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***Ua tafea le tau'ofe***

**Samoan cultural rituals through death and bereavement experiences**

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

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at

**The University of Waikato**

by

**Byron Malaela Sotiata Seiuli**



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## Alofa'aga

This thesis is a memorial to two men who passed away before its completion: *Afioga Tofaeono Tanuvasa Tavale* who provided cultural insights, and *La'auli Anson Kiwi Seiuli*, my nephew and research participant. Their narratives and experiences provided valuable insights on this important work. *Fa'afetai tele lava i le fesoasoani alofa ua tanu'u manuia ai lenei su'esu'ega.*

**Aue, ua māliliu toa, ua maumau ai aupega o le taua**

**Ua tō o le timu, ua tafea le tau'ofe**

**Ua galutoto le masina**

**Ua ta'ape'ape pāpā**

**Ua māsaesae le lagi**

**Ua gāsolosolo ao**

**Tulou, tulou, tulouna lava Samoa.**





## Abstract

Given that dialogue relating to death and grief for many Samoans remains in the realm of *tapu* (sacred) or *sā* (protected), few attempts have been made by researchers of Samoan heritage to understand whether the cultural contexts for enacting associated rituals might also provide avenues for healing. Psychological scholarship on recovery following death, particularly among men, is largely based on dominant western perspectives that continue to privilege both clinical and ethnocentric perspectives as the norm. Using the Samoan experience, I argue for a greater consideration of recovery from death as a culturally-defined process. In many instances, instead of severing ties with the deceased person as is popular in clinical approaches to grief work, this thesis makes an original contribution to the canon by demonstrating that Samoan grief resolution strongly endorses continued connections through its mourning rituals. Their end-of-life enactment helps to transition the deceased from this life to the next, while drawing the living together. Critically, the performance and maintenance of such important tasks create space for heaving emotions to be calmed, where meaning is made, and where the lives of those impacted are slowly restored. Some rituals offered therapeutic value, enabling the Samoan men involved in this study to walk hand-in-hand with their emotional distress, while transitioning them through the grieving process. Such mourning traditions are meaningful and culturally preferred. Moreover, the theoretical framework engaged by this research is predominantly informed by Samoan and Pasefika research perspectives such as the Uputāua Therapeutic Approach (UTA). UTA is firmly grounded in *fa'asamoa* (Samoan way) cultural traditions, while allowing space for western perspectives of therapeutic care to be incorporated into the research processes. This thesis critically advocates that psychology as a discipline could become more responsive and effective towards considering the centrality of indigenous perspectives of grief resolution when engaging with people from non-western cultures. As this thesis demonstrates, Samoan mourning rituals provided a significant pathway for my participants to validate and celebrate their cultural identity wherever they were situated.



## Fa'afetai tele lava

E muamua pea ona si'i le vi'iga i le Atua le Tama, Iesu Keriso le Alo, ma le fesoasoani sili, o lona Agaga Paia. E fa'afetaia le alofa tunoa o le Atua ua fa'a'iu'ina ai lenei su'esu'ega sa feagai ai. Ia maualuga ai pea lona vi'iga i le taumafaiga a lana auauna.

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## Glossary

The glossary in this section is set according to the Samoan alphabet.

**A, E, I, O, U, F, G, L, M, N, P, S, T, V, H, K, R**

<i>'āiga (potopoto)</i>	member of the nuclear and extended family	<i>fa'afiafiaga</i>	entertainment/Samoan dances
<i>'āitu</i>	spirit or ghost	<i>fa'alavelave</i>	crisis or emergencies
<i>Ao'ao</i>	lay minister		/giving out of concern
<i>Ao o le Malo</i>	Head of State	<i>fa'ale'āiga</i>	family bonds
<i>auosoga</i>	warriors	<i>fa'aleagaga</i>	spirituality
<i>aumaga</i>	untitled men	<i>fa'alupega</i>	genealogical origins
<i>aualuma</i>	unmarried women	<i>fa'amatai</i>	chieftainship
<i>aga'ifanua</i>	local customs	<i>fa'amamalu</i>	to consecrate
<i>agaga</i>	willingness to help	<i>fa'ameaalofa</i>	appreciation, gifting
<i>fesoasoani</i>		<i>fa'asamoa</i>	Samoan way of life
<i>aga'alofa</i>	giving out of love or sympathy	<i>fa'atalatalanoa</i>	narrative dialogue
<i>aganu'u</i>	Samoan customs and etiquettes	<i>fa'akerisiano</i>	Christian duty
<i>Ali'i</i>	lord or paramount chief	<i>faifaimea fa'atasi</i>	work cooperatively
<i>Ali'i Paia</i>	sacred ruler	<i>Faifeau</i>	church minister or pastor
<i>ali'i ma faipule</i>	council of chiefs	<i>Faifeau toea'ina</i>	elderly minister
<i>ali'i sā</i>	sacred high chief	<i>failauga</i>	orators
<i>alofa</i>	love, affection, charity	<i>fautua</i>	advice
<i>apa masi</i>	cabin bread	<i>fautua'aga</i>	words of wisdom
<i>ava</i>	respect, sensitivity to others	<i>falelauasi</i>	death house
<i>elegi</i>	tin mackerels	<i>fale-palagi</i>	Palagi-styled house
<i>evaevaga</i>	social enjoyment	<i>faleupolu</i>	orators from Upolu
<i>itumalo</i>	districts	<i>faletua</i>	wife of a minister
<i>'ie lavalava</i>	sarong	<i>faletalimalo</i>	house for welcoming and hosting guest
<i>'ie toga</i>	fine mat		covenant or code
<i>'ifoga</i>	traditional ceremony of forgiveness	<i>feagaiga</i>	family harmony
<i>oloa</i>	foreign property	<i>fealofani</i>	( <i>nonofo fealofani</i> ) living in harmony
<i>ola fa'aletino</i>	physical wellbeing	<i>fesoasoani</i>	physical help
<i>ola fa'aleagaga</i>	spirituality	<i>fia-palagi</i>	be like a European
<i>ola</i>	psychological	<i>fono</i>	assemble, gathering
<i>fa'alemafau</i>	wellbeing	<i>fono a matai</i>	council of chiefs
<i>ola fa'alelagona</i>	emotional wellbeing	<i>gagana</i>	Samoan language
<i>o lo'u nofoaga</i>	the place of sitting	<i>galulolo</i>	tsunami
<i>umu</i>	earthen oven	<i>lagi</i>	heaven
<i>umusaga</i>	building dedication	<i>lalaga</i>	weave
<i>fa'aaloalo</i>	deference, respect, politeness	<i>lauga</i>	Samoan oratory
<i>fa'aaloaloga</i>	reciprocal performance	<i>lau'ele'ele</i>	village or lands
<i>(fa'asamoa)</i>	ceremonial exchanges	<i>lalolagi</i>	under the heaven or earth
<i>fa'afaletui</i>	meeting house	<i>le vā tapuia</i>	a sacred space to relate
<i>fa'afeiloaiga</i>	face-to-face family dialogue	<i>liutōfaga</i>	transferral of deceased
<i>fa'afetai lava</i>	thank you	<i>loimata</i>	inner eye corner
		<i>loto fesoasoani</i>	desire to help, or be helpful
		<i>loto fa'asamoa</i>	Samoan spirit
		<i>loto maualalo</i>	humility

<i>loto fa'atasia</i>	collaborative approach	<i>Tagaloa-a-lagi</i>	Tagaloa-the-great-god-of-heaven or the sun god
<i>lotu</i>	church, religion		
<i>Mafui'e</i>	earthquake		
<i>malaga</i>	journey	<i>talanoaga</i>	narrative dialogue
<i>mālō</i>	national governance	<i>Talofa lava</i>	welcome, formal gesture of greetings
<i>mamalu</i>	dignity, prestige, sacred	<i>tama'āiga</i>	family heirs or sons of the family
<i>mana</i>	power, authority, dignity	<i>tamai'tai sa</i>	sacred female child
<i>maliu</i>	death, funeral	<i>tamāli'i</i>	high chief
<i>mauli</i>	soul	<i>tama tane</i>	male child
<i>matai</i>	chief	<i>taulaga</i>	tributary offering
<i>mavaega</i>	parting words or decree of succession	<i>taupou</i>	village maiden
		<i>tapu</i>	restriction, sacred, off limits
<i>meaalofa</i>	a gift, a treasure		
<i>nofo sauni</i>	preparation	<i>tausī tua'oi</i>	external boundaries
<i>nu'u</i>	village	<i>tausī le vā</i>	honouring relational spaces
<i>Pāia</i>	sacred, holy		
<i>papa</i>	rock	<i>tautua</i>	service
<i>pāpā</i>	founding or ancient	<i>tautua toto</i>	blood and sweat
<i>papalagi</i>	Caucasian person,	<i>tatalo</i>	prayer
<i>(palagi)</i>	Westerner or European	<i>teutusi</i>	gift envelopes
<i>pasese</i>	travel cost	<i>tinā</i>	mother
<i>pisupo</i>	tin corned beef	<i>to'ona'i</i>	lunch feast
<i>povi masima</i>	salted beef	<i>tōfā mamao</i>	knowledge
<i>pule</i>	authority, power		transformation
<i>sā</i>	sacred, forbidden	<i>toga</i>	cultural treasures
<i>sa'o</i>	elite title holder, family head	<i>toloa</i>	grey duck
		<i>tuaā</i>	elders, ancestors
<i>saofai</i>	bestowment of a chiefly title	<i>tua'oi</i>	boundaries
		<i>Tui Atua</i>	lord of Atua district
<i>Saveasiuleo</i>	the god of Pulotu (Samoan Hades or Hell realms)	<i>Tui A'ana</i>	lord of A'ana district
		<i>tufuga</i>	expert, master (eg. builder)
<i>siapo</i>	tapa cloth	<i>tūlafale</i>	executive chiefs
<i>si'ialofa</i>	contribution out of love	<i>tulagavae</i>	identity and belonging
<i>soalaupule</i>	cooperation / agreement		footprint
		<i>tu ma aganu'u</i>	culture and customs
<i>solī</i>	trample upon	<i>tupu</i>	crown or king
<i>sua</i>	tributary meal	<i>vā fealoaloa'i</i>	relational space
<i>ta'ita'iga</i>	leadership	<i>valegase</i>	mourning periods
<i>taulā aitu</i>	anchor of spirits or gods		
<i>tafa'ifā</i>	the king, the crown, or four sided		

## **Amataga**

(Prologue)

**Oi 'āiga e, tagi mai anae  
Ia malilie le olaga nei e mavae  
O se fue mavae (Vi'i o Malietoa)**

Oh what pity, to the grieving *'āiga*  
Take comforted but this life does end  
The fly-whisk has vanished (Tribute to Malietoa)



*Aiseā ea - Why?* It was just another Sunday that began like all others before it, starting with a symphony of church bells that reminded villagers of the Lord's Day. Smoke billowed from the *umu* (earthen oven) being prepared for the Sunday family *to'ona'i* (lunch feast). Samoan feasts remain vital in its social organisation, especially during cultural exchange and village rituals. *Tautua* (service) of this kind is an avenue of blessings from the *tuaā* (elders) or distinguished community leaders. Once the *umu* is set to cook, the family members ready themselves for Sunday morning church with the main service lasting about one and a half hours. When the final amen is proclaimed, families disperse in their home direction for their family *to'ona'i*. Samoan social etiquette dictates that the best portion of the *to'ona'i* is reserved for the *fai'feau* (the church minister's tributary meal) and the *matai ma tua'ā* (meal for the family chief and elders). Everyone has a share and no one is left out. Family *to'ona'i* epitomise essential ideals of family unity and harmony.

Samoan Christian devotion dictates that Sundays are esteemed 'holy days'. Rural Samoa especially monitors strict sanctions on general activities that could be seen as worldly and thereby *solu* (trample upon) this sacred day. Sporting activities, swimming, or worldly entertainment are all discouraged; after all, Samoa's principal motto states: *E Fa'avae i le Atua Samoa*, that is, 'Samoa is founded on God'. Dishonouring God's command equates with dishonouring the family and its founding ancestors.

Like other Sundays before, this particular one followed the same patterns until an incident changed one family's routine to unexpected calamity. The year was 1979, and after the family *to'ona'i*, the family chief called to attention three of his young sons. The father's instructions were along these lines:

Go and visit your uncle in the neighbouring village. Give him these items as a gift and ask him to cut your hair. After your haircut, come back quickly so that you can get ready for the evening church service.

The three boys began their trek towards their uncle's *fale* as their father retreated to the living room of his *fale-palagi* (European-styled house). As young boys do, they chatted and joked along their journey. The conversation soon

turned to swimming, especially given the hot midday sun, and the spot for a quick dip was behind their grandma's house, about a kilometre from home.

The boys arrived at their destination and were met with a warm welcome by their unsuspecting uncle. The uncle took the gift and in return, gave the boys well-trimmed haircuts as requested by their father. As the boys farewelled their uncle, they compared their new looks as they trekked towards home. Approaching their grandmother's *fale*, they headed for the beach as previously planned. They edged themselves closer to the awaiting arms of the ocean, eager to dive into the coolness of its refreshing embrace. In delighted anticipation, the boys stripped down to their bare tanned skin and began dipping themselves into the ocean's refreshing tide. Playfully, they splashed each other whilst trying to reassure themselves that no trouble would result from their quick detour. Apart from the uncle who gave them haircuts, no one in the family from the neighbouring village knew that the boys were even around. Most adults were asleep, sheltering themselves from the scorching afternoon heat.

As they exited the waters to continue their trek homeward, they spotted a canoe that lay near the walking-track leading to the ocean. Like many young boys, curiosity got the better of them. They reasoned that a quick paddle would be fun for their adventurous young minds, and that the canoe would be returned to its rightful place in no time at all. Hesitant yet excited, the mischievous adventurers launched the canoe into the water and scampered aboard. They found no paddle on the canoe, but it did not deter them from venturing out into the deep anyway. Being so young and energetic meant they could easily paddle the canoe around the bay by using their hands as oars. Further, the ocean remained relatively calm on this side of Upolu without experiencing much movement in the current at all, unlike the south-eastern parts where the waves were often more rampant and threatening. Unbeknownst to the young adventurers, the ocean creeping in unnoticed was to have a devastating effect on their boating expedition.

Time crept along slowly while the boys hand-paddled the canoe around the bay with careless abandon. Unlike their village, the absence of warning markers meant the ocean had crept in unaware, catching them all off-guard. And

even though it appeared that they were still relatively close to the shore, the depth of shallowness had definitely moved inland. One of the boys jumped overboard to test the depth of the water, so they could show-off their bombing skills while using the canoe as their launching-pad.

The jump was fatal. Instead of standing on the ocean floor as anticipated, the jumper's feet came nowhere near the bottom. Gasping for air whilst forcing himself above the enclosing sea, the jumper, who was now quickly drowning, signalled to his brothers for help. He frantically motioned for them to paddle the canoe closer so he could grab hold of its side for safety. In panic, the next boy launched himself into the ocean to rescue his drowning brother. He tried to push his drowning brother towards the shore amidst taking in mouthfuls of dirty ocean himself. Both are gasping for air while struggling against being overcome by the enveloping sea. The rescuer tiptoes toward the beach with the jumper clutching tightly onto his neck, refusing to let go.

The rescuer unloaded the shaken jumper where he could stand partly submerged in the tide while he continued for their *grandma's fale*. Upon reaching dry land, he began to run with all of his might to get help. Meanwhile, the rescued jumper, now standing alone and shaking in the shallow waters, realised the magnitude of his thoughtless act just moments earlier. Time seemed to slow itself to a standstill, capturing every minute detail in absolute clarity. With much regret amidst his growing guilt, the jumper mumbled to himself words of condemnation as though it would somehow abate his feelings of self-blame for their predicament: *God is punishing us for dishonouring His holy day. We're in so much trouble.*

The track of self-condemnation and trepidation was forcefully disrupted by desperate screams, coming from the remaining brother deserted and drifting on the canoe. At this point, anguish and fear began to manifest the drifting brother's agitations into vocal cries of despair and hopelessness, while trying to assess his options for a safe return to shore. Seeing no obvious clue for rescue, he appealed to his brother who was standing trembling on the shoreline:

Ua ou fefe! Ua ou fefe! Sau e avaku a'u (I'm scared, I'm scared, come and get me!).

His shaken companion on shore replied with the pretence of calming the drifter down:

Aua e ke fefe, fa'akali o la'e sau sesi e aumai oe! Gofo i lalo, aua e ke fefe, o la'e la'a sau sesi e aumai oe! Kago e alo mai le va'a. (Don't be scared, just wait, someone is coming to get you! Sit down; don't be scared, someone is coming soon to get you! Try paddling the canoe this way).

His brother's faint reassurance did not alleviate the panic-stricken situation on board the drifting canoe at all. The terrified drifter became more overwhelmed as panic gripped his young being, rendering him powerless and oblivious to any suggestions of calmness from his equally terrified brother on shore.

Finally, the drifter surmised that his only option was to swim his way to safety. To his young mind, this was better than staying on the drifting canoe that was now heading for the open sea. After a brief moment of hesitation, the drifting brother summoned enough courage to plunge himself into the awaiting ocean. His young being frantically battled against the overwhelming embrace of the consuming tide. After some time of struggling, the brave young fighter finally surrendered to the unbearable grasp of the ocean. An hour or so earlier, the ocean was a life sustaining and entertaining force. Now, it was a ruthless nemesis. All at once, the whole seaside seemed spell-bound and silently still because of what they had witnessed. All that could be heard amidst the haunting stillness was the echo of faint sobbing from the traumatised and scared brother on shore. The lonely and bewildered boy stared motionless at the spot where his brother had fought against the ocean's deathly clutches just moments before. With fading expectations, he looked, prayed, and hoped for his brother to emerge triumphantly - to escape death somehow. It did not happen.

Meanwhile, the canoe continued to drift slowly out to sea, now lifeless, and forsaken to float wherever it pleased. The dream-like spell was finally shattered by the scampering footsteps and yells coming from the direction of the rescuing party approaching the beach. The brother who ran for help was now being accompanied by an uncle in his early twenties, oblivious to why the boys were there in the first place. Approaching, they could see the canoe drifting aimlessly without a passenger out in the distance, but only a solitary figure,

standing, as though glued to the soft-mud by an invisible force. The lone witness pointed to the lethal spot, and informed the rescuing party that his brother had jumped off the canoe because he was scared. After a short time of searching, the brother was found and carried to shore by the uncle. His lifeless body was quickly transported to the hospital in a school bus, the only vehicle available in the village at the time. The brothers were then instructed to wait at the grandmother's house until the family had returned from the hospital.

Dreading the impending consequence of their disobedience, especially leading to the tragic death of their sibling, the two frightened and traumatised boys awaited their fate. Once informed, their father and the rest of the family hurried themselves to the hospital to examine the matter for themselves. Many of them responded to the awful news with varying reactions, ranging from shock, disbelief and denial, to anger and blame. With little time to prepare, the family hastily reorganized themselves in order to respond to death according to expected cultural patterns. For them, this was a day that started out like many other Sundays before, but by nightfall, a terrible event had changed their routine patterns to one of mourning and grief.



## Chapter One

My mother's mother . . .  
named me Ola-mai-i-le-Oti,  
Born-from-Death, to commemorate . . .  
My courageous mother's death (*Ola*).



The narratives presented in the prologue are actual events that led to the untimely death of one of my brothers. I was one of the three boys sent for haircuts, after which only two of us returned that afternoon. Like *Ola* (Wendt, 1991), surviving a traumatic event that leads to the death of a significant person raises many questions, over and above the emotional stress involved in death and bereavement itself.

From the untimely passing of my brother to now, funeral enactments continue to evoke personal emotional responses from time to time. With that tragic event, self-blame, fear of being haunted by his *'aitu* (ghost) and confusion accompanied me during the period of mourning. Further, having to provide a verbal statement to the Police and to the Court about the drowning incident also prompted fears of criminal punishment for my part in the death. By contrast, the passing of my nephew in 2012 (see chapter four) left me to experience a sense of peace and contentment; his death was the consequence of his battle with cancer and not a sudden or unanticipated tragedy like the earlier event. In the latter case, I became more supportive of, and reflective about the processes involved with the mourning rituals and practices rather than being fearful or confused. The difference in my age between the two events might have also influenced the ways I processed my emotions due to my ability to rationalise, or at least try to understand my feelings about death more sensibly than had been possible earlier.

Death seems to have the capacity to generate specific moments in still-shot pixels, ready to be replayed in detailed accuracy that renders these images timeless. Even thirty years after my brother's drowning, my recollection of those events remains clear and vivid. Time has somehow absorbed most of the associated pain while also removing any of the haunting memories I had carried for some time after the event. Yet in reporting my situation, I also acknowledge that this may not be possible for others. The memories of death may still be painfully difficult to consider even years since its initial impact. In this regard, considerable courage is often required to recount such traumatic incidents, particularly those memories that remain painful. Because of this, I acknowledge and express appreciation to the participants who volunteered their narratives of

pain, their stories of suffering, their moments of triumph, and their gift of love to support this present study. *Fa'afetai tele lava i lā outou fesoasoani fa'ameadlofa.*

### **The setting**

On 29 October 2009, an earthquake of 8.3 magnitude triggered a *galulolo* (tsunami) wave that ravaged Samoa, American Samoa and parts of Tonga (PSR Report, 2009). I was called to Samoa to support families and frontline responders through the aftermath, trauma, and devastation left by the tsunami. While this catastrophe swept through and ruptured relationships locally and globally for Samoan communities, personal conversations with survivors revealed specific impact on Samoan men. Those present at the contact sites were deeply affected, particularly the men who were called upon to search for missing people, to transfer and bear the injured to care, to retrieve bodies, and to bury their loved ones. As a Samoan counsellor who specialises in working with trauma and with Samoan men, some questions that concerned me were: How are they coping? What are their emotional and psychological health needs? What can I offer to assist them in their recovery? My concerns led me to return to Samoa on five occasions to provide follow-up counselling training and physical support. Yet despite these supportive endeavours, other questions arose because many others had no opportunity to access these forms of assistance.

It was very clear to me that those attendant professionals who were fluent in Samoan language and culture were more effective in therapeutic intervention than those who were not. The scale of death caused by the tsunami significantly disrupted customary mourning and bereavement rituals. Grieving families scrambled to mourn for their loved ones and comfort each other as best as they could. Some families arranged simple burial services to honour their dead, a distinct departure from customary practice (see Tui Atua, 2009b). Yet the performance of death rituals does not necessarily bring about closure for the bereaved. In fact, Samoan people everywhere continue to be affected by the impact of such a loss for generations.

My role with the tsunami recovery efforts strongly influenced my decision to undertake research into grieving, particularly to support bereaved families to help their men to cope with their losses in more appropriate ways. However, the focus on calamity is only one part of this research project. The broader context of this thesis concerns general perspectives of death and mourning as experienced by Samoan men, especially in New Zealand.

Personal observations of Samoan society reveal that public expressions of grief are more readily accepted from women and children, whereas men tend to mourn with some form of restraint. My observation seems to concur with what Ablon (1973) reported about Samoan patterns of grief as relayed by some of the participants in his studies who said:

one has to take hardship without complaining . . . exhibit[ing] a great tolerance for pain, death, and calamities, regarding these as aspects of life that one must bear, sanctioned by a Christianity that dictates an acceptance of God's will as non-reversible fate (1973, p.332).

Ablon's informants' advocated that despite painful events, life must go on. Such views seem to again echo the sentiments of those people who suffered loss and devastation from the tsunami event (see chapter seven). In the face of such widespread loss and resultant trauma, it needs to be considered whether our Samoan rituals, gendered expressions, and beliefs based on religious devotion are effective and adequate. On this issue, the relevant academic literature that pertains to Samoan people is limited. It is with the purpose of adding to this canon of knowledge that my research seeks to make a useful contribution.

This thesis is guided by these two questions: *How do Samoan men respond to, and make sense of, death and mourning experiences? What are the customs and cultural rituals that have helped them to grieve and give meaning in these times of emotional upheaval?*

In answering these two questions, this study firstly examines and documents many of the customary practices enacted and engaged in by my participants during their own personal experiences with death and mourning as Samoan-born Samoans, New Zealand-born Samoans, and US-based Samoans. The way they responded to and tried to make sense of loss and grief form vital

components of this investigation, along with whether the rituals they used as memorialisation or as coping have Samoan or western connections and origins, or both. The second part of answering the research questions is to locate and highlight those traditions and rituals, such as those used during mourning periods, which might have inherent patterns which support recovery. These avenues of support not only assist people to manage death's impact, but provide vital stepping stones in returning to normal life routines.

### **Outline of research intentions**

This thesis documents and examines the responses of Samoan men to death and grieving experiences, with a particular focus on how grief is addressed at both a personal and at a collective level. That is, to consider how people draw together in order to support one another in the form of material resourcing, and to help each other to cope emotionally with such adversity (see examples discussed in chapters four, six, and seven). Losing a loved one to death is profoundly personal, and for many Samoans, there is another dimension of knowing that they are a part of the larger collective that provides added support during such times (Suaalii-Sauni, 2008; Tui Atua 2009b). In one way, the collective level focuses on shared family identity, the role of cosmology and divine beliefs, of cultural rituals, of shared faith, and of shared practices. Embracing Samoan genealogy and divine connections underpins many important life cycle events (Morice, 2006) (see chapter two for detailed discussions on Samoan genealogical and cosmological realms). In another, the personal level encompasses the specific processes involved in grieving the loss, finding support, trying to cope, and returning to normal life routines. On the whole, some cope better than others regardless of social and cultural support, including men.

For this study, twenty-two research participants were recruited. Nineteen of my participants were men and three were women (see chapter five). The participants were recruited from three localities: Samoa, New Zealand, and California (USA). My extensive work in Samoa after the tsunami event, as well as my counselling work with Pasefika clients in New Zealand made these two localities important for recruiting participants, while California as a location was

not considered initially at all. However, a chance trip to California by the author during the data collection phase provided an opportunity to extend the conversations about coping with death and grief to other Samoans living in the area, who not only met the criteria set out for the study, but gave consent to become participants.

Samoan and Pasefika research methods, together with qualitative research components, inform the theoretical framework utilised as a guide for the data collection, analysis and dissemination of the findings. The Uputāua Therapeutic Approach (Seiuli, 2013) provides a conceptual framework for engaging research participants in the process of *fono fa'atalatalanoa* (narrative dialogue). A crucial component in the generation of empirical data is my own reflexive auto-ethnographic accounts as an insider participant in Samoan death and grieving rituals. These accounts make visible and transparent my own assumptions, biases and views alongside those of my participants.

To examine the guiding questions stated earlier, there are a number of key issues that are important in a research project such as this one. These are: the need to examine ways that Samoan people respond to, and make sense of, death and bereavement experiences in Samoa, in New Zealand, and in other places; and to examine Samoan end-of-life rituals, particularly those that have helped Samoan people to grieve, while also providing meaningful expressions to these important customs. Many Samoan death rituals carried out today trace their origin to some earlier ancestral practices, and there are also some death rituals which originate in *palagi* (Western or European) alternatives (Ablon, 1971; Braginsky, 2003). Such variations are worthy of documentation and discussion. Furthermore, understanding the pathways to a resumption of regular life routines by Samoan people experiencing death and grief would add value to psychosocial scholarship on cross-cultural grief resolution in New Zealand contexts (Cassim, 2013; Valentine, 2006).

## **Lalaga o le 'ie toga: weaving the text**

*Lalaga o le 'ie toga* represents the intricate processes required to weave a fine mat. *Lalaga* is a Samoan term that refers to the task of weaving an *'ie toga* (fine mat). There are many procedures involved before a fine mat finally materialises. Preparation for and weaving of the *'ie toga* is a long and careful process that takes months to complete. A well woven fine mat holds significant value in *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa* (traditional ceremonial exchanges – or *fa'asamoa*) such as those observed in funeral rituals (see chapters four and six).

From the outset, the weaver must firstly select and collect the most suitable material from the *laufala* (*Phormium tenax*) and *laupaono* (*Pandanus odoratissimus*) plants. Preparation of the *laufala* and *laupaono* means boiling them to soften the material before it is dried in the sun. The spikey edges are also removed to prevent injury to the weaver. These important steps make the fibre easier to weave as well as forming a natural prevention against fragmentation and splitting which may otherwise occur. Over-boiling or over-exposure to the sun can cause the raw material to become brittle or too tough. Lower quality materials are only used to weave a *fala papa* (plain mat) rather than an *'ie toga* (fine mat). Dried *laufala* and *laupaono* are apportioned and split into desirable strands or lengths, ready for the weaver to begin the weaving process. *'ie toga* can be woven into various styles and sizes depending on their intended purposes (see chapter six for fine mats used in funerals). Importantly, integrating other materials that complement, add beauty, or strengthen the final product becomes a vital part of the weaving process. A finely woven mat represents the skills and dedication of the weaver. When a completed *'ie toga* is finally displayed, celebratory remarks that echo approval and appreciation accompany its presentation. It is at such a forum where the value of the *'ie toga* materializes, acknowledging the patient processes involved and the care taken by the weaver to produce a national treasure (*'ie o le malo*).

*Lalaga o le 'ie toga* is also a contextual approach engaged by a number of Samoan researchers (Anae, 1998; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1994; Lee Hang; 2011; Meleisea, 1992) to examine Samoan perspectives on research more specifically. Mulitalo-Lāuta (2000) expands the *lalaga* concepts as a cultural framework in

social work practice with Samoan clients. Seiuli (2004) extends this perspective further with its incorporation into Samoan counselling and therapeutic research. What underlies the *lalaga* perspective in all these approaches is the art of weaving as a conceptual metaphor in clinical work or health research with Samoan communities. I consider *lalaga o le 'ie toga* to be a useful concept for this study, both for its Samoan origin and also as a framework for the specific processes of collection, preparation, sorting, weaving and, finally, presentation.

For this research, *lalaga o le 'ie toga* begins by initiating and apportioning the thesis into manageable strands called *Chapters*. The chapters are further apportioned into core themes which are then dealt with, each according to its own specific purpose. The methodology chapter (chapter five) of this thesis is where the focus on preparation and selection criteria finds its key role. That is, the raw material gathered and sorted in the process of data collection is apportioned into themes to form the basis of the case studies chapters (chapters six, seven, and eight). The case studies are ordered into three distinct chapter strands reflecting the overall findings. My research findings are synthesised with the literature I reviewed in the discussion chapter (chapter nine), offering vital perspectives and key conclusions reached through carrying out this study. The *'ie toga* that emerges intends to reflect a carefully woven cultural artefact which fuses together indigenous insights, empirical data, and western approaches (Anae, 2009; Seiuli 2013). This is my *meaalofa* (gift) as a Samoan researcher and counsellor, to contemporary Polynesian scholarship on indigenous perspectives to death and grief resolution.

### **Vaevaeina o le galuega: thesis outline**

The complete thesis is organised into nine chapters. Chapter one provides the rationale and overview of the context from which this study emerges. The chapter also explains the format undertaken to present my thesis overall. In this chapter, I briefly outlined my own work as a Samoan counsellor, and in particular, my role in providing trauma and recovery support for victims of the *galulolo* that devastated Samoa in 2009. Further, my personal observations from the tsunami

recovery highlighted the importance of being Samoan and of having a general understanding of the Samoan world in therapeutic support.

Chapter two provides the fundamental basis for important historical information about the origin, geography, traditions, and social organisation of the Samoan people. A discussion on *fa'asamoa* protocols and traditions in the lives of Samoan people is examined and its relationship to the formation of their unique cultural identity. The realm of *fa'asamoa* is extensive and is sometimes difficult to define precisely, yet it continues to provide meaningful practices that reconnect the living with the dead and with their supporting communities. Many end-of-life practices find their origin in the earlier patterns of Samoan ancestors.

Chapter three examines Samoan identity, with a particular consideration of how such identity functions in a foreign setting like New Zealand. Identity classifications provide an important context for understanding many traditional rituals that are discussed in other chapters of this thesis. As such, understanding what it means to be Samoan in places like New Zealand helps in contextualising associated rituals and customary practices during periods of mourning. A significant contribution of this chapter to the overall objectives of the thesis is my investigation into the ways that men grieve. Having an understanding of the way men grieve is helpful in considering the impact of death upon my own life, as well as the lives of Samoan men overall.

Chapter four critically examines the literature on Samoan grief in general. The written observations of early Christian missionaries from the 1830s to about the 1880s, and those of some German ethnographers who were resident on the islands around 1900, provide information on the traditional patterns of Samoan death and bereavement customs. More recent accounts from other scholars record later practices, allowing earlier periods to be contrasted with contemporary times. Such accounts allow identification of changes in death rituals over time. An important contribution to these later accounts is made by those scholars of Samoan ancestry such as Simanu (2002), Tavale (2012a & 2012b), Tui Atua (2009b & 2011a), and Va'a (2001). The change to Samoan death-related rituals in recent times is an important part of this chapter. The continual reappraisal of such long-held traditions raises concerns for the future

of Samoan death and mourning culture, with implications for the Samoan language and Samoan customs in general. A sequential overview of events observed during a period of death and mourning also helps to provide a general order that is observed during a mourning period: from when a death is announced, through the processes involved in the week or weeks of mourning, to funeral and burial services, to *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa* (rituals of ceremonial exchange), and an unveiling.

Chapter five explores the theoretical and practical approaches involved in gathering and analysing the narratives produced by the participants. I consider the significance of Samoan and Pasefika qualitative research design not only for this thesis, but for health research in general that involves Samoan participants. A key contribution of this chapter is a discussion of the Uputāua Therapeutic Approach (UTA) (Seiuli, 2011 & 2013) as the most appropriate framework for this thesis. The UTA also considers the important context of the Samoan world and of therapeutic support for participants who have been impacted by death. The chapter also discusses the use of *fono fa'atalatalanoa* (narrative dialogue) and semi-structured interview schedules to examine the personal stories of my research participants. The processes of transcription, translation, structural and thematic analysis, and dissemination are discussed as modes of data analysis that form the vital components of the theoretical framework for this research project (Rapley, 2007).

Chapters six, seven, and eight document the findings of my research through the presentation of three distinct case studies. With the case studies, the narratives are either presented under participant's actual names, or by using a given Samoan pseudonym. Some of my participants preferred to use their real names to tell their life stories, while others opted for an alias in order to remain anonymous. Both of these preferences are honoured in the presentation of my findings.

The first case study, chapter six, explores the role of *matai* leadership and decision-making through death and funeral performance. My father, Leiataualesā Tuilaepa Taulapapa, a paramount chief who straddles family and church responsibilities both in Hamilton and Samoa, becomes the key focus of

this chapter. The second case study examines the events of the *Galulolo* of 2009 in Samoa. This case study documents Jared's and his wife Neta's recollection of the tsunami, and of losing Jared's parents and their own two children in the same event. The third case study examines the experiences of New Zealand-born Samoans about death and mourning culture. Tauivi (pseudonym - to struggle and to triumph), a New Zealand-born of Samoan and European descent, provides the core narratives that inform this particular case study. The chapter goes further to examine the changes within, and continuing impact of Samoan bereavement culture upon younger New Zealand-born generations. I uncover the complexities that underlie Samoan ritual performance, discussing how these patterns present both useful and challenging aspects in Samoan grief resolution. These three case study chapters highlight the importance of continuing bonds: the physical, the emotional and the spiritual, rather than severing connections, as a culturally preferred way of learning to live with grief and loss. I document the important function of the physical performance expressed by *tautua* and memorialisation rituals, many which are evident in Samoan mourning culture and as handed down through the generations, as ways of addressing death that are also helpful to returning to regular life routines.

Chapter nine presents the conclusions of this thesis. Dominant western psychological scholarship on recovery following death is largely based on Northern American perspectives that continue to privilege both clinical and ethnocentric perspectives as the norm. Here, using the Samoan experience, I argue for a greater consideration of death and recovery as a culturally-embedded process. The chapter highlights the importance of grief recovery and therapeutic care that supports Samoan people in their journey, as they attempt to live with death's impact in meaningful and culturally preferred ways. The chapter concludes with a discussion of what this research contributes to Samoan men and their communities in Samoa, New Zealand, and in other places, and highlights its unique contribution to the field of psychology and counselling from a therapeutic standpoint.

## **Fa'agaganaina o tusitusiga: language and style**

This thesis is researched and presented with Samoan people as its primary focus and audience. It provides a written account of lived experiences, personal narratives, and shared perspectives that have shaped, and will continue to shape, the lives of people upon whom death has had an impact. Following in the footsteps of Samoan scholars and researchers such as Anae (1998), Lima (2004), Meleisea (1987), Suali'i-Sauni (2006), Tui Atua (2003), Wendt (1991), and others, I, too, have purposely allowed the Samoan voice to permeate the text. It is important to emphasise, as this thesis does, that the Samoan world consists of formal and informal occasions, and that the language spoken plays a distinguishing role within these specific spaces. There is a difference in language registers, and Samoans who are familiar with their culture and language can differentiate between the two, as well as being able to decide which language style to adopt: that is, whether to use formal or informal language, or, to express the distinction another way, oratory type language or simple everyday speech. Within these language registers or space, the language used reflects the protocols of each domain and, importantly, the relationships that exist within these settings.

Words and phrases may well present multiple meanings. The result is that terms or phrases can become situational or relational, or both. For example, the word *mana*, a pan-Polynesian word and concept, in one Samoan context could mean authority, yet in another setting, it can be translated to mean power, and in still another situation, *mana* can mean spirit. A similar challenge is posed by the word *tapu*. Nevertheless, Samoans who possess a good understanding of their language and culture will understand the precise meanings of these words in the particular contexts within which they are used. For this thesis, the English translations of Samoan words, proverbs and transcripts are written to provide the intended meanings in mind, 'within the context of death and bereavement culture'. However, it must be noted that fluent speakers and readers of the Samoan language could well translate these same verses differently. My translations for this thesis are not always made word for word in a literal sense,

but are designed to convey the contextual meaning of a phrase or sentence that a participant intended.

In regard to the printed forms of the Samoan language in this thesis, on first appearance the word will be given in *italics*, followed by its English translation. The subsequent use of the word will also be printed in italic, and the Samoan word may be used interchangeably with its English translation thereafter. The translations are also listed in the glossary as a matter of convenience for the reader. In some instances, certain words are treated as freely interchangeable in their use, such as *papalagi* and *palagi*. These two words both mean *white person* or European: the meaning conveyed is not lost with either spelling. For other audiences such as New Zealand-born Samoans, Samoan of mixed ethnicities, and non-Samoans who may have interest in reading or engaging with the content of this thesis, macrons and glottal stops are provided to assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of words and phrases, and to limit the possibility of misinterpretation and misuse. The purpose of these textual practices is to remind the reader that the words and phrases are embedded in the richness of Samoan lives and their meanings. As reflected by this thesis, Samoan culture and language is a sacred *meaalofa* (treasure/gift) that is handed on, to continuously connect the generations, through time and space (Seiuli, 2004 & 2013; Webber-Dreadon, 1999). This is the heritage we carry.

## **Chapter Two**

### **E lele le toloa ae ma'au i le vai (Samoan proverb)**

The toloa (grey duck) will fly anywhere,  
but it will always return to its home



The centrality of a Samoan worldview in this thesis requires an examination and documentation of its cultural and historical foundations. The earliest written records provided by Williams (1830s), Fraser (1880s), Pratt (1860s), Stair (1890s), and Turner (1880s) document their traditional customs and practices. The later recordings by Kramer (1900s) and Schultz (1900s), which have been reprinted and translated from German into English in more recent years, built upon and supplemented the earlier missionary accounts. The in-text reference date, it must be noted, is to the most recent year of publication, and not the year the material was first written or originally published. In order to understand the origins of Samoan cultural mores, worldviews and practices, including those associated with death, this chapter draws upon such earlier records.

The scarcity of published material relating to Samoan death and mourning culture reflects the tendency for time-period hopping in the author's attempt to reconnect earlier sources of death-related concepts with more recent periods. The key point to consider is that this study is the first of its kind, and there will be time lapses as a result due to the scarcity of resources available to draw from. However, this study creates space for others scholars who are interested in this topic to add to the canon in years to come, or for the addition of other sources that have not been located by the author.

According to Samoan cosmogony and mythological accounts, of which there are several versions, Samoan people originated in Samoa and not elsewhere. Fraser (1891, p.166) judges the Samoan accounts as being "pure and noble", with a strong claim to be considered the "parent" of the Polynesian race. Fraser comes to this conclusion because of the care with which Samoan oral histories were safeguarded by the highest chiefs and priests, who were entrusted as depositories of the old traditions and beliefs (Fraser, 1891). Kramer (1995) writes that the "stories and sayings [of the Samoans] were not invented separately, but are property common to Samoan people" (p.5). Kramer is referring here to the communal culture of Samoan people, where their lives and customs dictate the way stories are treasured and passed on from one generation to the next. He points out that the written accounts of Samoan

traditions were collected for about seventy years after the arrival of Williams in the mid-1830s, and Kramer himself was astonished to discover how “uniformly [the oral traditions] have been preserved, . . . and the most complete confidence ought everywhere to be placed in them” (Kramer, 1995, Vol. 1, p.5). Tui Atua (1994) offers some illumination on the subject by suggesting that Samoan traditions were sacredly guarded and jealously monitored because of their divine connections with the gods and spirit of the ancestors (also see Suaalii-Sauni, Tuagalu, Kirifi-Alai & Fuamatu, 2008, p.104-114). The communication of traditions or even uttering of genealogies was forbidden, and severe trouble would often result for informants who transgressed these sanctions. In certain family lines, the danger of death had to be taken into account (Kramer, 1995), which indicates the seriousness of keeping such sacred knowledge and maintaining its purity for many generations.

Varying accounts exist, both oral and written, of how Samoa and her people came into being. Some of these accounts are similar to Maori cosmological accounts, such as the separation of *Lagi* (heaven) and *Papa* (rock), which constituted the formation of the Samoan ecological world (Suaalii-Sauni, et al., 2008). The legend of Maui fishing up the North Island of Aotearoa has some similarities with Samoa’s legend of Tagaloa fishing the land out of the ocean (Stair, 1983; Stuebel, Herman & Toafa, 1976; Turner, 1984).

Other cosmogony accounts recorded by Turner (1984) and Kramer (1995) reveal that the great god Tagaloa existed and was without beginning. Tagaloa created *lagi* (heaven) as his dwelling place, and then proceeded to create the *lalolagi* (under the heaven or earth). This god, known as *Tagaloa-a-lagi* (Tagaloa-the-great-god-of-heaven or the sun god) is credited with rolling Samoa down from heaven. Turner noted: “Savai’i was formed by a stone rolled down from the heavens and Upolu by another” (1984, p.7). A similar account is recorded by Stair (1983):

Tuli, who was Tagaloa’s son or messenger, descended from heaven, but found no resting place on the face of the ocean. Tuli returned and protested to Tagaloa, who then threw down a stone from heaven which formed land. From the formation of the land, Tuli introduced plants and trees, beginning with Samoa and later

spreading to Tonga and Fiji. Tuli, under the command of Tagaloa-a-lagi, created man from ilo (germ) (Stair, 1983, p.212).

This Tagaloa-a-lagi is the principal god, creator of the world and the progenitor of other gods and of humanity. This same Tagaloa is also thought to be where the origin of the first Samoan person is traced.

In another version, Tui Atua (2007a) emphasises that the gods married and produced human beings, and, therefore, humans became the genealogical offspring of the gods. This is captured in the ancient Samoan saying:

*'E le se Atua fau tagata, o le Atua usu gafa'*, which means, 'God is not a god creator, but God is a God progenitor' (Suaalii-Sauni, et al., 2008, p.156).

Similar to the stories of creation and genealogical beginnings, there exist several versions to the origin of the name Samoa (Henry, 1980; Stuebel, et al., 1976; Turner, 1984). I recite two of these as a point of reference here.

The first (Turner, 1984, p.11-12) tells of *Salevao* (the god of the rocks) observing a stirring in the *moa* (centre) of the earth. From the motion, a child was born and Salevao named him *Moa*, after the place whence the child came (the centre). After cutting off the child's umbilicus, Salevao washed him and sanctioned the place sacred (*sa*). Salevao then became loose stones, and ordered that everything which grew would be *sa-ia-Moa* (sacred to Moa). The prohibition remained until Moa was old enough to have his first ceremonial haircut. This ceremony signified the lifting and removal of the *tapu* (restriction). The land, so this account says, was known as *Sa-ia-Moa* (sacred to Moa), or Samoa as it is now abbreviated.

A second account of the naming of the islands, according to Turner, evolves from Tagaloa who dwelled in heaven with his two children, a son called *Moa* and a daughter called *Lu*. Tagaloa had a brother who married his daughter *Lu*, and had a son to whom they also gave the name *Lu*. One night while Tagaloa was resting, he overheard his grandson singing, *Moa... Lu, Moa... Lu*. A little while later, Tagaloa overheard *Lu* changing the order of names by putting his name first and his uncle *Moa's* name last. *Lu* was now singing, *Lu... Moa, Lu... Moa*. Tagaloa became annoyed and wished to teach the boy a lesson about his

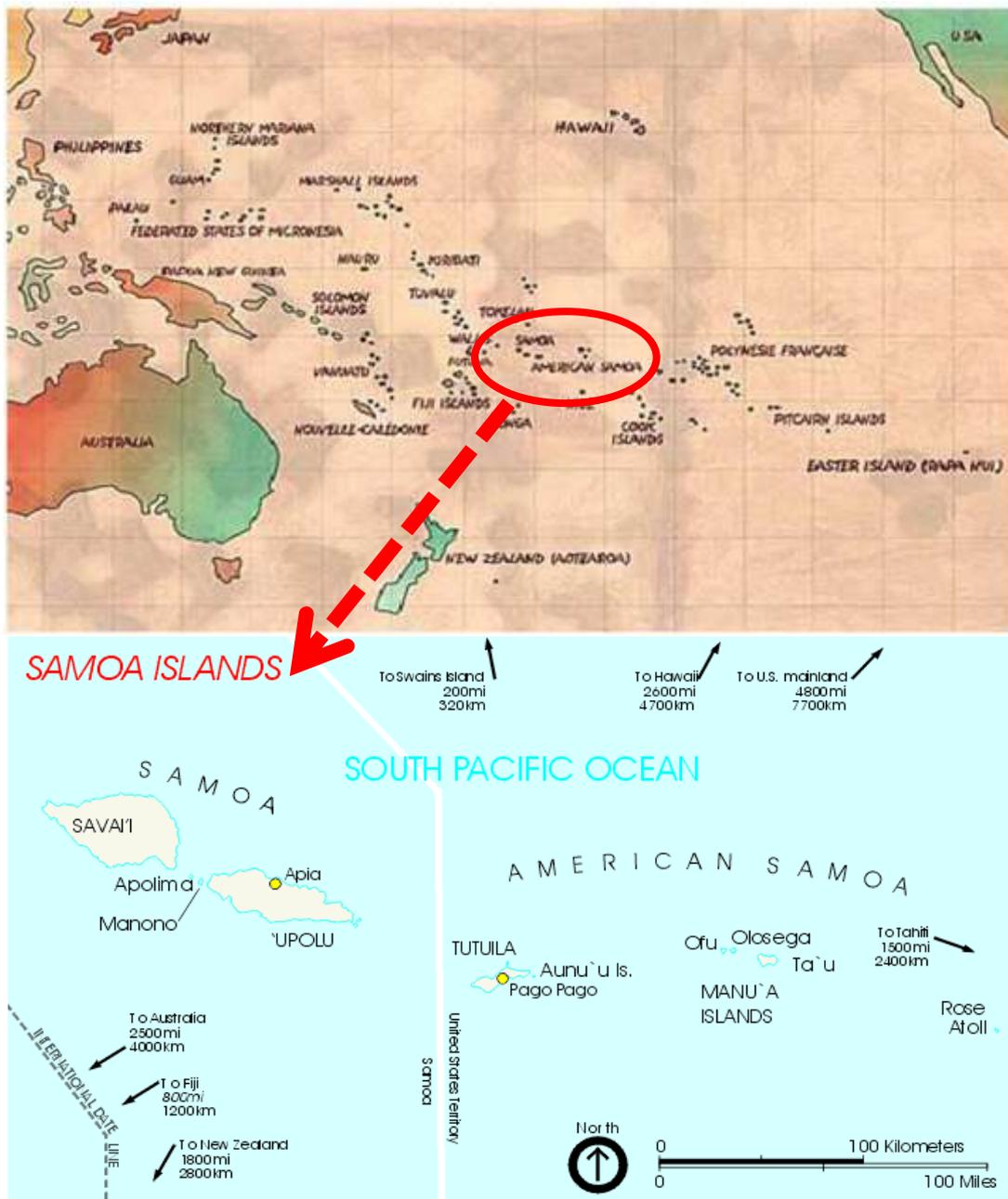
presumptuous wish to be above his uncle Moa, as his changed song seemed to suggest. Tagaloa tricked Lu by calling him to come scratch his back. When Lu was close enough, Tagaloa seized him and proceeded to beat him with the handle of his *fue* (fly-whisk). When Lu finally escaped the grasp of Tagaloa, he ran down to earth to get away. He found rest on the islands, which he came to call Samoa.

### **Samoa: geographical location**

Whatever the exact origin of its name, Samoa has forged a reputation as one home of the parent people of the Pacific, particularly of the Polynesian groups. The Samoan islands are geographically located in the South Pacific Ocean (Map 1). The eastern part of the group, which forms the territory of American Samoa, is comprised of Tutuila and the Manu'a islands. The western islands form the Independent State of Samoa (formerly known as Western Samoa) which comprises the islands of Savai'i, Upolu, Manono, and Apolima. In 1899, possession of Samoa was divided between the German Empire (Western Samoa) and the United States of America (Eastern Samoa). At the outbreak of the First World War, New Zealand as representative of the British Empire occupied German Samoa, and from 1920, administered the islands under a League of Nations mandate until 1962 (Pitt & Macpherson, 1974).

According to modern scholarship, Samoans, like their Pasesika cousins, are descendants of seafaring Austronesian people who had settled the Samoan archipelago by about 1200 BC (Bellwood, 1978; Kirch, 1984; Va'a, 2001). Kirch (1984) and Bellwood (1987) suggest that the origins of the Polynesian people can be traced back to South-east Asia. Characteristic traits of the Lapita pottery found in Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and other Pacific localities point to connections with the Neolithic cultures of the Philippines and eastern Indonesia (Bellwood, 1978; Davidson, 1979; Green, 1979; Kirch and Hunt, 1988). An alternative hypothesis, which has not received widespread support from scholars, proposes that Polynesians, including Samoans, arrived in their ancient homelands from South America (Heyerdahl, 1968). Whatever the case may be, whether they came from South America or from South-east Asia, by around 1000 BC, Samoans had begun

to evolve their distinctive cultural practices known today as *fa'asamoa* (the Samoan way of life) (Bellwood, 1978; Kirch, 1989).



Map 1: Map of the Pacific Islands

(Source: [www.world-science.net/images/polynesia-lg.jpg](http://www.world-science.net/images/polynesia-lg.jpg))

**Note:** The International Dateline for Samoa was shifted in December 2011 to that of Asia, New Zealand, and Australia. American Samoa remains in the same time zone as the USA.

Samoaian diaspora was initially within the Pacific rim of islands which included regular voyages to Tonga, Fiji, the Cook Islands, and others, primarily for trade, exchange of skilled labour such as boat or house builders, and

intermarriage (Bellwood, 1978). From time to time, specific ventures to other Pacific islands were fuelled by the desire to seek refuge or to conquer and expand political dominion (Va'a, 2001). Turner (1984) noted that Captain James Cook had written about the presence of Samoans in Tonga in 1773, which was evident in Samoan names in various Tongan communities. Traditional songs, chants and stories regarding war, marriage and conquest reveal regular contact with Tonga and Fiji in particular. These accounts suggest that the challenge of venturing beyond the Samoan archipelago into the unknown horizons has been a fundamental characteristic of the Samoans for over thousands of years. The diaspora of current times into the most widespread localities of the known world is a feature of this continued compulsion.

### **Fa'asamoa: the Samoan way**

Definitions and explanation of *fa'asamoa* put forward by writers do not always agree. Pratt (1862/1911), one of the earliest missionaries to Samoa, defines *fa'asamoa* as "acting according to Samoan customs" (p.131). Tui Atua (in Field, 1991) insists that *fa'asamoa* is much more than just a distinctive lifestyle as the term has sometimes been rendered in recent times. He proposes that *fa'asamoa* is more accurately defined as:

a body of custom and usage inclusive of a mental attitude to God, to fellow men and to his surroundings. It is a collection of spiritual and cultural values that motivates people. It is the heritage of people. *Fa'asamoa* provides individuals, the *'āiga* and the *nu'u* with an identity. . . [and] . . .with carefully defined, but unwritten roles and rules (quoted in Field, 1991, p.20).

Tui Atua's perspectives on *fa'asamoa* align closely with those of Kallen (1982) who called *fa'asamoa* a total phenomenon, which instils values and ideologies that govern life for all Samoans, spanning from little infants to the *matai* (chief) who presides over family affairs or village council. Lima (2004) further observes that *fa'asamoa* is commonly associated with historical practices of ancestors and to family history. Such practices and history, in turn, present the realities that form an integral part of Samoan social identity (Sahlins, 1985; Va'a, 2001).

However, Meleisea (1987), a Samoan historian, suggests that *fa'asamoa* was a terminology adopted by the Samoans to reference their political and economic system. That is, *fa'asamoa* provided a reference point and culturally derived framework for decision-making processes and action based on the nexus formed by the *'āiga* (extended family network), the *nu'u* (village), and the *pule* (authority) of the *fono a matai* (council of chiefs) (Meleisea, 1987). Meleisea concludes that the term and practice of *fa'asamoa* originated in the traditions of *fa'amatai* (chieftainship) to organise designated authority over the affairs of the *nu'u*. Additionally, *fa'asamoa* is based on the *ta'ita'iga* (leadership) of the leading *matai* (chief), and the *'āiga potopoto* that they serve. Lima (2004) supports this notion by emphasising that the institutions of *fa'amatai*, *pule* and *nu'u*, are “crucial to the maintenance of the *mamalu* (dignity) of *fa'asamoa*” (2004, p.8). These leadership roles serve a central function in safeguarding the *va fealoaloa'i* (reciprocated honouring) and kinship. These in turn support traditional practices, spiritual and cultural values connected to the worldview, lifestyle, and language in which *fa'asamoa* practices are embodied (Lima, 2004; Macpherson, 1997).

Anae (1995), a Samoan educator, comments that *fa'asamoa* refers to the social, economic, historical, and moral order which serves as a structure that defines Samoan people. This perspective speaks of the significance of *fa'asamoa* in the formation of one's identity and of self-governance. It is a view which echoes those expressed by Tui Atua and Kallen. Mulitalo-Lāuta (2000), a Samoan lecturer in social work, emphasises that *fa'asamoa* is more accurately seen as:

the total make-up of the Samoan culture, which comprises visible and invisible characteristics and in turn forms the basis of principles, values and beliefs that influence and control the behaviour and attitudes of Samoans. (2000, p.15)

While these definitions of *fa'asamoa* may appear contradictory, it is my observation that they function in a complementary way in the lives of Samoan people. They may be summarised in five ways.

Firstly, *fa'asamoa* provides a firm foundation for Samoan people to centralise their cultural values, spirituality, customs, and beliefs. Secondly, *fa'asamoa* provides a safe platform upon which, and out of which, their sense of

belonging is practiced, negotiated, maintained, reciprocated and passed on to the next generations. Thirdly, *fa'asamoa* as a way of life provides an important context for viewing a cherished heritage by offering a set of structural principles for ordering one's social life. Fourthly, *fa'asamoa* offers guiding principles for one's behaviour by forming an anchor that stabilises one's ethno-cultural identification. Finally, *fa'asamoa* serves as a moral praxis in achieving relational harmony with God, the gods, the environment, and one's people. It remains central to how Samoan people live out their existence in the past, in the present, and in the future.

*Fa'asamoa* cultural mores in Samoan society are a function of kinship and descent (Va'a, 2001). From an anthropological perspective, Va'a asserts that descent may be consanguineal (real) or putative (assumed). However, when important *matai* titles are vested, consanguineal descent must be accurately traced to ensure a position of primacy over all other claims (Va'a, 2001). Scholars such as Gilson (1970), Schoeffel (1995) and Shore (1982) propose that Samoan descent systems are bilateral (or cognatic), where potential successors can claim affiliation to a group through either the male or female line. Freeman (1964) rejects this claim, and instead proposes that the Samoan descent is primarily one of patrilineal emphasis with elements of "nonunilinear" (p.554). In other words, the descent system is traced through the male line, and as such, recognised and privileged within Samoan society. But, in agreement with Firth (1957), Freeman suggests that there are "allowances for the entitlement to membership through the female line" (Freeman, 1964, p.554). Freeman noted further that although there is no "prescriptive rule of patrilineal succession", evident within these practices is a "pronounced *de facto* emphasis on patriliney" (Freeman, 1964, p.554).

Firth (1957, p.5) argues that many Polynesian groups have an "optative" rather than a "definitive" emphasis on descent, a view which is also supported by Freeman. Hence, ancestry affiliation is based primarily on choice (optation) rather than absolutes (definitive). Theoretically, an optative system allows membership to as many descent groups as possible. Practically, however,

membership also implies duties, responsibilities, and specific privileges within the group.

### **Kinship structure**

In past times, and still predominantly in Samoa today, village life is dominated by the *matai* and the village councils (a formation of elected high ranking *matai*). These recognised authorities conducted the affairs of the village such as determining the activities of the *aumaga* (untitled men) and the *aualuma* (women). Head *matai* also organised the division of labour and land among its members (Wendt, 1965). The village council performs both an advisory role and governance on behalf of its members, whether on social or political fronts.

Turner (1984) reported that a village was an organized group of family households prior to European contact. The typical village forms a collective group of about three to five hundred persons, often comprising up to twenty families. Schultz (1949), who served as a judge in Samoa during the period of the German rule, recorded that the Samoans were “divided like clans into families . . . split into groups or branches” (quoted in Freeman, 1964, p.555). The *‘āiga potopoto* (collection of families), under the leadership of their elected senior *matai* (*sa’o*) formed a community that was economically and socially self-sufficient (see chapters four and six for an example of this type of support). Turner also reported that within this ‘village family’ was a “combined group of sons, daughters, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces, etc” (Turner, 1984, p.173).

The status and authority of the various titles within a village were quite clearly defined, helping to minimize any unnecessary rivalry amongst its members (Wendt, 1965). The *‘āiga potopoto* would also share a common meeting house called the *fale tele* (large house), plus other smaller houses for individual use. The advantage of such a cluster meant the sharing of resources and duties were quite easily managed. *‘Āiga* members supported the village by contributing cultural treasures such as *‘ie toga* (fine mats), *siapo* (tapa cloth), canoes and other items; *oloa* (foreign property) such as money and other introduced western material wealth and *tautua* (physical service) (Stair, 1983, p.74). Such contribution shows communal support during times of *fa’alavelave* (crisis or disruption). Nowadays, the frequency of *fa’alavelave* is generally

experienced by many Samoans as burdensome (see chapters four and six for more discussion on *fa'alavelave* impacts).

Wendt (1965) emphasises that within *'āiga* collectives were three notable divisions that served as a “socio-political organization” (p.5). The first division is the *nu'u* which is linked into the sub-district or district associations. These sub-districts were further grouped into *itumalo* (districts), depending on marital and historical connections. The whole *itumalo* then served the ruling *Ali'i* (lord or paramount chief) who presides as the governor of the district. If the ruling *ali'i* were also accorded the *Ali'i Paia* (sacred ruler) or *Tafa'ifā* title (four sided or crown), then they would also be recognised as presiding over the whole country. In the history of Samoa, only a small number were recognised with this authority on a national scale.

Traditional families were classified into two status groups. The first comprised the *matai*, a select class whose lineage is traced most carefully to “the ancient head of some particular clan” (Turner, 1984, p.173). Of particular importance were the classifications of titles and status attributed to *matai*. Stair (1983, p.65-71) noted four classes which denoted distinctions between the different *matai* statuses. The first class is the *Ali'i* or *Ali'i Paia* (Lord or sacred high chief), which could incorporate various ranks and authority. The second is reserved for the priesthood, called *Taulā Aitu* (anchor of spirits or gods). The third category is reserved for the *Tūlafale* and *Faleupolu* group, the orator chiefs who speak on behalf of the ruling *ali'i*. The second included the untitled men, women, and children who were referred to as *Tagata nu'u* (people of the land) (Stair, 1983). Understanding these classifications helps to trace its current practice more clearly.

### **Ali'i paia: sacred high chief**

The holder of the highest chiefly title in ancient Samoa is called *Ali'i Paia*. In social and political matters they were regarded as paramount and of the most revered order (Freeman, 1964; Meleisea, 1995). They were the manifest descendants through the “aristocratic bloodlines from Tagaloa-a-lagi” and

became the “intermediaries between the world of the gods and the world of people” (Meleisea, 1995, p.21).

There were twelve *ali'i paia* around the 1830s: *Tui A'ana*, *Tui Atua*, *Tonumaip'e'a*, *Fonoti*, *Muagututi'a*, *Tupua*, *Galumalemana*, *I'amafana*, *Tamafaigā*, *Malietoa*, *Tamasoali'i*, and *Gatoa'itele* (Meleisea, 1995, p.21) In addition to these sacred chiefs, six others were also addressed in the same manner by the districts which they resided: *Lilomaiava*, *Mata'afa*, *Le Manu'a*, *Fiame*, *Salima* and *Lavasi'i* (Stair, 1983). These titles were all associated with those who held the office of *Tupu* or *Tafa'ifā*, the supreme ruler of Samoa.

The most distinguished of all the *ali'i* titles is that referred to as “*Le Tupu*, *Ao*, or *Tafa'ifā*” (the king, the crown, or four sided) (Stair, 1983, p.65). The succession of the *Tupu* or *Tafa'ifā* was accorded only to those *ali'i paia* with clear connections to the most sacred ancestry lines, such as those mentioned immediately above. They were the chiefs in command of numerous villages and districts that held them in veneration as the most paramount of their members. In ancient Samoa, various *ali'i paia* and *tamai'tai sa* (sacred female child) were installed with the title of *tafa'ifā*. The most well-known of these include: *Nafanua*, *Salamasina*, *Fonoti*, *Muagututi'a*, *Tupua*, *Galumalemana*, *Tamafaigā*, *I'amafana*, and *Malietoa Vainu'upo*. Scholars continue to dispute the exact number and names of others who were attributed with this title outside of those just named. As an indication of the way such royals were treated by their supporters, Reverend John Williams of the London Missionary Society (LMS) describes witnessing the chief Fauea (his Samoan interpreter) saluting Malietoa Vainu'upo with the “greatest of possible respect by bowing sufficiently low to his feet and making his child even kiss the sole of his feet” (Williams, 1984, p.334). Malietoa was the *ali'i paia* of the Fauea line, and, therefore, Fauea paid appropriate homage by his actions. Failure to accord appropriate honour could be fatal, punishable by death. Such occurrences reflect the deep devotion and widespread allegiance on which an *ali'i paia* could depend (Freeman, 1964).

Next in line of importance in the *Ali'i* class were those referred to as *O le Tui* (the Lord of). The prefix *Tui* is then followed by the district the title belongs to such as *Tui A'ana* (the lord of A'ana district), *Tui Atua* (the Lord of Atua district)

(Stair, 1983). At the time of European contact in the early nineteenth century, four prominent titles were regarded as being of the highest rank in traditional Western Samoa: *Tui A'ana*, *Tui Atua*, *Gatoa'itele*, and *Tamasoali'i* (Tuimaleali'ifano, 2006). These titles were called *pāpā*, signifying their ancestral or foundational status, and were connected with Upolu, Savai'i, Manono and Apolima. The territory of Tutuila and Manu'a was regarded separately and the ruling Tui Manu'a wielded power over these lands, but rarely did so in Western Samoa.

If a person held all the four *pāpā* titles simultaneously, they were accorded the supreme status as the *tafa'ifā*, the *tupu* (crown) (Freeman, 1964; Meleiseā, 1995; Tuimaleali'ifano, 2006). The national title of *Ao o le Malo* (Head of State) as used for the late Malietoa Tanumafili II and the current Head of State, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi (hereafter Tui Atua), recognises their modern status on a national level. Despite their governance status, neither Malietoa nor Tui Atua are accorded the *tafa'ifā* honour. Malietoa Vainu'upo in the early 1800s, is widely regarded to be the last of the nationally recognised *tafa'ifā* holders in Samoa, although this assertion could be contested by other Samoan scholars. Perhaps contact with Europeans, compounded by the destructive wars for land and power, and attempts to control the *malo* (national governance) meant that the position of *tafa'ifā* remained unfilled.

Even though contending for power to control the *malo* existed in earlier periods of Samoan history, the influence of the colonial administrations resulted in the introduction of weaponry and other resources that were not available in earlier battles. The added influence of introduced weapons of warfare meant that the death toll in such campaigns was much more devastating than in any previous period of Samoa's history. Furthermore, the different colonial powers in Samoa at the time attempted to re-institute various *tupu* (kings), particularly those paramount title holders under their influence, with the primary purpose of aiding their own push for legitimacy. Despite these efforts by foreign powers, such appointments are not recognised under traditional Samoan customs of *tafa'ifā* succession discussed earlier.

Samoan people in more recent times recognize that the head of any household or descent group is their highest or most esteemed title holder (*sa'o*) (Ember, 1962; Va'a, 1993). It is also acknowledged that within the family group sit a number of other recognized title holders, all with the purpose of serving the elite title holder. There are two main classes of *matai*: the *tamāli'i* (high chief) title holders, and, the *tūlafale* (executive chiefs) who serve the ruling *ali'i* (Suali'i-Sauni et al; 2008; Meleisea & Meleisea, 1987). I provide a more detailed discussion on *tūlafale* titles later in this chapter.

Holmes (1969) suggests that a lead titleholder is elected by their kinsmen on the basis of "intelligence, industry and wisdom" (p.343). The position of leadership allows the title holder the privilege of assuming the right to exercise authority and governance over the extended family or village. They must govern land appropriately, and uphold the group's honour and reputation locally and nationally. They must also supervise clan labour and ceremonial activities, ensuring their cultural obligations are met satisfactorily (Holmes, 1969; Holmes & Holmes, 1992, O'Meara, 1990). A failure to administer this role adequately has the potential to burden members unnecessarily or tarnish the family's reputation within the wider community, thereby diminishing family honour or insulting its founding ancestors. In earlier times, and certainly before Christianity and westernization, chieftainship sanctioned that members "lived in an order that rested on fear of extreme . . . punishment by the all-powerful reigning high chief" (Macpherson & Macpherson, 1987, p.130), "who controlled the spiritual, material, and physical resources of families and villages" (Meleisea, 1992, p.16). But in recent periods, many men and women have received chiefly titles, along with the social and political prerogatives of a *matai*, although with no set authority over the extended family or their lands (O'Meara, 1990).

### **Taulā aitu: anchors of the spirits**

Stair (1983) proposes that the next in line of importance in social order is the position held by the priesthood, otherwise referred to as *Taulā Aitu* or anchor of the spirits/gods (Stair, 1983, p.70). More prominent in traditional times, this class possessed much power and influence. Their control principally

influenced the minds of the local people, and, from time to time, it included some control over a ruling *ali'i*. The *taulā aitu*'s influence was often called upon to invoke the spirits of the dead or to call down diseases and destruction in warfare. The class of *taulā aitu* included "prophets, sorcerers, family priests, priests of war gods and keepers of war gods" (Stair, 1983, p.70). Turner (1984) reports that the *taulā aitu* were greatly dreaded by the people due to the supernatural powers (perceived or actual) they possessed. In warfare, the village or district sought blessings from Nafanua who was the most revered war deity, or other war gods (Turner, 1984). Before a battle, the warriors assembled themselves before the *taulā aitu* who pronounced prayers and blessings upon them for a successful campaign. Confession of offences to the *taulā aitu* also provided a pathway for pardon, and purification. On occasion, torchlight processions through the village were held in honour of Nafanua.

Sacred rituals and spiritual practices were the domain of the *taulā aitu*. Both Meleisea (1995) and Tui Atua (2007b) indicate that these elites were perceived to have inherited the powers of the gods and ancestors. They were recognized and thus revered as a select group imbued with powers by the gods. Tangible objects such as the *pū* (conch shell), various emblems, and sacred boxes that were used to invoke the spirits, were also feared (Stair, 1894). They were given the responsibility to ensure that the general populace maintained appropriate connections and devotions to the various manifestations of Tagaloa, or the ancient practices of the ancestors. To dishonour or neglect the ancient pathways attracted curses and punishment by both the gods, and the village people. To revere and maintain these sacred rituals attracted favour, resulting in peaceful and harmonious achievement of the sacred balance of life (Tui Atua, 2006).

Most powerful and revered of all Samoan war-gods to be summoned for guidance and success in battle is the goddess *Nafanua*. I want to briefly outline Turner's (1984, p.38-40) account of Nafanua due to its importance in Samoan mythological foundations. Nafanua is reported to have been sired by *Saveasiuleo*, the god of *Pulotu* (Samoan Hades or Hell realms) (Stair, 1983; Turner, 1984). At her birth, the child was hidden-in-land (*nana-i-fanua*) by her mother because of

her illegitimate birth and connections to the underworld. The child grew and became known for her supernatural powers. It is told that during her later life, the rulers of her time were fearfully oppressive. Prisoners of war were made to climb coconut trees upside down and pluck the nuts with their toes for the mere entertainment of the lords. It happened that Nafanua passed through one of the districts and came upon one man from her area being punished in such manner.

After witnessing such cruelty, Nafanua decided to put an end to this practice by summoning all the affiliated districts to battle. She led the campaign herself. Nafanua disguised herself by covering her breasts with coconut leaves so the enemies would not discover her true sex, or identity. The campaign was victorious. As they celebrated the victory, a gust of wind lifted the covering that hid her breasts, revealing that the brave warrior was indeed a woman. In shame, the vanquished totally surrendered. Nafanua then ordered strips of palm leaves to be tied around the coconut trees, marking these as belonging to her. This practice instituted a *tapu* or *sa* on these trees, rendering them sacred and forbidden to be harvested or cut down by anyone. Further, this specific ritual is thought to be the origin of the solemn practice of *tapu* amongst the Samoans. The early missionaries noted the continuance of this practice some 500 years later when a tree or specific area was declared sacred for a defined period or a marked occasion. Declaring *tapu* on the land and on the sea is particularly observed with the death of an *Ali'i Paia*. Trespassers who disregarded the *tapu* were severely reprimanded, cursed, banished, or even killed. The severity of such penalties reveals the seriousness of observing instituted *tapu* in designated places. Importantly, rituals such as these recognise the revered relationships that exist between the gods, the environment, and the Samoan people; many of these rituals are still being acknowledged and observed when a *tamāli'i* passes away.

### **Tūlafale ma faleupolu: oratory chiefs**

The class of *Tūlafale* and *Faleupolu* is next in social status and rank. These are generally referred to in literature as 'talking chiefs' or 'orator chiefs' attached to the ruling *ali'i* within a defined district. They represented a powerful and

influential group, especially as a collective unit. Kramer (1995, Vol. 1, p.18) emphasizes that the “governing body in the home affairs of the country lay in the hands of the orators” (1995, p.18). Similarly, Stair (1983) refers to them as the “real authority and [controller] of districts”, primarily due to their influential role as “principal advisors of the ruling chiefs” (p.70). Importantly for this group, they could exercise power to replace, dispose of, or banish any ruling *ali'i* who did not function according to their mandated jurisdiction as deemed appropriate by the group (Tuimaleali'ifano, 2011). One such, according to Stair, was the *ali'i* of Tui A'ana, who was banished and ended up in Rarotonga. The practice of banishment has also continued into very recent times, with incidents within the last five years. Some village councils have punished families who disregarded their village constitutions through the burning of the offenders' dwellings and farm crops, while other village councils have ordered the shooting of offenders (Polu, 2000; Tuimaleali'ifano, 2006). In recent times, this practice has been challenged by families taking legal action against the village councils for reparation or reinstatement (Tuimaleali'ifano, 2011).

Early written accounts of Samoa described a nation embroiled in tribal wars and characterised by instability (see Kramer, 1995; Stair, 1983; Tuimaleali'ifano, 2006; Turner, 1984; Wendt, 1965). Wendt (1965) reports that such warfare and feuding was largely due to three key elements, each of which involved a struggle for control. Firstly, there were struggles within clans for “control of their larger elite [chiefly] titles” (p.5). Secondly, there were struggles among clan and local groups to “enhance or increase their prestige and power” (p.6). Lastly, there was an on-going struggle between the two “power systems of *Sa-Malietoa* and *Sa-Tupua*, which had crystallized into a struggle of *Tumua* and *Pule*, and which often embroiled the whole country in civil war” (p.7). *Tumua* derives its meaning from the Samoan words *Tu* (to stand) and *mua* (in the front rank), and implies *Tumua's* intention of standing in the frontal position or leading from the front in pursuit of governance (So'o, 2008; Tuimaleali'ifano; 2006, Wendt, 1965). Likewise, *Pule* is a Samoan word which denotes authority or sovereignty, thus signalling its objective of serving its ruler in attaining governance and authority (Kramer, 1995). When examined against the backdrop

of Samoan political and social history, the object of the rivalry between Tumua and Pule was the acquisition of the *tafa'ifā* titles (*Tui A'ana*, *Tui Atua*, *Tamasoali'i* and *Gatoa'itele*) for their champion, and the pre-eminence of the *malo* (governance) over Samoa islands (Kramer, 1995; So'o, 2008).

Political in their intentions and purpose, *Pule* and *Tumua* were the foremost schemers of the succession process. Tuimaleali'ifano (2006) points to the inherent political and social powers vested in these two groups within Samoa society. He writes: "when united, they [*Pule* and *Tumua*] and their champions commanded influence to transcend village and district boundaries" (Tuimaleali'ifano, p.4-5). *Pule* hailed from Savai'i and held the right to bestow two of the four paramount titles known as *Tamasoali'i* and *Gatoa'itele*. *Tumua* was Upolu based and involved the right to confer the *Tui Atua* and *Tui A'ana* titles, which make up the remaining two of the four *pāpā* titles (Wendt, 1965). Tuimaleali'ifano (2006) refers to *Pule* and *Tumua* as an "elite band, instrumental in the mobilization and conferral of the *pāpā* titles" (2006, p.4).

The final class called "*Tagata nu'u*" (men or women of the land) was a name recorded by Stair to describe the lowest rank in traditional Samoan society (Stair, 1983, p.74). They were generally people with no direct lineage to any important titles I have mentioned. The *tagata nu'u* group are comprised of the *aumaga* (untitled men), the high chief's *auosoga* (warriors) who served as his armour bearers, and others. They were also referred to as "*Soga, Soa, Atamai-oli'i, Taumasina, Fa'atama and Salelesi*" (Stair, 1983, p.74). The primary role of this group was to attend to any errands or chores required by the *ali'i* that they served, such as farming the crops, fishing, and preparing food as part of their *tautua* service.

### **Papalagi: European encounter**

The first wave of *papalagi* (Europeans or white people) arrived some 3000 years after the initial settlement of Samoa. *Papalagi* is the name the Samoans gave these strangers with pale skin, who had "burst through the heaven" to reach their shores (Turner, 1861, p.108). In 1722, Jacob Roggewein, a

Dutch navigator, was the first non-Polynesian to sight the islands of Manu'a. His fleet sailed on without landing after several days of close monitoring of the island (Masterman, 1934). Almost a half century later, the French navigator M. de Bougainville arrived. He sighted Upolu, and then Tutuila in 1768, the latter is now called American Samoa (Masterman, 1934; Stair, 1983; Turner, 1984). He called the Samoan islands "Isles of the Navigator" to reflect the seafaring nature of the Samoan people, who were seen by the French many miles from land in their canoes. The Samoan islands continued to be referred to by Europeans as the Navigator Islands through to the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Samoa was sometimes referred to by European as the "Cradle of Polynesia" in reference to the notion that the islands were the original home of the Polynesian people. Kallen (1982) points out that this is compatible with Samoa peoples' own belief about their origin. That is, Samoan people believe that Savaii (the largest of the islands) is the legendary "Hawaiki", home of the Polynesian people. From this cradle, ancient Samoa was a dispersal centre for the migration of people to populate the outer islands of the Pacific Ocean, including Hawai'i, Easter Island, Tahiti, New Zealand and many others. A well-known Samoan proverb reflects this belief: *E le mou le tatou gagana aua tatou te lei folau mai vasa*, which means: the Samoan language will not vanish because the Samoan people originated in Samoa, rather than sailing from oceans afar (Schultz, 1949). This perception underlies the belief that not only will the Samoan language survive despite the many changes, but, significantly, the essence of its belonging is deeply rooted in the divine nature of its origin.

The first *papalagi* known to have landed on Samoan soil is the French explorer La Pérouse, whose expedition arrived off the coast of Manu'a in 1787. It is recorded that a skirmish broke out between a French watering party and some Samoan warriors. The conflict resulted in the death of Commander de Langle and eleven of his crew members (Gilson, 1970; Tcherkezoff, 2004; Va'a, 2001). This event persuaded other European voyagers to steer clear of the Samoa islands as La Pérouse called the local people "a race of treacherous savages, whose shores ought not to be approached" (Turner, 1861, p.98). There was little further foreign contact until missionaries arrived some years into the nineteenth century.

What was not known by Europeans for many years was the full account of the incident that started the bloodshed. A Samoan native was found on the expedition ship, and accused of pilfering. He was shot and wounded by one of the French sailors, and tossed overboard. He was then rescued by other Samoans and taken ashore. Angered by this act, the locals sought immediate revenge and attacked the watering party who were on land at the time. The retaliation concluded with the death of eleven of the crew, M. de Langle, and some of the locals. Turner reported that the “natives wound up the bodies of the Frenchmen in native cloth, and decently buried them, as they do their own” (Turner, 1861, p.98). This information was not included in the reports of the La Pérouse expedition.

La Pérouse’s condemnatory account was a complete contrast to that provided by the first Europeans to sight the islands. Karl F. Behren, a member of Roggewein’s expedition in 1772, wrote:

the inhabitants [Samoans] came towards us in their boats, . . . we exchanged all sorts of knick-knacks. They seemed to be honest people, friendly in speech and circumspect in their conduct; . . . one could sense no savage nature in them . . . they were the best behaved people I had seen in all of the South Seas. They were so thoroughly satisfied with us as though gods had arrived among them. (Kramer, 1995, p.3)

La Pérouse’s own diary account of the initial encounter in 1787 is similar to that of sixty years earlier. La Pérouse wrote:

They approached us with fear and without weapons, and it all shows that they are as peaceful as the inhabitants of the Society Islands or of the Friendly Islands. (quoted in Kramer, 1995, p.9)

But it was the published French judgment of ‘treacherous savages’ that remained the Europeans perception of the Samoans people for many years.

### **Missionary influence**

It is generally believed amongst Samoan people that Christianity is the physical manifestation of Nafanua’s prophecy. The origin of the prophecy, is said to have been declared by the war goddess Nafanua, when Malietoa Fitiseanu came to request from her a share of her governing titles to assist him assert

governance of the *malo* (country). Nafanua declared to Fitisemanu, “*e tatali i lagi sou malo*” meaning, “heaven will usher a government that will reunite Samoa” (Brown, 2008). This foretelling was deemed to have been fulfilled when Samoa accepted Christianity – that was the heavenly government that united Samoa.

John Williams and Charles Barff of the London Missionary Society (LMS), the first recorded white missionaries to land in Samoa, began their missionary activities in the islands during the 1830s (Field, 1991). Field believes that Williams’ influence in Samoan religious history was fortunate, and the timing of his missionary success providential for a number of reasons. Firstly, Williams arrived in Sapapāli’i, which was the headquarters of the Sa-Malietoa clan at the time. Malietoa Vainu’upo, who was the *ali’i sa* (sacred high chief), was on the verge of assuming the *tafa’ifā* titles. The *tafa’ifā* and *pāpā* (founding or ancient) titles are discussed in more detail in later parts of this chapter. Secondly, Fauea, Williams’ Samoan interpreter, was also kin to Malietoa. Thirdly, Field suggests that Malietoa’s acceptance of Christianity was inevitable because he would have already encountered Europeans and the power of their material goods prior to the arrival of the missionaries. Young (1972) notes that the effect of the Christianising of the Samoans was far-reaching:

Williams’ [Reverend John Williams of the London Missionary Society (LMS)] foothold opened the door to European cultures [for the Samoans] in the context of religion, mores, and language. The acceptance of these aspects of European cultures . . . was predicated on the hope . . . that such knowledge would provide the key to the material power which the Europeans enjoyed. (cited in Va’a, 2001, p.49)

Young’s statement suggests that LMS converts became convinced that tangible and attainable opportunities were provided through religious acceptance. Further, the new way of worshipping centred on the prevailing hope of acquiring the social, moral, and economic wealth exhibited by these *papalagi* reformers. Pitt and Macpherson (1974) note that this hope of acquiring the elusive wealth of the *papalagi*, particularly through western education, remained prominent amongst Samoan and Pasefika communities in recent times. Pitt and Macpherson argue further that the acquisition of “western education was seen as a making a full person and its acquisition [was] a Christian duty” (1974, p.112).

From then to now, even though the acquisition of wealth has been elusive for many Samoans, they continue to pursue this dream.

Through his influence as the *tafa'ifā*, Malietoa Vainu'upo's acceptance of the teachings and practices of the LMS movement aided the church to gather national recognition. Vainu'upo later changed his name to Tavita (David), drawn from the Bible (Kramer, 1995, Vol. 1, p.17). It is recorded that Malietoa in his *mavaega* (dying wish) decreed that the *tafa'ifā* or kingship over Samoa would end with him, and God as proclaimed by the missionaries would become the sole supreme ruler of Samoa. Malietoa's decree stated:

This kingship shall be buried with me in my grave and should never be in use. Samoa should never experience savage bloodshed on her people. When I die, there should be no king in Samoa but God in heaven. This is my last will to you as king of the country. You shall all worship endlessly God Almighty inside the vast seas and in this whole world. (Tu'u'u, 2001, p.298)

Malietoa sanctioned his *mavaega* on his deathbed around 1841 by also dismantling the *tafa'ifā* title he held (see Kramer, 1995). He divided the *pāpā* titles and handed them back to the high chiefs of the various districts from which they originated.

Malietoa decreed that the Tui Atua and Tui A'ana titles were to be returned to these districts to decide their own successor. Additionally, he appointed his brother Tamalelagi as the "*Tupu o Salafai*" or king/ruler of Savai'i, his own stronghold, as well as ruling over the *Tuamasaga* (Gatoa'itele and Tamasoali'i) district (Kramer, 1995, Vol. 1, p.17). However, the *mavaega* decreed by Malietoa did not constrain efforts by ambitious successors to push their claims for the vacant *tafa'ifā* post once Malietoa had breathed his last. Wars and further bloodshed emerged as factions either supporting the governing *malo* or its opposition were embroiled in feudal conflicts (So'o, 2008; Tuimaleali'ifano, 2006). Victory ensured control of the paramount titles and, consequently, the country.

Malietoa Vainu'upo also decreed that God's servants, *faiifeau* (church ministers), were to be honoured by Samoans in the same manner as they would honour a king. From that time onwards, the *faiifeau* hold a highly honoured and

favoured position in Samoan society, both in the realms of *fa'asamoa* observance and *ola fa'aleagaga* (spiritual life). It appears that church ministers have ascended to the roles traditionally apportioned to the *taulā aitu* as the modern form of intermediaries between God and the people, and as spiritual advisors in village matters (Tu'u'u, 2001). Moreover, their status is equated to those traditionally held by *ali'i* particularly in village distributions (So'o, 2008; Va'a, 2001).

Despite initial episodes of tension referred to above, Samoa's appetite for, and attraction to, western material culture since early colonial contact encouraged many Samoans to take flight, like the *toloa* (grey duck – chapter opening quotation), for Aotearoa-New Zealand, and other parts of the western world. Kallen (1982) suggests that the phenomenon of emigration from developing to developed countries has been associated historically with the impact of colonialism. Samoa was no exception. The consequences of colonialism resulted in economic dependency of nations like Samoa upon the West, including New Zealand, for supplies of raw materials and other benefits. In addition, developed countries encourage proletarian migration for the purpose of supplying cheap unskilled labour for industries which were unable to offer wages and working conditions sufficiently attractive to the local workforce. New Zealand offered such incentives to Samoans, particularly after Samoa gained political independence in 1962. This migration trend has not shown any signs of slowing down despite many barriers at various times.

### **Diaspora experiences**

Like many of their Pacific cohort, Samoan people have been migrating to New Zealand since the 1940s (Pitt & Macpherson, 1974). Initially few in number, migration increased rapidly in the later 1960s and 1970s mainly due to changing demographic, social, and economic circumstances (Pearson, 1990). By the 2006 census, Samoan people represented the largest Pacific ethnic group in New Zealand, numbering 131,103 (Department of Statistics, 2006). However, there had been significant contacts between Samoans and New Zealand well before post-independence migration.

As alluded to in earlier parts of this chapter, Samoa was divided between Germany (Western Samoa) and the United States of America (Eastern Samoa) at the time of the outbreak of the First World War. New Zealand, representing Britain, occupied Western Samoa in 1914 and administered the islands from 1920 until 1962 under a mandate from the League of Nations (Pitt & Macpherson, 1974). The attitude of Samoans to New Zealand's occupation of the islands became increasingly hostile, especially when the local people began to demand the right for self-governance under the 'Mau' movement (Meleisea, 1987). The tension reached a climax on 28 December 1929 when nine Samoans, including the high-ranking chief Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III, were shot dead by New Zealand military police during a peaceful demonstration march (Field, 1991; Meleisea, 1987). Field points out that some in New Zealand have deliberately avoided giving attention to what happened in Samoa under New Zealand's rule, choosing to emphasise the quaint picture of the colonial administration and neglecting to mention the "gunning down and hunting of Samoans by [New Zealand led] armed forces" (Field, 1991, p. xvi). Nevertheless, Samoans, spurred on by the Mau movement, based on principles of pacifism derived from their Christian values, continued to work for their independence from the colonial domination of New Zealand. Finally, in 1962, Samoa celebrated the achievement of her independence from New Zealand, and a Treaty of Friendship was signed between the two nations. Samoa became the first Pacific nation to regain independence since colonisation (Meleisea, 1987; Meleisea & Meleisea, 1987).

As New Zealand authorities left Samoa, Samoans began to arrive in considerable numbers in New Zealand as part of the increasing Samoan diaspora. A diaspora need not entail relinquishing familial or cultural bonds in favour of acculturated lifestyles. Its purpose, for many Samoans so it seems, was to service and strengthen the home base, both in Samoa and New Zealand. The example of the early Samoan migrants to New Zealand served to strengthen and legitimise the practices of *tautua* (service) and *aga'alofa* (giving out of love) for others who followed. For many, migration to new localities brought not only material success and rewards, but multifaceted challenges within these new environments. (Taule'ale'ausumai, 1997a; Va'a, 2001) Whether they were prepared or informed

about the new challenges, the hopes and expectations of the *'āiga* became constant reminders of familial ties. Eventually, many saw these traditional roles and responsibilities as competing with their on-going efforts to adapt and succeed in their new environments (Va'a, 2001; Young, 2007). Some of these challenges I discuss in detail in chapter eight.

Even more burdensome are the overarching obligations to maintain financial support to the *'āiga* in Samoa (Bertram, 1986; Maiava, 2001). Monetary and material remittances continue to contribute the largest portion of financial income for Samoa. For example, in 1990 a total private transfer of remittance from Samoans living overseas equated to WST\$92.0 million, while exports earned only WST\$20.5 million (Yamamoto, 1990). For the period 2005/2006, remittances accounted for USD\$98.6 million or twenty three per cent of Samoa's total GDP (FDC, 2007, p.6). A considerable portion of this monetary transfer would be directed to *fa'alavelave* (family emergencies) purposes. Such financial contributions continue to reflect active commitment and support to the *'āiga*, despite any ambivalence or ill feelings. (*Fa'alavelave* is examined in more detail later in this chapter).

Maiava (2001) argues that for many Samoan adults, "loving and giving are equated" (p.83). In other words, when children reach the capacity to earn financially, they are seen to have a responsibility to hand over their earnings to their parents. Maiava argues that the equating of love and money or material goods is seen by both the parent and, to a lesser extent, the child as a fundamental component of Samoan culture. However, the desire for parental love and acceptance connected through generosity is somewhat diminished by the sense of obligation and resentment on the child's part. Like many relationships, such tension often leads to various coping strategies and ingenious actions to accommodate and maintain harmony. Maiava further contends that stemming from these genuine feelings is the notion that "the parent-child relationship is the strongest relationship of all Samoan relationships for as long as the parent lives" (2001, p.82). This means the *tautua* to parents, expressed through loving acts of financial and material provision, continues until parents die, (see chapter six) so that one has to provide not only for one's self and one's

nuclear family, but also for one's parents. This commitment generally includes taking care of the parents' responsibilities to the church, the village, or to extended families.

Certainly, the constancy of *tautua* demanding obligatory sharing, serving, and conformity compounds the frustrations of many Samoans with the *'āiga* and *fa'asamoa* (Maiava, 2001). The practices of *fa'aaloalo* or deference to authority through submission, charity, love, and generosity have become notable values that are intricately interwoven into the fabric of Samoa's cultural ethos (Mulitalo-Lāuta, 2000). On one hand, these concepts create a strong and dynamic living organism which responds and connects to others with the same intensity. On the other hand, pressure is experienced within these relationships, creating ambivalence and resentment not only to the *'āiga* collective, but the entire culture (Seiuli, 1997; Tiatia, 1998). For this reason, those living in places like New Zealand may abandon *fa'asamoa* altogether in favour of more western paradigms (Samu & Suaalii-Sauni, 2009; Silipa, 2004). In-fact, this trend seems to also be taking place in Samoa and other places. There is a need for a reappraisal.

The intensity of these feelings can be overbearing for some living abroad if their parents remain in Samoa. Their obligation and duty is to support and finance their parents' migration to their country of residence. If this occurs, other responsibilities follow. As Maiava explains, according to Samoan customs, "it is [the obligation of the] children to support their parents both financially and physically when they are old" (Maiava, 2001, p.82). Importantly, when the parents die, they must be returned to Samoa to be buried in the family's burial plot (also see chapter six for participants' discussion of burying parents). For some, juggling these multiple expectations is a significant departure from the relatively debt-free life they once lived in Samoa. To make matters worse, the strain of such burdens becomes more unbearable when *fa'alavelave* encroach on the *'āiga* where some feel trapped by the requirement to maintain their cultural obligations.

There is a well-known Samoan proverb which says: *O le ala i le pule, o le tautua*, "the pathway to leadership or authority is through service." The philosophy communicated through this saying is that one cannot be a good or

responsible leader unless one has felt the pain, sweat and sacrifice of serving as a faithful steward within the *'āiga*, *nu'u*, and *Ekalesia* (church). The concept of *tautua* is particularly important when *fa'alavelave* arise, a regular occurrence in the lives of Samoan people. The word *fa'alavelave* signifies interruptions, which is also synonymous with the practise of addressing family obligations. These interruptions or *fa'alavelave* obligate the *'āiga* to respond and to contribute generously (Va'a, 2001; Yamamoto, 1997). Whatever the *fa'alavelave* occasion, one is expected to provide adequate contributions in the form of *toga*, *siapo*, money, food items, or *fesoasoani* (physical help) (Cahn, 2008; Puaina, Aga, Pouesi & Hubbell, 2008). The tension of experiencing multiple burdens is emphasised by Taule'ale'ausumai (1997a, p.162), where she writes:

one cannot drink long from the riches of one's labour without feeling the parched poverty of one's family . . . to do so is to deny one's inherited identity and attendant rights and obligations.

*Fa'alavelave* speaks of an interruption to the *'āiga's* general routines. Because of this, the *'āiga* reorganizes itself to rally sufficient resources to meet their obligations (Tui Atua, 2009b). The traditional intentions of *fa'alavelave* were to share the load of larger responsibilities amongst members and to demonstrated characteristics of *tautua* (service), *aga'alofa* (compassion), and *fa'ale'āiga* (family bonds) (Puaina, et al., 2008).

Despite its proposed purpose of burden sharing as mentioned above, *fa'alavelave* in the modern environment seems to be contributing a lot of additional stress to Samoan families. This concurs with recent research on Samoan and Pasefika peoples' wellbeing in New Zealand. For instance, *Te Rau Hinengaro: The New Zealand Mental Health Survey* (Ministry of Health, 2006) reveals that Pacific people in general experience poorer mental and physical health outcomes than the general population. The report cautions that if these poor mental health outcomes are left untreated, they can lead to self-harming practices, suicidal beliefs, and suicide attempts. Additionally, a report by Suicide Prevention Intervention New Zealand (SPINZ, 2007) on the Samoan population reveals that "if family expectations are not met, if moral norms are violated, or if a person's conduct reflects badly on the family name, a person can feel guilt and shame" (2007, p.9). The guilt and shame has led some to contemplate self-

harming practices or suicide ideations as a legitimate option for address (SPINZ, 2007).

The level of stress is particularly notable when financial demands are made on the extended members to contribute (Maiava, 2001). Maiava noted that the general consensus amongst her participants was that *fa'alavelave* was often felt to be a "burden" (p.132). Such burdensome demands have led to questions over the continuing relationship between *fa'asamoa* and prescribed commitment by *'āiga* members to contribute whether in Samoa, New Zealand or elsewhere. These commitments became more demanding when the family experiences a death of one of its members. On this point, Ablon (1970) emphasises that one of the most significant aspects of *fa'asamoa* observance is firmly positioned in modified traditional patterns of funeral observances. Funeral rituals serve an important forum for the family in grief to showcase their sense of unity by the way they farewell their deceased relative, and to honour all those who may attend.

Despite the familial appearance of solidarity, the topic of obligatory participation and *fa'alavelave* has been a subject of heated debates and discussions both in private and public settings. Disparaging comments are cries for reappraisal (Tui Atua, 2009b). Such practices cannot continue indefinitely while many continue to suffer under its strain. The burdensome weight of traditional obligations on those living in foreign settings like New Zealand has created communication problems between parents and children, and with extended relations (Taule'ale'ausumai, 1997a). The outcome sometimes is that the different parties are embroiled in a struggle between traditions and modernisation, and between obligatory responsibilities versus survival in the current economic climate (Tiatia, 1998).

### **The New Zealand experience**

Some observers of migration trends suggest that the full impact of long-term migration from developing countries to industrialised countries, such as from Samoa to New Zealand, tends to produce a 'migration-oriented' society and

a goal-oriented type of migration/remittance syndrome with specific obligations to those remaining in the homeland (Philpott, 1973). This was certainly the situation for those early Samoan migrants, and the trend continues to this day. For example, the early migrants came to New Zealand for work and economic advancement (Pearson, 1990). Not surprisingly, when opportunities for manual labour in New Zealand and Australia opened up, many more vacated their homeland in search of what was called the 'better life' (Anae, 1998; Tamasese, 2002; Taule'ale'ausumai, 1997b). Those who were from Western Samoa travelled to New Zealand, or Australia, while those living in American Samoa headed for Hawaii or mainland America. These migrants made the most of their opportunities by establishing themselves in their adopted homes. Ablon (1970), who carried out research on Samoans in West Coast America in the 1960s, reported that "Samoans adjusted with relative ease and poise into an environment that could hardly be more different to that of their native islands" (p.209).

From 1964, the government of New Zealand issued three-month visas for Samoan migrants (Anae, 2009). In 1967 it proceeded to set annual quotas for all immigrants entering New Zealand. Regulation of immigration laws remained flexible as long as the need for cheap labour remained a priority, but as the New Zealand economy declined after 1973, so did the flexibility which allowed immigrants to remain beyond their allocated visas. Samoans were embarrassed when some politicians unjustly blamed Pasefika people for straining social services. Such accusations in turn shaped a negative stereotype of all Pacific people living in New Zealand at the time. In fact, statistical records on migration reveal that the greatest influxes of temporary migrants were from the United Kingdom and Australia, not from the Pacific as the politicians and media falsely portrayed (Anae, 1998).

One major consequence of these political and racial allegations was the series of raids by New Zealand police on the homes of alleged over-stayers, beginning in 1974. These raids took place very early in the day, and were widely criticised as 'dawn raids'. It was supposed by the authorities that guilty parties were likely to be asleep and would be caught unaware in homes, garages, or

under the houses of relatives. Worse, the New Zealand public were encouraged to report any neighbours who seemed to have an excess number of inhabitants, particularly those of Pasefika descent. Any person found without the proper documentation was deported back to the islands on the next available flight. Even worse, they were shamed by being escorted to the airport and onto the plane in handcuffs by a New Zealand police officer. For older Pasefika people, the trauma and embarrassment associated with the dawn raids remain bitter memories. Anae (2009) pointed out that although many Samoans and Tongans were guilty of overstaying their visas, the focus on their two ethnic groups was unacceptable to many.

Although early migrants had little capital to start with, their determination to work hard and their efforts to maintain cultural connections led to the establishment of churches and other community initiatives (Ablon, 1970; Anae, 1998; Pitt & Macpherson, 1974). For instance, the first Pacific Islands Presbyterian Church (PIPC or PIC) was established with the intention of “exist[ing] harmoniously with its *papalagi* counterpart while catering to the spiritual and pastoral needs of Cook Islanders, Niueans and Samoans” (Anae, 1997, p.126). Similarly, Ablon (1970) reported the establishment of churches on the West coast of North America, following the settlement of Samoans in mainland cities such as Los Angeles and San Francisco in the 1950s and early 1960s. The primary function of these early churches was “to cater for religion and fellowship of other Samoans” (p.331). Kallen (1982) says that “churches function as an important institutional referent for Samoan ethnic identity” (p.104). In other words, for these early migrants, continuity in church ties provided an essential component of the *‘āiga*-based nexus of links to the homeland. Involvement in church related activities provided Samoans with a space to reconnect with the culture, language, and village practices that reminded them of their earlier lives in Samoa.

The church has been the central place for spiritual rituals which celebrate, commemorate, and dedicate the fullness of Samoan life outside of Samoa itself (Taule’ale’ausumai, 1997a). Churches continue to serve as the hub of cultural growth and religious life for diasporic Samoan communities (Ablon, 1971; Anae, 1998). The church as a social structure has essentially become the place that

serves to encourage the maintenance of Samoan language and cultural mores. This has been achieved through the establishment of church services, Sunday schools, and biblical exams, all in the Samoan language. Taule'ale'ausumai (1997a) explains the impact of this growth by saying that:

The majority of children brought up in SMC [Samoan Methodist Church] and EFKS church settings speak Samoan in Sunday school and youth group. (1997a, p.175)

Such endeavours mean that Samoan culture and language are asserted and maintained in diasporic environments, contributing to the fluency of many Samoans in both language and *fa'asamoa*.

### **Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has described the context from which Samoan people derive meaningful expressions of their culture, their language, and their rituals. The discussion on *fa'asamoa* protocols and traditions, and the ways by which their kinship structures function and maintain their collective responsibilities remains critical in the formation of their unique cultural identity. As this chapter has identified, the realm of *fa'asamoa* is extensive and is sometimes difficult to define precisely, yet it continues to provide meaningful practices that reconnect the living with the dead, and their supporting communities. The impact of migration to other countries has also resulted in changes to Samoans' traditional practices, many of which have been modified to suit their adopted locations, while endeavouring to maintain connections to their cultural heritage. As such, many of their end-of-life practices may find traces of the earlier patterns of Samoan ancestors, as well as the integration of more recent alternatives. Many of these traditions or adopted alternatives are discussed and documented in chapters four, six, seven and eight.

Significant within the context of this current research are changes and modifications to *maliu* (death) customs and traditions, into which there have been no recent inquiries. The next chapter examines the core of Samoan identity and considers its role in understanding Samoan death and bereavement traditions, while also exploring how men deal with grief according to the relevant

literature I have reviewed. An important development in the next chapter is an examination of current definitions of grief, mourning, and bereavement within the New Zealand context.



## Chapter Three

I does not exist. Myself does not belong to me because . . .  
I is always we. (Figiel, 1996, p.135)



Ethic 'identity' provides a crucial context for understanding cultural perspectives, symbolic rituals, and mourning practices important to Samoan people. This chapter examines the Samoan self in that context, especially when such identities are located outside of Samoa itself. Bereavement, mourning, and grief are also defined, and ways in which these definitions might contribute to understandings of how men grieve in general. Consequently, the chapter lays a foundation for presenting mourning rituals that have shaped the lives of many Samoan men, including many of my research participants.

Every person possesses multiple identities (Stryker, 1987; Stryker & Stathan, 1985) as a by-product of social interaction with other people, or groups of people, about their traditions and heritage. Because of this level of interaction, identity and its task in determining roles and functions within death and bereavement paradigms needs re-examining (Kopytoff 1990). The Anglo-American model of the lonely thinker underlying the self-concept is inadequate because it provides only one cultural perspective. This way of thinking about the 'self' makes it problematic for understanding those who exist outside of such parameters, such as Samoan people. In this regard, Samoan identity, inclusive of their culture, ethnic, gender, status, sexuality, age, and locality, is crucial in understanding meanings relative to things Samoan (also see UTA, chapter five). There is a sense of belonging that moves beyond the merely physical and emotional dimensions to include the wider embrace of their genealogy, their environment, and their divine connections (see Tui Atua, 2009b). Although this wider embrace may not characterise all Samoans, understanding the self-concept in this context is imperative when Samoans are impacted upon by death.

Stryker (1987) proposes that individuals who are able to claim multiple social identities have the ability to bring into play different social identities in diverse situations. Identities within these multiple social groups are also hierarchically prioritised according to behavioural needs (Stryker & Stathan, 1985). 'Social representations' provide us with structured reference points to help us group our understandings of reality and to serve as a guide in our relationships with each other and to the world around us. Because we elaborate these representations together and invoke them frequently, social

representations become deeply embedded in our cultural fabric. Inherent in Samoan identity are the imperatives of responsibilities to one's family, the environment, and to the spiritual world (Suaalii-Sauni, et al., 2008; Tui Atua. 2009b). Therefore, the connections between one's actions and the influences these could have on others, their surroundings, and their indigenous world outline imperative responsibilities that are shared and maintained by members, as well as one's self.

### **The Samoan sense of self**

Even within the European canon, scholars such as Tajfel (1978 & 1981), and Tajfel & Turner (1986), recognize limitations to the disconnected individual because the 'self' as an identity concept embraces both the personal and social world. Identity in this context is fluid, and is tied to social, structural, and broader arrangements that help maintain group memberships (Hodgetts, Chamberlain & Groot, 2010). Young & Arrigo (1999) concur with Tajfel and Turner (1986) that identity is derived from the roles and social functions one encompasses at any given point in one's life. They regard identity as the search for personhood, where understanding and maintaining one's purpose in life becomes important. The meanings derived from the search are primarily based on distinctive characteristics such as physical appearance, talents and abilities, core values and beliefs, and social roles (Kopytoff, 1990; Merton, 1970). Others like Ashforth & Mael (1989) and Tajfel & Turner (1986) argue that the sense of belonging is the key driver of social identification for many groups of people. The basic idea is that people want to maintain a positive sense of self-concept and that this can be achieved through membership of, or belonging to, a certain group.

'Culture', as the environment through which we live our lives, gives meaning to our existence and sense of belonging. Yet at the same time we remain active participants in the evolutionary process through the meanings we create (Deaux & Philogene, 2001). This then becomes a process of co-creation, where neither the culture nor the individual functions alone, but are interconnected and intertwined in a collective process. The result of these connections is that the thinking and behavioural patterns of individuals are not

shaped in isolation; rather, they are equally if not more influenced by others who share the same connections (Tui Atua, 2009b). Collectively shared reifications of patterns, ideas, and objects significantly contribute to the co-construction of lived reality (Deaux & Philogene, 2001). Shared meanings, beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and opinions not only help in relating to others in the same group, but can become vital for collective understanding of each other. This co-construction can therefore become a bridge that provides a linking point between individuals and groups within the social world. In the realm of the Samoans, their ancestral history and heritage has as much influence in shaping their lives and behaviours as they themselves do. Such ancestral connections are vital in their end-of-life rituals and memorialisation practices, much of which I discuss in more detail in chapters four, six, and seven.

Figiel's (1996) quotation that opens this chapter, "myself does not belong to me because I is always we", is a reminder of the challenges Samoan migrants face in their *malaga* (journey), carrying the dreams and hopes of the *'āiga, nu'u* (village) and *lotu* (church). Importantly, identity and the interpretation of the self are fundamental to the way Samoan people perceive themselves, which in turn gives meaning to the world that they know and exist in. The Samoan person is both relational and communal, which is reflected in Tui Atua's (2009b) statement:

I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies . . . I share my tofi [an inheritance] with my family, my village and my nation . . . This is the essence of my belonging. (Tui Atua, 2009b, p.80)

The call to unified belonging is a well-worn path many Samoans traverse regularly, especially when it comes to addressing *fa'alavelave* responsibilities.

Some who find this part of the journey arduous and difficult may try to avoid its demands from time to time; but whether demanding or otherwise, the social outworking of this sense of belonging ultimately means that no person is an individual unto themselves. Samoan people are multi-connected because of their many associations, belonging to a wide network of relatives and communities. Such connections are vital when *fa'alavelave* occasions impact upon the family, especially death. In essence, their identity is socially and

culturally constructed. Nevertheless, within this realm of collectivity is the continued presence of the individual self, responding and reacting to the larger unit in its own unique and dynamic way. The 'we' component of the collective self is traditionally perceived as a core ingredient that knits Samoan people together, creating a strong sense of affiliation, loyalty, and community. Further, this way of living and relating is particularly important when it comes to Samoan people's place or status in the *'āiga*, the *nu'u*, and the *lotu* (Seiuli, 2004).

Tamasese, Peteru and Waldegrave (1997), in their report on mental health service delivery to Samoan clients, emphasise that the Samoan self cannot be described independently in the way Western perspectives may construct it. Their findings pinpoint the importance of understanding how Samoan people perceive themselves relative to others, the environment, the cosmos, and ancestral origins, along the lines of Tui Atua's statement indented in the previous page. Because of this prevailing belief, a singularized self is discouraged because it undermines the ethos of belongingness that many ascribe to within this shared domain. Hence, the capacity for finding meaningful expressions outside the collective parameters is limited and is sometimes seen as foreign, or simply put, *fia-palagi*, or becoming like a *palagi*. Tamasese and her colleagues emphasise this point by saying:

There are no such things as a Samoan person who is independent of others [tuto'atasi]. You cannot take a Samoan out of the collective context. We can try and explain the *palagi* concept of self, but this is futile. We will eventually return to the connection between people [va fealoaloa'i]. (Tamasese, et. al., 1997, p.28)

The individuated boundaries thought proper to the self in many European dominated societies are deemed to be based on the perspectives of the "body as a closed, self-contained unit" (Mageo, 1998, p.46).

This understanding accords with the 'egocentric' self, described by Geertz (1976) as, "bounded, unique ... organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastingly against other wholes and against a social and natural background" (quoted in Mageo, 1998, p.5). In contrast, Mageo argues that the Samoan self is better understood along the 'socio-centric' dimension as "the *dramatis personae*, not actors, that endures; in the proper sense, they really exist" (1998, p.5). By

this definition, one's calling and identity as a Samoan is to stand resolute at one's appointed post of *tautua* (service), not independent of others, but in close community and relationship.

It is widely accepted in Samoan circles that an individual's claim to *'āiga* membership remains open as long as they are seen to participate when the family calls on their support (see chapter two). Group membership equals active and regular participation. Braginsky (2003) suggests one's membership within the family unit includes a constant stream of obligations to service *fa'alavelave*, as well as one's physical presence in family *fono* (gatherings). Ultimately, the failure to fulfil one's obligations considerably weakens one's claim to that group. This can lead to a declining sense of identity and connection to the group as a whole. Ideally, one must continue to affirm and reaffirm one's membership through on-going participation in the extensive reciprocating family network. This fundamental concept of enactment is the key to understanding Samoan life functions and collective cultural identity. Usually these representations help members to reach consensus, which is enforced and maintained by the collective.

In a constantly changing world, where identities and meanings are negotiated and reconstructed regularly, concerns may arise from time to time about what it actually mean to be a Samoan man within these shifting paradigms. Additionally, the way in which Samoan men identify themselves, their practices and their collective responsibilities during times of mourning is vital and crucial to their cultural reference in places like New Zealand. Important in supporting Samoan identity in such westernized localities is the understanding of terms such as bereavement, grief and mourning which I discuss next.

### **Defining bereavement, grief and mourning**

A reading of the literature suggests that bereavement, grief and mourning are inherently similar, yet contain some key differences. The three terminologies refer to our inherent reaction to the loss of someone with whom we have some associations. This loss could be temporary or permanent. The level of response is also dependent on whether the loss is the result of a calamity

or a natural life event. Such reactions are particularly heightened when they involve those whom we love or towards whom we feel affection. Stroebe & Schut (1998) suggest a variation in reactions to loss among individuals or groups. The distinctions between bereavement, mourning, and even grief are somewhat artificial; clearly they are interrelated. However, literature suggests that there are some ambiguities in the way these three terms are defined across cultural divides. Stroebe & Schut (1998) assert that there is a need to examine the range of cultural behaviours because:

not only does lack of understanding make it difficult to interpret the reactions of those in other cultures, but potential insight is limited if we remain completely ethnocentric in our approach. (1998, p.8)

As the statement emphasizes, broadening our general constructions and interpretations of these end-of-life processes is an important task. This study supports this construction. By examining cross-cultural disparities to death and grief patterns as this study does, it is useful to provide some definitions of bereavement, grief, and mourning to also support this endeavour.

Worden (1996), an early pioneer in grief work, describes *bereavement* as “the process of adapting to loss incurred through death” (quoted in Charles-Edwards, 2005, p.4). Worden’s definition agrees with Stroebe, Schut, Stroebe and van de Bout (1998), who defines bereavement as “the situation of a person who has recently experienced the loss of someone significant through that person’s death” (1998, p.7). Charles-Edwards (2005), a supporter of Worden’s work asserts that “bereavement [is] feeling overwhelm[ed] in the case of someone important, connected to the bereaved” (p.4). He further explains that although bereavement usually refers to loss through death, the word is sometimes applied to other kinds of loss. An important part of Charles-Edwards’s explanation is that bereavement represents the journey which the bereaved person must travel until they reach the place where they can “come to terms with the loss” (p4). The bereavement journey promotes steps that can help the bereaved to sever ties, and to let go of the memory of the deceased. The goal is to become the person they have the potential to become, and to develop into a full creative person once again unhindered by the loss. Through the journey, they

are striving to reach a place of self-actualization (Maslow, 1943), and self-actualisation materialises when the bereaved person begins to re-evaluate their life and make preparations to move forward.

This concept of bereavement is built on the classical perspectives of Bowlby (1973) and Freud (1961). With this perspective, Freud conceptualized 'love' as the attachment (*cathexis*) of the psychic and emotional energy to the psychological representation of the loved person (the object). When the object of affection is removed (loved person), say, by death, the libidinal energy remains attached to the thoughts and memories of the loved person. Because of the limited reservoir of energy, the cathexis to the lost object has to be withdrawn in order to replenish the energy resources. The process of detachment Freud termed *hypercathexis* allows for the severing of ties to the deceased. The replenished energies are encouraged to be reinvested into new and existing relationships with the living (Charles-Edwards, 2005). Consequently, Freud cautioned that those who fail to go through the process of *hypercathexis* are likely to remain emotionally stunted (Klass, Silverman, & Nickman, 1996). Charles-Edwards (2005) emphasizes that such perspectives of bereavement can offer certain advantages. Using the analogy of being wounded, a wound takes time to heal. Over time, one needs to ensure the wound does not become infected. Likewise, the bereaved person needs to take care of small but subtle processes in order to heal. Like a physical wound, the healing journey, to a considerable degree, is often an "invisible and unconscious" process (Klass, Silverman, & Nickman, 1996).

Research suggests that traditional psychological perspectives categorized 'grief' as an emotional response to loss (Rando, 1993). This view continues to be echoed by other grief researchers such as Stroebe and her colleagues (1998) who also defined grief as:

The primary emotional reaction to the loss of a loved one through death, which incorporates diverse psychological and physical symptoms and is sometimes associated with detrimental health consequences. (1998, p.7)

More recent research broadens grief to encompass the physical, cognitive, behavioural, social, spiritual, and philosophical dimensions of loss (e.g., Klass, et

al., 1996; Worden, 2009). Accompanying such anguish are symptoms and behaviours people invariably demonstrate throughout the period of their grief (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Grief is the tension created by a person's strong desire to maintain their assumptive world as it was before the loss, or to "accommodate to a newly emerging reality resulting from their loss, and to incorporate this new reality into an emerging assumptive world" (Doka & Martin, 2010, p.18). In the Samoan world, the assumptive world could be seen in the vital role of continuing bonds with the deceased member, a key concept to recovery that is examined in more detail in later chapters (four, six, seven, eight, and nine).

Grief, then, can be interpreted in the broader context of people's intrinsic responses, as they attempt to readjust themselves to the changed surroundings of their world due to the loss. Traditional grief perspectives theorized grief as a form of separation anxiety (Freud, 1961; Bowlby, 1980). Because of this perspective, therapy encouraged the relinquishing of physical and emotional bonds. The focus of counselling therapy became centred on moving the person towards recovery and readjustment. There is value in this approach, particularly in its desire to support people in moving from grief towards a resumption of life routines. However, its application to people who value on-going emotional connections with those who have passed away would inevitably mean they would have to disregard or replace their innate beliefs to achieve successful outcomes. I discuss the importance of these continuing connections in chapters four, six, seven, eight and nine. The question here is: whose perspectives and subsequent outcomes are privileged, those of the client or those of the therapist? In my experience of observing and providing therapy for Samoan people in grief, an insistence upon severing emotional ties with loved ones would not be efficacious. I would suggest that such an approach would be counter-cultural, perhaps even offensive and as a result not be the most appropriate in supporting them towards recovery after a death.

'Mourning' is defined as:

The social expression or acts expressive of grief, which are shaped by the practices of a given society or cultural group (e.g. mourning rituals). (Stroebe, et al., 1998, p.7)

In the above statement, mourning is essential to understanding the effects of loss on people through the processes by which they use to express and attribute meaning during their period of loss.

Rando (1993) further suggests that the psychological, behavioral, social, and physical reactions to loss are all part of the mourning process. Whereas grief is the expression of one's reactions to the loss, mourning includes the processes of "reorienting in relation to the deceased, the self, and the external world" (Rando, 1993, p. 26). As mentioned earlier, although definitions of grief and mourning often overlap in the literature (Archer, 1999; Heinz, 1999; Nadeau, 1998; Orbach, 1999; Rando, 1993; Rotter, 2000), one distinction stands out. Grief represents and reflects the conditions surrounding the loss, while mourning is a process one traverses to accommodate or make sense of the loss. In other words, grief is the displayed psychological, behavioral, social, and physical symptoms which are the result of the loss, while mourning involves the social or cultural processes that help us to adjust to that loss. The readjustments help us to make sense of it, and then help us to proceed forward into a re-orientated world shaped by the loss.

To summarize, the term bereavement tends to be used when referring to the basic fact or objective reality of loss (see Doka, 1989). Research suggests that one can experience bereavement, a death, without the attached deep feelings of grief attributed to the loss. Grief, on the other hand, refers to the person's response and reaction to the loss (Doka & Martin, 2010). It is the responses made when death impacts that determine the magnitude of grief and the meanings people attribute to their loss. While grief represents the conditions surrounding the loss, mourning indicates the processes that are taken by the person affected to make sense of the loss. Mourning includes the social or cultural rituals that help people to cope with the loss and to find a way forward. Mourning is clearly unique to individual's contextual situations. In this regard, understanding the way in which my participants give meaning to their periods of mourning and their journey towards recovery is at the heart of this study. That is, how mourning practices impact upon Samoan people, especially men, in Samoa,

New Zealand, and in other places, and how they find ways to readjust after a death.

### **General New Zealand perspective of grief**

In New Zealand, grief theorists have drawn largely on the experiences of the dominant Pakeha (New Zealand European) society to explain how New Zealanders in general grieve. Cultural minority groups, such as Maori and Pasefika, have received insufficient attention from grief theorists. Rosenblatt and Wallace (2005), caution about defining grief under such generalised terms because it may be “mute, misleading, or unhelpful” (p. xiii) with respect to minority groups. Theoretical assumptions premised from perspectives of the white dominant ethnic majority tend to largely ignore the specific patterns of particular cultures. In the case of New Zealand, grief literature has largely overlooked ways in which indigenous groups, such as New Zealand Maori or Pasefika, may experience and make sense of death and grief. A critical approach to this literature is therefore required.

Contemporary research into death and dying devolves primarily from bio-medical orientations (Neimeyer, 2001; Neimeyer, Prigerson & Davies, 2002), where disease and death have been categorised as adversaries to overcome, requiring corrective action (Klass, Silverman & Nickman, 1996). Such processes in the psychologising of grief are largely influenced by the work of Bowlby and Freud as discussed earlier in this chapter (Valentine, 2006). The early attempts to understand end-of-life processes primarily interpret grief from a psychoanalytical perspective, of the unconscious mind greatly influencing human behaviour (Freud, 1961). Such early scholarship placed grief and grieving on a lineal scale, which made it more convenient to define the different phases and stages of the grief process -from impact to completion. Grief work therefore focused on locating those affected by a loss within the recovery scale. Of particular importance to the speed of recovery is the ability of the grieving person to relinquish connections with the dead (Freud, 1961). The sooner a grieving person could ‘let go’ of their contacts with their deceased relative, the sooner they were likely to recover. Freud argues here that mourning is completed when the “ego

becomes free from and uninhibited by the lost object” (Rando, 1995). The objective of grief therapy was, and remains, to help the bereaved to sever ties with the lost object (person).

More recent literature (Hockey, 2002; Hockey, Katz & Small, 2001; Neimeyer, et al., 2002) points out that these earlier perspectives are still firmly established in many elements of current academic and health professional literature and practice. Grief continues to be interpreted in stages or phases that are separated from ordinary, everyday life (Bowlby, 1961, 1973, 1980; Kubler-Ross, 1969). Strongly influenced by Freud, Bowlby also suggests that grief takes place through a sequence of phases which include and alternate between protest and anger, through to despair and hope (Klass, et al., 1996). With this in mind, one is expected and encouraged to journey through the grief stages, and ultimately towards returning to normal life routines. Important to this way of dealing with grief is the idea that a reunification with normal life means that the bereaved must strictly and attentively follow the stages along the grief recovery continuum. Bowlby also concurs with Freud’s idea of the need for the bereaved to move on. He justifies this position by stating that “death is a permanent separation and the attempt [by the bereaved] to restore proximity is inappropriate or non-functional” (quoted in Klass, et al., 1996, p.33). Further to this, Bowlby suggests that bonds with the deceased not only need to be relinquished but, importantly, must be broken in order for successful recovery to occur. Those who maintain bonds are considered maladjusted (Klass, et al., 1996). This suggests that the inability of a person to let go of their beloved will ultimately lead to the inability to cope with everyday life. The ultimate result of this inability is isolation, confusion, and failure to handle daily routines. Successful grief resolutions are reached when the bereaved is no longer inhibited by thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that reflect their previous life with the deceased. Such approaches to grief resolution could well be perceived as alien and possibly bizarre in the Maori and Pasefika context, particularly with those who value on-going connections or ancestral ties as being vital in the healing journey.

More recent research suggests that when grief therapy is construed within a spiritual and cultural framework (Hockey, 1990; Klass, et al., 1996; Noggle, 1995), an enduring bond with the deceased is found to be useful rather than an irrational response (Attig, 1996; Laurie and Neimeyer, 2008). Research also suggests that post-death encounters may have a healing and therapeutic effect when a person feels reconnected to their loved one (Culbertson, 2011; Penwarden, 2009; Nowatzki & Kalischuk, 2009). This perspective seems at odds with the earlier ideas proposed by Freud and Bowlby which encourage the severing and separation of the deceased from the living, first in the physical sense and then emotionally. The concepts of staying connected, of remembering (Hedtke, 1999; Holge-Hazelton & Krojer, 2008; Myerhoff, 1980; White, 1997 & 1998), and of continuing bonds (Hedtke, 2001, Klass, Silverman & Nickman, 1996; Penwarden, 2009) are important concepts this research examines and discusses in depth with research participants.

The pathway to understanding grief processes has also led to the development of grief resolution and recovery models (see Kubler-Ross, 1969; Neimeyer, 2001; Klass, et al., 1996). Of particular importance to the topic is the break-through work of Kubler-Ross (1970) with terminally ill patients. Kubler-Ross developed a model to help her patients understand their emotional state and the ensuing grief cycles (Figure 1). The model outlines various stages involved such as the initial impact of receiving the news, the rollercoaster ride of passivity and activity where the person tries to make sense of their situation, to the eventual acceptance of the diagnosis and inevitable result of their illnesses. Kubler-Ross suggests that the stages serve as general indicators of the various processes people may traverse through grief. However, unlike Bowlby's stance of strictly following the stages along the continuum, Kubler-Ross advocates that the approach is not a restrictive format one must follow sequentially. There will be likely fluctuations along the way until the bereaved reaches a stage of recovery.

Some of the participants' responses concerning their emotional state and journey through the grief cycle showed similarities with the various stages identified by Stroebe (see Figure 1). These included: 'denial' or the refusal of accepting death upon receiving the news of their relative's passing; to expressing

'anger' at the cause of, or the injustice of an untimely death; to 'bargaining' with God for the life of their beloved relative or for another chance to rekindle a relationship with the deceased; to feeling 'depressed' in their period of mourning; and, to finally reaching a place of 'accepting' the passing away of their relative and for the need to move on, with a life that is now shaped by the loss.

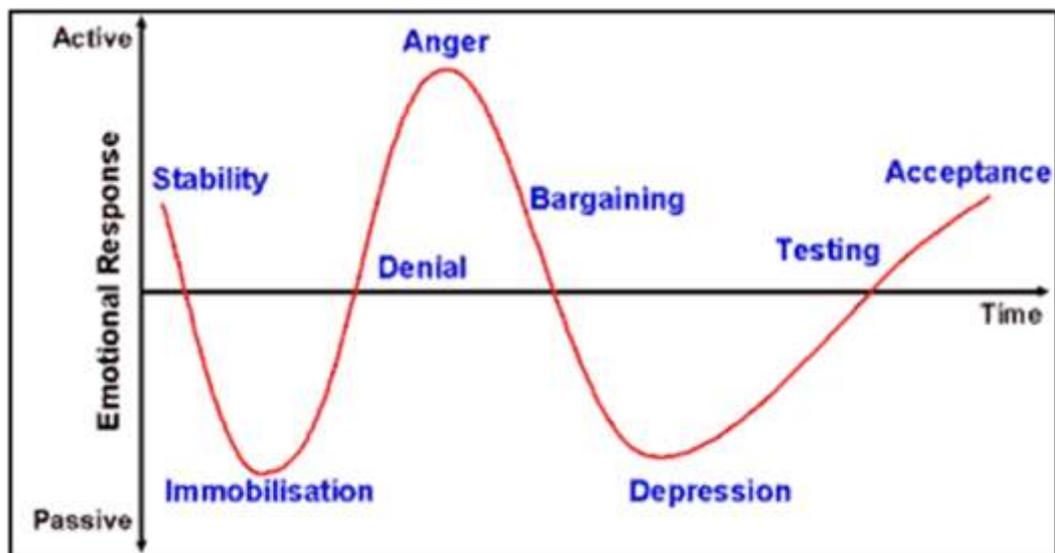


Figure 1: Kubler-Ross Grief Cycle

(Source: [http://changeminds.org/disciplines/change\\_management/kubler\\_rosshtm#gri](http://changeminds.org/disciplines/change_management/kubler_rosshtm#gri))

Although grief models like this one can be helpful for people in grief, others can lead to the pathological labeling of the bereaved as someone with a psychological illness or a disease that needs specialized treatment. It is well documented (Bowlby & Parkes, 1970; Kubler-Ross, 1969; Levang, 1998, Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987) that natural responses to grief include, but are not limited to, shock, anger, numbness, denial, disbelief, disorientation, despair, crying, hysteria, and depression. Other emotional, physical, and psychological conditions may also become apparent over time. If the grieving person is unassisted, it then has the capacity to impact them through symptoms that may become debilitating, affecting them physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987). This stage is generally referred to as complicated grief, which can become life threatening. Although such symptoms are assumed to be universal,

the experience and expression of grief may vary widely between individuals and across different cultural groups (Stroebe, Gergen & Stroebe, 1992).

Traditional psychological and psychiatric management of people with such diagnoses and pathologies led to medication and social isolation as preferred treatment. On this point, Hedtke (1999, p.7) maintains that some professional bodies and health authorities have acted as gate keepers, and have in the past imposed obsolescent philosophies about the 'right stages' of grieving. The result of such impositions led to the undermining of an individual's or family's wisdom and the vital role of their inherent local knowledge in the recovery process (Anderson, 2010; Gergen, 1985). These circumstances also raise the concern over whether grieving individuals may have been inappropriately diagnosed and treated as mental health patients when they should not have been.

Levang (1998) challenges the lineal process in grief theory as upheld by traditional grief experts. She argues that bereaved people do not simply follow a prescribed sequence from a starting point to a finish line, with the attainment of the latter indicating that their grief is finished. In contrast, she proposes that grief and grieving is better described as a "circular and repetitive cycle" (p.40). She explains:

We cycle through grief over and over . . . we make progress, advance forward then we backtrack, retracing our steps. Grieving isn't continuous but it's recurring. Events like anniversaries, holidays, or new losses trigger our grief. We never get over our losses, we just get through it . . . grief dictates that we are never quite the same again. (Levang, 1998, p.40)

Here, Levang resolutely places the journey of grieving and mourning as a 'maladjusted' process, and removes the possibility that the grieving person will be unhelpfully categorised as maladjusted. Important within this perspective is the recognition that grief itself is not easily defined, nor is it confined to a rigid set of emotions or behavioural patterns which dictate how one is to act in order to be perceived as recovered.

Researchers such as Rosenblatt (1988), Walter (1999) and Neimeyer, Prigerson and Davies (2002) maintain that grief is itself a social construction, that

is, how people grieve is largely shaped by their culture and their environments. These authors suggest that a vast difference exists between societies and peoples relative to how grief is shaped within such cultural boundaries. Despite such claims, few studies have focused specifically on how different cultural groups express grief overall (Centre for the Advancement of Health, 2004). The findings of my research are therefore pertinent to extending of our understanding of culture-specific grieving. Additionally, the examination and documentation of the ways in which Samoan men address grief is vital to the preservation of these important life cycles, wherever they are located.

### **Men and grief**

Miller and Golden (1998) suggests that from an early age, men are encouraged to view and interpret their emotional world through the lens of manliness. The Greek philosopher Epictetus is reported to have said: “men are disturbed not by things, but by the view they take of them” (quoted in Smalley 2006, p.34). The statement indicates that men generally respond according to how they see and interpret events, not necessarily the event itself, which ultimately determines their emotional capacity to respond.

Emotional responses such as crying are discouraged, while being a person of strength, both physically and emotionally, is a desired virtue. In this world, a man’s own pain must be put aside so that he can support others. Literature also suggests that western society in general regularly characterises and describes men in masculine terms such as protectors, providers, and problem-solvers. Such descriptive societal expressions place men on a hierarchical ladder which encourages independence or self-reliance (Golden, 2000). Such societal discourses promote the ideals of governance, which translate to who is in charge of whom, thereby depicting and encouraging men to be strong, capable, and in control (Levang, 1998). Levang adds that such societal expectations drive many men to live up to these unrealistic and, sometimes, unforgiving standards. Not surprisingly, such prevailing expectations can also lead to dissociation from generally accepted grief symptoms as men deal with their own loss (McKay & McKay, 2009).

Men are encouraged to remain stoic while showing patience and endurance during adversity. This can result in men being forced to postpone or even suppress their own grief. Levang (1998) declares that such pressures on men are unrelenting. On this point, Doka and Martin (2010) challenge the perceived societal bias in favour of affective expression that disadvantages men compared with women. On the whole, women are seen as being more ready to ask for help, and express their emotions throughout the process of their grief. These characteristics are deemed essential to successful grief work. Perhaps it is the influence of unrelenting societal pressure that has caused men to express their grief in ways that are not easily understood or accepted by society.

Research suggests that men do grieve (see Doka & Martin, 2010; Golden, 2000; Golden & Miller, 1998; Levang, 1998), but theorizing has been hampered by a perceived inability on the part of men to respond to loss appropriately or according to societal norms. I want to suggest here that the expressions of grief by men cannot be fully understood from such gendered positioning. In order to understand men in grief better, it is necessary to consider the struggle they have with an effective language that can help them articulate their inner turmoil and struggles more appropriately. The question which arises therefore is: how do men grieve?

General research in relation to death and loss shows that men grieve differently to women (Cochran & Rainbowitz, 2002 & 2003; Miller & Golden; 1998; Stroebe, Stroebe & Schut, 2001). Men are often silent or solitary mourners (Golden, 2000). However, they tend to experience greater changes in mood than women, and may experience more consequences for their physical health as a result (Cochran and Rainbowitz, 2003; Stroebe, Stroebe & Schut, 2001). Golden suggests that men are more likely to immerse themselves in activity or private symbolic rituals as a form of expression for their thoughts and feelings associated with a loss. In this regard, the power of ritualistic expressions is a preferred pathway for expressing their inner turmoil connected to the loss (Golden, 2000). This method of releasing death-related emotions strongly reflects the approach in which many Samoan men who participated in this study expressed their grief (see chapters four, six, seven, and eight).

Levang (1998) points out that grief and grieving are “centred in our emotional lives; aspects of which are developmentally unique to each gender” (p.41). In general terms, societal expressions encourage men to be less self-disclosing, less expressive and more independent, while women are encouraged towards relationships, intimacy, and communities. These gender affiliations reveal that the emotional domain of many men tends to be relatively narrow. This can create fear of expressing the ‘wrong’ or undesirable emotions publicly within societal forums. The perceived fear of being labelled as weak, vulnerable, or unmanly helps to restrain men from venturing into this domain more regularly, even if they have an innate desire for release. To further compound the challenge of male expressions of grief, Levang suggests that there is an absence of a language to help men describe their inner emotive world. The absence of a suitable masculine language means many men continue to find expression of their grief through the dominant language they are accustomed to: silence, withdrawal, independence, or stoicism. Though this may be the case, the important work of Doka and Martin (2010) offers hope for a language of grief for men. Doka and Martin (2010, p.4) emphatically refute the “one size fits all” approach to mourning, especially when it concerns men and grief. Their research promotes the perspective that men experience, express, and adapt to death and grief in many different ways. Therefore, solutions for addressing grief are many and varied, and may be equally effective. They propose two patterns of grieving termed *intuitive* and *instrumental*. I highlight these two perspectives to extend our understanding about men and grief next.

Intuitive grievers are “individuals who experience and express grief in affective ways” (p.4). This means that those who are intuitive grievers will gravitate towards adaptive strategies that are oriented towards the expression of distress. From the research information discussed already, this pattern associates more with women grievers than men. But, Doka and Martin (2010) suggests that generalisation of gendered expressions within the specified pattern does not automatically determine dominant expressions by this same cohort universally. Their findings indicated that both men and women utilised intuitive ways to make sense of their grief experiences. Significantly, they raised concerns with the

dominant Western biased perception that affective expressiveness presupposes superior progress in grief therapy. Although there is a distinct connection between genders and grieving patterns, this should not be seen as deterministic.

Instrumental grievers on the other hand relate to individuals who tend to “experience their grief in physical, as well as cognitive ways” (2010, p.4). Men are depicted to be predominantly found in this category. That is, they are seen as independent mourners, while engaging themselves in tasks to express their internal turmoil. This means that a grieving man tends to respond behaviourally to his loss. That could include giving greater attention to tasks or jobs to do with the funeral, or even returning to work soon after the death to earn money for a headstone. The findings chapters (six, seven, and eight) examine this way of responding to death impacts in greater detail.

Although the two patterns could be seen as opposite ends of a spectrum, there is also the possibility of various blending patterns, in which individuals will draw from both the instrumental and the intuitive patterns to help them cope. This type of thinking resonates with the perspectives discussed earlier promoted by Levang (1998), where grief is seen and experienced as cyclical and repetitive, rather than one that adheres to a definitive pattern. Doka and Martin’s (2010) work further highlights the importance of the unique reactions individuals might display to losses. The different ways a man learns to cope are uniquely shaped by his experiences, expressions, and adaptation – his culture of origin. This perspective towards addressing grief work re-emphasises the power of the individual by privileging their localized knowledge, their expertise, and providing reference to their indigenous traditions as support. Additionally, it de-centres grief work from phases and stages, or gendered expressions between men and women, towards a place where each person’s unique response and reaction to a loss is privileged. In light of what I have discussed about men and grief in this section, it remains to be seen what this understanding might mean for Samoan men.

## **Samoan men and grief**

In chapter four, I provide an in-depth documentation of Samoan patterns of grief, particularly those that have been observed during the passing of two of my close relatives. Leading into that chapter, I provide here an initial glimpse into the way Samoan men are perceived to grieve according to the literature I reviewed. I begin with a brief overview of a conversation I had with a New Zealand-born male cousin regarding his father's passing as a foreground for my review.

Before leaving for Salafai's (pseudonym) funeral service, I spoke briefly with each of his three sons to offer them my support, particularly because of my experience as a Samoan grief counsellor, and as a concerned family member. In particular, I offered Tama Matua (pseudonym - eldest son) my full support in case he or his brothers might need someone to talk to about their grief. To my enquiry, he blurted out amidst his tears that he was *"just holding it together"*. He lamented further by saying: *"What do I do without my superman [his dad]?"* Physically, Tama Matua was always head and shoulders above everyone else, a man of great physical stature. Yet in responding to my inquiry, he revealed a sense of dependence and inadequacy. The death of his father had in a way reduced his own status to one of insignificance and vulnerability, while simultaneously elevating his father's position to a hero.

In considering the literature on attitudes to death amongst Samoan communities, Tama Matua's verbalized expression appears to call-into-question what Ablon (1970) found amongst his participants. For example, Ablon reported that the Samoans he interviewed displayed an attitude that:

one has to take hardship without complaining [and] . . . they exhibit a great tolerance for pain, death, and calamities, regarding these as aspects of life that one must bear, sanctioned by a Christianity that dictates an acceptance of God's will as non-reversible fate. (1970, p.332)

Many of Ablon's informants stated that despite painful events of whatever magnitude, "life must go on" (p.332). In this regard, Tama Matua was admitting through his tears that life was hard with his father's death, but ultimately, life must go on. Tama Matua's way of responding to my inquiry is the result of his

liminal state (Anae, 1998), where the grief he was experiencing was fresh, and therefore equated with his sense of helplessness and dependence on his father – his hero. The liminal periods for Tama Matua include having to anticipate new experiences and understandings without his mentor and role-model to guide him through life's adversities. This period could be seen as a time of confusion and instability through the transition of loss, whether conscious or otherwise. Losing his father drove home the significant place that his *'āiga* has in providing a consolidated cultural base for him as a New Zealand-born Samoan man during his period of mourning. As Anae (2007, p.341-342) emphasised in her study with New Zealand-born Samoans and church identity, liminal spaces in many ways present *rites of passage* where experiences of negotiating or revising of identity is part of the journey, whereby both the chaos and the confusion might be reconciled in some form. This can be seen here in the tension experienced by Tama Matua with his state of loss, having to reconcile the loss of his security with having a father figure, and having to adapt to a world without him. Death has a way of doing this to most people, not just Samoans like Tama Matua.

Such an admission from Tama Matua left me wondering whether this is a common phenomenon among Samoan men, or that this was only an isolated incident. I also began to wonder whether statuses attributed to deceased relatives might be forever elevated as Tama Matua had communicated about his father, or whether they tend to return to a normal level as the grief dissipates. Importantly for coping with loss, I wanted to know whether such types of reflective appraisal might also help the bereaved person to resume daily routines. In order to explore such concerns further, I provide documentation of the way Samoan men grieved in the past according to the literature I have reviewed.

Aside from the works of Kramer (1995), Stair (1983) and Turner (1984) which mention mourning rituals performed by men in traditional society, there are no other specific accounts that detail Samoan men's reactions to death and grief. According to those earlier accounts, men traditionally engaged in expressive rituals that provided them with a means to release cathartic emotions caused by their loss. Detailed rituals were more prominently enacted when a high chief, district or national leader passed away, which were absent from the

passing of ordinary village members. Many of these rituals involved specific public performances that demonstrated honour and deep-felt sorrow and distress. For example, I point out in chapter four that the practice of loud wailing, self-inflicted wounding, or the burning of one's skin with firebrands, signified 'blood' and 'sacrifice' for the dead (Kramer, 1995; Stair, 1983). In addition, the *tūlafale's* verbal pledge for the life of the chief, and a subsequent challenge of the demon Moso to a duel, spoke of his courage to defend the honour of the deceased member and of the family.

Kramer (1995) also reported that when a high chief passed away, men in his *auosoga* (fighting warriors) carried his body on their shoulders through the village to honour him. While in procession, they sang ancient songs and *lagi* chants; some examples of these chants are presented in chapter six, attributing high praise and honour to their deceased *matai*. Others in the group would release their rage at their loss by destroying all they could get hold of on their path, which might include the *falelauasi* (death house), animals, canoes, trees, and anything else in their way (Kramer, 1995). After the burial, mourning rituals quickly changed in tone to celebrations, that lasted for up to fifteen days, called *taupiga* or *valegase*, all in honour of the deceased person (Kramer, 1995). Taulapapa (key informant - see chapter six) reported in his account that some of the villages in the Manono district still engage in this practice as a way of honouring a deceased paramount leader. The later work of Ablon (1970 & 1971) does not deal with the particular experiences of Samoan men in grief. His research, which was conducted five years after the critical incident, focused generically on a Samoan community in North America which had experienced mass death as the result of a fire. He specifically referred to the officiating minister and *matai* of a particular family as exclusively male roles.

Other research records (Ala'ilima & Stover, 1986; Mead, 1930; Meleisea, 1987; So'o, 2008; Va'a, 2001), aside from the accounts already discussed, remain silent on the responses of Samoan men or males when loss, death, and grief situations arise. Only the works of Tui Atua (1994, 2003, 2009a, 2009b & 2011a) provide information on Samoan men in the context of death that addresses some of this void. The gap in the records highlights the significance of this

present thesis in informing academics, health professionals, and Samoan communities about death customs nowadays, while also linking these to earlier practices. This study makes a foundational contribution through documenting Samoan men's way of grieving in current times, their expression of grief, the meanings they attribute to their experiences, and the way their grief expressions find similarity to, or difference from, the traditional grieving practices enacted by many Samoan people in Samoa and other places. Much of the examination and documentation of such areas of concern as I have raised here is presented in chapter four, in my findings chapters (six, seven, and eight), and in my discussion of the findings (chapter nine).

### **Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has documented the important role that identity and belonging has when people are impacted upon by death. The sense of belonging is the key driver of social identification that supports people in maintaining a strong desire for group membership (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Group membership equates with active participation, and for many Samoan communities, this means *tautua* (service) obligations to support family *fa'alavelave*, especially those associated with death. The failure to fulfil one's obligations not only reduces one's claim to that group but also produces a declining sense of identity and connections. The fundamental concept of enactment is the key to understanding Samoan life functions and collective cultural identity, particularly those roles that are fundamental to Samoan men's way of mourning their losses.

Understanding the processes involved to farewell the deceased, and then to proceed with life afterwards, is both complex and personal. Despite this, having some knowledge of the key terms attributed to these processes can be useful. This chapter defined what is meant by the terms bereavement, grief and mourning. Inasmuch as these terminologies may appear distinctive, they are clearly interrelated. A key focus of this chapter was the examination of the dominant western perspectives on grief such as the early works of Freud (1961) and Bowlby (1973) that focused on severing connections with those deceased,

and the stages of grief model by Kubler-Ross (1970), which influenced much of the work on grief recovery in recent times. Although useful, these approaches fail to recognise the importance of on-going connections with those who have passed away as being significant in the process of recovery for indigenous groups like the Samoans.

As a counsellor with many years of experience in therapeutic practice, embracing continuing connections resonates with being Samoan, and in working with Samoan communities in grief. In this context, permissible and respectful spaces need to be cultivated to examine, explore, and acknowledge their traditional customs and cultural expressions connected to celebrating death. The road to recovery must include those practices that are either intuitive or instrumental, or both, as a means of expression for Samoan grievers (Doka and Martin, 2010). They help to reconnect the legacy of their ancestors with the living, while simultaneously honouring the recently deceased in meaningful cultural expressions. Such engagements with death have therapeutic value in understanding the way Samoan men deal with grief recovery. Such patterns of address need attention in general grief work and in psychological literature.

The following chapter examines traditional expressions and rituals of death, as well as the vital role of *fa'asamoa* (the Samoan way) and *ola fa'aleagaga* (spirituality) in the lives of Samoan people, men in particular. Following their migration from Samoa to New Zealand, the chapter also examines how they have maintained their cultural traditions in times of death and mourning. Many of these practices find their origins in the earlier traditions of their ancestors.



## Chapter Four

**Auē, ua māliliu toa, ua maumau ai āupega o le taua**

Oh, how the mighty have fallen, alas, the weapons of victory now lie abandoned (Samoan Proverb)



The practice and expression of grief may vary between people and across diverse cultural groups, even if such symptomatology is assumed to be universal (Stroebe, Gergen & Stroebe, 1992). Mandelbaum (quoted in Ablon, 1970, p.215) suggests that “rituals for death can have many uses for life”. In fact, rituals relating to death can function in significant ways to help the living (Ablon, 1970). While death and bereavement is regularly experienced in Samoan communities everywhere, the topic itself communicates *tapu* (sacred) and *sā* (protected) – an unseen guardian in some way.

Death has the uncanny manner of arresting people amidst the ordinariness of life’s journey, accompanied by an atmosphere of uncertainty. Disruptions happen. Transforming patterns become evident as changes are made manifest in the way regular routines and practices are brought to a halt. Distinct emotions, dress codes and behaviours that are considered appropriate become the unrehearsed norm until a specified time of observance has elapsed. In many Samoan communities, a collective responsibility to their departing beloved means everyone contributes to make sure the farewell is a memorable event. On the whole, Samoan people have mastered the art of addressing death’s presence with poise and elegance that elevates such occasions publicly, honouring both the departed and those remaining in the same occasion.

This chapter examines Samoan death and bereavement practices through reviewing the relevant literature to lay a platform. The earliest written records (Williams, 1830s; Fraser, 1880s; Pratt, 1860s; Stair, 1890s; Turner, 1880s), document Samoan traditional customs and practices. Such accounts, particularly those of Turner and Stair, describe customs and traditions in the early periods of contact with *papalagi*. After this earliest record is the classical work of Augustine Kramer (1995), who provides a comprehensive account of *fa’alupega* (genealogical origins) and oral histories of the Samoan people. The later accounts of such scholars as Ablon (1970 & 1971), Simanu (2001), Tui Atua (2009b & 2011a), Va’a (2001) and others provide more recent contributions to the canon. As had already been mentioned in chapter two, the inadequacy of published material relating to Samoan death and mourning culture reflects the time lapse

due to resources available to draw from. Despite this, many of the concepts discussed remain vital to many Samoan end-of-life rituals.

In an attempt to reconnect traditional bereavement culture with the more recent one, the literature reviewed here is also woven into my own journey and narratives relating to death customs in Samoa and New Zealand. With my own death-related journey, I provide an overview sequence of some events that were observed with the passing of three family members: Tinā (my grandmother - 1975), Salafai ((pseudonym) an uncle - 2005), and Kiwi (my nephew - 2011).

### Early Samoan death patterns

To be raised in Samoa afforded opportunities to witness and actively participate in death and mourning rituals. My grandmother Uputāua, or Tinā (mother) as knew her, passed away while were living in Malie (Map 2 - X). Malie is renowned for its strong affiliation to the Sa-Malietao title (Kramer, 1995; So’o, 2008; Tuimaleali’ifano, 2006). Tinā’s father was a direct descendent and holder of the esteemed chiefly title Tonumaipe’a from Falealupo district (Map 2 – X1) in Savai’i. Tui Atua (2008a, p.37) refers to the Tonumaipe’a lineage as one of the most “ancient of Samoan families of Falealupo – the Mecca of Nafanua religion” (see chapter two for a discussion on *Nafanua*).



Map 2: Samoa - Location of Malie, Manono, and Falealupo  
(Source: www.worldmaps.com)

Tinā married my grandfather, Seiuli Leiataualesā Tuilaepa of the Sa-Malietoa lineage (Malie and Manono (Map 2 – X2)), which strengthened the traditional allegiance between the Malietoa and Tonumaie’a covenant. Tinā’s lineage and heritage remain significant to my *’āiga*. Many of the rituals involved with her passing have remained while some have changed. To understand the changes between deaths recorded in much earlier periods and when Tinā passed away, I present some of the accounts observed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Stair (1983), Turner (1984) and Kramer (1995). Turner’s observations describe vivid expressions while addressing death. Turner writes:

Whenever the eye is fixed in death, the house became a scene of indescribable lamentation and wailing. “Oh my father why did you not let me die and you live here still?” . . . Oh what use is it for me to survive you; would that I died for you!” These cries might have been heard 200 hundred yards from the house; and they were accompanied by the most frantic expressions of grief, such as rending garments, tearing the hair, thumping the face and eyes, burning the body with small piercing firebrands, beating the head with stones till the blood ran, and this they called an “offering of blood” for the dead. (1984, p.144)

Stair (1983) reported similar responses. He writes:

On ordinary occasions the body was prepared for burial within a few hours of death, but if the deceased were of high rank . . . many customs and observances were attended to which were omitted at the ordinary funeral. Visits of sympathy were also made by persons from the surrounding district who came to pour forth lamentations both real and feigned. . . . in-front of the dwelling might be seen men and women wildly beating their heads and bodies with large stones, and inflicting ghastly wounds, from which the blood poured as an offering of affection and sympathy to their departing friend. (p.179-181)

The physical acts of self-inflicting wounds by mourners were an attempt to appease the wrath of the gods and to avert the death. This type of lamentation was significant and meaningful, even if the person being lamented was still showing the faintest signs of life. While these endeavours continued, the voice of an appointed *tūlafale* (orator chief) could be heard calling upon the god of the family to cease from their evil undertaking. The *tūlafale* would entreat the demon of death known as *Moso* by calling:

Moso, what does all this mean? Give back to us our chief. Why do you pay no respect to us, *faleupolu*. (Stair, 1983, p.181)

The *tūlafale* would enhance his efforts by calling upon the god of the sufferer's relative to intervene as well.

If all appeals were to no avail and the chief passed away, the *tūlafale* would change tack by proceeding to verbally abuse Moso, even challenging the demon of death to a duel. Stair (1983) writes of the *tūlafale's* changed response:

O thou shameless spirit, could I but grasp you, I would smash your skull to pieces! Come here and let us fight together. Don't conceal yourself, but show yourself like a man and let us fight, if you are angry. (1983, p.181-182)

Tui Atua (2011b) has suggested that the imagery evoked by the *tūlafale's* change of behaviour from pleading to challenging the gods was a known traditional practice amongst early Samoans.

The *tūlafale's* actions could be interpreted as 'sparring' with the gods, linking to the underlying belief of shared divinity discussed in chapter two. Further demonstration of this type of challenge is reflected in the gravesite ritual by the *matai* exposing their backsides and genitals to the grave (Tui Atua, 2007a). This demonstrative act defiantly proclaims to the spirit world that the living still has some form of control over life, and that not all is governed by the domain of the eternal. The provocative exposure and stance communicates to the death realm that even as it takes the life and soul of one member, the displayed genitals assert that the living and humanity still have the ability to procreate and to continue on in this life (Tui Atua, 2008a, p.210). These gravesite practices reinforce the triumph of life.

Stair (1983) also observed that immediately after the pronouncement of death, all the mats on the floor in the *falelauasi* (death house) were thrown outside. The thatched sides of the house were either torn down or beaten with clubs until the house was totally destroyed. The families and masses who had gathered would continue with increased fervor their lamenting, tearing their hair, and wounding their bodies by heavy blows from stones and clubs. As long as the *matai* lay dead in his house, a *tapu* was instituted where the village could not receive guests, nor was anyone permitted to walk along the road. To do so

invited punishment and contempt from the village and the family in mourning. Similarly, the sea and the lagoon of that village were declared off limits.

Even in the early years of the twentieth century, these death practices were still evident. Kramer, writing in 1901, observed that “the greatest tributes are paid a chief after his death, be it that he lost his life in battle or was assassinated” (Kramer, 1995, p.110). He commented that the people belonging to the chief’s family and village would cut their hair short, beat their heads bloody, burn wounds in their skin, and even remove complete parts of their fingers to show their respect and devotion to the deceased *matai*. Similar to Stair’s (1983) earlier accounts, Kramer writes that there were many mourning processes that occurred prior to the actual death. For instance, while the high chief was on his death bed, special messengers were sent in all directions to call close kin and relatives of the chief to his bedside to hear his *mavaega* (parting words or last pronouncements). I discuss *mavaega* in greater detail later in this chapter. Continuous weeping and wailing could be heard accompanying relatives as they approached the place where the dying *matai* lay, and in anticipation of his last breath (Kramer, 1995).

Early reports also indicate that funeral obsequies of a chief of rank lasted from ten to fifteen days, whether he died of a natural cause, an illness, or warfare. Particular signs of mourning were displayed by the fighting men called *auosoga* (Kramer, 1995). During the period of mourning, the deceased and the death house were watched continuously by men appointed for this task. After the burial, and until the mourning period ended, the days were usually spent in sham boxing fights and wrestling-matches. The nights were reserved for dancing, jesting, and sexual procreation, distinctive to periods of mourning for the dead called *taupiga* or *valegase* (Kramer, 1995; Stair, 1983).

Many aspects of death and mourning culture described immediately above had been largely phased out or replaced when my grandmother Tinā passed away, particularly the blood offerings, the gravesite ritual of genital exposure, and the *tulafale* appeasing the gods. Many of the changes were strongly dictated by Christian influences and were replaced by more solemn behaviours by mourners that reflect Christian and *papalagi* influences; that of

the clergy performing the final rituals and pronouncing a biblical benediction to release the deceased person into God's care.

Returning to Tinā's mourning rituals, a large makeshift tarpaulin shelter was erected next to the family home to be the storehouse for the boxes of *elegi* (tinned mackerels), *pisupo* (tinned corned beef), *apa masi* (cabin bread), kegs of *povi masima* (salted beef), and baked bread, stacked in rows. The food items are exchanged by the bereaved family as a *sua*, a tributary take home meal provided for guests who bring material and financial contributions to assist the family with funeral expenses. The contributions by visiting delegations are referred to as *si'ialofa* (contribution out of love) or *si'i* for short (Simanu, 2002; Va'a, 2001). Traditionally, *si'ialofa* literally means "a gift motivated by love" (Tui Atua, 2006). Although the items exchanged between the grieving family and their guests might well be the same, (*'ie toga, pusa apa, siapo, povi* (whole beef), *meaalofa* (money)), the specific terms used in the exchange process differentiate what is given by whom. Many aspects of reciprocal performance are also reiterated in chapters six and seven (case studies one and two).

All visitors and their contributions are received with orations of gratitude given by an appointed chiefly spokesperson on behalf of the bereaved family. Such welcome ceremonies are an integral part of Samoan cultural exchange generally referred to as *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa* (a detailed discussion follows later in this chapter). During the reciprocal ceremony, an appointed orator from both sides will verbalise their respective exchange of appreciation, gratitude, and good wishes. Upon the completion of their traditional interchange, the visitors will bid farewell while the family turns their attention to the next delegation of support. Visitors normally include *faifeau*, *matai*, church choirs, village folks, extended relatives, and others who are connected to the family or the deceased person in some way. There is generally no viewing of the deceased person during these exchanges.

## Burial customs of old

With Tinā's funeral, there were some burial practices that appeared peculiar to a youngster like me. Such burial practices left me wondering about their purpose and intention. Two such practices involved burying relatives within close proximity to the family home, and the task of reburial for those previously deceased (*liutofaga*). I examine these two burial practices in more detail next.

Goodman (1971) drew two key conclusions about why gravesites were located very close to the family home. Firstly, keeping the gravesite of the deceased close provided a way for the living to stay closely connected with their deceased member, a physical reminder in a way. Burying relatives close by was a demonstration of the family's *alofa* (love) and on-going commitment to maintain the gravesite in good condition. Personal observation of gravesites close to family homes shows that they are often neatly adorned with fresh flowers and paint, unlike some which are located further inland which are often neglected and unkempt.

Secondly, a burial close by enabled the *aitu* (spirit or ghost) of the deceased to keep guard over the *'āiga*, like an unseen sentinel. In traditional times when warfare was rife in Samoa, if the deceased person was a great warrior, enemies would attempt to steal their bodily remains. When this happened, it was believed that the deceased person's *aitu* would no longer be close enough to protect the family. It was the prevailing belief at the time that the spirit of the deceased person would be wandering restlessly without a home; it was therefore imperative to bury relatives close by, and protected. Nowadays, people are more concerned about the deceased person's *aitu* bringing punishment than about the endless wandering. A similar sentiment was voiced by Jared (chapter seven) when the body of his deceased son could not be located immediately after the tsunami. The fear of *mai aitu* (spirit possession/sickness) is especially heightened if the living has failed to adhere to the proper burial rituals to rest the dead, or caused grief to the deceased while alive. Traditionally held beliefs among Samoans reveal that if the dead person's remains are not treated respectfully, his/her *aitu* can return to cause trouble—accidents, pain, disease or death—to family members or those who have not shown proper respect (Kramer,

1995; Turner, 1984). In this regard, the task of *liutofaga* (transferral) served an important purpose.

*Liutofaga* of the remains of previously deceased family members was one that was enacted with carefulness and respect (Goodman, 1971; Tui Atua, 2009a). When my grandmother Tinā died, the skeletal remains of her husband and an auntie who had also died many years previously were exhumed and re-wrapped. These were carefully gathered together to be washed, fragranced with coconut oil mixed with *moso'oi* (ylang-ylang), and wrapped in *siapo* (tapa cloth). The remains were then placed in a room set aside in the *fale*, awaiting their reburial. Conversations with my father, as the paramount title holder of my family, reveal that his eldest sister was appointed with the task of washing and of fragrancing the skeletal remains. *Matai* from the village of Malie were assigned to dig the grave. When the old coffin was revealed, selected family *matai* entered into the grave to lift the skeletal relics of the deceased relatives to the surface for cleaning.

I do not recall observing any cleansing or purification rituals used to specifically remove perceived curses or evil spirits before or after family members handled 'deceased' relatives. Nor was I aware of any prayers specifically performed in the house to ritually cleanse any lingering spirits once the bones and skeletons were reburied. In New Zealand, I regularly observe practices amongst Maori mourners of washing their hands with water as a way of separating and of cleansing themselves from the domains of death, especially upon leaving a burial site. In fact, many public cemeteries in New Zealand have water dispensers for this particular purpose. With my family, I do recollect the care with which the transferral and cleaning of the remains took place. These practices exhibited the respect of the living for the dead.

Earlier in Samoa, particularly Western Samoa, family members of the deceased were not supposed to exhume the remains themselves. Instead, they called villagers from *Salelesi* to perform this service. Salelesi is located in Upolu and lies approximately thirty kilometres east of Apia. This village was specifically appointed for such tasks, and, accordingly, Samoan customary practice demanded payments of *'ie toga* (fine mats) for their service (Goodman, 1971).

This is no longer the case in modern Samoa, where financial consideration requires avoidance of extra expenses through such practices. Families like mine opted to disinter remains of relatives ourselves. This aspect of death practice remains very real for Samoan people, even in modern times. Such attributes of respect and sensitivity helps to attain and maintain connectivity and continuity with the memory of ancestors. While laws in western locales like New Zealand make such practices almost impossible to enact, they are still found in Samoa today.

### **Burial order and continued connections**

When it came time for the burial service, the order for placing of the corpse and reburial was as follows. Tinā was lowered into the site first by appointed family chiefs. Her casket was placed on a woven *fala* (mat) and *siapo* that were laid beneath her. The oiled and fragranced remains of my grandfather, already wrapped in a *siapo*, were placed in the same burial space with Tinā. This burial act signified them as husband and wife being laid to rest together (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Family Burial Site in Samoa (Source: author)

As I reflected back to the time of burial, I felt certain that the skeletal remains of a previously deceased auntie was placed in a separate level of the

grave above my grandparents. However, my father corrected my assumption about Samoan burial order by saying:

It is not right in Samoan customs to bury another person on-top of another unless they were a married couple. Only your grandmother and your grandfather are buried in the same grave, just like your auntie and her husband [see Figure 2]. This is our family practice but others may do things differently. (Taulapapa, personal conversations, 2013)

The auntie's remains were entombed in a separate space within the same gravesite, but, as my father had indicated, not directly above my grandparents.

This gravesite has expanded since Tinā's passing to include others, and currently has eight family members who are buried together on that site which comprises three graves (Figure 2: L - R). The middle grave entombs the remains of my grandparents. On the right of them is the grave of my father's eldest sister and her husband. This particular auntie had lived in New Zealand for many years and passed away in 2007. Her dying wish was to be returned to Samoa to be buried with her husband, who had died in 1981. On the left side on my grandparents' grave is the burial place of two of my younger brothers: the one who died from the drowning incident recounted at the beginning of this thesis, and another who died in a vehicle accident in 1997. They are buried in the same grave with the auntie whose remains were reburied at the ceremony for my grandmother Tinā.

Concerning traditional burial customs, my father laments the mistake that my two brothers are buried together, in addition to their auntie, all in the same grave. This was an oversight which will have to be remedied at some point in time, possibly when the next person who passes away is buried in the same site, and not elsewhere like New Zealand. The members are buried in mounding order with the most recently deceased being placed at the bottom, and the earliest deceased wrapped in *tapa* cloth and entombed in a separate space closer to the top of the grave. As demonstrated by the burial order, positioning does indicate and affirm correctly those hierarchic and social relationships that are importantly observed in the life of Samoan people.

I wonder whether the practice of combined family burials, such the one adopted by my family, is a common practice amongst Samoans. Additionally, can the practice of entombing members in a shared space provide a sense of 'togetherness' both for the living and the dead? Perhaps according to Goodman's argument discussed earlier, having more members within close proximity would then translate to greater protection for the family overall. Accessing such manner of protection reiterates again the vital role of continued connection with the spiritual realm familiar with many Samoan people.

Broadly speaking, contemporary Samoan spirituality can be described as a blending of *fa'asamoa* with Christian customs and traditions (Taule'ale'ausumai, 1997a & 1997b; Makasiale, 2007). This encompassing form of spirituality provides a strong supportive network for grieving communities in today's society. Since the arrival of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in Samoa in 1830, and the later introduction of other Christian churches, there has been an effective integration of Christianity into the traditional social structure (Ablon, 1970). In places like New Zealand, the church continues as the centre of Samoan village life, playing a significant role for Samoan families when death occurs.

The way some Samoan families deal with death points to the "significance both of continuing tradition and of adaptive modifications" (Ablon, 1970, p.209). The continuing memory of those who have passed away can comfort the living, which makes the prospect of death much easier to bear (Treadaway, 2007), much like the visible presence of the gravesites mentioned earlier. In fact, some believed and still believe that the spirit of the deceased may keep in touch after death to be a guide to the living (Makasiale, 2008 cited in Penwarden, 2009), or to protect and be a guardian to the family (Stair, 1983; Turner, 1984). For some Samoans, on-going connection with those who have passed away is a vital part of their genealogical heritage.

## **Samoaan death rituals in New Zealand**

In 1982, at the age of twelve, my family migrated to New Zealand to seek, like others, the promise of a 'better life' and better educational opportunities (Anae, 1998; Seiuli, 2004). This move also provided opportunities to observe and participate in church and Samoan communities outside of Samoa. Initially, the New Zealand scene was vastly different, and foreign, to those that shaped me as a young boy in Malie. One of the most significant aspects of *fa'asamoa* that is carried out with ever-increasing vigour is a modified traditional pattern of funeral observances (Ablon, 1970). Not only do these observances reinforce community solidarity, but their ritualized patterns (*si'ialofa*, *meaalofa*, *taulaga*, *sua*, etc.) highlight the importance of reciprocity and of common support for Samoans. Even more profound is the degree to which many of these ritualized patterns are observed in adopted locations outside of Samoa. I provide below a closer examination of three funerals in New Zealand that I have observed in the past, with two of these deaths involving close family members.

That first funeral service I witnessed was for a young woman who died in a motor vehicle accident, and who had previously attended the church my family were attending at the time. At the end of the church service, those attending were invited to walk past the coffin which was located at the front of the church, to view the deceased and to offer their farewell. The casket was closed with a glass frame that revealed only the deceased girl's face. At the end of the evening, light refreshments were served and the family of the deceased left soon after with the accompanying hearse, never to be seen by me again.

The closed casket and not seeing the deceased being buried was in complete contrast to funeral services I had witnessed in my village. In Samoa, the coffin had remained open throughout and was only shut and sealed before heading to the gravesite. Village folk who were able to do so attended the funeral service and burial, especially if the deceased belonged to the same church. Family members and mourners were often seen kissing, gently touching, lovingly stroking, and conversing with the deceased person before their burial. Such mourning practices maintain the underlying belief that death is not a final ending, but, instead, is part of the continuum of life, a transition between one

world and the next (Barrett, 1998; Goodman, 1971; Tui Atua, 2009b; Turner, 1984). This initial experience left me wondering about the vast difference between Samoa and New Zealand death practices.

In 2005, and again in 2011, I was confronted with the intricate formalities involved in Samoan funeral observance because of the death of two family members, Salafai (pseudonym) and Kiwi. I recount the sequence of events surrounding both of these members' passing to highlight in this chapter, some important aspects of Samoan funeral patterns currently. Although the arrangements may vary from one family group to the next, they generally share similar patterns of address which can include: rallying together before the person passes away, the gathering of the family network and support once the person has died, providing funeral and burial church services, and reciprocating honour. In many instances, whether in Samoa, New Zealand or in other places, burying the dead, and honouring those who gather to mourn have observable patterns to recognise their status within the family, church, village, or district of affiliation. Additionally, the patterns observed in urbanised centres like Auckland or Hamilton might be different to those being practiced in Samoa itself.

When a member is seriously ravaged by an illness, the family draws near to provide support and to encourage the affected person to conquer the infirmity. Such gatherings are accompanied by fervent prayers to God for healing and strength to do 'His will'. Literature discussed previously in this chapter noted similar gatherings in earlier periods. For example, Turner, Stair, and Kramer all reported that those who were connected to the dying person gathered at the location of the ill person with vibrant demonstrations of grief and affection. The display of anguish and affection was generally accompanied by blood offerings or the verbal pleading by the *tūlafale* to the god-of-death (see Kramer, 1995; Stair, 1983; Turner, 1984). The influence of Christianity has largely resulted in the replacement of such behaviours, and where the main focus now is through seeking God's divine intervention.

If death appeared certain, and if the dying person was an important title holder, then a *mavaega* (dying wishes) is important during their final moments while still alive (also discussed in chapters two and eight). The whole family

gathers in order to be instructed about the final wishes by the departing member. Tuvale (1968) explains that the purpose of a *mavaega* is equivalent to a last will and testament, and it may be decreed in this manner: *O la'u mavaega e fa'apea* (my departing wishes are these . . .). However, if the dying person is an untitled man, an unmarried woman, or a child, a *mavaega* is not sought or given with these members. The most appropriate practice in their final moments is to provide them with as much comfort as possible.

Kramer (1995) has documented just how integral a *mavaega* is in the grieving process, particularly one that also reflects a known *feagaiga* or covenant. A verbalized *mavaega* serves an important function to the *'āiga's* purpose and mandate in moving forward. It helps the family to maintain continuity through specific directives imparted through the final wishes of the dying chief. An important part of the *mavaega* is the appointment of the new successor to govern the family in the absence of the deceased *matai*. Such appointments can be a source of contention amongst members competing for their right to the vacant title and rank. Despite any disagreements, feuds are generally laid aside in favour of mourning the deceased, and giving him a good funeral that reflects his status in the *'āiga* and *nu'u* (village). Such perceived acceptance of the *mavaega* was also observed with the passing of the *tafa'ifā* Malietoa Vainu'upo as discussed earlier in chapter two. And like Vainu'upo's *mavaega*, the burial can be followed by contending parties feuding over the various claims in accordance with the *mavaega* decree. Kramer (1995) also reported that relatives brought *toga* (fine mats) and *siapo* (tapa cloths) to stack them around and over the dying person. This practice seems to convey the message to the dying person that even in "one's last hour, it is nice to die surrounded by wealth" (Kramer, 1995, p.110).

My nephew Kiwi was diagnosed with cancer in 2010. He underwent numerous operations, scans, and rehabilitative treatments to combat the tumour. Later scans revealed that the cancer had spread and was aggressively attacking all his vital organs. The disease left a previously active young man, one who had won many awards as an emerging rugby league player, fatigued and out of breath, needing constant physical assistance. A cancer specialist informed our

family that further treatments were not that effective in combating the cancer, less than two months before he passed away.

The medical specialist also suggested it would be better for Kiwi to be cared for at home, and to be assisted by his family instead of seeing out his last weeks in the hospital. The doctors' declaration was met with an urgent call by the family leader to the wider network for intense prayer for Kiwi's healing. His relatives also made it their task to encourage Kiwi, and that God willing, he will recover. Driven by their strong Christian faith, the family refused to accept that death could visit such a young life. His family refused to entertain the thought, or even talk about the possibility, of Kiwi dying. He was too young.

The author of this thesis was able to *talanoa* with Kiwi about these crucial moments of his life, having previously consented to become a participant of this research project. Kiwi wanted his life narratives to be used to enhance general understandings on this important topic. It was two weeks prior to his death that the opportunity arose to converse with Kiwi about his journey under death's shadow. Kiwi shared these thoughts about his battle, and his love for his grandparents who he referred to as mum and dad:

I am ready to die, but I know mum and dad [grandparents] don't want me to give up. I don't want to disappoint them. I will keep on fighting for them but as for me, I am ready.

Kiwi's readiness to face death came as a surprise because those praying for and supporting him insisted that he would overcome the cancer, and live. Kiwi also acknowledged that he would keep on battling because this is what his family wanted him to do. But less than two weeks later, his ravaged body finally yielded to the cancerous invader, though not without putting up a good fight.

In his last week of life, Kiwi was transferred back to the hospital so that he could be closely monitored. By this stage of his battle, he was left breathing through an oxygen mask around-the-clock. Such restrictions caused severe physical pain, preventing him from lying down, or sleeping. Although the physical signs were ominously dictating his final moments, his community of supporters remained unwilling to accept that 'death' was his fate. They kept praying and hoping for a miracle, or a cure. Reflecting back to that period of time, it was not

the fear of 'calling down' or 'hurrying death' (Te Awekotuku & Nikora, 2009) that rendered a discussion on the topic unapproachable; rather, the family's steadfast desire for healing became their sole focus. Every visitor was ushered to Kiwi's bedside to echo encouragement and to pray. Kiwi knew without a doubt that in his last moments of life, he was never alone in his battle. His family and supporters were with him all the way through to his final breath. Family support of this type is also reported by Tauivi in chapter eight just prior to his father passing away.

Conversations with Kiwi two weeks prior provided the opportunity for the author to talk with family members about the possibility of Kiwi dying. It was also imperative for these supporters to consider that God might have plans for Kiwi. They were also reminded that they have to be prepared to release their beloved into the God's arms. After hearing this announcement, the family refused to give up hope and urged Kiwi *-fa'amalosi, aua le fa'avaivai-* encouraging him to stay strong, and not to give up.

The family gathered close, sensing that with Kiwi's worsening state, there was little they could do but to pray, and hope. The atmosphere in the room was punctuated by prolonged silence, unwavering hope, and silent prayers. This was not the occasion for frivolous conversations, rather, a solemn presence pervaded the atmosphere, leaving those present grasping to the faint hope of deliverance. Slowly, some of the family were anticipating the unwelcomed yet familiar adversary, death. On 13 November 2013, not long after midnight, Kiwi drew his last breath. He was held by his older brother while surrounded by his family and friends.

Unlike Kiwi's prolonged battle with cancer that led to his eventual death, Salafai's passing was sudden and unexpected. Salafai was a kind and gentle man. He was an esteemed chief within the family and a respected person of good standing in the Auckland Samoan community. He and his wife Upolu (pseudonym) were enjoying a waltz at a family graduation celebration when he suddenly collapsed and died from a heart attack. Attendants with medical experience vigorously attempted CPR but to no avail. Salafai was pronounced dead at the scene before he was taken to a hospital nearby. During the week of mourning, I

was at Salafai's home when I overheard Upolu's conversation with a close relative where she recounted Salafai's final moments of life. She said something along these lines:

He seemed different that day. He was oddly quiet as though he sensed something was going to happen. He insisted on staying close to me over the duration of the function even though there were many of his friends that he would normally interact with.

Salafai chose to stay close to his beloved on this peculiar day. His last living moment and final words contained affectionate sentiments reserved only for his wife. Upolu continues:

Then he whispered to me; 'Come and let us dance'. It's as though he knew what was going to happen to him.

These final words compounded Salafai's commitment to his *feagaiga* (covenant) with his beloved wife. In the Samoan world, every relationship is sacred (*mamalu*) and is sealed by the *feagaiga* (Lui, 2003).

The term *feagaiga* derives its significance from the root word *feagai* which means "face-to-face or, to dwell together cordially" (Pratt, 1911, cited in Schoeffel, 1995, p.85). In relational institutions such as marriage, *feagaiga* plays a crucial role in the way such covenants maintain their sacredness. Each and every *feagaiga* relationship is defined by its *tua'oi* (boundaries) which are further governed by *tapu* or *sa* (Tui Atua, 2011a & 2011b). The *tua'oi* is established by the *feagaiga* relationships between them. Like marriage, one of the most important and revered of all *feagaiga* relationships is between a brother and his sister. This relationship is sacred. The *ilāmutu* or eldest sister in particular, held significant power positions within the *feagaiga* covenant (Kramer, 1995; Stair, 1983). The sanction "surrounds her with an aura through which she becomes similar to an *aitu* (spirit)" (Cain, 1971, p.176). Breaching the *tapu* within the *feagaiga* context can inadvertently result in a curse, but if one maintains good relations (*teu le vā*), she can be a source of *fa'amanuiaga* (blessings). Schoeffel (1995) refers to this special covenant relationship between brother and sister when she writes:

The sister, when born, is known as *Tama Sa* (sacred child), the brother, *Tama Tane* (male child). There is a well-known saying

which reflects this covenant relationship: 'a sister is the inner corner (*ioimata*) of her brother's eye'. (Schoeffel, 1995, p.86)

Because of the power to prevent or attract a curse, the brother is required under the *feagaiga* to seek his sister's face-to-face agreement for any decisions relating to lands and title within the '*āiga*. Without her covenant agreement, he is at risk of being on the receiving end of a curse.

Even a powerful *matai* is very careful in the way he treats his sister, lest she calls evil on him and his children. As a result, males are vulnerable socially and spiritually through their sisters. The *feagaiga* demands recognition of the sister's status within important distributions. Stair (1983) documented how the *ilāmutu* was acquired in earlier times in order to avert the feared sisterly curse. To remove a curse, the sister would perform a ritual called *pūpūga* in which she would drink some coconut juice into her mouth, and then proceed to blow it out again over her brother's body. By performing such a ritual, the sister ensured the removal of any curse she may have held against her dying brother (Kramer, 1995; Stair, 1983). Her demonstration also freed her from any guilt or suspicion of being the cause of her brother's death. This practice was still carried out by bereaved families when Kramer began his work in Samoa many years later.

The sister was ultimately responsible for banishing all disease and curses into the grave through the performance of a gravesite ritual. Kramer writes that the *ilamutu* was the only person permitted to be at the head of the deceased, ready to pronounce for the deceased the last rites of passage from this world to the next. Even with her powers in life, the fears of death or curses ensured that her performance of significant rituals led to a peaceful farewell. Kramer writes:

Into this chamber four men placed the corpse wrapped in '*ie toga* (fine mats) facing east, while the sister, sitting at the head and swinging a piece of *siapo* (white bark cloth) shouted: 'Pity for you! Go with the good will and void of anger towards us, take all of our diseases with you and let us stay alive'. Pointing towards the west she then called: 'Misfortune is there!' and to the east 'Good fortune is there!' And turning to the south, 'Misery is down there, leave us the good fortune'. (1995, p.111)

The roles reserved for women or sisters within mourning periods, such as those described in the above statement, are seldom, if ever performed at the gravesite

nowadays. The three female participants of this study acknowledged their awareness of the *feagaiga* covenant, but gave no evidence of how this role was acted out in their personal relationships with their husbands or male siblings. It remains to be seen what has been lost as a result of this adaptation and accommodation. Further investigation should consider whether these modified traditions are actually helpful to the bereaved in reconnecting them with daily life routines.

### **Falelauasi to accommodate death**

Many in the Samoan community recognise that with a death, the general events will include: important family *fono* to consolidate resources; memorial church services; transferring the body home; receiving donations from visitors; and reciprocating honour to all who come to offer support. These events represent significant markers in mourning periods, providing mourners with a helpful path to transition them through the various cultural and religious rituals involved. They also signal a start point and a completion period for cultural and religious rituals that underpin Samoan death customs. During these times, traditional leadership ensures that the family as a whole respond appropriately to their overall responsibilities. The central role of leadership and decision-making in Samoan death culture renders the need for further examination on the topic. I provide this critical examination in chapter six.

With most Samoan deaths, an official death notice is published in the local paper or broadcast on radio. Personal announcements are also relayed by various members among their own network of relatives, friends, and associates. Announcing death remains paramount in Samoan society so that relatives throughout Samoa and other parts of the world are informed about this event. Television announcements are commonly used in Samoa nowadays in addition to radio and newspaper broadcast. Advances in technology have also enabled such events to be announced via mobile phone text messages and through social network internet sites.

Concerning technological advancements such as the internet, the capability of instant graphic uploads to these virtual cyber-network sites allows regular updates of photographs, videos, and other information to be viewed worldwide in a very short time. These types of forums enable families and acquaintances located elsewhere to become easily connected and feel closer during such sorrowful times. In the last decade, and certainly following Salafai's passing, social network sites like Facebook have provided a semi-personal forum for sharing support and for encouraging family members both near and far. I include three comments from Kiwi's Facebook page to illustrate the use of this medium for communication. The comments are left in the original written form.

Thanks to all who took the time to visit me in hospital. Seeing and being surrounded by my loved ones is always the best medicine. Please don't look down on me because I have cancer. Instead walk beside me, step by step, moment by moment, time after time. (Kiwi – 21 August 2012)

To our nephew Anson Kiwi Seiuli, now you get to rest, no longer in pain, or struggling for air. You are now in the loving arms of your saviour, Lord Jesus. You made the right decision to give him your heart 3 weeks ago. Proud of you and privileged that God used me to pray with you that salvation prayer. See you in time my neph. (Family - 13 Nov 2012)

We are truly blessed to have your love and never ending support during this difficult time. Thank you for your love and kindness not only to my brother Kiwi, but to my family as well. Your love and kindness has eased the pain left by my brother's passing. No words or money can ever repay your kindness but we pray that the good Lord continue to bless you and your families in all you do. Love you always my family. (Family – USA, 19 Nov, 2012)

Many New Zealand-born and younger generations of Samoans find this type of social network forum convenient and familiar for connecting and for offering support to each other.

The availability of such avenues not only increases the profile of these important life events globally, but they also raise concerns about the use, maintenance, and confidentiality offered through such virtual spaces. The ability to 'display' death online may be quite appropriate for one group, but another group might see this as offensive. To what extent are photographs displayed seen as 'sensible' rather than 'shocking'? Is there a defined standard about what

should be displayed and what should not? I raise such concerns, because, as the person who was appointed to keep others updated, it was also my duty to provide photographs, videos, and updated comments with Kiwi's passing. It is important to consider and discuss such issues, especially as technology continues to play a significant role in connecting and supporting the community of mourners in contemporary times. On this point, caution is still important as we journey forward and more research is needed on this essential issue. Chapter nine (conclusion) provides a discussion on the future role of technology in Samoan death practices.

Funeral preparation in New Zealand contexts usually begins immediately after the pronouncement of death. *Matai* members, close bilateral kin, and older respected relatives' *fono* (assemble) to make the practical decisions for burial arrangements, and for religious services (Ablon, 1970). Aside from various *fono* to gather and combine resources, preparation also means arranging space in the family home as a makeshift *falelauasi* (mourning house) for the deceased to lie in state. At the same time, the familiar tarpaulin shelter is erected in the backyard for food preparation and other general duties. The family garage is also converted into a *fa'afaletui* (meeting area), and the storage facility for *si'ialofa* items that are donated by visiting delegations, and additional resources that are collected by the family themselves. In contemporary urban settings such as Auckland or Hamilton, those who rally to support a family in crisis are not limited to one's extended family, but embrace other Samoans who may have been friends of the deceased through work, church, sporting clubs, and in other settings. Ablon (1971) suggests that relatives or close family friends will make an effort to visit the deceased at his house in order to make their presentation and offer consolation to the family.

The practice of *fa'aalologa fa'asamoa* (reciprocated gifting) is a significant process within death and mourning occasions for Samoan people everywhere. It is essential that one must reciprocate with those who support one's *'āiga* in their times of need. Embree (1933) observed this practice in a village in Tutuila and commented that "exchange is the very essence not only of courtesy but of self-respect" amongst Samoans (p.566). To withhold the

exchange or to be denied the opportunity to express themselves in the form of reciprocated exchange was in effect, to “seize their souls” (Embree, 1933, p.566). In essence, what Embree is suggesting with the ritualised practices of *si’ialofa* and the counter exchange of *sua* and *meaalofa*, speaks to the heart and soul of *fa’asamoa* traditions. Such heartfelt exchanges are motivated by *aga’alofa* (compassion) that reflects Christian and community compassion. I provide a more detailed discussion on *fa’aalologa fa’asamoa* later in this chapter.

In past times, the deceased person was buried relatively quickly, either on the day of their death, or the next day. A quick burial is a practice which was also confirmed by a number of my older research participants who grew up in Samoa. Rarely was the body of the deceased person left for longer periods because their remains decomposed quite quickly. Nowadays, embalming and refrigeration allow the body to be left for much longer periods before burial. The only exception was seen with the victims of the tsunami of 2009 who were buried within a short period because of the mass deaths involved.

Embalming and preparation of the body of the deceased is a vital part of the grieving process of many Samoans, including my family. The advances in embalming practices have permitted more people to visit the deceased in their homes than would have been possible in earlier periods. Certain members of the immediate family, particularly the spouse and the children of the deceased, are assigned the task of dressing the deceased relative. In this capacity, ‘dressing’ of the deceased was a first-time personal experience. For my family, those who returned to dress Kiwi were his grandmother, his girlfriend, his older brother, and the author. While Kiwi was being dressed, conversations continued to flow between the four family members, much of it being communicated in light-hearted humour and playful tones amidst sorrowful pain. Photographs provided some momentary interludes into the process, capturing these precious memories.

With Salafai’s passing, his wife and their three children were present to dress him before he was transferred to his home later that same week. His coffin was laid out in the living room that was adorned to be his temporary resting place. Adhering to the recommendations of the funeral director, Salafai’s family

kept his body in the casket rather than have him out on the prepared mattresses because of the length of time he was to be home. When a chief died in earlier periods, his body was placed on a mound of *siapo* while he lay in state (Kramer, 1995). The top *siapo*, during these earlier bereavements, was removed as it became soaked through with the fluid excreted from the body of the deceased. Modern embalming processes used with Salafai's and Kiwi's bodies enabled longer access without needing to return them back to the mortuary, or needing to constantly change the bedding to remove bodily fluids.

While Salafai was housed in his living room, other activities continued in the family home as usual: the kitchen area continued to be used for cooking; the dining table was used for eating; and the bedrooms for sleeping. However, an unspoken but clear invisible boundary line existed with the living room where Salafai lay. No eating of food or unnecessary activities occurred while his body was present. These modern practices are vastly different to the ones noted by Turner (1984) in the nineteenth century:

While the [dead] body is in the house, no food is eaten under the same roof; the family have their meals outside, or in another house. Those who attended the deceased were formerly most careful not to handle food, and for days, were fed by others as if they were helpless infants. (1984, p.228)

The evolving nature of funeral practices in Samoan/New Zealand contexts, particularly the functions attributed to the *falelauasi*, is a vast contrast with traditional mourning practices indicated by Turner.

The traditional death house was a place set aside for the dead and for those who sat guarding and attending to the body. Cain (1971) also reports the distinction traditionally involved with death when he describes how:

a member of the *tamasā* line sits next to the body and keeps death-watch. She anoints the dead person and wraps him in *tapa* and mat. At the other end of the house, all the women and girls of the village congregate to sing dirges and hymns all night. They must not go near the body and the *tamasā*. (1971, p.176).

No other activities were permitted in the house in earlier times, especially the serving or eating of food which was considered an abomination and consequently attracted wrath and punishment (Kramer, 1995; Stair, 1983; Turner,

1984). Food preparation was carried out in a separate house designated for it. But with modern adaptations to mourn the dead in their family homes, it is not possible to have separate places to serve these important cultural traditions as was the case in earlier days.

Of greater significance was the on-going use of the living room for family conversations. People who visited sat in the seats around the living room area conversing all while Salafai lay in his casket. Such similar scenarios were also present at Kiwi's home visits. Each and every family member had their time in the living room. At different stages, sobs, wailing, talking, and laughter could be heard echoing from the living room. The events that took place in the living room space seem to suggest that mourners were connecting with their departed beloved, while at the same time comforting each other in their collective loss. The strong sense of kinship prevalent in Samoan society does not end with death but endures and encompasses families and ancestors who have passed (Tui Atua, 2009b). In this regard, death simply marks the end of a physical existence, without precluding a real sense of enduring bonds (Harrison, Kahn & Hsu, 2005; Penwarden, 2009). The living room came alive. Its space was filled with loving memories, tears, sorrows, and shared experiences that evoked both laughter and sadness. The space became so much more than just a room; it was literally transformed into a place that created *le vā tapuia* -a sacred space to reconnect. The space became hallowed in some way, shared by both the living and the departed. This way of celebrating life and death is a regular occurrence with many Samoan families in grief.

Therapeutically, the living room experience provides meaningful pathways in grief resolution for the many mourners who spent time there. It provided a physical and consecrated space for them to express cathartic emotions related to passing of their loved one. The physical space enabled bonding between the living relatives thus proclaiming – 'we are one in our loss'. Further evidence of this oneness followed once members gave their contribution and when they completed their 'living room' visit. They helped out wherever required or needed because their physical presence communicated their loyalty to the group.

## Family and community support

The physical manifestation of support and of loyalty described immediately above gathers momentum during the week of mourning. That is, soon after the death is announced to relatives and friends, a complex network goes into motion gathering resources (Ablon, 1970; Va'a, 2001). The *matai* system I explained in chapter two is what defines traditional leadership and authority structure for many Samoans. This message is reiterated by my participants in chapters six, such as my key informant Taulapapa who reported that “[*matai*] leadership is for the wellbeing of the family, the village and the church”. In funerals, or for larger *fa'alavelave* occasions, the family head, in consultation with elders and other title holders, provides instructions of what the family expectations are, what needs to be contributed, and when these must be gathered together (Va'a, 2001). Case study one (see chapter six) specifically outlines the key functions of traditional *matai* leadership within funeral preparations. Ablon (1970) emphasises that there seems to be inherent prestige for the *'āiga* of the deceased and the community to which they belong, in being able to raise as much support as possible to demonstrate their commitment and loyalty to their departed. Accumulating lavish support continues as a preference throughout many Samoan communities today, a phenomenon communicated by many research participants in chapter six as well.

For the funeral service, the lead *matai*, his *faletua* (wife), and the *tūlafale* (orator chief) perform an important *fa'afeiloaiga* ceremony (face-to-face family dialogue) to prepare the family for their combined responsibility for the funeral service (Braginsky, 2003). The *fa'afeiloaiga* ceremony is important because the roles of each member are discussed and delegated accordingly. With Salafai's funeral preparation, representatives from both sides of the extended family met to consult and agree upon the processes involved and to address the specific requirements for the funeral: the quantity of *'ie toga* to be acquired by each side, the financial contributions, the food items necessary for the *sua* and *taulaga* (tributary offering), the floral arrangements, the number of pall bearers, and the feast for when the funeral service is completed.

In past times, customs and traditional practices associated with funerals were meant to provide relief (financially and emotionally), and do justice to the family and person deceased in terms of dignifying the memory and legacy of the deceased (Tui Atua, 2009b). Some current Samoan funerals practices have become elaborate, expensive and stressful, and as a result, families are often left with financial debts associated with funeral expenses (further discussion in chapters six, seven, and eight). Worse, residual feelings of resentment after the *fa'alavelave* can lead to a state of mental and spiritual exhaustion. Such ailments can cause long-term emotional stress and depression (Ministry of Health, 2006; SPINZ, 2007). The social stigma of losing face is so great that *matai* are willing to do almost anything to avoid the embarrassment and shame associated with not being able to measure up to what is expected (Tui Atua, 2006). Furthermore, it would be discourteous to accept gifts from family members without some redistribution in return once the obligation to the *fa'alavelave* has been addressed. Left over resources are reallocated back to family members, which has to be managed with equity, integrity, and fairness. This is an enormous task; to ensure that each person receives a share of the remaining resources according to their level of contribution. To cheat members out of their fair share is to ensure disgruntled and non-compliant relatives on future occasions when their support may be required, but may not be forthcoming. The head chief must also be prepared to become the peace maker in family quarrels, and, often times, to receive the least at the redistribution of family resources. Many of the issues of contention raised here are echoed further by *Taulapapa* in his case study account in chapter six.

There is a Samoan saying: "*A e iloa a'u i Togamau, ou te iloa foi oe i Siulepa*" which means: "if you do me a good deed in Togamau, I will reciprocate in Siulepa" (Tui Atua, 2009b, p.5). The reciprocal performance of customs is motivated by the knowledge that if performed with the best motives, then they will be reciprocated at some point in time. As Ablon (1971) suggests, there is prescribed expectation to offer help to other family members as a way of showing respect. The strength of such vital connections supports Samoan communities to better handle death and grief processes than the general

population. Such network structure available in Samoan communities provides the stabilizing force for personal and social life challenges, which further enables the “extraordinary financial and moral backing” (Ablon, 1971, p.335) required to address cultural responsibilities. Such social support is meant to contribute to the alleviation of emotional distress characteristically associated with bereavement. All contributors and their gifts are recorded in the *api* (a Samoan funeral recording system) for future reference. I present a sample of the recorded contributions and distribution of finances and material resources later in this chapter (see figure 3).

The *matai* and family members prepare themselves to welcome any visiting delegations with the appropriate recital of assigned *fa’alupega* (genealogical connections), and to acknowledge their gifts of support. When a delegation presents their *si’ialofa items*, *meaalofa* (financial gift) and *toga* (fine mats), these are inspected and recorded in the *api* by the host family. About half of the money and fine mats are returned back to the visitors (Braginsky, 2003). Returning items to visitors is a necessary part of the exchange (Ablon, 1970), where the receiving family will relay their heartfelt desire to reimburse the visitor’s resources in kind. The guests are also compensated with added cartons of tinned fish and other food items to take home with them. These items are supplemented by a monetary *pasese* or travel reimbursement. After receiving their *sua* and *pasese*, the delegation will eventually return and redistribute some of these items to their own network of contributing members. This completes the obligatory exchange between these reciprocating groups.

As alluded to earlier in this chapter, a *sua* is a ceremonial meal offered to visiting delegation as a mark of welcome, and in recognition of their contribution to aid the bereaving family (Ablon, 1970). Historically, the following items are generally included in a *sua* presentation: a *niu* (baby coconut) with the spine of a *lau niu* (coconut palm) inserted into it, a tray of cooked *taro* and a cooked chicken, an *‘ie toga*, and a box of *pisupo* (corned beef) or a keg of *povi masima* (salted meat). A ceremonial *sua* is not to be eaten immediately; rather, the exchange symbolises honour and respect. In recent times, the enculturation of

western-style values within Samoan culture has meant modification of such traditions to reflect a shift in changing customs.

Frequently, and increasingly in ceremonial exchanges, items which formed part of a traditional *sua* are being replaced by westernised alternatives intended to convey the customary meanings. For instance, a baby coconut is now being replaced by a bottle of soft drink, and the coconut palm frond is replaced by a \$10 dollar bill tucked into its mouth. Similarly, *tapa* cloths of traditional times are being replaced by rolls of patterned fabric materials. The status of the recipients is often revealed by the quality of the fabric presented to them. In some cases, a bolt of sequined silk lace might be presented to one particular person while the rest of their party would receive cotton *lavalava* material. In this way, Samoans who live outside of their homeland have adapted their traditions to incorporate material aspects of Western-influenced culture and its lifestyles (Braginsky, 2003; Va'a, 2001).

The financial commitment to bury a Samoan person in places like Hamilton, New Zealand, is quite substantial. For example, the funeral director's costs for embalming, storage, and transporting the deceased is normally around \$5000 (NZD), or more. A burial plot is also about \$5000, with additional costs for digging the grave. Another considerable cost is the catering of food during the week of mourning. Food plays a vital role in people's opinion of whether an event has been 'done well' or not, and events such as a death are closely associated with family honour (see Ablon, 1970 & 1971; Tui Atua, 1994; Turner, 1984). With Kiwi's funeral feast, the cost of catering came to about \$5800 to feed around two hundred and fifty people. This cost does not include the extra food provided to visitors throughout the week, or the food involved with the formal reciprocal rituals (*fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa*).

Va'a (2001, p.168, Table 1) provides the following figures to show the costs for a funeral he attended in Sydney, Australia:

<i>Lauava</i> (food for funeral participants)	\$6,000
Gravesite, funeral parlour, casket, transport, etc	\$6,500
<i>Sua</i> (monetary gift to ministers and guests)	\$550
Gift for deceased's husband from Samoa	\$2,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,050</b>

Table 1: Costs for a funeral in Sydney Australia. (source: Va'a, 2001, p.168)

Although there is a growing concern over the high costs in maintaining some end-of-life cultural rituals, many Samoan families have shown that they can take care of their responsibilities by pooling their resources together. These important cultural and religious enactments demonstrate a way of honouring their deceased relative, their founding ancestors, and their community of support.

Contemporary ritual elements such as those which I have discussed here can be traced to earlier accounts of Samoan funeral observances as recorded by the early missionaries. For example, Turner (1984) observed that all who came to the burial brought presents which were all distributed again so that each person received something in return for what he had brought. Mead (1930) also documented the giving of food, *'ie toga*, and *tapa* cloths as offerings by village communities who attended funerals. The host family would then redistribute some of these items back to its guests and family members at the conclusion of a *maliu* (death). Food was consumed at the funeral feast, while goods were either returned to their donors or redistributed. In Tutuila, Manu'a, Hawaii, and North America particularly, *'ie toga* were returned to donors. This form of control came about because of the scarcity of these cultural treasures and their declining availability in these locations, unlike the greater volume found in Samoa.

Additional financial and material gifts were also distributed to ministers, important dignitaries, church groups, and families who were present during the

*fa'aaloaloga* ceremony. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the *api* provided an important record of all contributions made by various groups. The *api* is generally designated to the care of a senior member of the family. I have provided the first four pages of the *api* (Figure 3) that records the *si'ialofa*, monetary donations, as well as the reciprocated gifts, donated and exchanged by Kiwi's family.

As shown in the *api* pages provided, the total monetary donations received came to around \$41,000 (NZD) plus \$2,500 (AUD) (red circle). The total donations included all sources from which they were given to the family, such as church, the community, other Samoans living in the area, CanTeen Foundation, extended family, and so on. The records also show that about twenty *'ie toga* (fine mats) was donated to the family (purple circle). In reciprocation, the family gave over \$18,000 (NZD, blue box) in monetary gifts to ministers, *matai*, church groups (choirs, youth group, and so forth) in addition to *pusa pisupo* (boxes of corned beef), *pusa moa* (boxes of chicken), and other food items (black box). A similar amount of *'ie toga* was also given to various guests. The remainder of the money was used to pay other death related expenses such as the funeral plot, embalming fees, the shared feast after the burial service, and more (green box).

Such simple recording systems ensure that the family remains transparent in the allocation and reciprocation of the resources acquired during a funeral. There is a growing sense of apprehension amongst Samoan communities, including my participants, that some funerals are a source of wealth accumulation by some families. That is to say, a death is used by the family to acquire resources and finances from others, but give little back in the reciprocal exchange. However, the example of the *api* provided in this case clearly demonstrates that the money and material resources donated were similar to what was returned back to the various donors, and the remainder was used to cover the rest of the expenses as indicated earlier. In this example, the funeral event took care of itself through the gifts and donations received from all sources.



The outcome of such well-managed events ensured no outstanding debts, an accomplishment that is just as important, if not much more critical to the psychological and emotional recovery of surviving members. The significance of this desired outcome is reiterated by my participants in chapters six and seven, where they are advocating for more responsible demands on families to contribute to funerals beyond their means. Aside from alleviating unnecessary debts, a well-managed funeral event can leave family members feeling satisfied and honoured.

### **Memorial church services**

The central role of the church in the lives of many Samoans, as discussed in chapter two, has resulted in its increased role in providing comfort and support to grieving families. Memorial church services remain prominent during the week of mourning and prior to the burial. When these services actually began is not documented in earlier written accounts. Although Malietoa Vainu'upo heralded the wider acceptance of the LMS church in many parts of Samoa, there are no records of memorial services being held to honour him (see Kramer, 1995) at his death. Mead (1930) does provide an account of a church service she observed in Tutuila whereby all who were related to the deceased were expected to attend. Ablon (1970 & 1971) also provide an account of memorial services being held in North America to commemorate those who had passed away in a fire. What is not clear in the literature reviewed is the exact period when these church memorial services were first held. Whether the adoption of memorial services was initiated by the earlier missionaries, or was added in later periods, it has become a mainstay of end-of-life rituals for many Samoan families, including my participants.

Many Samoan communities have integrated their own style to memorial services where the host church works closely with the grieving family to honour the deceased person (Ablon, 1971). The deceased person may be taken to a number of church gatherings before being buried, thus recognising their spiritual involvement. These church services also enable spiritual support and a ready-made community of physical and moral support to grieving families. Typically,

there are two main church services to be held: the *Family Service* and the *Funeral Service*. A format for the church services is also drafted to outline the specific roles the family and church members are to perform during the church services (see Figure 4).

Service formats such as these are commonly used with Samoan funerals in recent periods. The service format is useful in communicating to the gathered audience any exceptional news that may lead to a departure from what are deemed normal patterns in Samoan funeral customs. For example, the service format for Kiwi’s funeral service (see Figure 4 – red dotted circle) outlines a *haka* (Maori action dance) performance upon his coffin exiting the church building. The Maori haka, to be performed by his school friends, was to honour Kiwi in a uniquely indigenous ‘New Zealand’ tradition (Armstrong, 1964). In my own experience of Samoan funerals over many years, this was the first time I have observed a *haka* being performed to honour a deceased person. The inclusion of this performance also indicates the growing influence of Maori culture being incorporated and blended into Samoan/New Zealand ways of life. This was a truly humbling and awe-inspiring experience for the grieving family and those who witnessed this occasion for the first time.



Figure 4: Format used for Kiwi’s Family Service. (Source: author)

The pattern of formal and informal services varies according to the church with which the family is affiliated (Ablon, 1970). Throughout the week, informal family *lotu* are conducted in the deceased person's home with family members and others who were visiting at the time. In some instances, particularly concerning the death of a parent, two memorial services will be held. The first service is held in the adopted country, followed by the deceased being transferred to Samoa for the final service and burial in the family burial plot. This can be very expensive for the family because of the extra costs involved, as was the case with the auntie who was returned to Samoa to be buried with her husband mentioned earlier in this chapter. It had been her dying wish, one which was honoured by the family.

With the family service for Salafai, I was assigned as one of the pall bearers to carry him into the church. I recall a *matai* turning and instructing the pall bearers by saying:

Smile when you carry the coffin into the church . . . do not show the church your sad faces, show them we are a happy family.

To me, this command seemed contradictory to the intended purpose of the family service, that is, to come together to mourn and grieve as a collective unit. In such circumstances, it was more than appropriate to have a sad countenance because it matched the occasion. However, like this person who gave the instructions, some might perceive that this was not the place to publicly show any appearance of weakness which might come from a sorrowful expression.

The request seemed to be particularly directed to the men who were given the task of carrying the casket into the church. Dutifully we obeyed. I have since wondered what would have happened if we had allowed our emotions to dictate as might have been the practice in earlier periods. In this instance, it appeared to me that funeral customs had changed to display stoic expressions that publicly displayed our ability to 'hold it together'. Such staunchness of disposition in light of our shared adversity seems to contrast with the open expressions of grief as recorded by Kramer (1995), Stair (1995), and Turner (1984) discussed earlier.

The family service proceeded for about three hours, with hymns, speeches, and family *molimau* (testimonials) filling the auditorium. At the end of the family service, Salafai was returned to his home for the final night with the family. Traditionally, the final night before burial was an occasion for an all-night vigil, where the family and villagers would congregate at the deceased's house to join in songs and prayers offered to the gods. These all night mourners are referred to as *osi lagi* (heavenly worshippers/priests). Throughout the night, the villagers' purpose was to remove the sadness of death and return the household to joy (Copp & Pula, 1950; Kramer, 1995). Activities such as singing took place while the family cooked and prepared for the next day's activities (Ablon, 1971).

In both Turner's (1984) and Kramer's (1995) reports, there was a real dedication by men to this all-night vigil practice in earlier times. The acts by the men were significant in showing honour and respect to the memory of the deceased *ali'i*. Men lit fires and keep them burning around the *falelauasi* and in the village *malae*, which was a designated open space for village gatherings. Fires were believed to have kept evil spirits away from the deceased person and the family. Fires also ensured that village warriors were ready to avert any attempts by enemies to steal the body of the deceased, who would then desecrate their remains. If this happened, it was a cause of greater grief to the relatives and shame to the village or district to whom the deceased belonged.

Such vigils changed tone with the adoption of hymns instead of ancient songs under the influence of the missionaries. At the time of Mead's research, the old Samoan death chants had been displaced by Christian hymns (Mead, 1930). Additionally, Christian choirs had taken the responsibility from the untitled men's and women's groups for the customary singing in shifts at the time of an important death. The two songs that follow were sung at funerals in traditional Samoa according to Kramer (1995) and Tui Atua (2011a).

The first song is recorded by Kramer while the second was presented by Tui Atua (2011a) in his *James Ritchie Memorial Symposium* address. The English translations to both songs are provided by Tui Atua. The examples and emphases given in the first song illustrate those things prized by Samoans and common to their life experiences (Tui Atua, 2011a). The dirge also depicts a life lived to the

fullest, without consideration for reprisal or fear of death. With the imagery in the first chant of being fully alive, praise is accorded to those who have the joy of offspring or of high rank, whilst condemnation is reserved for those who do not attain these in life. However, the end of it all is vanity. As the chant proclaim, *lefulefu le i'uga*, that is, both the high and the lowly ranked end as dust.

*Mai e, mai ea lea*  
 He is coming, he is rising  
*Oti e, oti ea lea,*  
 Death, death approaches  
*Ua igoa ese na'ua,*  
 Its name is so bizarre  
*O tua'oi ma le palapala*  
 The boundary with the earth/mud  
*Tapai faatali e le 'āiga!*  
 Why for the family awaits!  
*O alu malaga pe po lima*  
 Is he travelling for five nights  
*Pe po fa? Peu su mai ie lua?*  
 Or four nights? Or from eternity?  
*Talofa, ua le iloa,*  
 Pity, it is not known,  
*Ua i le Nuu o Maioa*  
 He is in the land of void  
*Ma le atunuu o figota*  
 And the nation of seafood  
*Ta'inoino i ma'i o pa*  
 Curse be the malady of barrenness  
*A ma'i o na ona taatia,*  
 When ill you are condemned to lie,  
*E leai se na te tu'ituia*  
 No one to massage  
*E leai se na te lomilomia*  
 No one to press gently  
*E leai sana suavai e faia*  
 No one to prepare baked food  
*A e peitai le fanau,*  
 By contrast he who bears children  
*A taoto, fai le niutao,*  
 When sick is served *niutao*,  
*Ma le suaesi ma le vaisalo,*

And pawpaw and coconut puddings,  
*I le ma lana ta'isi ufivao,*  
 And the wild yam wrapped in  
 banana and breadfruit leaves,  
*A e a oti ua pisa talau,*  
 When you die there is noise galore,  
*Le lauaitu a le fanau,*  
 The wailing of the children,  
*Matua e talofa e,*  
 Parents, how sad,  
*Sena e a e sola e,*  
 When mother departs,  
*E a tagata ola e f'āigata,*  
 It is a difficult ordeal,  
*A oti ua liolio faamasoa,*  
 You become the mush of starch

*Ae ta'isi fa'afa'iota*  
 Or like ripe bananas baked soaked  
 coconut cream and wrapped in  
 banana and breadfruit leaves  
*Ave i fafo i le faumaa faa'aupa*  
 Taken out to the grave of stones  
*Pei o le upu mai a Manu'a*  
 Like the saying from Manu'a  
*Lefulefu le i'uga*  
 Dust is your fate  
*O tagata ola ma alii soifua*  
 Of all living people and of men of  
 high station  
*Ua vale na'ua! O!*  
 Such a poor end! Oh!

(Kramer, 1995, p.614-615, Vol. 1;  
 English translation, Tui Atua, 2011a).

*E te manatu le oti*  
Reflect on death  
*la e manatu pea*  
And reflect some more  
*Kerisiano manatu o oe na*  
Christians remember, you are  
*O le eleele i le e te oti*  
Dust when you die

*Chorus:*  
*E te manatu i le oti*  
Reflect on death  
*la e manatu pe a*  
And reflect some more

*O le ola o le tagata*  
A man's life  
*E pei o se aute*  
Is like a hibiscus  
*Taeao tupu, ona matala lea*  
In the morning it blossoms and blooms  
*Ua afiafi ona mate lea*  
In the evening it withers and dies

*O ifea lou malosi*  
Where is your strength?  
*Ma lou tino lelei?*

And your handsome body  
*O te'a oloa, ma fale, ma fanua*  
Goods, house and land disappear  
*A te'a mea sa e loto i ai*  
And all that you once desired

*la e nofo saunia*  
Be prepared  
*I aso afoa uma*  
In the beginning of everyday  
*Tuu le mimita, tuu le agasala*  
To forsake pride and sin  
*Ae saga teu lou atamai*  
And focus on enhancing the soul

*Vave malepe lou tino*  
Very quickly your body will rot  
*Vave liu eleele*  
Very quickly it will turn into dust  
*E faavavau lo oe atamai*  
But your soul lives forever  
*E tumau pea e le pala ai*  
And will not turn to dust

(Source: Tui Atua, 2011a)

The second funeral song is of Catholic origins and reminiscent of Gregorian chant. Tui Atua laments the rarity with which this song is sung nowadays because the funeral song demands deep reflection on the profound meanings of death by its words, and its melody. However, beyond the dictate for sombre reflection, the song can also be contemplative and uplifting to one's soul:

Unlike the first chant, with its focus on worldly achievements, the second song challenges its audiences to carefully consider what is temporal, which withers, is destroyed, and eventually dies. These momentary pleasures are contrary to those things that are eternal, namely one's soul. The song extols the virtues of preparing one's soul and being vigilant against the devices of pride and sin, which destroy. The song encourages one in one's Christian duty, that is, to guard one's soul and to seek its enhancement, for unlike the body which rots and decays, the soul lives forever.

Memorial services are generally held at the church venue provided by the host church. The availability of chapels at funeral homes or crematorium facilities has led to the use of these alternative venues by grieving families instead of a local church venue for a memorial service. This was done by Tauivi and his family when his father passed away (see chapter eight). The themes of both the family and the public service reflect important Christian values, of the soul being cherished and enhanced through one's Christian duties and virtues, as encouraged in the second song presented by Tui Atua (2011a). These virtues and Christian examples are memorialised through a *molimau* (public testimony) in the presence of all who came to bear witness to the deceased person's faithfulness to their Christian call. Due to Salafai's role in the church as a deacon and a lay preacher, a number of ministers from the *pulega* or district affiliation are invited to be involved in the final service presentation, thus reflecting his extensive spiritual service.

The final service for both Salafai and Kiwi brought the largest crowd, similar to what was recorded by earlier observers such as Ablon (1970) and Braginsky (2003). The format for the funeral service was similar to the family service as previously presented and the casket was stationed at the front of the church. Salafai's casket was closed at his funeral service whereas Kiwi's casket was left open and was only closed before he was transferred to the burial site. It seems to me that the decision for either an open or a closed casket during the funeral service was totally dependent upon the arrangement between the host minister and the family, and apparently there is no strict rule. This service was no more than two hours from start to finish. There is no food served at this time, but all attendees are made aware that they can return for a meal after the burial.

### **Tu'ugamau as the final resting place**

Customarily, when the family service finishes, those attending the church service file past the casket to say their final goodbye. From here, mourners retreat to their vehicles and follow the hearse to the cemetery in a convoy of vehicles with headlights beaming. This practice seems to be more modern than traditional. For Kiwi's funeral service, his family carried his casket to the awaiting

hearse while his school friends stationed themselves at the church entrance, preparing to perform a *haka* to honour and to farewell their comrade. Upon exiting the church building, the rousing and emotional *haka* performance subdued the air, challenging death, celebrating life, and releasing Kiwi on his final physical journey. They chanted: *Ka mate, ka mate, ka ora, ka ora*, 'Tis death, 'tis death, 'tis life, 'tis life.

The graveside service is usually brief and many people from the church service are also in attendance. It is contrary to Samoan customs that only immediate family members are present at the gravesite service. Private burials seem to be a preferred practice with some funeral services I have attended involving non Samoan groups. However, Tauivi's (see chapter eight) account of his father's funeral service, which was followed by his cremation, was only attended by him and his two siblings. This situation might be seen as a carefully considered departure from long established customary practice.

Samoan gravesite rituals in New Zealand display many similarities with non-Samoan funerals I have observed over the years. The casket is brought to the resting place near the grave while family, friends, and supporters gather for the last words by the officiating minister. A bible verse is read, followed by a farewell benediction and a prayer. A final hymn is then sung by the crowd assembled around the burial site. Family members gather close, generally around the open grave, while supported by friends and the church community (see Figure 5).



Figure 5: The gravesite: community gather to mourn (Source: Author)

Kiwi's casket was wrapped with a *siapo* before being lowered into the open grave. Also visible in the photograph (Figure 5) are the many aspects of funeral culture discussed throughout this thesis. For example, the embroidered cross symbolising the church; the use of a video and digital camera to capture footage; and the closeness of the community of mourners to one another and to the casket of the deceased person. Such elements demonstrate again the unique relationship that exists between Samoan culture, its people, and their churches with end-of-life rituals and memorialisation. With both of my relatives' funerals, a Samoan love song was spontaneously started by a member of the family as their casket was lowered into the grave. Those who knew the words joined in this chorus. There was no specific order or rehearsal for this moment. It just happens.

At the completion of the officiating minister's final benediction, relatives and all those who have gathered drop flowers or dirt on the casket symbolizing the proverbial 'dust to dust'. Ablon (1970) and Braginsky (2003) both observed that flowers and the gloves worn by the pall bearers were also lowered with the casket. As the dirt and flowers are tossed into the grave, sentiments of *ia manuia lau malaga*, fare-well in your journey - are echoed by mourners as they release their beloved member.

As discussed in earlier parts of this chapter, Samoan people maintain the essential belief that death is not a final ending. The strong sense of kinship prevalent in the Samoan community does not end with death, but endures and encompasses family members and ancestors who have gone before. Death is an integral part of the continuum of life (Harrison, Kahn, & Hsu, 2005). Death only transitions the deceased between this world and the next (Barrett, 1998). Therefore, verbal sentiments echoed by family members and grieving communities when they declare *ia manuia lau malaga* reaffirms on-going connectedness between the now and the eternal.

The final gravesite ritual is the refilling of the open grave with soil (Figure 6). Personal observation reveals that Samoan families always ensure the grave is refilled before they leave the gravesite. The sentiment here is more than just casting dirt into the grave that signifies the ashes to ashes and dust to dust

symbolism. Time and again, families, particularly the men, will not leave the grave site until the task has been completed. This particular practice does not seem to have been recorded in the writings of Ablon (1970), Braginsky (2003), or other commentators who have observed Samoan funeral customs in contemporary settings. Refilling the grave was no different with both Salafai and Kiwi's funeral. The young men of the *'āiga*, equipped with spades, began the process of filling the hole where the casket lay. Even though there were appointed grave diggers from the cemetery present, the men refused to hand over the shovels.



Figure 6: Filling the grave: The final act of honouring. (Source: author)

What do these actions mean? I have come to believe that in contemporary times, this act is a symbolic gesture by Samoan men as part of their instrumental way of grieving (Doka and Martin, 2010). They are expressing their grief in practical ways that also communicates *tautua* (service). Regrettably, media reports of rumoured graveyard robbery and the detestable practice of dumping bodies into dirt graves while the caskets are resold have served to strengthen the resolve of the men to remain present and ensure the grave is filled. If such abhorrent acts were to happen to their beloved, they would be left feeling partly responsible for not attending to the final part of the gravesite custom. This could then lead to possible acts of retribution by family members. By completing this task themselves, they ensure there is little chance of such an

incident happening. Refilling the grave completes their gravesite rituals. Finality displays responsibility similar to those duties performed by the *auosoga* in traditional Samoa as mentioned earlier. Significantly, this type of responsibility is synonymous with loyalty and honour.

Not everyone who attends the funeral service attends the burial. Some family members choose to stay back to prepare the hall and the feast for the returning masses. In addition to the meal preparation, extra resources are readied for the *taulaga, sua, and meaalofa* to be distributed to the important guests and families at the end of the meal. The overall significance of *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa*, fortunately or unfortunately in some cases, indicates the 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' outcome of a funeral. It is sometimes argued that this practice has become the sole focus of Samoan funeral observances, and to the detriment of the true nature of what traditional funeral customs had intended these practices to achieve (see Tui Atua, 2009b). A discussion on the importance of *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa* is imperative to the way funeral rituals are enacted by many Samoan communities. These important customary traditions are examined in greater detail next.

### **Fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa traditions**

Earlier in this chapter, I pointed out that Samoans, in contrast to western society in general, tend to view death as an aspect of the natural cycle of life. This perspective allows the funeral rites and accompanying activities to provide a positive platform for social interaction (Ablon, 1970). Indeed, the occasions provided by death reinforces cultural and social identity for families and church communities. Additionally, these occasions aid in the on-going practice of Samoan and Christian traditions to meet the demands and challenges of life in western locales. Fundamental to Samoan life are the ideas and practices of generosity, hospitality, reciprocity, and helping one another (Braginsky, 2003). This applies to strangers, as well as the relative in one's home; hence the importance of the ritualized presentations involved with *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa* or reciprocal distributions. The full occasion of *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa* involved

in funeral presentation normally takes about an hour from start to finish, depending on the amount of people present during these exchanges.

*Fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa* provides a forum for the grieving family to show their appreciation to their honoured guests. Generosity becomes a measuring rod for the donor to honour both himself and his *'āiga*, aside from the obvious benefits for the recipient of his gift. Such hospitality involves an elaborate dinner that is a requisite ending to the funeral ceremonies, over and above the redistribution of material goods following the meal. The great quantity of food consumed and taken home maintains the “prestige of the family of the deceased, as well as serving to express gratitude to those who participated in the last rites” (Ablon, 1970, p.223). Further to this, the social and symbolic significance of food for Samoan ceremony ensures that the occasion would be “publicly validated and would hold a place in the memories of the guests” (Keesing & Keesing, 1956, p.80).

As alluded to in earlier parts of this chapter, the reciprocal feature of *fa'asamoa* cultural rituals is vital because it is often seen as the final opportunity to showcase family members' genuine love for their departed member. The many events throughout the week of mourning find their climax and fulfilment in this traditional exchange. It is generally for this reason that ritual performance attributed to Samoan funeral culture is both awe-inspiring, and expensive. If the death is of a family chief, or a minister, ensuring these processes are performed with “*all of your might*” (Taulapapa, 2013, personal communication), become more compelling. The formal address and exchange of gifts (fine mats, food, and money) is always dependent on three components: the status of the person who has passed away, the status of those who are in attendance, and, the reputation desired by the family performing the exchange rituals.

For both Salafai's and Kiwi's funerals, the *'āiga* indeed maintained the tradition of providing an elaborate feast at end of the burial service. As the *api* record indicated earlier, the costs for catering after Kiwi's burial service came to \$5800 (NZ). Similar to the description of food reported by Braginsky (2003) with the funeral feast she observed in Hawai'i, the meal featured traditionally consumed Samoan delicacies with a further mix of European and Chinese dishes.

At these feasts, a large quantity of food is served, and guests are expected to take home what they cannot eat. Wrapped packages of additional food items may be distributed to each guest to take home. Keeping with current preparation practices when feasts are held, guests are seated at arranged rows of tables. However, another table or tables are prepared and adorned for ministers and other distinguished guests, who are seated at the head of the dining area. After the host minister has offered a prayer of thanksgiving, the meal is served. On such occasions, the family do not eat with the guests. It is general Samoan practice for host families to serve their guests, clergy, and the elderly first. The family will then have their own meal afterwards when the *fa'aalologa fa'asamoa* formalities are completed.

Both Ablon (1971) and Braginsky (2003) report that at some point during the meal, an exchange of oratory will begin. In particular, the *matai* as the family spokesperson seeks permission from the families and other high-ranking chiefs present to speak on behalf of the family of the deceased (Ablon, 1970). Such formalities are recorded in the early writings of Turner, Stair, and Kramer who observed these interactions taking place amongst chiefs belonging to a particular family. The chiefs were seen to jostle (*fa'atau*) for the right to be the spokesperson for the *'āiga* at auspicious occasions. For example, Stair (1983) writes of this type of formality:

There were always a certain number of heads of families in a settlement who alone were permitted to address the assembly. Much stress was always laid upon the privilege of addressing a public assembly, therefore, when it came time . . . to address the assembly, the whole of the speakers stood up and contended amongst themselves for the honour of speaking on the day. Although they might not be able to exercise the privilege, very often, they all liked to assert their right to speak, and to exhibit their *to'oto'o lauga*, or orator's staff. (1983, p.85)

The designated *matai* representing the combined host families is already prepared to assume the prerogative of one who rises to speak. In his speech, he acknowledges the various ministers who presided over the specific parts of the funeral services, paying particular tribute to the host minister. At specific intervals during the speech, the family will present a *sua* to each of the ministers

present. Similar presentations are made to other recognised dignitaries and families who provided support with their *si'ialofa* contributions during the week.

The *sua* serves to acknowledge the support shown to the deceased member and the family by the recipient. It generally includes *'ie toga*, rolls of fabric materials as a substitute for *tapa*, a cooked pig (for the host minister), boxes of corned beef, baked *taro*, fish, *palusami*, cartons of canned fish, kegs of *povi masima*, tins of crackers, cooked chickens, baked banana, and other food items set aside for this purpose. Added to this contribution is a monetary *pasese* (travel reimbursement), which may range from \$50 to \$500 New Zealand dollars depending on the status of the receiver. It is customary for the host ministers to receive more than, or even double the amount given to other ministers, both in food and in monetary donations. Such contributions reflect the significant role of the lead minister and his congregation in hosting the funeral service and arranging other necessary support for the family in grief. Such reserved honour is the legacy of King Malietoa Vainu'upo and his *mavaega* as discussed in chapter two. The *taulaga* and *sua* provided for ministers is the enactment of this custom nowadays.

The guests respond with a *lauga* where an appointed speaker pays tribute to the grieving family and to the community of support. Such recognition heaps praise on the family, acknowledging their generosity as reflected by their gifts. In such occasions, guests are discouraged from returning any of the gifts or food items they have received. Their physical presence and their praise simply validate the family's ability to face-up-to and to respond adequately to their spiritual and cultural responsibilities. After this exchange, the formalities lighten and the *fa'asamoa* is deemed completed. At the conclusion, guests leave carrying both food and other items received from the distribution ceremony. The whole occasion honours the memory of the deceased member whilst solidifying the status of the *'āiga as: e fai mea mafai* or a family who is able to 'walk the talk', with particular reference to taking care of their Samoan cultural obligations.

As I mentioned in earlier parts of this chapter, the overall cost associated with many Samoan-observed funerals can be quite substantial. For example, I pointed out that funeral costs for Kiwi, even as an untitled person, came to

around \$45,000 (NZD). This level of financial commitment is one of the reasons why funeral culture amongst Samoan communities continues to be an important topic for discussion. Concerns have been raised about easing the financial costs of such funeral practices, especially in times of financial uncertainty experienced by many Samoans living in urban centres like Hamilton, New Zealand.

Added to these initial costs is the expense of an unveiling, which includes erecting a memorial headstone at the deceased person's gravesite. Unveiling is another event that is not discussed in literature concerning early Samoan deaths. From my own observation, unveiling rituals are not as strictly observed as funeral rituals. It seems that, on the whole, unveilings seem to carry less weight in ritual importance than the actual funeral event itself. Hence, no specific dates or timelines, such as the first anniversary of the passing, is followed about when a commemorative headstone is to be put in place. As a result, many gravesites, especially in Samoa, do not have commemorative headstones. The number of people in attendance at an unveiling service is much fewer compared to those who were present at the funeral service. Most of those who gather for an unveiling are immediate family members, and friends. It also appears that many families choose to have an unveiling if they have sufficient finance to purchase a memorial headstone.

Both Salafai's and Kiwi's unveilings presented another occasion for their families to show their on-going love for, and remembrance of, their beloved member. Their unveiling involved a brief church service at the gravesite which was attended by the family, close friends, and church members. This was followed by a Samoan-styled meal catered for by the family. These events are normally low key commemorations compared with the elaborate presentations such as those that I have discussed and documented in this chapter.

## **Chapter conclusion**

The specific rituals and practices discussed in this chapter highlight important traditional processes enacted when a family member passes away. Many of the associated rituals illustrate the duality that exists within Samoan

culture and Christian beliefs. This union, which can sometimes be seen as an uneasy alliance, proves helpful in releasing the deceased from this world and into the next. Such connections resonate with traditional Samoan beliefs that we are simply continuing the *malaga* begun by ancestors (Seiuli, 2004; Tui Atua, 2009b; Webber-Dreadon, 1999). Death and the subsequent processes of mourning provide pathways that reunite Samoan people with their origin, reflecting the circle of life.

It must be acknowledged that this account does not necessarily describe all funeral rituals of Samoans living in urban localities. It does, however, represent patterns that are commonly observed during times of death and mourning. Importantly, the various rituals explored in this chapter provide opportunities for the bereaved and their communities to unite in their collective journey through grief. The displays of solidarity allow them to share the burdens associated with death. Additionally, they provide avenues for reconnecting their life histories and for enacting cultural rituals such as *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa* (honouring), while simultaneously supporting each other emotionally and financially. All of these rituals indicate a people who are active in their embrace of life and death realities, not simply existing in a shared space. The enactment of their traditions portrays their belief that death is a natural part of being alive, a view that is strongly supported by the narratives of my participants (chapters six, seven, and eight). While this chapter has examined and presented much of the literature concerning Samoan death rituals of past times, the next chapter focuses on the methodological approach used in this research to gather current perspectives, understandings, and practices from my research participants.

Chapter five explores the vital role of research methodologies adopted for this project, and the reasons for choosing these approaches over others. An important part of chapter five is my discussion of research methods that stood out as the most appropriate for researching Samoan people in grief. I have already stated that death and bereavement is a sensitive topic amongst Samoan people, one that is generally treated as *tapu*. Therefore, a person entering into this consecrated space needs to carefully *teu le vā fealoaloa'i* (take care of the relational space) with all possible audiences including: those who have passed

away whose lives are being narrated; my participants who narrated their painful experiences; the wider Samoan community who are connected in many ways to these events; and other Samoans who might be impacted by the findings of my research.

## Chapter Five

**Tau mai na o pua o ula. Aumai na o auga o aute.  
Se'i mai na o muia'a o la'au, e osi ai le taulaga**

Bring only the most beautiful of frangipani.  
Bring only the freshest hibiscus.  
Bring only the young palm frond,  
those that are worthy for the sacrificial offering



This chapter discusses the methodological approach used in this thesis to gather, analyse, and disseminate the *fono fa'atalatalanoa* (narrative dialogue – hereafter referred to as *talanoa*). The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first provides a context for the fieldwork, that is, the decision on research design that takes into consideration Samoan and Pasefika research perspectives. This section pays particular attention to the development of the Uputāua Therapeutic Approach (UTA) to research in Samoan communities. The second section discusses how empirical materials were generated during the fieldwork. This section covers the localities of the participants, and also discusses criteria for inclusion or exclusion. The third section examines the processes of analysis and dissemination, in addition to a discussion on some of the limitations encountered in this research. The section concludes with a preview of what to expect in the presentation and analysis of my findings in chapter six, seven, and eight.

### ***Section one: research design***

#### **Tulagavae as positioning for research**

When considering research from a Samoan viewpoint, it is vital to declare the researcher's positions or approach to the work to be carried out (Anae, 1998; Lee-Hang, 2011; Suaalii-Sauni, 2006). Silipa (2004, cited in Lee Hang, 2011, p.65) refers to the idea of *o lo'u nofoaga* (the place of sitting) as important to locating oneself within the 'house' of research. Where one sits or is positioned when involved in a *talanoaga* with a family can also relay one's perceived or actual status. That is, each pillar of a *faletalimalo* (house for welcoming and hosting guest) is pre-designated, or is assigned according to Samoan protocols. Using a different metaphor, Seiuli (2012b) offers the idea of *tulagavae* (footprint or place to stand) as a form of locating identity and belonging within the constructs of research.

During this research, my place of sitting, of standing, and of belonging, was firmly grounded in the world of Samoan people. I engaged Samoan and Pasefika methodologies that allowed the richness of cultural protocols and values to be

championed, privileged, and transmitted throughout the engagement. My *tulagavae* was one of a Samoan man, engaging in examining and documenting Samoan cultural practices that impacted upon Samoan men and their families in contemporary times. My research uses etic and emic approaches (Helfrich, 1999; Morris, Leung, Ames & Lickel, 1999; Pike, 1967), enabling me to move between the positions of being a researcher and the subject being researched.

The methodological approach (Figure 7) outlines key parts of the consultation and data collection undertaken, while also guiding the data gathering, analysis and dissemination phases as well. Each phase follows according to the specific tasks required. For example, ethical approval was acquired from the University of Waikato and Health Research Council prior to beginning the *talanoa* interviews with participants. However, initial contact had already been made with potential participants, informing them about the research project and seeking their participation once ethical approval had been granted.

Maintaining ethical considerations throughout the interviews, empirical analysis, and dissemination is a vital part of *teu le vā* or safeguarding important relationships (Pereira, 2011; Wendt, 1996). The on-going responsibility of *teu le vā* recognises their dignity that maintains accountability, between them and myself as the researcher, beyond mere institutional ethical approval. The methodological approach (see Figure 7) used in my research reflects the principles of *va fealaloa'i* (relational accountability) in all of my engagements. Each specific area is discussed in more detail in the following sections.

### **Qualitative research approach**

Buckle, Dwyer and Jackson (2009 & 2010) considers qualitative investigations of death and bereavement valuable because of the opportunity afforded “to access areas that are complex and generally impervious to quantitative research methods” (2009, p.1). Additionally, qualitative research provides space for both the researcher and participants to interact in meaningful

conversations focused on the research topic. It is research that is done *with* people, not *on* people (Hodgetts et.al, 2010; Jovchelovitch, 2007).

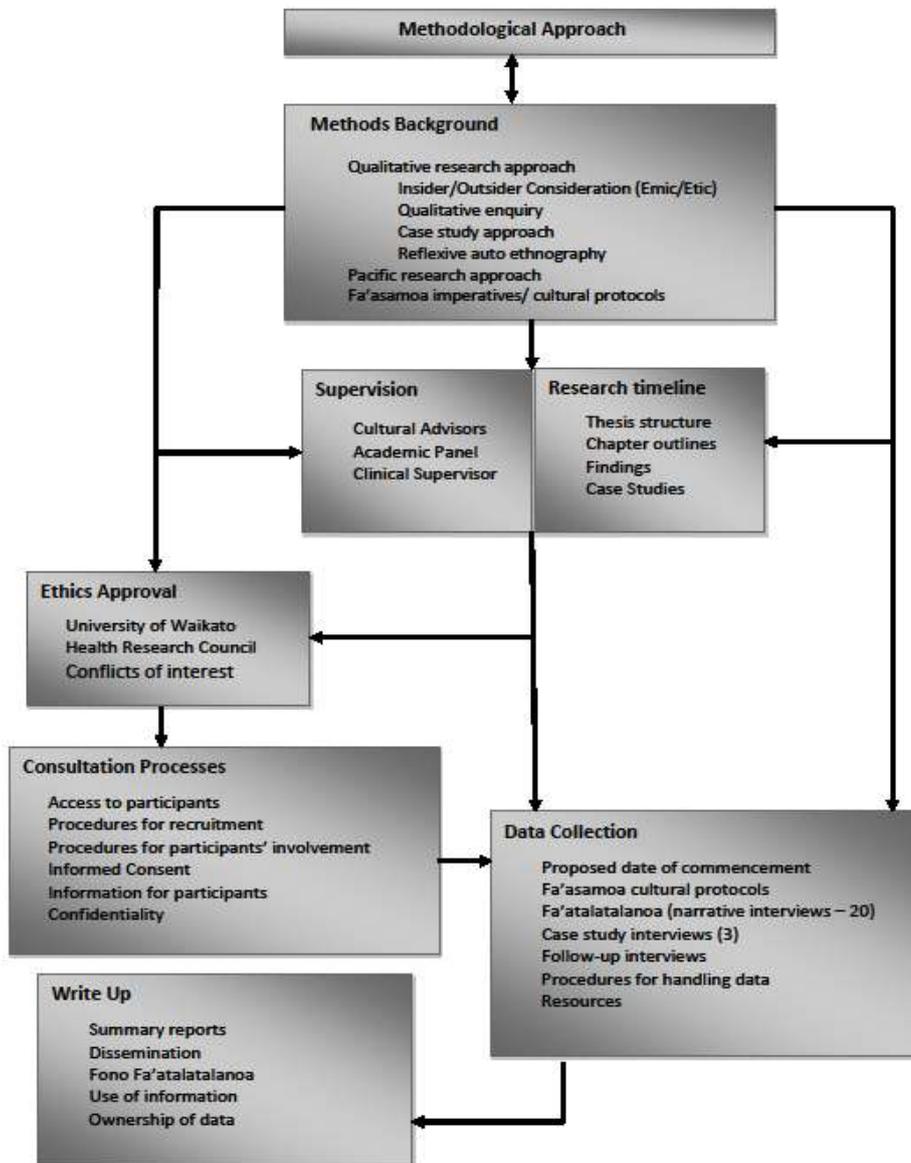


Figure 7: Consultation and Data Collection Flowchart

Historically, qualitative research of Samoan life was fundamentally research done *on* people. For example, Kirk and Miller (1986) point out earlier qualitative observations depended heavily on “watching people in their own territory, interacting with them in their own language, and on their own terms”

(1986, p.9). Such observations often resulted in misrepresentations and misinterpretations. It is on the basis of these past experiences that Tamasese and her colleagues (1997) emphasises that Western models and methodologies “are repeatedly, by design and habit, significant interpreters of the realities of people’s lives” (p.8). This awareness is helpful for us all, so that we can avoid repeating the same mistakes.

More recent qualitative approaches, particularly by Samoan researchers, have sought to weave into qualitative research principles the values and processes embedded in the culture of Samoan people, together with the recognition of their indigenous voices (Anae, 1997; Seiuli 1997, 2004 & 2010; Suaalii-Sauni, 2006; Tamasese et.al, 1997). Such researchers have engaged with the subject matter both as *outsiders* by assuming the role of researcher, and as *insiders* where they are actively involved as members of the researched community. Importantly, Sanga (2004) stresses that the “active participation of insiders is integral to indigenous Pacific research” (cited in Watson, 2007, p.49), because it can help to provide space to explore their many experiences and multiple voices in the process.

A key focus of this research project is about documenting the processes by which Samoan people, particularly men, address death, and learn to cope with its impact. Qualitative research allows investigation into the processes of addressing these issues in depth more satisfactorily than a quantitative inquiry. Many quantitative researchers emphasize objectivity and detachment as an ideal and raise questions about whether insiders researching their own communities can be objective. On this point, I want to emphasise that as a researcher, I am aware of the challenges and difficulties in being an ‘insider/outsider’ researcher, but do not accept that my status as a cultural insider leads to misinterpretation. Rather, it leads to a more humane, relevant, and grounded interpretation of the Samoan condition. As is common practice in qualitative research, I have worked to be transparent in terms of my influence on the research process by critically examining my own viewpoint as an insider, as an outsider, and other positions in between. Further, I have been open when incorporating my own experiences into the research project in terms of death customs, and how my experiences

relate to those conveyed by my participants. This transparency enables a richer and fuller representative of death culture and experiences amongst Samoan men, myself included. Although a core component of the methodological approach used has Samoan and Pasefika foundations, the research project also draws upon, and adapts, other qualitative research traditions to help inform the broader research orientations of this thesis.

### **Emic and etic research approach**

The literature on Samoan and Pacific cultural mores and practices has grown in depth and volume over time. Despite this, there is a scarcity of information specific to rituals encompassing loss and grief, death and mourning, particularly from an insider's perspective (Cerroni-Long, 1995). In considering the role of cross-cultural and inter-cultural research, there are two key approaches commonly used (Morris, et al., 1999): *emic* and *etic* perspectives (Pike, 1967).

The *emic* approach deals with the insider perspective where researchers strive to "describe a particular culture in its own terms" (Morris, et al., 1999, p.781). It seeks therefore to understand culture from the "native's point of view" (p.781). An insider perspective as applied to this current research is my sense of being a committed member of the Samoan community being researched. The *etic* approach focuses on the outside perspective where researchers attempt to describe differences across cultures in terms of "general, external standards" (Morris, et al., 1999, p.781). These comparisons link cultural practices to factors such as economic or environmental settings that may not seem significant to cultural insiders (Berry, 1999; Harris, 1979; Morris, et al., 1999).

There is, as the literature indicates, a divide between the two approaches in cultural scholarship (e.g. Geertz 1976 & 1983; Munroe & Munroe, 1997; Shweder 1991; Smith and Bond 1990 & 1998). Emic and etic approaches traditionally have been associated with differing research methods (Morris, et al., 1999). The central theme of the divide is the differing assumptions researchers have about how culture is best studied. For instance, *emic* researchers tend to assume that a culture is best understood as an "interconnected whole or system"

(Morris, et al., 1999, p.782), whereas *etic* researchers are more likely to isolate particular components of a culture and hypothesize about their distinct backgrounds and significances in comparison with others within a specified discipline (Feleppa, 1986).

In the case of Samoan culture, emic researchers immersed themselves in the cultural setting, developing relationships with informants, learning the local language, and taking on social roles, such as pastors, doctors, or translators (for example, Kramer, Turner, and Stair). Emic approaches also enabled them to observe and to conduct structured interviews with informants (for example, Freeman, 1964; Schultz, 1949). As important as these steps were for gaining access within the researched community, it also limited some of the research outcomes because the researchers were not 'born' into the community and were, therefore, only temporary or makeshift members instead of life members by virtue of birth. This would be vastly different from an insider researcher who has birth membership with the researched group. The latter is the position and membership that I bring to this present research.

An *etic* approach in the Samoan cultural context involves brief, structured observations of several cultural groups. For example, Cook's (1911) research titled: "The coconut and the peopling of the Pacific" examined the history and role of the coconut palm for theorizing how Pacific people migrated to the islands, whether from South America, or from Asia, and the work of Te Rangi Hiroa (1935), which explored material representations of the Samoan and Tongan gods and their resemblance to other groups in the other parts of Polynesia. Both utilized *etic* approaches.

It is not the intention of this thesis to argue whether research should use one approach or the other, or that it should create a "tension or pose a dilemma" (Berry, 1999, p.166). Indeed, Pike saw the distinction between the two approaches as indiscriminate, and expected that the results of their use would merge in some instances:

It proves convenient though partially arbitrary - to describe behaviour from two different standpoints, which lead to results which shade into one another. (Pike, 1967; p.37)

Both approaches are of value and neither is more important than the other. Pike argues that “emic and etic data do not constitute a rigid dichotomy of data, but often present the same data from two points of view” (Pike, 1967, p.40). It seems the relationship between emic/etic approaches is synergetic, rather than opposing.

It is this understanding of etic/emic perspectives that I use to understand coping strategies and document their meanings for Samoan men affected by death and grief. Integrating and utilising insights from the symbiotic mixture of etic and emic perspectives allows the development of culturally appropriate approaches that build on what is valuable, rather than on attempting to resolve differences between the perspectives (Helfrich, 1999). As a Samoan researcher, this way of proceeding aligns itself with values and core beliefs I carry in helping Samoan communities impacted upon by death. The combined emic/etic perspectives serve as my *tulagavae*, placing me in this research both as an insider and outsider. This is a position that also translates to greater responsibility for relevance and sensitivity of my procedures and findings.

### **Pasefika research approach**

The quotation that opens this chapter (*tau mai na o ni pua ula*) calls for drawing together of those elements that are valuable and useful, the best in all approaches that provide the best outcome for Samoan communities being researched. Some research on Pacific communities in the past has resulted in harmful and distrusting relationships between researchers and those researched (HRC, 2005). These unfortunate situations continue to stain the path for researching Pacific communities for both Pasefika and non-Pasefika researchers. The challenge, therefore, is not to repeat the same mistakes, and to ensure that not only useful knowledge is gained and treasured, but, importantly, beneficial outcomes are possible for those communities being researched. As a Samoan counsellor, it has been my desire from the outset that this research project is not one for the shelf. Rather, my concern is to make a significant contribution to the knowledge base pertaining to death, grief, and mourning practices. Not only will

it be informed by good ethical practices, it is purposed with therapeutic objectives in mind, supporting Samoan and Pacific communities in grief recovery.

Central to this research are unique protocols located within Samoan and Pacific research methodologies. Vaioleti (2003) stresses the need to include “Pacific research approaches as legitimate research methodologies for Pacific issues” (p.13). The vast Pacific Ocean, with the many island people that inhabit its extensive archipelagos, is a reminder of the variations that must inform Pasefika research perspectives. Pacific scholars agree that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ when it comes to addressing Pasefika perspectives (see Kalavite, 2010; Lee-Hang, 2011; Tamasese, et al., 2002; Vaioleti, 2003). Each nation requires its own particular perspective and practices, amidst shared commonalities and understandings with neighbouring Pacific peoples. As a result, many approaches to Pasefika research have become available through the work of existing and emerging scholars and researchers. Some of these models and approaches are discussed in later parts of this section.

An important component of the methodological approach proposed in this thesis is about supporting and validating expressed life narratives of Samoan men and their *‘āiga*. The validation process can be contextualized in three distinct ways. Firstly, the validation of expressed life stories is therapeutic in and of itself. Understanding the way Samoan men respond to death and grief enabled participants to express their unique and their common methods of coping with their loss. The *talanoa* also validated both their individual and their collective experience of loss, of their processes of mourning, and of their journey towards healing. For many participants, the *talanoa* presented an initial opportunity for them to specifically reflect on their loss and recovery journey. Although narrating their experiences was difficult for some participants, many of them expressed their appreciation for the consecrated space to remember their loved ones in affectionate and meaningful ways.

Secondly, the validation of expressions is inextricably linked to the recovery and preservation of Samoan epistemological foundations. These foundations promote ideas of personal and collective *tulagavae* as an identity of belonging. For my participants, the *talanoa* validated their shared identity as

Samoan men experiencing struggles, challenges, and emergence from the impacts of death in New Zealand, Samoa, and in other places. Shared stories can provide a sense of community, similar to that experienced within a Samoan village. Funeral responsibilities are shared with other family and community members, helping to ease the overall burden of associated responsibilities (see chapters four and six). Men were encouraged to interpret their grief experiences less as isolated and exclusive incidents, but as ones that can be shared and could be similar to others in the wider Samoan community. Many found this collective identification to be helpful because they were not alone in their experiences of trying to cope.

Thirdly, the process of validation, particularly from a therapeutic standpoint, reconciles and reprioritizes the important practices of Samoan traditions and cultural expressions engaged in by Samoan men. A clearer understanding of these priorities continues the process of handing on an important *meaalofa* (gift): the gift of life stories and lived experiences, and the gift of struggles and of their emergence (Seiuli 2004). These gifts connect Samoan people over time and space, serving them as a living legacy.

### **Fa'asamoa imperatives**

There are vital aspects of attending to and maintaining cultural protocols of how one person relates and converses with another. Significant within these relationships is the consideration for people of esteemed status such as *matai*, *faiifeau* (ministers), and *tuaā* (elders), or those of the opposite gender. Being Samoan and engaging in *fa'asamoa* is supported and reinforced by the boundaries of *va fealoaloa'i*, *fa'aalalo*, *alofa* and *agaga fesoasoani* (willingness to help) (Mulitalo-Lāuta, 2001; Seiuli, 2004; Tamasese, et al., 1997). These foundational characteristics were used to continually inform and guide the information gathering processes, the analysis, discussion, and dissemination of my findings.

As a Samoan researcher who remains accountable to the greater community, a vital part of my work, both clinical and academic, is concerned

with maintaining alertness and mindfulness to the sensitivity of topics such as death and family. These are delicate matters that are seldom discussed openly especially with strangers, and many Pacific groups have experienced being over-researched, and feel used. I was sharply reminded of this some years ago (see Seiuli, 1997, p.12) by one participant who told me: *“we are sick to death of being researched . . . we are not brown palagi”*. Since then, I have remained attentive to, and conscious of, the need for greater sensitivity and respectfulness when researching Pasefika people.

Guided by the imperatives of being Samoan, I purposely engaged in qualitative research methods that encompass Samoan and Pacific practices and protocols. Sanga (2004) argues that qualitative research methods are more suited to researching Pasefika issues for their ability to engage and capture the richness of contextual experiences. The use of Samoan and Pacific research models such as Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001), Lalaga (Mulitalo-Lāuta, 2000), and Talanoa (Vaiotei, 2003) has been helpful towards informing and guiding engagement, participation, and participants interviews. But I also became acutely aware of the absence of therapeutic consideration for participants and their communities as an intimate component in much research. It seems that, for most part, the benefits of research are only realized when the findings or outcomes of such studies materialize. It is for this purpose that I explored ways which therapeutic approaches could become woven into the processes of carrying out research. These considerations led to the development of the Uputāua Therapeutic Approach (Seiuli, 2012b) in an attempt to offer a culturally therapeutic perspective to researching Samoan communities. For this thesis, researching Samoan communities impacted upon by death not only needs to be specifically anchored in Samoan paradigms, but must consider other patterns of influence in their contemporary locations. Therefore, adhering to these collaborative cultural values ensures that every participant feels safe and supported to narrate their personal account and life experiences.

## A unique Samoan approach to research

The Uputāua Therapeutic Approach (UTA) is grounded in ancestral beginnings along the lines of what Anae (1999) suggests in saying that “we are carrying out the genealogies of our ancestors . . . over time and space” (p. 1). The UTA is a *meaalofa* handed down by the *tuaā* (ancestors), and, for me, ancestors like my grandmother Uputāua Leiataualesā Seiuli (Tinā) after whose name this approach takes its title. Her *meaalofa*, which is reflective of her love and life, left a profound impact on those she cared for. Safety and security were the hallmarks of her compassionate nature, providing a refuge in troublesome and challenging times. The UTA approach is an enduring legacy that supported me in the process of *talanoa* in a culturally embracing manner. Furthermore, the Uputāua Therapeutic approach opens *le vā tapuia* (a consecrated space) to facilitate sensitive conversations in culturally specific ways (Tui Atua, 2007b).

The UTA uses the *Faletalimālō*, a modern Samoan meeting house specifically built for hosting and welcoming esteemed guests, as its conceptual framework (Figure 8). Uputāua contains two Samoan words: *upu*, meaning a word or a saying, and *tāua*, which is used to indicate worth, wisdom, or sacredness. The combination of the two words to form Uputāua is easily translatable to also convey “words of wisdom or sacred conversations” (Seiuli, 2013, p.43). Likewise, ‘approach’ in this context, regards the position of advance towards a proposed space. In Samoan social organisations and cultural rituals, the proposed space is the *va fealaloo’i*, that is, the space of social relatedness between people. Another similar space referred to as *va tapuia* emphasises the sacred divide between people and all living things, inclusive of genealogical connections (Suali’i-Sauni, 2012).

The UTA approach recognises the type of embrace or attention when engaging with specific people. For example, when engaging a *matai* or a *faifeau* (church minister), one needs to be familiar with the proper protocols required in this *va*. The UTA reminded me as the researcher to pay attention to the various components of the *faletalimālō* framework that supports respectful *talanoa* when researching Samoan participants. Although the UTA finds correlation with the work of talking therapies (Te Pou, 2010), the approach recognises that the

healing journey for Samoans encompasses far more beyond the therapeutic encounter.



Figure 8: Uputāua Therapeutic Approach. (Seiuli, 2013)

I outline the key parts of the UTA next, highlighting their significance to Samoan epistemological foundations, and its role in Pacific research. Several of the concepts that are central to the UTA have already been discussed in chapters two and four of this thesis, while other parts are referred to in later chapters (six and seven). Many of the Samoan cultural concepts used to conceptualise the UTA framework are not necessarily new knowledge, but are drawn together from familiar cultural practices, values, and beliefs, to support the important work involved in researching Samoan people. And although many of the ideas used with the UTA are grounded in the world of Samoan people and their culture, some of these practices may be relevant for other Pasefika or indigenous settings. Hence, the UTA framework could be used in a comparative framework.

*Ola fa'aleagaga* or spiritual life as represented by the 'roof' is the covering that endorses safety and protection for many Samoan people. Nowadays, spirituality is predominantly associated with Christian teachings and values (Taule'ale'ausumai, 1997a; Va'a, 2001 – also see chapters two, four, and six). But it must be emphasised that many Samoan people continue to maintain an understanding and practice of spirituality connected to their ancestral past (Fraser, 1891; Kramer, 1995; Suaalii-Sauni, et al., 2008). Spiritual connections are particularly called upon with the death of a *tamāli'i* (chapter six – see *lagi* chants). Such divine connections remain a significant aspect of Samoan life, even in the present day.

*Tu ma aganu'u fa'asamoa* is represented by the 'land' which advocates for the understanding and practice of *fa'asamoa* culture and customs (see chapters two, four and six). The practices of *fa'asamoa* include but are not limited to respect for the *va fealoaloa'i*, acknowledging various *feagaiga* relationships, and honouring personhood and status. Essentially, *fa'asamoa* serves as the solid ground that upholds the family unit. The cultural context is also representative of one's *tulagavae*, helping to locate one's ancestral connections and birthplace. This cultural context is not rigid but living and breathing, meaningfully forming Samoan identity wherever situated. In this regard, the flexibility of culture gives space for accessing both traditional and contemporary knowledge that supports Samoans in their development, and on their healing journeys.

*'Āiga potopoto* is the family and relationship network which is presented as the 'foundation' of the *faletalimālō*. The current formation of many Samoan families, especially in Euro-urban localities, contains traces of the traditional as well as a diversity of other ethnic mixes. Consideration must be allowed for the complexities of cultural variants that may exist within each and every family group. Significantly, as much as one may presume that family structures for Pasefika people are strong, nurturing and communal, it may not be the reality for all (Samu & Suaalii-Sauni, 2009). Samoan identity is germinated, nurtured, matured and replicated within the *'āiga*. Gender issues, sexuality, roles and responsibilities, learning, observing, and other activity all find their purposes and meanings within this context. A Samoan proverb that reflects this sense of

belonging says: *o le tagata ma lona fa'asinomaga*, exhorting each person in their designated role and responsibility of *tautua* (service).

*Le vā fealoaloa'i* or relational space is represented by the 'internal boundaries' of the *faletalimālō*. The internal boundaries serve to protect the family while simultaneously maintaining safe limits with those outside. As discussed in earlier chapters, *teu le vā* is a well-known Samoan expression that reflects the importance of safeguarding relationships. This declares that one must always take care to 'nurture, cherish, and take care' of the relational space, firstly within one's family, and then with the wider community (Seiuli, 2012b). The relational space needs continuous attention so that the possibility of being *solī* (trampled) is avoided (Pereira, 2011). Failure to nurture and take care of the *va* has invariably led to dishonouring of, and of trampling upon, the *mana* (sacredness) and *mamalu* (dignity) of communities being researched (Seiuli, 1997). This can lead to the refusal of some to further participate until the space has been restored and healed. If the space is deemed unsafe, the prospect of achieving beneficial outcomes in research is severely reduced.

*Ola fa'aletino* or physical wellbeing is the first of the four 'pillars of wellbeing' which stands for the physical aspect of life. *Ola fa'aletino* is recognisable in the humble nature of Samoan people, their strong sense of loyalty, their happy attitude, their unique language, their cultural surroundings, and their supportive community. The physical pillar values and incorporates reciprocity, like those discussed in chapter four concerning the *fa'asamoa* exchange rituals or *lagi* chants in funeral customs, and where many Samoans find their connections to the larger tapestry of life: that all are sacred and related (Morice, 2006).

*Ola fa'aleloto* or social wellbeing is the second pillar. The Samoan social self is better understood as "socio-centric" (Mageo, 1998, p.5 – also see chapter three), and is often visible in their friendly, obliging, warm, and cheerful personas. Social values emphasise collectivity and shared responsibilities. Significantly, all members are called to family loyalty as their *tautua*, not as independent or self-centred beings, but in close community. The performance of their reciprocal practices is carried out both to support and to communicate connection,

understanding that the cycle of supportive contribution will be reciprocated in future incidents. For many, their extended social structure, with its adhering patterns of support, provides the stabilising force in the face of death impacts.

*Ola fa'alemafaufau* or psychological wellbeing is the third pillar which focuses on the thinking and decision-making processes of Samoan individuals and their families. The area of psychological wellness is vital in examining and understanding one's ability to cope and to process situations with which one is confronted from time to time. From personal observation within counselling therapy, the psychological wellbeing of many Samoan people is often ignored or neglected altogether, which is the primary reason for its position in the rear. The importance of Samoan people's psychological wellbeing needs to be highlighted as crucial to their overall wellness, if Samoan people are to attain restorative health.

*Ola fa'alelagona* or emotional wellbeing is the fourth pillar. Emotional health is another neglected but central part of the Samoan person, hence depicted here like that of the psychological wellbeing by its backward positioning. The *'āiga* plays a foundational part in how emotions are cultivated, articulated, and endorsed. When there is a breakdown in communication that usually fosters strong emotional attachments, the likelihood of healthy emotional development and security can be disrupted or weakened. It is well documented (see Maiava, 2001; Tamasese, et al., 1997; Tui Atua, 2006 & 2009b) that a significant factor contributing to greater stress in Samoan communities is the struggle for economic survival whilst balancing traditional responsibilities such as *fa'alavelave* obligations. As a result, *fa'alavelave* is an enormous "burden" (Maiava, 2001, p. 132), and many find such obligatory duties hard to bear.

*Tausi tua'oi* or external boundaries as represented by the 'fence' provides a secondary boundary for the *'āiga* with their local community, health professionals, helping agencies, researchers, and the likes. This secondary boundary allows for a respectful negotiation of desired outcomes, specific timeframes, *meaalofa* (gifts, reimbursements, resources, food, etc.), accountabilities, and responsibilities involved in an engagement. The *tua'oi* is an extension of the internal boundaries, and needs on-going care. The capacity to stay alert is instrumental in ensuring that harmony is achieved within such

important social and relational spaces. The need for being alert is informed by my past experiences I mentioned earlier, where Samoan communities have felt that their boundaries were regularly trampled as a result of being ‘over-researched’ (Seiuli, 1997).

*Meaalofa* or gifting processes is the first of the three ‘steps of engagement’ prior to entering into the *faletalimālō*, a reminder of the crucial role of supporting healing and restorative practices that are culturally relevant (see chapter three). *Meaalofa* emphasises the spirit of generosity: with knowledge, with time, with resources, and with relevant support. The important aspects of *meaalofa* serve as a cornerstone of the Samoan self (Seiuli, 2004; Turner-Tupou, 2007), which also reflects reciprocal support (see chapter four). Gifting practices affirm and strengthen important relational bonds between the family, the church, and the wider community (Seiuli, 2010).

*Loto fa’atasia* or collaborative approach is represented by the second step. *Loto fa’atasia* strongly advocates and invites into research with Samoan communities the practices of intentional co-collaboration (see White & Epston, 1990) or the ‘we’ approach. *Loto fa’atasia* can be literally translated as “to be of one heart or, one soul” (Seiuli, 2013). The collaborative approach is relational and community-based, not isolated or individuated. Co-collaboration recognises Samoan people and their communities as an integral part of the collective unit not an independent entity. Research that is carried out in a collaborative manner critically acknowledges Samoan expertise and wisdom in their lives and restorative journeys (Seiuli, 2004 & 2010).

*Mana ma mamalu* or maintaining honour and dignity is represented by the third step of the *faletalimalo*. This final step endorses the critical role of honouring and providing deference throughout the process of researching Samoan communities. Honour in this context recognises participants and families’ roles as *tufuga* (experts) of their lived experiences and journeys, similar to the collaborative approach initiated by the second step of the *faletalimalo*. One must enter into the sanctity of participants’ lives and *‘āiga* in the spirit of humility. In this research, honouring aligns closely with therapeutic intentions as a way of validating expressed life narratives of individuals, their *‘āiga*, and their communities as discussed in section one of this methodological chapter.

The various components of the Uputāua Therapeutic Approach, as I have discussed here, became a useful reference guide for appropriate protocols and practices I needed to pay attention to, especially when I began my field work. The UTA framework also became an important guide to areas that I needed to cover with each of my participants. For example, I engaged in conversations with them that highlighted the various roles played by their spiritual life, or their family life, or their cultural involvement, and so forth. This way, not only did the UTA remind me of my responsibility to *teu le vā* with my participants, it also provided components that enabled my conversations with my participants to focus on areas that were both familiar and important to them as Samoans, wherever they lived.

### ***Section two: generation of empirical materials***

This section discusses how participant narratives were generated during the fieldwork. It documents the number of participants, the gender mix, their age and status, and their locality. In regards to consultation, this section pays particular attention to the important role of ethics, especially when researching a sensitive topic such as death and family with Samoan communities. Also highlighted in this section are key reasons for inclusion or exclusion criteria. The performance of appropriate cultural protocols, as discussed in section one, find their place of action within the confines of social etiquettes required to facilitate *talanoa* interviews with participants.

### **Fono fa'atalatalanoa: narrative dialogue**

The main data collection involved *fono fa'atalatalanoa* (narrative dialogue) interviews which allowed my research participants to narrate their stories and experiences of addressing death. That is, their participation in mourning rituals, their roles in *fa'asamoa* protocols, and their journey of recovery, wherever they were situated. For the *talanoa* interviews, I utilised three forms of ethnographic engagement: qualitative narrative inquiry, cross-case synthesis, and auto-ethnography, which I discuss in more detail in the next section. The engagement of Samoan and Pacific methodologies, interwoven with

these three qualitative research methods, generated a richer description of Samoan men's experiences overall. These approaches move beyond the role of mere mining for information, and more towards providing an orientation map, so to speak, for making sense of the empirical materials involved with this research. These approaches are compatible with Samoan cultural values, concepts, practices, and relationships examined throughout this thesis.

The first approach to data collection I used was qualitative narrative inquiry, with the foundational component of action research inherent to indigenous scholarship. Narrative inquiry allows participants to story their lives in ways that are meaningful to them (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). As Mishler expresses it, narrative inquiry "structures events into distinct plots, themes and forms of characterization" (cited in Goldring, 2006, p.36). Action research seeks to "address social issues and to generate broader theoretical understanding of pertinent socioeconomic processes shaping such issues" (Hodgetts, Drew, Sonn, Stolte, Nikora & Curtis, 2010, p.7). My past involvement with research has been carried out with the primary purpose of making meaningful contributions, providing solutions, and helping improve the overall health of Samoan and Pacific communities in New Zealand and the Pacific (see Seiuli 1993, 1997, 2004, 2010, 2012a, 2012b & 2013). Such sentiments align with what Anae and her colleagues (2010) advocate about those researching Pasefika communities, that is, to "improve the lives of Pacific people, transform the practices of those in power and influenc[e] policy" (p.8).

Likewise, this research shares the goals and intentions of narrative inquiry and indigenous action research conducted by members of the group for members of that group, and in keeping with the cultural values and practices of the group. My engagement with participants in this regard, is about understanding and attributing meanings to their lived experiences during personal life challenges and restorative developments (Ballard, 2009; Buckle et al., 2009; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Owens & Payne, 1999). For me, action research is not only appropriate but vital in giving back something useful to the community being researched. Thus, not only is this research project seeking to better understand Samoan grieving processes, but a key objective is ultimately to

validate and make visible therapeutic pathways to these grieving patterns. The result is that valuable cultural knowledge becomes recognised, both locally and globally, as useful in resourcing and supporting Samoan men and their families during times of loss and bereavement.

The second approach to data gathering uses a cross-case synthesis approach (Lee & Chavis, 2012; Yin 1994 & 2012) to document more precisely how social identities and psychological capacity shape human responses (Drabek, 1986 & 1999; Elliot & Pais, 2006). The case studies document three different perspectives of death-related experiences from key informants. Further, they draw from the narratives of the other nineteen participants, which are synthesised within emerging themes to provide a richer tapestry of similarities, as well as those that may reveal opposing patterns. This approach is particularly useful where there is a scarcity of research that considers the experiences and difficulties faced by a particular population (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006), which is the case for Samoan death and bereavement paradigms. As Hancock & Algozzine suggest, case study research is useful for exploring and observing patterns of behaviours, customs, and ways of life of a culture or group. The heavily contextualized knowledge that cases afford also lends itself to local action (Flyvbjerg, 2001). As a Samoan counsellor, this means engaging in culturally relevant research on grief recovery amongst Samoan communities everywhere.

The case studies presentation follows both a descriptive and exploratory pathway (Yin, 1994) that enables us to gain a deeper understanding of the *how* and *why* questions within the context of death rituals and mourning customs for Samoan men. The outcome is that the data gathered are grounded in first-hand experiences, resulting in deeper insights into the meaning-making processes involved with death impacts. As Knowles (2000, p.217) comments, “lives are not static, fixed in place, but ceaselessly in the process of many journeys from one place to another”. When examining the lives of Samoan people, their stories reflect their *malaga*, both as part of the diaspora and in the re-development of their identity in nations like New Zealand. These journeys are worthy of examination.

The third form of ethnographic data collection uses auto-ethnography (Ballard, 2009; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Hemmingson, 2009). My own personal reflective writing as an insider who has witnessed and participated in Samoan death rituals first-hand is regularly included within the *talanoa* narratives of my participants. Their accounts have from time to time helped me to examine my own personal experiences, and have generated internal personal dialogue and produced interaction between my own intuitive processes and those of my participants. This procedure involves personal monitoring and supervision, regular ethical self-assessment, and the reassurance of appropriate cultural guidance. My reflexive auto-ethnographic accounts serve as an explicit and integral part of the dataset, making visible and transparent my own assumptions, biases, and views.

### **Empirical engagements, ethical issues and participants**

This thesis has two important objectives. The first focuses on documenting the various ways Samoan men have made sense of their death-related experiences, by examining their grieving processes, the rituals they use, and the outcome of these patterns of address for them and their families. The second examines these patterns on the basis that they could well provide therapeutic aspects helpful to grief recovery. Here, I am particularly interested in the use of Samoan grieving traditions and rituals for their potential to reveal healing paths, and support the return of grievers to normal routines. It is clear to me as a Samoan counsellor that there is a dire need for evidence-based therapeutic approaches that are useful in addressing Samoan people's health needs. A personal objective is that this research project will not only assist me as a counsellor, but also provide helpful information for others who work with Samoan people in grief recovery.

To achieve my research objectives, I interviewed my participants (19 men and 3 women) about their death-related experiences. These conversations took place in New Zealand, Samoa, and North America. The *fono fa'atalatalanoa* involved an examination and documentation of important areas such as family rituals, cultural practices, spiritual beliefs, and ways of coping. The *fono*

*fa'atalatalanoa* interviews were guided primarily by the University of Waikato and Health Research Council (HRC) approved ethics proposals, and informed by the Uputāua Therapeutic Approach (Seiuli, 2012) and the Fonofale Model (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). The two models caution researchers to pay specific attention to unique cultural protocols. Engagement includes the important protocols of *fa'aaloalo*, *ola fa'aleagaga*, *loto fesoasoani* (hospitality), and *meaalofa* exchange. *Fa'ameaalofa* (appreciation) is an intricate process in social exchange. This practice serves as an integral part of the consultation and data collection procedures, comparable with *koha* practices found in Maori communities. Concerning the performance of *fa'ameaalofa*, the on-going guidance of my cultural advisors became vital in administering this part of the data gathering process.

This research project was given approval by two distinct ethics committees. The first was through the Human Ethics Review Committee within the Psychology Department and the School of Maori and Pacific Development at the University of Waikato. The second approval was granted by the Health Research Council of New Zealand which regulates health research within Pasefika communities in the country. Ethics in Pasefika research is closely aligned with the concept of *fa'aaloalo*. *Fa'aaloalo* reflects the role of upholding and honouring the dignity of research participants, a valued characteristic embodied both within *fa'asamoa* and social relationships. Marsack (cited in Lima, 2004) emphasises that the characteristics of *fa'aaloalo* set Samoan people apart from others. Not surprisingly, at least in the area of research, respect for the dignity of participants has been recognized as an important ethical consideration, and requires the researcher to carefully consider methodologies that are particularly appropriate within this context (also see UTA framework).

Previous qualitative bereavement studies highlighted many ethical concerns (Buckle, et al., 2009 & 2010) that needed to be monitored throughout. It is of particular importance to give high priority to working sensitively, considering the vulnerability of those undergoing the process of loss and grief. Additionally, the cultural needs of the participants must be attended to throughout the process of data collection, analysis of findings, and dissemination.

My present research targets a specific ethnic group, that is, Samoan men in the context of their *'āiga*. It is therefore important to note that I interviewed only those who fitted the criteria set out for this research (see Participants' Involvement discussed later). Despite this narrow focus, there were occasions when wives/spouses participated in the *talanoa* with their husbands or partners. This involvement of wives was a result of requests by families that had suffered in the tsunami, asking about ways to help their male relatives deal with their grief appropriately. In the Samoan context, family includes all members, and where women are not necessarily exempted, even for researches that are specifically focused on men like this one. Hence, the women's input and involvement in the dataset were also crucial in this regard.

All participants were informed of their right to decline to answer any of the questions in the interview without having to provide any reasons for doing so. Importantly, they had the freedom to withdraw from the research project at any time before or after the transcription of their interviews. Again, there was no requirement for them to justify withdrawing their participation. These guiding principles were either outlined in the Consent Form (see Appendix 5) or in the Information Sheet (see Appendix 1 & 2) provided to every participant prior to being interviewed. The Information Sheet outlined the intent and purpose of the research, as well as defining participants' role in the research. Although the original proposal for this thesis suggested that if a participant agreed to be part of the research project but preferred to consent orally, a taped recorded consent agreement was to be utilised. There was no need for this approach because all of my participants signed a written consent indicating their desire to freely participate in the research.

The University of Waikato Ethics Committee does not specifically outline a requirement for the translation of Participant Information Sheets, Consent Forms, or Interview Guides into the language of the group to be studied. But my own personal experience with researching Samoan communities in the past prepared me to act accordingly. I engaged a professional translator in Hamilton to translate the Information Sheets, Consent Forms, and Interview Guide into formal Samoan language (See Appendix 7). This preparation proved very useful

while out in the field, because it provided immediate access to Samoan wordings or phrases that were invaluable in guiding the *talanoa* discussion with participants who chose to use the Samoan language solely. Additionally, the prepared materials allowed the conversations with participants to move between using Samoan language, or English, or both, throughout the interviews. Translating resources, research information, and interview questions from English to Samoan is a vital process in promoting 'excellence in research', particularly for vulnerable population groups (Lima, 2004).

It was initially projected that between fifteen to eighteen participants would be interviewed. However, more were added during the data collection phase when some of my initial participants recommended others in their sphere of contact as being able to provide valuable insights. This pattern reflects the snowball technique for participant recruitment (see Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Fife-Schaw, 2003). A total of twenty two participants gave consent and were interviewed for my research project. The added participants provided insights and comments on death and mourning practices not already covered, or on some situations which stood outside of the experiences of those already interviewed.

All of my participants were aged twenty years or older, identified themselves as Samoan, and were currently living in New Zealand or had lived in New Zealand for at least three consecutive years in the past. Although the interviews primarily sought to examine death practices and customs with Samoan men particularly, participants were given the opportunity to invite their *'āiga* or other significant people as support during the *talanoaga*. All of the twenty two participants were initially interviewed once for a time frame of between forty five minutes and one and a half hours. These interviews were generally held at the participants' homes, their work place, or other locations identified as a safe place to talk and explore the topic involved in this research. After the initial interviews with the twenty two participants, three were asked to participate further, and to allow their stories to form the basis for the case studies (see chapters six, seven and eight). I discuss the significance of the case study interviews in later parts of this chapter.

Personal long-term connections within the Samoan community, and years of employment as a health clinician in Hamilton and Auckland provided useful links for accessing potential participants. I also used family contacts and personal networks to canvass further participants outside those regions. It was anticipated originally that the participants were to be located in New Zealand and Samoa. However, the later phase of the field work provided an opportunity for the author to travel to North America (California), thereby enabling interviews with four of the twenty two participants of this research project. The inclusion of the American participants, though minimal in numbers, provided some useful comparisons with the findings from the earlier works of Ablon (1970, 1971 & 1973). These participants met the criterion of having resided in New Zealand in the past before relocating to America.

The participants involved in this study included: church ministers, family heads (*sa’o*), *matai* leaders and non-*matai*; full-blooded and half-caste Samoans (*afakasi*); Samoa-born, New Zealand-born and USA-born; Samoa-based, New Zealand-based and USA-based; married and singles; young adults, middle-aged and elderly; high levels of education and lower-end education; traditional denominations, Pentecostals, Latter Day Saints, and non-church attendance; and, employed, unemployed and students. The breakdown of each participant’s location, age, and family role is provided in *Table 2*.



Table 2: Participants Sample Distribution

A major *galulolo* (tsunami) in the Pacific in September 2009 which caused numerous sudden deaths is a central event for some of my participants. The *galulolo* event devastated Samoa, American Samoa, and Tonga, calling into question the way people dealt with death at a national and global level. In fact, it would have been difficult for any Samoan, wherever located at the time, not to have been impacted upon by the devastation. In particular, Jared (see chapter seven) lost his parents and his two children in this catastrophe. Further, many of the people I spoke to while in Samoa, particularly in the villages directly hit by the tsunami, are still battling to move on from the physical, psychological, and emotional damage that lingers, even several years since its initial impact. The way death and grief was handled during these times provides an important part of the dataset examined during this research project.

Of the twenty-two participants interviewed, five lived in Samoa; four lived in California (USA); and thirteen in New Zealand (Table 2). The New Zealand participants were made up of five participants living in *Maunga*, three in *Mata*, one in *Rangi*, and four in *Moana*. All of the Samoan participants identified Samoa as their birthplace. The American sample was made up of three Samoan-born and one US-born. The New Zealand sample contained the most people who identified themselves as being born overseas; seven had been born in New Zealand, while five other participants resident in New Zealand had been born in Samoa. Overall, the sample contained fourteen participants who were identified as Samoan-born, and eight participants who were born overseas, either in New Zealand or the USA.

Other participant characteristics reveal a diversity of backgrounds (refer to Table 3). For example, two participants were between the ages of 21-30, both were untitled, one was married and the other was single, and both were males. Of the 31-40 age group, containing seven participants, there were six males and one female. The female participant became involved because her experiences and her husband's experiences of death and bereavement were intricately connected. Their recollection was richly captured as they jointly narrated their lives together in Samoa and their subsequent move to New Zealand.

As already alluded to earlier in this chapter, although the primary focus of this thesis is on men, the context of the *'āiga* is very important in all engagement practices, including interviewing participants. This meant that some of the spouses became part of the sample groups because they chose to accompany their partners/husbands in the interview. This dilemma is not uncommon with Samoan research (see Anae, 1997; Lima, 2004), even if the researcher tries to target a specific gender. The beauty of Pasefika *talanoa* research approach is that not only are such discrepancies expected, but they can be accommodated within appropriate cultural protocols quite easily. For instance, in this research project, five female spouses were present at some point during the interviews with their husbands, and three chose to become formal participants by signing the consent forms. However, any comments contributed by the other two partners who did not become formal participants were included with their husband's narratives. Therefore, the total female participants were counted as three and not five. The total number of male participants was nineteen. Of the twenty two participants, eighteen were married and four were single.

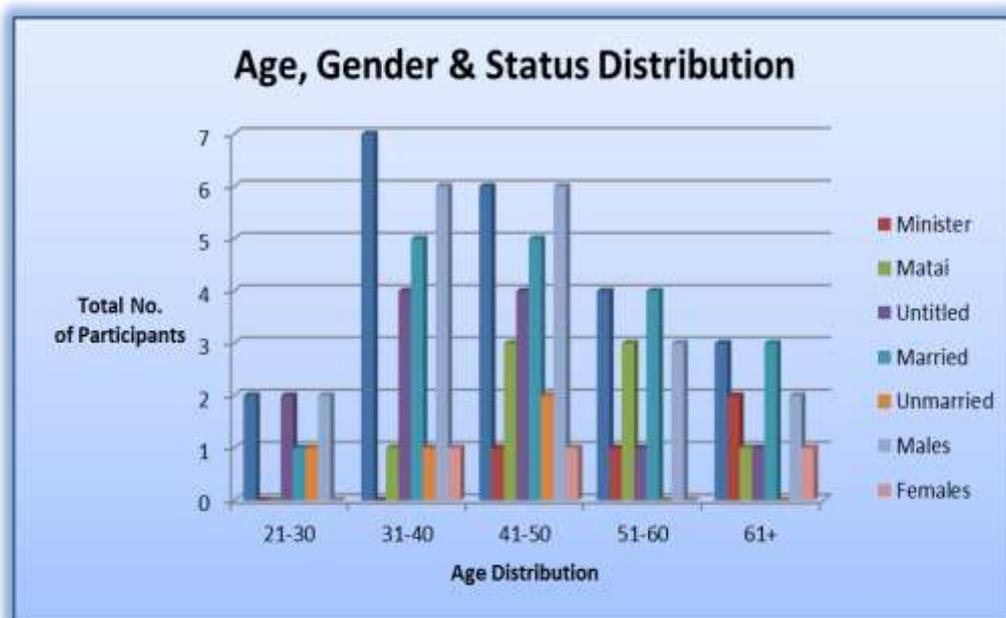


Table 3: Age, Gender, and Status Distribution

Another characteristic of the sample which was not part of the original research design is the difference in the number of *matai* compared with non-

*matai* participants. Overall, there were more untitled participants (12) than those who held *matai* titles (8). General Samoan religious practice dictates that once a person becomes a church minister, their *matai* status has to be rescinded in order to take up their church minister position. This practice is observed primarily by the LMS (Congregational Church) and the Lotu Metotisi (Methodist Church), but is not necessarily the practice of all Samoan churches. Unwilling to allow the church to make hard and fast rules about these matters, Samoans found a way to navigate around this sanction. Principally, a person can maintain his/her *matai* title and status, if he/she chooses to become an *Ao'ao* (lay minister) and not a *fai'feau* (church minister). In this lay capacity, an *Ao'ao* is perceived as adding value to both the church and the culture. The duality of this unique position is therefore recognised in this research project with participants who are *Ao'ao* being included in both the *matai* and ministers category. This does lead to some of the figures represented appearing skewed, but their representation in both categories, of *matai* and minister, is vital because of their roles within these important social and religious contexts.

### **Participant involvement**

The *talanoa* interviews engaged a semi-structured approach that utilises the guiding format of themes and questions proposed (see Appendix 3). Robson (1993) and Wengraf (2001) recommend a semi-structured approach to interviewing because it allows the researcher to prepare questions in advance, while allowing space for conversations to be flexible and open-ended. The result is that discussions are more fluid and unplanned, but still broadly follow a pre-defined purpose. The nature of semi-structured interviewing formats also provides opportunities for the researcher to ask probing questions that might not be asked if a set questionnaire was strictly adhered to (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).

*Talanoa* sessions adhered to Samoan social protocols, which were either formal or informal depending on the person's status or preference. The flexibility of the *talanoa* format allowed space for participant and researcher to negotiate the most appropriate engagement process. My participants were understanding

of the reasons for this research, and accommodated my research by making it easier to engage in an informal manner. This does not translate to mean that informal conversations resulted in less meaningful dialogue. Far from it! Rather, the preference for relaxing certain cultural formalities allowed both the researcher and participant to feel at ease and be comfortable throughout the *talanoaga* (dialogue). This more relaxed approach created space for many of my participants to be more open in sharing their stories with me. At times, they themselves were surprised by related emotions that were rediscovered and expressed during these conversations. In some instances, the retelling was accompanied by heartfelt tears, helping to soothe our souls in their narrative journey.

My research participants chose to *talanoa* by moving freely between the Samoan and English language. There were occurrences where the participants chose to speak only in Samoan or only in English. In such instances, the researcher simply mirrored the preference of the participant and followed suit. The researcher's ability to navigate both the Samoan and English language and cultural protocols during the *talanoa* was very important in maintaining track during their narrations. This meant that there was no need for an interpreter to be engaged in any part of the discussions or translation of data. However, it must be stated that, as a researcher, I am acutely aware of the need to have cultural input throughout the project, even if the need for translating the data was minimal. From time to time, I was able to elicit the support of members from my cultural panel, either face-to-face, or through their written work, to clarify meanings and nuances present in death and grief culture that were beyond my personal understanding. Their input and direction remains invaluable to the processes and outcome of this research project.

The *fono fa'atalatalanoa* (narrative interviews) also invited participants to utilise any physical or visible objects of affection, such as photographs, memorabilia, and artefacts that embodied significant connections for them. These kinds of techniques have proven useful in helping people engage in deep reflection and articulate their own experiences (Cassim, 2013; Hodgetts, Chamberlain, & Groot, 2010). Such methods provide the opportunity for

participants to have more substantially engaged interactions that add a deeper and richer element to information about their experiences of grief than might come out of a traditional semi-structured interview (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, & Radley, 2007). Regardless of the usefulness of engaging in *talanoa* with the use of personal material objects as metonyms for storying and re-storying fractured lives due to death impacts, many of my participants chose to simply articulate their recollections without the need to engage such materials for their elicitation. The lack of material objects being used to stimulate deeper conversations explains the absence of much discussion on this topic in this thesis. Nevertheless, I have added photographs throughout this thesis to provide deeper reflections of the various events that were captured in my own death-related experiences (see chapter four and chapter seven).

The interviews were later summarised into reports which were returned to participants for their comments and feedback. For the single-interview participants, there was no need for any follow up interviews, unless it was to clarify a point made in their *talanoa*. Follow-up interviews were only required with the three participants who were invited to be involved in the case studies. The summary reports were emailed, posted, or handed to participants in person. The participants edited the reports by removing or adding parts that were important for them to include or exclude from their narratives. These reports and their content were included into the overall context of the findings chapter.

### **Case study interviews**

I highlighted in section one of this chapter that case study interviews provided an important part of the empirical material gathered (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012). I amplify discussion on the use of case study interviews more specifically in this section. Further interviews for the case studies involved only three of the twenty two participants. These follow-up interviews explored key themes that were raised in the general interviews, in addition to considerations of other issues that were important to discuss (refer to Appendix 4 for the interview schedule). The follow-up *talanoa* encouraged participants to involve other significant members of their *ʻāiga* or community in the discussions if they desired.

The overall *talanoa* were between two to four meetings, ranging from six to ten hours in total. It is important to note here that the *talanoa* interviews, important as they are to this thesis, represent only a part of the engagement process overall. That is, the on-going relationship between my participants and myself as the researcher, especially after the completion of the research project, is vitally important for adhering to cultural protocols. For example, the family who were affected by the tsunami (see chapter seven) have become close friends and remain in regular contact. The flow on of this contact is that when I am in Maunga, I usually call in to visit them. We would share a meal together, talk about their growing children, and pray for each other. Likewise, the case study participant from Moana (see chapter eight) arranged lodging for me in his home when I visited him for the interview. If I am in this city for other occasions, I would generally lodge with him. This form of hospitality is reciprocated if and when they visit my area. Not only are these forms of connection important to the process of data collection, they serve to uphold the integrity of the participants, while simultaneously forming an accountability that honours them as people in the process. This way of researching reflects an important part of the UTA approach to research discussed earlier, particularly the steps of engagement. This then becomes a vital part of therapeutic allegiance and process in doing research *with* people, not *on* people.

The selection criteria for the case study participants hinged on two main aspects that I want to briefly discuss here. The first criterion was accessibility. That is, for the follow-up interviews, I needed to be able to have longer access to each of the participants involved. Additionally, access meant that participants were willing and available to have their narratives examined in more detail. It was not possible to include all of the twenty two participants in this part of the research project because of their location, time constraints, and, in some cases, their unwillingness to participate further. Naturally, the list of possible case study participants shortened as a result.

The second criterion falls under my desired outcome of areas for further investigation, meaning that I did not want to present three case studies that were very similar, such as three *matai* perspectives of death culture from

different locations. As valuable as this might be, I preferred to cast my view wider in order to capture a broader panorama of how bereavement and grieving is practiced and transitioned by Samoan men in current times. The three positions would then be contextualised within themes that emerged from the *talanoaga*. This approach resulted in capturing three major themes that became the focus of the case studies dataset: *Leadership and decision-making during death and mourning; responding to death as a result of calamity; and, New Zealand-born Samoans' experiences of Samoan death rituals*. The focus on these themes provided a greater range of death related experiences of Samoan men and their families in their current locations. The narratives of the other nineteen participants were included within the case studies where relevant, thus providing supporting or contrasting perspectives.

### **Therapeutic support**

Due to the sensitive nature of these in-depth interviews, it was imperative to allow participants time to journey at a pace that was solicitous of their emotional energy, and conducive to their psychological and physical wellbeing at all times (see UTA pillars of wellness). Allowing time for participants during these more in-depth interviews was important because of the possibility that the interview would bring to the surface deep hurts, painful memories, or emotions that were profoundly felt in their initial experiences and this did indeed happen. As an experienced and qualified trauma counsellor, I remained mindful of, and alert to, the emotional and psychological challenges of such elicitations for my participants, and especially those who were engaged in the case studies. The guiding principles of the Uputāua Therapeutic Approach prompted me as a researcher and counsellor to remain alert throughout my participants' narrations of their experiences.

My experience as a grief counsellor prepared me to use my cultural and clinical skills to facilitate appropriate support for participants or their *'āiga* as required. My role involved empathetic and genuine regard for the participant's wellbeing. I listened to them as they themselves became experts on their lives, their stories, and their healing. My role was to simply facilitate and journey with

them through their narratives of impact, management, and emergence from death's shadow. There were very few instances where I may have felt the need to provide brief counselling support on the spot. Most often, I would ask the participants to talk about the pain or distress that might have surfaced, and then examine what this may have meant for them and why. This way of examining participants' emotional turmoil was helpful in transitioning them from focusing solely on the hurt, to giving meaningful connection and interpretation to their sense of loss (Winslade & Hedtke, 2004). For many of my participants, the transition from painful memories to meaning making became valuable in remembering and re-negotiating their experiences. These events, although still challenging at the best of times, were now being treasured and celebrated as a living legacy (Seiuli 2004, Webber-Dreadon, 1999).

Research that is anchored in Samoan cultural traditions and purposeful with therapeutic intentions, as advocated by the Uputāua Therapeutic Approach, meant that there was no need for further counselling referrals to be made. In saying that, I was fully prepared to facilitate referral support for my participants if it was requested or if I felt they would benefit from it. My clinical supervisor, who is a trained counsellor, was also available for debriefing or other therapeutic support if required. In addition, my research supervisors were available throughout to call upon for guidance and support. While all of these levels of support were available to my participants, nevertheless they were informed at the start of the interviews that the *talanoa* were not counselling sessions, but conversations about their experiences of loss and grief.

### ***Section three: analytical processes***

This section examines first the processes used to analyse participants' accounts. That is, sorting, coding, and grouping the information into manageable sections, which were then divided into themes for analysis. Secondly, this section presents some of the limitations encountered through engaging in this present research. Thirdly, this section presents some of the pathways used to disseminate the findings of this research project. Personal accounts gathered

from the participants in the initial interviews provided sufficient material for analysis. As anticipated, the *talanoa* interviews surveyed the following issues which, in turn, presented a structure for the summary reports. The summary reports were then synthesised and incorporated into the three case study topics of 'traditional leadership and decision-making, experiencing loss through calamity, and New Zealand-born experiences of death impacts outside of Samoa.

- An overview of the participants' engagement and experience of death rituals, customs and practices as Samoans. The information gathered here provided recent information on the ways that Samoan men engage with and view such customs.
- An elaborated narrative of participants' journeys through the sequence of bereavement and mourning, with particular attention to therapeutic pathways to recovery.
- How participants' experiences vary from, or converge with, taken for granted bereavement and mourning experiences.
- How *matai* status, employment, gender, *fa'asamoa*, and other factors influence bereavement and mourning for Samoans in Samoa, in New Zealand, and in USA.
- Identification of helpful (and not so helpful) strategies adopted to navigate the bereavement and mourning experience.

All of the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, thus providing written accounts of what the respondents said. Verbatim transcription offers the advantage of allowing all possible analytic approaches to the material (Fielding & Thomas, 2001). Interviews were generally transcribed and translated within a week or a couple of weeks after the interviews took place. This method enabled me to note incidents or moments in the interviews that stood out as being significant. For example, I may have noted my observations of how a participant presented at various points in our conversation. They may have been laughing or crying as they storied their lived experiences. Further, I would mark these moments by noting the counter on my audio recorder, while recording my

observation of the participant's expressed emotion. Some of my observations are included in the transcribed verbatim of my participants in the case study chapters (see chapters six, seven and eight). By staying alert in the interview process, I was able to question or inquire about such expressed emotions by asking probing or clarifying questions.

I must add that transcribing and translating such depth of heartfelt vulnerability and pain from the interviews is an emotionally demanding task in itself. Because of my participants' trust and willingness to be open in their recollections, it was vitally important that I accurately capture the essence of each participant narrative through this process. The verbatim transcription and translation became the basis for creating summary reports. These reports then formed the basis of the material that was coded for analysis. Coding involves reviewing transcripts and field notes, thereby identifying emerging themes that held some significance for the research. By reading and examining the transcripts and field notes closely, codes were then ordered into thematic areas which I organised into various subjects and perspectives.

Each participant was given a code number to correspond with their location (SA – Samoa, NZ - New Zealand, and US – North America). For my New Zealand participants, they were identified by the cities (pseudonyms) where the interviews took place (MT- Mata, MG – Maunga, MA – Moana, and RA – Rangī). This method enabled me to group my participants very simply. They were then given a number within that group: 1, for the person that I interviewed first, 2, for the person I interviewed next, and so on. The interview transcripts were then re-organised under the associated questions from the interview questionnaires as suggested by Griffie (2005) and Miles & Huberman (1994). Grouping responses under the key questions explored in the *talanoa* interview schedule allowed for participants' responses to be categorized and organised. Texts that were considered relevant for providing possible quotations or ideas that related to the research themes were highlighted. Field notes were analysed in conjunction with the interview transcripts and coded according to the relevant categories or themes. This simple coding process allowed for “a constant state of potential revision and fluidity” (Bryman, 2001, p.392). The outcome of this process

resulted in my writing and analysis becoming closely connected, with many of my themes and findings emerging through the writing process.

Pseudonyms are used to conceal and protect the identity of my participants, unless they consented and preferred to use their true identity. This is the case with a number of participants whose narratives formed the basis of my case studies. Their preference for using their true identity speaks of their desire to be intimately connected to their personal accounts, and be fully represented in their retelling. For these participants, retelling forms an important part in honouring and memorialising, one that is carried out with dignity and great care. Nevertheless, given the positions that some of my participants have in Samoan communities in New Zealand and in other places, there is the possibility that some could be identified. Therefore, I have further removed identifying features for generalised descriptions in an attempt to reduce the chances of this happening, for example, by employing Maori pseudonyms to designate their locations in New Zealand as I have done in the previous paragraph.

As stated earlier in this chapter, narrative inquiry informs the basis of the *talanoa* processes with participants, thus allowing for the analysis of both the context and content of each narrative recorded. Narrative analysis therefore considers the structure of beliefs, social interaction, rituals and practices, and the influence of social and cultural ideologies upon participants' lived experiences (Labov, 1997; Martin, 2013; Murray, 2000). Initially, field-notes and transcription processes proved fundamental to my analysis process.

The analysis of the material collected resulted in highlighting initial themes and patterns that emerged. Thematic analysis is a common technique used to support a narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008). This approach extends the focus of the analysis beyond the mere content of the narratives, and considers the wider aspects of significant action and events within the narrative (Li, 2011; Riessman, 2008). Using thematic analysis helped me to identify key themes that emerged from the dataset. These included categories that converged into parallel patterns of shared meanings. There were also some narratives that stood out as providing differences in interpretations and patterns of address. These

themes are presented and discussed in the three case studies chapters that follow.

There is an increased focus on the use of visual methods in social science research as being influential in eliciting narrative expression beyond just verbatim statements (see Hodgetts, Chamberlain, & Radley, 2007; Radley, Chamberlain, Chamberlain, & Groot, 2010; Radley & Chamberlain, 2011; Reavey, 2011). While the analysis of interview transcripts enables the interpretation of spoken material, words represent only one form of communication. Photographs allow for observing and interpreting the world through the experiences of the participants (Riessman, 2008). That is, through visual narratives or photographs, aspects of daily life also became accessible. The meaning attributed to a photograph, for example, does not necessarily constitute the captured object solely, but gives people a pathway to re-access stored meanings (Hodgetts et al., 2011). On this point, Radley (2011, p.19) argues that the focus is not so much about the “understanding *of* the pictures, as an understanding *with* the photographs” in relation to participants’ narratives. In this research project, photographs taken prior to, during, and after interviews were interpreted alongside participants’ accounts. This is particularly important in the context of the tsunami and the devastation it caused to the environment and livelihood of those affected. Additionally, the increasing role of technological media to capture footage and images of death seems vital to the ability of Samoan people to stay connected with their global community of support (see chapter four – Kiwi’s funeral). As much as the role of photographs and technology remains important to current Samoan death related practices, it is mentioned only briefly in my thesis. Other scholars who might be interested in this topic could extend this knowledge with further research.

### **Dissemination of findings**

From the outset, I envisaged this research being beneficial to a number of audiences in personal and in professional situations. Firstly, this research would be valuable to Samoan and Pacific people affected by death and grief. Because of my desire to provide feedback and useful information to Samoan and Pasefika

settings, I have already engaged in a number of forums to distribute my findings from this research project, apart from the obvious output of this thesis. For example, in 2012, I held a radio talkback interview with Capital Radio – Samoan Show in Rangi. This interview provided an opportunity for Samoan audiences in the area to discuss and question current Samoan death practices, especially given their urbanised locations. Further, I have presented my research to various Pasefika Fono, including the Pasefika Medical Association Bi-Annual Conference (2012), the Health Research Council Pasefika Fono (2012 & 2014), and the Samoa Conference II (Samoa). I have also provided presentations to some academic conferences relative to indigenous research perspectives including the University of Waikato: Death Studies Symposium (2011); Nga Pae o Marama: Indigenous Conference (Auckland University, 2012); Pasefika Research Symposium: Auckland University (2011); University of Waikato FASS Post-Graduate Conference (2013); and KIWA Colloquium: Pasefika Talanoa - University of Waikato (2013).

Secondly, the findings of this research project can serve employers and health providers, particularly mental health providers, in deepening their understanding of the intricate processes involved in death, bereavement, and mourning practices for Samoan people in general. As a foundational research project on grief and bereavement from a Samoan and Pacific perspective, the findings of this research will contribute to informing the wider community of academics and health clinicians on this sensitive, yet highly important, topic. On this note, I have also engaged in writing academic articles that have been accepted for publication in two journals: the *New Zealand Journal of Psychology* (2013); and the *Australian Community of Psychology Journal* (Seiuli, 2012b & 2013). On-going dissemination of the various parts of this research will continue wherever possible, furthering the intentions of this research. Such dissemination continues to reflect the important role of community action research. Just as vital in the process of disseminating this research project is the question of ownership of the information and knowledge produced through this research. In this domain, ownership is a collective responsibility. As the primary researcher and writer, it is my responsibility to act as a guardian of the information that is

entrusted to me. The stories relayed remain connected to the participants, and therefore, in retelling, they are acknowledged and honoured accordingly.

### **Limitations and challenges**

The opportunity to examine and reflect on the context and content of this thesis highlights limitations and challenges, as do other research projects. As significant a contribution as this research project is in documenting and understanding Samoan death and bereavement customs, its long term contribution remains to be seen.

The primary focus of this thesis is the examination of Samoan death and bereavement patterns. As a result of this specific focus, very little attention is given to comparative analysis of death practices of other Pasefika cultures like Maori, Hawaiian, Tonga, and so forth, with indigenous beliefs and rituals similar to the Samoans. While comparative analysis might present valuable information that could highlight similarities or variations, I have chosen to focus solely on Samoan perspectives and experiences. The task of venturing into an examination of death and bereavement patterns in other Pasefika communities is one for further research or scholars who may have interests in the findings of this study.

There are also other aspects of death and bereavement culture not touched upon, or simply glossed over because of the narrow focus of this thesis. Primarily, it is written as a doctoral thesis. The danger is that this thesis runs the risk of being labelled an *expert* work on Samoan death and bereavement culture. Although much as this work represents a unique perspective and provides a valuable account of what is taking place in contemporary contexts, it is not comprehensive: a more comprehensive research project would require additional time, greater funding, and extended focus. Rather, this thesis represents a snapshot of a particular area of interest for the author. Further, the dual focus of this thesis's objective, concentrating on 'the patterns of grief' and the 'pathways to recovery', means that areas beyond these perspectives are not represented or discussed only briefly.

The methodological approach taken in this research project also imposes limitations. Research by an individual might be aligned or coordinated with group research when considering researching collective communities like Samoans. This consideration is important, bearing in mind the data that could be canvassed by a group of researchers compared with the data gathered by a sole researcher, as is the case with this study. On this point, as a sole researcher, I am appreciative and envious of the support provided by the *Tangihanga Research Team* based in the Maori and Psychology Research Unit at the University of Waikato. Their work clearly highlights the value of, and need for, a group approach rather than individual research focus in this type of research project. Further, the role of sharing of resources, collective *fono* and debriefing, and peer supervision, provides researchers with another level of accountability.

Another area of limitation comes from the specific focus on men, which meant that only a few women were part of the research project. The primary reason for the specific gender focus on men arose out of my personal involvement with the Samoa tsunami of 2009. In the course of providing counselling and trauma recovery to families who were directly impacted, concerns were raised about the way some young men in the villages were dealing with the psychological impact of what they saw and went through. Such conversations steered the specific focus of this project towards understanding the way Samoan men grieve, and thus women were not specifically targeted as participants. However, the *'āiga* means gender is not an easy separation when researching Samoan communities. Hence, some women became participants because they accompanied their partners in and throughout the interviews and consented to be part of this research. Additionally, the roles of children, youth, and *fa'afafine* (transgender) were not considered, and would certainly provide valuable insights on the subject matter of my research.

The issue of location also contributed to the limitations encountered by this research project. As discussed in earlier parts of this chapter, the three locations where the participants were interviewed were Samoa, New Zealand, and USA. Of these three locations, only New Zealand provided a substantial number of participants (13). However, the participants were also scattered

throughout the country. Samoa and the USA provided much smaller samples. This research was not a simple, 'drive-by' project. It involved a good deal of travelling, communication, and organisation. A group approach might well have provided better coverage and focus with the various locations indicated above. Future research might consider Samoans living in Australia, Hawaii, American Samoa, and other places.

These possibilities for further research, which I explore in chapter nine (Discussion and Conclusion) in more detail, emerge from the key findings that I present in the next three chapters. I provide a preview of what to expect in these three chapters in the following sub-section.

### **Case studies preview**

The following three chapters (chapter six, seven, and eight) present my findings. Each of the three chapters focuses on a particular theme that arose from my *talanoa* interviews with my key informants. Additionally, the case study presentation concentrates on using one key informant's in-depth narrative to shape the core presentation of that particular chapter. Each case study is different and unique, providing specific insights into the way death and mourning rituals were performed and observed by these participants, and their families, as well as the personal cost to them as individuals. Importantly, the three case studies also reveal a pattern of shared similarities on a number of levels such as: the level of collective grieving by families and communities, the patterns of resourcing and of shared responsibility to meet funeral expenses, the role of the church during these times, and the performance of various cultural rituals. Such vital practices maintain the uniqueness of Samoan death and mourning rituals over time and space.

A cross-case synthesis approach (Lee & Chavis, 2011; Yin 1994 & 2012) is undertaken to allow the narratives from my key informants to be combined with those of my other participants and my own personal narratives where appropriate. These are discussed along a thematic structure as they emerged from the *talanoaga*. This way of examining, and of reporting the narratives of my

participants, provides a richer tapestry of similarity as well as revealing opposing paradigms from the data collated. Importantly, approaching the findings from the collective dataset provides space for this research to join in the scholarly enterprise by contributing to the emerging body of information on cross cultural understanding of death and bereavement journeys. Overall, my finding provides an important role in connecting current patterns of addressing death impacts, with those of past times as reported earlier in chapters two and four. My findings are arranged as follows:

Chapter six presents my first case study with a specific focus on the important role of traditional *matai*-led leadership and decision-making during death impacts. This form of leadership structure is predominantly how many Samoans perceive and experience leadership domains within the wider Samoan context. Though this is not the only form of designated or recognised leadership enacted by Samoans overall, it is the most widely recognised and practiced. The chapter provides an in-depth case discussion and analysis of the narratives provided by my father, Seiuli Leiataualesā Taulapapa Tuilaepa (hereafter Taulapapa), who is the *sa’o* or paramount chief of my extended family. The chapter is organized into key themes that emerged from my *talanoa* interview with Taulapapa, who continues to reside in Hamilton, New Zealand, while also enacting his leadership role for his home village in Samoa.

Chapter seven presents my second case study, which examines the events of the *galulolo* (tsunami) of 2009 in Samoa. This case study features a husband, Jared, with his wife Netta, who suffered from the devastation of the *galulolo*, and who lost his own parents and his two children to the tsunami. Their journey through this devastation is documented first, followed by their migration to New Zealand to continue in their recovery. Their narratives of suffering, despair, recovery, and healing are presented in this chapter.

Chapter eight documents my third and final case study, which examines New Zealand-born Samoan’s perspectives of Samoan death and bereavement culture. Tauivi, who is a New Zealand-born of Samoan and European ethnicity, provides the core narratives that inform this case study. The third case study also explores changes and continuing impact of Samoan bereavement culture on

younger generations of Samoans, especially those who are living outside of Samoa. These findings chapters are linked in a case analysis which will form part of the discussion and conclusion (chapter nine), reconnecting these three cases to the overall objectives of this research.

## **Chapter Six**

### Case Study One

#### **O le ala i le pule o le tautua (Samoan proverb)**

The pathway to leadership is through service



*Matai* leadership remains central to Samoan people and to Samoan culture because it provides them with a structure that orders and organises the way they interact with one another. This form of leadership also plays a pivotal role in the way families function collectively in social and cultural life. One of the most visible events that showcase the ability of family leaders to prove their worth publicly is when *fa'alavelave* occasions, such as a death, take place. Traditionally, Samoan leadership is the primary domain of the family *sa'o* (appointed family head), together with those who are designated with recognized authority to provide support in this area of family governance.

This chapter provides the first of three case studies. The first case describes, explains, and analyses the significance of chiefly leadership and decision-making in death and mourning rituals involved in many Samoan families. Taulapapa, who is the *sa'o* (family head or lead *matai*) of his clan provides the core narratives for this case study. The chapter provides a major focus on traditional death patterns that are still being observed nowadays, particularly when a *matai* passes away. Adhering to end-of-life rituals for a *matai* demonstrates continued connection between Samoan people and their genealogical past. Further examples from other research participants are also woven into the exposition, discussion and narratives of this chapter.

### **Samoan leadership and decision-making**

A noticeable characteristic displayed amongst Samoan people is the cohesive nature and closeness evident in the *'āiga* network (O'Meara, 1990), where family members seek to move and function as one in most of its affairs. It is because of this cohesiveness that decision-making is rarely, if at all, an individuated process (Keesing & Keesing, 1956). The task of formalized decision-making is shared with the wider family group, especially with those of chiefly or senior status, and generally with the larger good in mind (Braun, 1998; Le Tagaloa, 1992; Macpherson, 2001 & 2002). The result of functioning in such a context means that "important decisions tend to involve group rather than individual responsibility" (Keesing & Keesing, 1956, p.97).

Samoaan life is a function of collectivity and of family-centred responsibility. As Tamasese, Peteru & Waldegrave (1997) explain, “there is no such thing as a Samoan who is independent of others . . . you cannot take a Samoan out of the collective context” (p.28). As discussed in chapter two, every Samoan person is connected to a family of origin, with specific lineage to ancestral forbears (Holmes & Holmes, 1992; Lui, 2003). O’Meara (1990, p.55) emphasizes of the Samoans that “everyone has a place. No one is alone, no one is a stranger, and no-one is without support.” It is within this collective niche that the ideal of filial piety materializes, and where leadership and decision-making focuses on taking care of the family.

Samoaan familial ties are complex and highly interwoven, yet constitutive. In this regard, family members are expected to provide *tautua* and to support the elite title holders of the *‘āiga*. Much of the current structure of leadership, its incorporation of Christian elements, and its centrality to maintaining cultural traditions finds its roots in the social apparatus of historical provenance where leadership is set out (see chapter two). Although collective in its intention, the family structure constitutes a sanctioned hierarchy whose members know their domain of responsibility and influence, as well as their social standing within the group (Mageo, 1998, 2002 & 2008; Mead, 1930).

At the head of each extended unit presides the *sa’o* (leading *matai*) with delegated authority to organize the regular activities of the extended unit (Lui, 2002; O’Meara, 1990; Wendt; 1965). Although an autocratic style of governance appeared more prominent in past times, the move towards capitalism has resulted in more relaxed structures of authority in village life nowadays. In predominantly western settings such as New Zealand, the role of a chief organizing the activities of family members is not as strict or as clearly obvious to outside observers as it might be in Samoa itself. In these adopted locations, greater flexibility exists for members to contribute to family resources according to an individual’s skills or their ability to provide financially, rather than by land cultivation as was the case in past times. Chiefly roles in urban centres also include employment to help the family survive financially instead of organizing their daily chores and responsibilities. Nevertheless, the prominence of chiefly

status is almost always recognized in specific family, village, and church gatherings.

Samoan people have “well defined leadership and mechanisms of decision making and public opinion formation” (Keesing and Keesing, 1956, p.1). Keesing and Keesing’s observation exemplifies the well-known Samoan notion of “*o le tagata ma lona fa’asinomaga*”, which advocates that every person has designated roles and duties. Another Samoan saying, “*o Samoa ua uma on tofi mai anamua*”, reiterates the same notion of predetermined responsibilities. That is, the distinguishable functions of Samoan leadership and decision-making, as well as the pathways that exist to maintain these practices, are gifts handed on by ancestors. As a result of these pre-defined designations, Samoa’s social and relational patterns have remained largely intact despite the push towards change.

To some extent, the role of the church has solidified and spiritualized these patterns further, especially the biblical teachings about family unity being desirable (see Taule’ale’ausumai, 1997a & 1997b). Accordingly, Samoans have shown their ability to modify religious patterns to suit their own purposes as well as maintain the foundation of their cultural imperatives, even in the face of stern opposition. An example of this firm resolution is the noticeable strength and maintenance of its *fa’amatai* or chiefly structure. The *matai* system, as a way of conducting family and community affairs, has retained a central role in the lives of Samoans locally and in diasporic locations (Hanna, 1998; Hanna & Fitzgerald, 1993; Holmes & Holmes, 1992; Lui, 2003; Va’a, 2001). In Samoa itself, the role of the family *matai*, in conjunction with the village council of chiefs, is prominently showcased in death-related rituals and practices. Such important life cycle events ensure that families continue to examine their own leadership structure by adding or replacing title holders in order to respond appropriately during such times. As already discussed in the earlier chapters, addressing death is a testing time, both emotionally and economically. Nevertheless, Samoa as a nation, and Samoans as a people, continue to hold fast to their cultural practices which are strongly rooted in their staunch chiefly system.

Leadership is very strongly concerned with providing good examples for its followers. A leader who serves his or her own interests is the antithesis of

good stewardship. A Samoan proverb which says *“ia soso’o se fau ma se fau”* conveys the message that a commendable family leader needs a successor of worthy calibre. Another Samoan saying that reiterates the same message declares: *“ia uma atu se toa ae tula’i mai se toa”*, meaning that, when one warrior falls, another warrior should take his place. *Toa* is the Samoan word that is also used to describe a rooster. So when referring to a *toa* (warrior) taking the place of a fallen family warrior, the contrary and most detrimental replacement is that of a *matuāmoa* - a chicken. Thus the Samoan imperative suggests that a *toa* (warrior) be replaced by another *toa*, not a *matuāmoa* (chicken). The emphasis of this proverb is vital because a person of cowardly disposition in leadership, hence a chicken, will ultimately cause the deterioration of the family’s capability and reputation in the village, church, and wider community. Ultimately, this could lead to embarrassment and shame.

One participant who resides in Samoa, Tia, who is also a family *sa’o* emphasises the importance of a God-appointed leader to serve the family by saying:

I am convinced that vying for chiefly titles is not necessarily a good thing. But, if the [person] specifically feel that God is calling them to this role, and they are absolutely sure that this is their duty to perform, then it is okay to pursue it.

As Tia advocates with his statement, a leader whose appointment is regarded as being the ‘will of God’, can serve the family well. Such divine-inspired appointments can only benefit the family long-term.

The Samoan proverb that introduces this chapter: *o le ala i le pule o le tautua*, reiterates the message that governance is attained by one’s service to the family, the church, and to the village (*ua afu le tautua*). Sometimes, the appointment of a member who resides abroad when other members live and serve the family and village locally can be perceived as unfair. Taulapapa says:

This is one of the problems that I see in many families who appoint their own children as title holders but who do not serve the family or the village. They favour their own children instead of looking out for the wellbeing of the extended family by appointing the most suitable candidate to carry the legacy of the ancestors.

The statement reflects Taulapapa's concern that even in his own family unit, an attitude of self-edification has begun to permeate the way the family sees title designations. He elaborates further by saying:

Some [family members] want their children to succeed to the titles vacated by deceased members, yet they might not be good servants of the family. T[itle designation] needs to be for the whole family.

Families must appoint those who are suitable to serve their collective interest beyond individual status or self-seeking motives. This prerequisite to leadership is paramount for long-term survival, especially when the 'āiga is faced with occasions impacted upon by death and bereavement.

### **A chief for his time**

As the elected *sa'o*, Taulapapa enacts his leadership duties with a level of integrity and respect that is matched only by his fierce determination to preserve family honour at any cost. Taulapapa performs his duties with an earnestness that requires him to act wisely and sometimes shrewdly in order to preserve the family heritage. The Boy Scout motto of 'be prepared' epitomizes his underlying philosophy of leadership because he is ultimately responsible for protecting family honour and integrity. His commitment to ancestral foundations is recognised by the five *ali'i* (high chief) titles he currently holds which are: *Seiuli* from the village of Malie, *Leiatualesā*, *Mulipola*, and *Tuilaepa* from Manono, and *Taulapapa* from Luatuanu'u. As I have already discussed in chapter two, *ali'i* titles trace their origins back to Tagaloa-a-lagi (Stair, 1983, Turner, 1984).

The bestowal of a chiefly title in modern Samoan is a mere shadow of ancient traditions. It is well known in Samoan circles that many titles are regularly conferred upon those who can afford them, whether they are legitimate heirs or not. For instance, there is a recent trend of designating titles on visiting dignitaries such as Prime Ministers, clergymen, or businessmen from other countries, not because they were legitimate heirs or Samoans by birth, but because of their high profile or financial status.

For Samoan candidates desiring to claim a title, they must have allies within the larger family, village or district network. Their claim to a specific title is especially noted through the endorsement of their paramount titleholder and others who are favourable towards their campaign for the chiefly honour. These candidates must also be able to raise the financial and material resources to fund such title bestowment ceremonies. Nowadays, title bestowment is an expensive exercise with no guarantee of recognition, and the title may be contested by opposing parties in the Land and Titles Court of Samoa. Nevertheless, a chiefly designation, especially of an esteemed *ali'i* title is still highly desirable within Samoan circles. Taulapapa clarifies this important designation in the following passage.

In Samoan customs, the *matai* name and the honour that it carries can only be established and acknowledged within the *'āiga* and the village to whom they belong. The first responsibility of the family is to appoint a leader who will take on the honour and privilege of inheriting the title and *mana* of the ancestors. There are two levels of title holders in Samoa society. The first tier is represented by the *sa'o* who will head the *'āiga*. This person is elected only by legitimate heirs [*suli moni o le 'āiga*] of the family line to be their chief-in-command.

The second tier of title holders include *matai tautua* who are tasked with various responsibilities as directed by the *sa'o*. This vital relationship between the chief-in-charge and those serving the collective reiterates the Samoan proverb: "*o le ala i le pule o le tautua*", the path to leadership is earned through service. The services rendered to one's leader and to the family unit are generally by way of *tautua toto* (blood and sweat) and *tautua tuāvae* which are duties that can only be performed by one's constant physical presence. *Tuāvae* literally means the heel of one's foot, emphasising the role of the *tautua* (server) as the attendant and messenger of the *sa'o*. A significant role of the *tautua* is one's ability to carry out designated instructions, or to provide a ceremonial oration on behalf of the family chief. All of these characteristics are important indicators of the roles of *tautua* in serving the head chief.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, an elected *sa'o* is one who has been ceremonially recognised by the extended family and the village to exercise *pule* (authority) to govern family affairs. Gilson (1970) contends that the designation

of *pule* does not necessarily equate to an unchallenged authority or rule within this or other Samoan contexts. It can simply mean that this person has been recognised as having “the privilege or right to perform a public function on behalf of others” (p.55). The status as the family head is a privilege not a right, one that is coupled with a commitment to serve the family well. One prominent role for the *sa’o* is the function of appointed spokesperson in village or church *fono* (meetings) who represents the needs of both the family and the village, thereby allowing these two entities to function cooperatively. The *sa’o* has further responsibility of attending the *fono a ali’i ma faipule* (council of chiefs) in their village. *Matai* of lower rank or untitled family members are not permitted to attend or to speak at these meetings (Holmes & Holmes, 1992; So’o, 2008).

Holmes & Holmes (1992) report that a family patriarch “becomes a man of increased importance, [with great] responsibility” (p.32). Involvement in bereavement and funeral responsibilities has increased significantly over time not only for family patriarchs but the whole extended network. Family heads are generally expected to be physically present to provide oversight and leadership at these occasions, and to contribute significantly to the material and financial resources required. Because such events happen often, it is a marvel that family units are able to maintain their obligations and still survive financially. Despite such challenges, Samoan people have demonstrated time and again that they are survivors, and that their cultural traditions will maintain their foundational roots. But, at what cost, is a question that needs asking and further discussion.

When chiefly positions are to be conferred upon new members, the *sa’o* appoints and designates titles to likely candidates. It is not for the individual themselves to decide who makes these appointments, or *matai* of lesser ranks. The *sa’o* is responsible for assigning these titles, together with their inherited responsibilities befitting the purpose and objectives of the whole family. The decision to confer titles is always done in consultation with other important members of the family. With such appointments, Taulapapa advocates the importance of choosing candidates who possess qualities and characteristics which reflect their physical service indicated earlier. The reason for this stringent criterion is because the task of continuing the legacy of the ancestors is a

weighty responsibility that must be jealously guarded. Preserving family honour is a sacred heritage.

In some family units, recognition of the *feagaiga* covenant, particularly the eldest female (ilamutu), can lead to a privileged position in title succession. For example, in Taulapapa's case, his eldest sister and her children would have pole position to assume a vacant title under their *feagaiga*. Taulapapa believes this should not be the case when it comes to serving the extended network where he says:

I could have favoured my children more than others. But instead, I gave this honour to one of my other sister's sons who has faithfully served our family in Samoa. The message I am telling the family [with this appointment] is that I am looking out for the wellbeing of the whole family, and not just for my own. This is important, because the role of the *matai* is to be the servant who stands [*auna e tū mo le 'āiga*] guard for the family.

Taulapapa reiterates with his statement that when leaders consider the best interest of the family as a whole, it will lead to the appointment of the best candidates to carry the mantle of family honour forward. And as contentious as title bestowment might be in one sense, ultimately, it is a consensus that involves collective decision-making by the wider members. I examine the processes of Samoan decision-making next.

### **Taupulega a 'āiga potopoto: Decision-making processes**

The Samoan process involved for reaching decisions is traditionally known as *soalaupule* (Huffer & So'o, 2003 & 2005; Lui, 2003; Macpherson & Macpherson, 2006). It is also referred to from time to time as *fa'afaletui* (Tamasese, et al., 1997), or more commonly *taupulega*. All of these Samoan terms carry the notion of *vā tapuia*, the respected space required in all relational engagements (Le Tagaloa, 1992; Pereira, 2011; Seiuli, 2012; Va'ai, 1999). The practice of engagement and decision-making is premised on the understanding that each person is sacred (Tamasese, et al., 1997), and all engagement between people is a consecrated process. This means that as long as these relational

structures and social arrangements continue, the sacredness of both the personal and collective well-being is a desirable outcome.

The emphasis of *soa-lau-pule* can literally be translated as “seeking-your-authority-in-partnership”. Huffer & So’o (1992) point out that participatory decision-making amongst Samoans recognises individuals, but the principal aim is that consensus is sought after, and highly valued. The process of *soalaupule* could take hours, days, or even weeks depending on the issue being discussed (Lui, 2001; Tamasese, et al., 1997). As a result, participants will continue dialogue and discussion until an agreement is reached, or there is a treaty for proceeding forward. The relational mandate of *ia tausi le vā fealoaloa’i* underpins this social organization (Anae, 2010; Seiuli, 2012b).

Decision-making, especially the ability to make good judgements is seen as a vital ingredient in family leadership. A valued leader seeks to ensure that all members are in unison with each other, or at least committed to working cooperatively towards achieving their family goals. This means having to provide a safe and respectful space to facilitate multiple voices and concerns, inclusive of other titleholders and leaders within the entire unit. Taulapapa explains:

It is important that these supporting *matai* are in alliance with the *sa’o* to serve the family during church, village, or district affairs. If there was a *fa’alavelave* within the *’āiga*, the *sa’o* would firstly communicate this with other *matai* to seek their support, and assistance. A message is sent to the residence of these *matai* to gather [*potopoto*] in order to discuss and deliberate [*taupulega*].

Such gatherings also seek for a consensus on what needs to be done to address the issue at hand, whatever it might be. From the initial meeting with the family head, each *matai* is responsible for returning to their networks of wives, children, or others, to gather their contributions to help address the family need. Family unity enables both the leader and the collective to mobilize their resources to compete more effectively with other family units for social and political status (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2006). If leaders are able to effectively organise their clan both socially and politically, its influence and social status becomes the focus of public discussion and admiration. This equates with family *mana* and prestige for the leader and for those associated with such an effective unit (Tui

Atua, 1996). Competent groups that are led well reflect favourably on their elected leaderships, hence the process of seeking consensus and unison of representation becomes the starting point of group mobility and decision-making. This is a powerful incentive.

A death ensures that greater than normal resources are required by the affected family. Taulapapa provides the following example of the contribution of members to prepare for a funeral. Such a resolution would have been generated from a *taupulega* (leadership deliberation) *fono* by group leaders.

From the deliberation, a consensus may mean that each family, as represented by their *matai*, will contribute ten fine mats, \$1,000, five boxes of canned fish (*pusa apa*), and three boxes corned beef (*pusa pisupo*).

From the *fono*, leaders return to their respective families and support groups to gather their contributions and bring these back on an appointed day when the goods are combined.

Tia provides the next example from his family's deliberation to address the death of his son-in-law in Samoa. The combined family leaders reached the consensus on the amount of resources and money to be contributed by each title holder and their respective supporters:

When we came together as a family [to deliberate] for my son-in-law's funeral arrangement, I suggested to the extended families that each unit contribute 100 boxes of canned fish, and 100 boxes of corned beef. However, his [son-in-law] side of the family said . . . that what we are suggesting to give was not enough. Instead we should give 200 boxes of each item per family.

With Tia's family gathering, the purpose of the meeting was to negotiate and to discuss possible contributions from the wider collective, including all those who had some connection to the deceased person, whether close or not. As indicated earlier, the process of decision-making must provide important space for multiple voices to be heard, and this can take some time before a final consensus is reached.

Another one of my study participants from Samoa, Rev Toea'ina, reported some of the issues that arose during his family's *fono* when discussing the required resources for the funeral of one of his aunties:

We met with Peni (pseudonym) to dialogue. I encouraged them [the family] that whatever each family were able to contribute were sufficient. We also discussed the need to find a suitable *matai* to be the orator of the day. We also gathered together the resources we brought on the night of our *talanoaga* such as *toga*, money, and *pusa apa*. The fine mats were then set aside for the ministers (*aufaigaluega*).

According to Rev Toea'ina, all of the contributions of food items, *'ie toga*, and money that was gathered by his extended family at their first meeting was recorded in the *api*, and then organised accordingly in preparation for the *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa* (see chapter four). The examples above, from research participants who held senior roles within their respective families, illustrate how family gatherings are important in apportioning responsibilities and resources amongst their members.

The capacity to provide financial and material support across the extended family acknowledges that the full weight of the disruption is not expected to be borne alone (Keesing & Keesing, 1956; Taule'ale'ausumai, 1997a). Additionally, the village authority offers assistance by contributing food items, fine mats, *tapa*, as well as offering *tautua fesoasoani* (physical service). Throughout this time, the family and the village will work side-by-side, thus emphasising a shared relational bond and ancestry (Holmes & Holmes, 1992; Lui, 2003; O'Meara, 1990). This kind of support is often more evident with the passing of a family chief (*tamāli'i*). Furthermore, the passing of a *tamāli'i* might well result in specific ritualised enactments of an *aualasi'i* to be performed unless such rituals are prohibited by the grieving family, the church, or by the village to whom the deceased belongs. The following section expands on the *aualasi'i* processes, and also discusses the importance of such rituals to Samoan funeral traditions in current times.

### **Aualasi'i: ritualised chiefly procession**

The ritual performance to mark the death of a *tamāli'i* (paramount chief) is ceremoniously observed according to traditional patterns. As Turner (1984) recorded, a high chief's death was attended to with "great excitement and display" (p.146). Kramer (1995) suggested that for a *tamāli'i*, death provides the

platform for enacting cultural tributes (Vol. 2, p.110) by the living relatives and their supporters. Even with the passing of Taulapapa's father some fifty years after Kramer's account, many of these funeral patterns had remained relatively unchanged.

When a *tamāli'i* passes away, a ritualised processional often referred to as a *lagi* is performed to recognise their ancestral status. This ritual is also called *launiu*, referencing the use of coconut fronds carried by the chanting *tūlafale* as they parade towards the house of mourning (Simanu, 2002). The coconut palms symbolise a *taulaga* (offering) which is laid on the front *paepae* (stony entrance) of the *falelauasi* (death house), before proceeding to a designated place set aside by the grieving family (Lui, 2003, p.68). The most appropriate Samoan term for this ritualised procession is "*auaalasi'i*" (*auala* for short) which literally means "the path" where the dead person is "lifted" as was the practice in earlier periods (see Kramer, 1995; Turner, 1984). Another term used for this same process is "*o'otaga*" to signify *the arrival* of death, and of the mourning period (Simanu 2002, p.512-513). In a traditional funeral for a *tamāli'i*, his body was paraded around the village on the shoulders of the *auosoga* (fighting men) while they sang old songs of praise (see Kramer, 1995; Turner, 1984). A *lagi* procession was exclusively observed when a paramount chief (*ali'i*) or a *tūlafaleali'i* (paramount orator) passed away. The *lagi* ritual is not performed for a general *tūlafale* (orator), a *faiifeau* (minister), for *tama ma tinā matutua* (elderly men or women), or for children (Lui, 2003; Simanu, 2002; Tavale, 2012a).

Tavale (2012b) contends that the strict purpose of such ceremonial enactment is two-fold. The first is *fa'amamalu* (to consecrate) the occasion, and the second is *ave ese ni mala ma ni puapuaga* (lift or to vanquish any curses or misfortunate) on behalf of the grieving family. Tavale emphasises that *lagi* is the term that is appropriately used to refer to the 'death' of a *tamāli'i*, and not the 'process' as it is mistakenly used by observers nowadays. For instance, if a Seiuli title holder passes away, the following phrase would be appropriate: *ua lāgia le susuga ia Seiuli*, which means, "high chief Seiuli has passed away". The mourning rituals for a *tamāli'i* are referred to as *lāgia*. As such, an important part of mourning processions is the notion of *fa'amamalu*, at which the village will

institute a *tapu* (see Stair, 1983; Turner, 1984) to observe this event by declaring: “*ua sā le vao, sā le sami, sā le lau’ele’ele, aua ua tu’ua le mālō e le alo o le Malietoa, o le susuga ia Seiuli*”. This decree declares that for the duration of the mourning period, no work is to be carried out in the inner lands, or plantations (*vao*), on the ocean (*sami*), or in the village lands (*lau’ele’ele*). Any person caught in breach of this *tapu* declaration will be severely punished, and in traditional times this usually meant death. In contemporary times, this form of prohibition is rarely observed in Samoa itself, and certainly not in diasporic locations.

Continuing with the example of a Seiuli titleholder’s passing, the *lagi* chants performed are those specifically connected to the Sa-Seiuli and Sa-Malietoa heritage of the village of Malie, and of the Tuamasaga district. Hence, the most appropriate *lagi* chant being directed to the deceased and the mourners is: “*ua tō’oletimu, ua tafea le tau’ofe, ua pa’u le masina*” (Simanu, 2002, p.514), meaning, the rain has fallen, and the place where the bamboo shoots grow has flooded, the moon has ceased to give its light. This grief-related expression carries allegorical references appropriate to the grieving family because of their genealogical connections to historical events, whence the said expression derives its meaning (Tavale, 2012b).

An *auaalasi’i* procession must be initiated by the host village before sunrise. No other group may proceed until the host village has lifted the *tapu* that acknowledges the dwelling place of Tagaloa-a-le-lagi, the ancient Samoan god. Once the *tapu* has been lifted, other delegations are then permitted to proceed with their sequence of a *lagi* performance and to bring their *si’ialofa* to recognise their connections to the deceased and the family. However, if a *lagi* is not instituted by the host village, then none is allowed to be performed by any other visiting delegation, no matter the status of the deceased title holder (Tavale, 2012b). Such prohibitions have been instituted for a number of reasons, including the influence of religious commitment which has led to the abandonment of performing a *lagi* for many who are members of the Catholic Church, the Latter Day Saints, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and some Pentecostal churches. Additionally, a ritualised procession will not be instituted for a person who has been banished from the village at the time they pass away

(Tuimaleali'ifano, 2011). But, in many instances, these rituals are maintained despite strict restrictions and threats.

When a *tamāli'i* passes away, the ten heavens are chanted to reflect this divine connection, acknowledging the journey from this mortal life into the spirit world of Tagaloa. In essence, if the deceased person held five *ali'i* titles from different parts of Samoa such as Taulapapa, then one or all of these villages or districts may choose to attend the funeral in order to perform a *lagi*. Taulapapa explains:

Whenever a paramount chief dies, a *lagi* is normally instituted by the village he resides in. Before dawn, at about five o'clock in the morning, the procession of *tūlafale* would march towards the house where the deceased *ali'i* lay. When they are close to the residence, they will begin chanting '*tulouna le lagi*', beginning with the first heaven and continuing to acknowledge all the ten heavens according to Samoan cosmology, and then back to the start again. They [chiefly procession] will continue chanting until the family acknowledges their parade.

Simanu (2002) makes a similar comment:

*Pe tusa e sefulu (10) launiu e fa'atatau i le sefulu lagi o aiga e sefulu o le atunu'u* [There are about ten chiefs carrying coconut fronds to symbolise the ten heavens and the ten families of the Samoan cosmological world]. (2002, p.513)

Tavale (2012a, p.250-251) says of the ten heavens involved in a *lagi* chant, that these were first ascended by "Sa-Tuala" as Tui A'ana Tamalelagi. The legend tells of Tamalelagi ascending the heavens, beginning with the first, and continuing until he had reached the tenth heaven, which is believed to be the dwelling place of Tagaloa-a-lagi. Other versions of this legend claim that the ten heavens were actually the ten layers of a mountain range that Tamalelagi climbed, beginning from the plain land, or the first heaven, and continuing until he had reached the tip of the mountain, or the tenth heaven. Whatever the case may be, the significance of this feat by the Tui A'ana is that it permitted Samoa sacred access to the divine. It is also said that due to Tamalelagi's status as a

*tamāli'i* (paramount chief), only those of *tamāli'i* status are accorded the *lagi* chant honour at their death (Tavale, 2012b).

According to experts on Samoan customs such as Tavale, Taulapapa, and Simanu, *tamāli'i* do not march in the processional. This role is reserved only for *tūlafale* chiefs. The group of *tūlafale* and some *tauleale'a* all walk in a single file chanting: “*Tagaloa e, lou ali'i e, or, Tui Manua e, lou ali'i e*” (see Kramer, 1995; Turner, 1984 for similar records). The chant of *tulouna le lagi* throughout this ritualized procession is recited in preparation for the “*aualasi'i*”, signifying the clearing of the pathway from this life and into the next, calling to the divine to receive the returning spirit of the deceased person (Lui, 2003). Lui further emphasises that because of strong Christian influence, these *lagi* chants have been modified to three “*tulouna le lagi*” instead of the traditional ten, so that the revised performance now reflects the trinity of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Lui, 2003, p.68).

Simanu (2002, p.513-514) provides an example of the *lagi* chant below. She suggests that the chant to Tagaloa or to the Tui Manua, as recorded by Kramer and Turner in earlier periods, is exchanged with the deceased person's name. The *lagi* chant provided by Simanu is recorded only in the Samoan language. I provide here an interpretation in accord to the *spirit* of the chant instead of a word-for-word translation.

Tulouna a le lagi (o le lagi tuatasi). Tulouna a le ta'ape o pāpā.  
Tagaloa e, lo'u ali'i e, (Tali): Tulouna a le lagi.

(Lead Chant) Salutations to the first heaven. Salutation to scattered rocks. Alas, the great Tagaloa. (Echo by the group) Salutations to the heavens.

Tulouna a le lagi (o le lagi tualua). Tulouna a le gauolosa'a. Tulouna a le tafea o le Tau'ofe. Tagaloa e, lo'u ali'i e, (Tali): Tulouna a le lagi.

(Lead Chant) Salutations to the second heaven, salutation to the gauolosa'a, salutations to the place where the birthplace of the bamboo buds, Alas the great Tagaloa. (Echo by the group) Salutations to the heavens.

Tulouna a le lagi (o le lagi tuatolu). Tulouna a le masae o le lagi.  
Tulouna a le gasolosolo o ao. Tulouna a le motu o le 'asoā. Tagaloa e, lo'u ali'i e, (Tali): Tulouna a le lagi.

(Lead Chant) Salutations to the third heaven. Salutations to the rendered skies. Salutation to the broken bond. Alas, the great Tagaloa. (Echo by the group) Salutations to the heavens.

Tui Atua (2009a), in his address at the “Pacific Thought Symposium”, included a version of the *lagi* chants to illustrate the divine connections of Samoan people with their supreme ancestor, Tagaloa. Thus, the Samoan notion of creation finds its reiteration in funeral chants as indicated in the following stanza (Tui Atua, 2009a, p.2-3).

*Tulouna le lagi tuatasi! Tulouna le pogisa ma le leai!*  
Salutations to the first heaven! Salutations to the darkness and the void!  
*Tulouna le lagi tualua! Tulouna le nanamu!*  
Salutations to the second heaven! Salutations to the sense of smell!  
*Tulouna le lagi tuatolu! Tulouna le ‘efu’efu!*  
Salutations to the third heaven! Salutations to the dust!  
*Tulouna le lagi tuafa! Tulouna le iloa!*  
Salutations to the fourth heaven! Salutations to the knowable!  
*Tulouna le lagi tualima! Tulouna le maua!*  
Salutations to the fifth heaven! Salutations to the obtainable!  
*Tulouna le lagi tuaono! Tulouna le ‘ele’ele!*  
Salutations to the sixth heaven! Salutations to the earth!  
*Tulouna le lagi tuafitu! Tulouna le papatū!*  
Salutations to the seventh heaven! Salutations to the standing rock!  
*Tulouna le lagi tuavalu! Tulouna le ma’a ta’anoa!*  
Salutations to the eighth heaven! Salutations to the stones!  
*Tulouna le lagi tuaiva! Tulouna le mauga!*  
Salutations to the ninth heaven! Salutations to the mountain!

The two *lagi* chants reported above are not necessarily the only versions performed in death rituals. As characterised by both Simanu’s and Tui Atua’s examples, the chants accentuate different aspects of Samoa’s ecological and cosmological inheritance. In this regard, other versions or variation of the chants as enacted by different villages or districts may exist. Despite their differing version, *lagi* chants remain significant in connecting past traditions with recent ones, and with Samoan death culture overall.

The *lagi* chants encompassing the ten heavens is also a topic which has been discussed in a number of online discussion forums such as

“activeboard.com” and “topix.com”. These virtual forums allow interested audiences or subscribers to discuss, question, and debate various topics of interest to Samoan audiences worldwide. For example, an anonymous subscriber with the username “Tamasamoamoni” provides their own version of the ten heavens in the following passage. I provide a simple translation:

Tulouna le lagituatasi na tautagataina ai Lumatagi  
*Salutations to the first heaven inhabited by Lumatagi*  
Tulouna le lagitua lua na tautagataina ai Lumatua  
*Salutations to the second heaven inhabited by Lumatua*  
Tulouna le lagituatolu na tautagataina ai Lutofu  
*Salutations to the third heaven inhabited by Lutofu*  
Tulouna le lagituafafa na tautagataina ai Lutama  
*Salutations to the fourth heaven inhabited by Lutama*  
Tulouna le lagitua lima na tautagataina ai Luia  
*Salutations to the fifth heaven inhabited by Luia*  
Tulouna le lagituaono na tautagataina ai Luo’o  
*Salutations to the sixth heaven inhabited by Luo’o*  
Tulouna le lagituafitu na tautagataina ai Lua’itu  
*Salutations to the seventh heaven inhabited by Lua’itu*  
Tulouna le lagituavalu na tautagataina ai Luau  
*Salutations to the eighth heaven inhabited by Luau*  
Tulouna le lagituaiva na tautagataina ai Luita  
*Salutations to the ninth heaven inhabited by Luita*  
Tulouna le lagituasefulu na tagataina ai Lupupu  
*Salutations to the tenth heaven inhabited by Lupupu*

(Source: [www.activeboard.com/lagi-sautua-sefulu-o-se-maliu](http://www.activeboard.com/lagi-sautua-sefulu-o-se-maliu))

There is an interesting link in this version of the *lagi* chant with the genealogical Samoan ancestor *Lu* (refer to chapter two) as denoted in the prefix to the names of these ancestral beings (*Lumatagi*, *Lumatua*, etc.). *Lu* is Tagaloa’s daughter who sired Moa, the founder of *sa-Moa*.

Similarly, another anonymous subscriber with the username “Masina” adds to the discussion by noting that when the procession of chiefs reaches the place of death, they will chant and circle the death house at least three times, chanting. . . *Tui Manu’a e lo’u ali’i* . . . before they lay down their *launiu* (fronds) on the *paepae* (stony entrance). After their solemn performance of *lagi* chants, the delegation are then received by their hosts, before being directed to a designated *fale* for the duration of the mourning period.

Evident in these accounts, and the earlier discussion on Kiwi's passing (see chapter four), is the desire of the children of the Samoan diaspora to maintain contact with their cultural heritage and identity through technology and cyber forums such as these. In this way, technology seems to be helping to keep *fa'asamoa* alive and vibrant in the lives of young Samoans anywhere and everywhere.

The late Tavale (2012b, personal communications), a *tūlafale ali'i* and a cultural advisor to this research project, provided an example of the *lagi* chants performed by the *tūlafale* from the village of Siumu, Upolu, Samoa. The segment provided by Tavale is not translated because in translation it loses its nuance and actual meanings. Instead, the author has provided brief summary statements to help readers capture the essence of what is being communicated in this *lagi*.

#### **Fa'atinoga o le 'Auala (An example of the lagi procession)**

Nu'u: Siumu (village)

Taiala (Lead chant begins and is echoed by the processional group)

1. Fa'atulou lagi e iva ae sefulu i lagi o le nu'u (Acknowledging the ten heavens)
2. Fa'atulou maota ua lagia (Acknowledging the residence in mourning)
3. Fa'atulou laoa ma malaefono ua usuia ai le fonu (Acknowledging the physical dwelling places)
4. Toa'sā o le Atua (Acknowledging the will of God, gods)
5. Fa'amaisega (Acknowledging that all are destined to the same fate - death)
6. Fa'amatafi (Pronouncement of a blessing, and lifting any curses)

#### **Folasaga o le lauga o le 'auala**

(Performance of the oration following a *lagi* procession)

Tulouna a le lagi (*acknowledging the first heaven*), Tulouna a le lagi, tulou (*second heaven*), Tulouna a le lagi ma le lagi, tulou (*third heaven*), Tulouna a le lagi ma le lagi ma le lagi, tulou (*fourth heaven*), Tulouna a le lagi (*fifth heaven*), Tulouna a le lagi, tulou (*sixth heaven*), Tulouna a le lagi ma le lagi, tulou (*seventh heaven*), Tulouna a le lagi ma le lagi ma le lagi, tulou (*eighth heaven*), Tulouna a le lagi ma le lagi ma le lagi, tulou (*ninth heaven*).

Fa'atulouga o le lagi o le afio'aga (*tenth heaven*), Tulouna a le aualā'aua o Tofaeono, tulou, Tulouna a le tā'ape o aualuma ia Atanoa, Tulouna a le motu o le soa ia Tapusalaia ma Tala'epā, Tulouna a le Tologaoumuloa i 'āigaelua, tulou, Tulouna a le motu o le mua sa i le Faleagafulu o 'Asomua, tulou. (*The tenth heaven acknowledged is the lagi belonging to the deceased person's genealogical line*).

Ua lāgia Tauma Nu'umau o le Tō'āiga i Tūmua, o le maota e afio ai Tofaeono, tulou, Ua lāgia Faletelē e afio ai Atanoa, o le tautai matapalapala, Ua lāgia Matāfala e afio ai Tapusalaia, Ua lāgia Palalaua e afio ai Tala'epā, Ua lāgia Si'ufagā, e afio ai Tafilipepe o le Ma'opū o Sa'asomua. (*Acknowledging the gathering of families in mourning*).

Tulouna a le usuia le fono i Mulivai, o le Maotaotōfiga a 'Asomua e alala ai Tu'u'u, o le Moa na vinimua, o le na Itūfā ai Atua. Tulouna a le matagitogaina o le Laoa ma le Laupatafetalaia e alala ai Li'o, o le Fofogaoalatuaa, Tulouna a le usuia o le fono i Saumōlia, e alala ai Uta'ile'uo ma le Faletolu (*Acknowledging the physical spaces, and environment, including the village and district*).

The *lagi* segment illustrates the complexity of Samoan funeral customs involving the death of a high chief. Such salutations as provided in Tavale's account are nuanced in oration not easily recognised outside of formalised chiefly performance. I reiterate again the foresight of the late Tavale in permitting me to recount this *lagi* chant as part of documenting Samoan death practices in this research study.

In the following passage, another of my research participants, Nu, recalls his earliest memories of a *lagi* being performed to honour his grandfather who was a high chief and a church minister from the village of Ufiufi (pseudonym).

When my grandfather passed away, he was a retired minister of the Methodist church and the *sa'o* of our clan. I can distinctly remember my mother's wailing that night as she cursed the gods, '*aisea, aisea, o le auaua a le Atua . . . why, why, he is God's servant on earth?*' Upon arriving [at our village], one can hear the throngs of people performing their death (*lagi*) chants.

For Nu, such cultural observance displayed his people in the act of abandoning their immediate sense of grief and mourning in exchange for the performance of death rituals such as the *lagi*.

In such instances, a *lagi* observance serves to maintain important genealogical connections. Yet despite their importance to ancestral traditions, the validity of such rituals in the lives of Samoan people nowadays is being questioned, especially for those who are living outside of Samoa. Tavale (2012b) comments on this issue:

It is unfamiliar to perform an *aualasi'i* in places like New Zealand because it's a different environment to Samoa. There are many who believe that it [*aualasi'i*] should not be performed overseas. Firstly, it is difficult for the *faleupolu* (*tūlafale* orators) to perform their roles appropriately in order to honour their covenant relationship [*feagaiga*] with the deceased *tamāli'i*, because their indigenous reference is not the same. For indigenous references to achieve their intended purposes, they must be performed in those designated environments such as the village, or districts from where they were instituted.

Secondly, Tavale is conscious that non-Samoans where the deceased once lived might not understand the ceremonial chanting of a *lagi* in their neighbourhood. While *lagi* performance remains significant as a way of honouring *tamāli'i* within Samoan communities, how strongly these rituals can be maintained in urban environments remains to be seen.

More research is required to focus specifically on this area because such traditional rituals are increasingly being phased out. The excessive cost associated with Samoan funerals, coupled with a push for cheaper foreign alternatives, means that specific cultural practices such as a *lagi* can be undervalued. It raises some concerns that if such practices are being phased out, what aspects of Samoan culture overall are at risk of being modified in the process, and, what might the result of such losses be for future generations of Samoans.

### **Lāgia o le ali'i: to mourn one's chief**

Each village will respond to a death according to their own *aga'ifanua* (local customs). As alluded to earlier in this chapter, the village, as an extension of the family, will add their support. The support by the village is in recognition of their unique *feagaiga*. The extended Taulapapa family, together with the village became united (*pulupululima fa'atasi*) in their effort to honour Taulapapa's father when he passed away. Taulapapa recalls:

When my father passed away, a messenger was sent as far as Savai'i to inform his surviving siblings of his death. Many supporters came with items to help take care of normal responsibilities such as pigs, *toga*, and food items. These items were combined to help with the funeral. Others in the village who have a '*fai'ā i le suafa*', or connections to my father's title, also came to offer their support.

They also came to be part of the discussion [*soalaupule* or *taupulega*] for what needed to be gathered, and what amount of resources would be needed for the redistribution ceremony.

At the time of his father's passing, Taulapapa was fourteen years old. He was not of the age or status to play any significant role in the decision-making process.

An important part of funeral rituals is the gifting of food items, *toga* and money known as *si'ialofa* (see chapter four). One significant aspect of the gifting process that is highly valued especially in funerals is the meaning attributed to '*ie toga* (fine mats) that are presented to the family in mourning. For example, a specific mat called '*ie o le mavaega* (or '*ie fa'amavae*) symbolises a farewell gift to the deceased. The '*ie o le mavaega* mat is gifted by both the husband's and the wife's sides of the family to recognise the special bond between the living relative and the deceased family member. This *toga* acknowledges that death has caused the severing of a vital family connection.

Visiting delegations who are related might also present a *toga* called: "*o le 'ie a'ami*" as part of their *si'ialofa* contribution. This particular fine mat communicates their request to return the body of the deceased member to be buried in their birthplace (see Kramer, 1995, Vol. 2, p.115; Tamasese, 2011). The fine mat states boldly the intentions of the family to repatriate their dead relative, and to bury them amongst the remains of parents and other ancestors (see Goodman, 1971; Turner, 1984) instead of in an unfamiliar environment. Even if the family has little to no chance of retrieving the body, it is vital for them to be perceived publicly as caring enough to try. Another reason for seeking to reclaim the body of the deceased person is because "the family sees to it that the deceased will find a grave on native soil [family land]" (Kramer, 1995, Vol.2, p.115). Failing to attempt to repatriate the deceased relative communicates abandonment, or the rejection by the family of their own member. As discussed in chapter four, such treatment could cause the spirit of the dead to be angered, thereby leading the family to be cursed with sickness, or even death (see Goodman, 2002; Turner, 1984).

The last '*ie toga* presented is called "*ie ufiufi*" or "*afuelo*" (Simanu, 2002), a fine mat that is given for the purpose of *covering* the coffin. This fine mat is

sometimes accompanied by a large *siapo* which is used to line the grave instead of putting the coffin directly on the soil. The practice of placing a coffin on a *siapo* was especially noticeable for a chief or for an elderly person in traditional times. In more recent funerals, a *siapo* is also used to wrap the coffin of younger members (refer to photograph in chapter four – Kiwi’s burial service) before their burial. The practice of using a *siapo* to cover a coffin seems to be more acceptable nowadays rather than its exclusive use for *matai* or elderly people as in earlier periods.

When his mother (Tinā) passed away twenty four years later, Taulapapa assumed his father’s chiefly title which enabled him to become more involved with her death. Taulapapa reported that both of his parents were honoured with a traditional *lagi*. The wife of a *tamāli’i* will receive the same tribute as her husband because she is the one who is designated with the duty of caring for him, and for birthing the continuity of the family line. In Samoan customs, a *lagi* is performed to honour him at his death and the same is provided to his wife at her death.

With Tinā’s funeral performance, a situation arose where more than one delegation sought to assert their claim as the legitimate representative of his mother’s family. This can be problematic not only for competing groups, but the hosting family too. Because families and title holders are able to claim descent from multiple ancestry groups (see Freeman, 1964; Schoeffel, 1995; Shore, 1982), it can become a cause for contention when a chief title holder dies, and groups vie for the honour of representation. The first of these competing delegations was the family from the district of Sātaua, Savai’i, representing Tinā’s father’s ancestry, the Tonumaipē’a clan. As I discussed in chapter four, this clan is one of the ancient families of the Nafanua religion, highly revered in Samoa. The second delegation represented Tinā’s mother’s side from the district of Sātupaitea, also in Savai’i. The Sātupaitea claim noted Taulapapa’s mother as their district’s recognised *taupou* (village maiden), a descendant of another highly esteemed family, the Lesātele title.

Both of these delegations arrived in Malie bringing with them their respective *ie mavaega* to farewell Tinā, an *‘ie ufiufi* to cover her coffin, an *‘ie*

*a'ami* to lay their claim to repatriating her body back to the ancestral district. Situations like these can become intense, especially if only one *'ie mavaega*, and one *'ie ufiufi*, are expected from the father's lineage, and one from the mother's ancestral line. Therefore, when two groups such as these are claiming legitimate representation of the mother's side, it can become extremely difficult to recognise one and not offend the other. Worse still, neither party is prepared to combine into a single delegation because they must not entertain the possibility of *e le fia fa'atoilalo*, or being perceived as insignificant by others. One cannot be second best.

Taulapapa reported that on this occasion, both groups were honoured and received by the host family accordingly, acknowledging that both parties had legitimate claim to the deceased person according to their genealogical connections. This compromise allowed the host family to recognise these delegations separately which then allowed the funeral rituals to progress without any malice between the two groups, and especially towards the grieving family. Family honour remained intact because harmony was achieved through the wisdom of the hosting family in recognising both ancestral lines of importance belonging to Tinā. In the end, it was agreed by all that Tinā was to be buried in Malie with her husband. Achieving a harmonious balance is the primary objective during such potentially chaotic situations because: "*O se 'āiga nonofo fealofani*", is a requisite of wise Samoan leaders. The workable outcome as achieved in this occasion speaks highly of the role of able leaders to navigate such tense moments. But it must also be noted that such harmonious outcomes are not always reached despite the efforts of some leaders towards mutual consensus.

### **Alofa fa'amātua: parental compassion**

I began this thesis by pointing out that a significant part of its focus is concerned with examining the role of death and bereavement customary practices in supporting families in grief. Such a focus is important to restate here because of *feagaiga* relationships that exist within Samoan society at all levels. One of the most important of all *feagaiga* relationships is between Samoan parents and their children, whether in Samoa, New Zealand, or other places.

When a parent-child relationship is severed by a death, devastation is generally experienced by the living. Further, death is final according to traditional Samoan beliefs, offering no prospect of reunification, even though there is a strong sense of ongoing connection between the living and the dead. Since the advent of Christianity, belief in an after-life has changed because the Christian faith regarding eternal life offers hope to the bereaved of meeting again with those who have passed away. The Apostle Paul declares this hope in the Bible, First Corinthians Chapter 15 verses 20-22, where he states:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive (New King James Version).

Furthermore, Christianity offers courage to those who mourn, and resolution in the journey through the valleys overshadowed by death. My discussion on the strong role of the Christian church in the lives of Samoan people nowadays (see chapters two and four) reflects greatly on their ability to navigate through these challenging times.

Taulapapa reflects on his special and loving bond with his mother. Because of their close relationship, her death impacted upon him tremendously. Her death also motivated him to honour her with the best farewell he could possibly arrange:

My mother cared for my wife and my children while I worked, and travelled overseas. I was very secure knowing that my mother was there as their [wife and children's] guardian. I miss her greatly not just because of what she did for my family, but also because of her constant '*fautua'aga*' (advice). She prayed for me regularly. Back then, I didn't really listen. She kept reminding me to make this scripture verse as the motto (*o le matua mo lou olaga*) for my life which says, '*a'o au, aua lava ina ia ou mitamita i se mea, tau lava o le satauro o Iesu Keriso*', meaning, 'I count all treasures as nothing, except for the cross of Jesus Christ'. Back then, I would just try to ignore her. Other times, I became angry thinking that she was trying to run my life.

Like most young people, close relationships with their parents will have their challenges which include a time of rejecting their influence or control. This was no exception for Taulapapa as he indicates in his statement above.

Such closeness in a mother and son relationship was echoed by a number of men involved in this study. The passages that follow document the experiences of two men regarding their affectionate relationship with, and subsequent passing of, their mothers. Nu, who lives in New Zealand and is a paramount title holder in his clan, provides the next passage. Even after fifteen years since her passing, there are defined moments where he still longs to restore their broken bond:

It's all because of the loss of my mother. I miss her terribly. My mother died about 15 years ago and to this day, I haven't forgotten. I don't necessarily think that my grief is gone. There are impenetrable moments in my life that are full of doubt and apprehensions . . . moments of emotional weakness despite my leadership capacity, confidence and success. Is that grief? Have I really gotten over it [the death of his mother] . . . I don't know.

Nu questions in his statement whether his experience with the loss of his mother is 'complicated' grief (see Bowlby, 1961) or whether it is something else. And even after fifteen years since her passing, he is unsure that he is, or wants to be, over the memory of her life.

Pule, another title holder, who came to New Zealand in the late 1980s, provides the next passage concerning his own struggles with his mother's death. Her sudden passing impacted upon him adversely because he was planning to reunite with her after a long time of being separated:

My mother was a school teacher. Her income was only \$40 (SAT) a fortnight which took care of the seven of us children. She had a stroke that paralysed her and forced her to retire from teaching. On 19 September 2003, I got a call that my mother had passed away. There was no thought that my mother would die so suddenly.

The relative who relayed the message to Pule was crying on the telephone, triggering the start of his mourning. Her unexpected passing left Pule with the sense of unfulfilled expectations, including his promise of returning to Samoa. This regret drove him to honour his mother in accord with Samoan expectations.

For these three men, their longing for a restored relationship with their mothers motivated them to show their love through the practical performance of their duties to honour their mothers. The knowledge that "*there is only one chance*" (Taulapapa, personal communication, 2012) to show the depth of their

love becomes the unspoken prerequisite of memorialisation practices. Such knowledge encourages the living to farewell the dead with a generous expression of love through extravagant action. The result of this deeply held conviction means that very few places on earth will express such sentiments more seriously than those enacted by Samoan communities everywhere (Ablon, 1970; Tui Atua, 2008b). Taulapapa reiterates such conviction by emphasising that:

There is no coming back to do it properly in the future. You only get to bury your parents once, and so you need to be committed to making it the best funeral service possible to honour them. You have to perform this with all of your might. If the funeral rituals, preparations, and *fa'asamoa* duties are not performed to a high standard, it will only lead to the humiliation and shame, of yourself, your siblings, and the whole family.

The reputation of the family is at stake, and such performance, as it were, safeguards the status of their loved one. As Taulapapa pointed out in chapter four and reiterated in the statement above, there is no second opportunity: these acts must be performed with “*all of your might*”.

Similarly, Pule gives his own personal assessment of how he felt his mother’s funeral rituals were performed:

I think it really helped me to know that I had done the best that I could have done for my mother, and to remember her with my service. Even though she had died, I gave all that I could to make her final days with us the most memorable, one that was respected by everyone who attended.

According to Pule, the satisfaction of those who attend the funeral service is vital to family pride. Thankfully for Pule, the whole performance was done well, which left him and his family satisfied with their efforts because ultimately, it was their collective financial and material resources that made it happen for his mother.

Rev Toea’ina provides the next reflection of the outcome of his auntie’s funeral performance. He also comments on the perceived motivation by the deceased auntie’s eldest son to honour her extravagantly:

What I observed is that Peni wanted to do things to the best of his ability to honour his mother. For example, when the village from Savaii [where the son is a church minister] came with their *si’i*, they brought with them 5 x beasts (*povi*), \$7,000 (SAT) and *toga*. We reciprocated (*teu*) 2 x *povi* (beasts), 20 x *pusa apa* (canned fish), 20 x *pusa pisupo* (boxes corned beef), 20 x *pusa samani* (salmons) and

their fare (*pasese*) of \$6,000 (SAT). We also return to them the *toga* they presented. . . . Not only that, all the ministers that came [with the delegation] were given their *sua*, plus an envelope of about \$500 (SAT) on the night of the family service, as well as another envelope after the burial of about \$1,000 (SAT).

Rev Toea'ina commented that he tried to advise Peni towards apportioning their resources appropriately (*ia fai fuafua*), but Peni wanted to express his final devotion to his mother through extravagant gifts to their guests.

Supporting the ideal of filial piety is the belief that the service to one's parents becomes the avenue of *fa'amanuiaga* (blessings). Filial piety is strongly endorsed in Christian teachings, and validated by scriptural references, and supported by the values of Samoa's founding motto: *E fa'avae i le Atua Samoa* (Samoa is founded on God). The emphasis of the message here is that God's blessings are bestowed by a parent upon a child whose service is honourable. As a result, a parent might be heard giving a blessed acknowledgment for a service that is appreciated with the phrase: "*Fa'afetai lava i le tausima matua. Ia alofa le Atua ma fa'amanuia ia te oe*", meaning, "Thank you for caring for us. May God's favour and blessings be upon you". The prevailing belief that parents are a source of blessings means that much effort goes into safeguarding this parent-child *feagaiga* (covenant relationship). It is also a source of motivation for many Samoans to ensure that their parents are farewelled with the best possible efforts. Taulapapa comments:

Even if I have a lot of things to bring to my parents funeral, its value is diminished because they are not alive to verbally pronounce their blessings on to me. These items are still useful in the funeral, but it is always better to do this while the parents are still alive.

Taulapapa's sentiment is echoed by Jared and Netta (see chapter seven), who say that the best service rendered to parents are those carried out while they are alive. As I have already highlighted in chapter four, the *feagaiga* covenant between parents and a child is one of the most sacred bonds that exist within Samoan society (Schoeffel, 1995). Therefore, when a parent dies, the child will seek to demonstrate the sacredness of this covenant relationship by a show of extravagant performance at their funeral. Sadly, such heartfelt devotion by the grieving child is sometimes used by others to gain resources for themselves.

### **Leading in decision-making: always be prepared**

As noted earlier in this chapter, Taulapapa had assumed his father's chiefly title when his mother passed away in 1975. He arranged to relay the news of her death to the rest of the family who were scattered throughout Samoa and abroad. The death notice was broadcasted on Radio 2AB and in the national newspaper. This form of broadcasting enabled the news of Tinā's passing to reach relatives quicker than in earlier times when a messenger was sent from village to village to herald the sad occasion. Taulapapa then proceeded to prepare the schedules for the funeral arrangements such as: *o le aso e falelauasi ai ma ona toe sauniga*, or, the day for the burial service and what might be required for the traditional *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa* (see chapter four for detailed discussion) exchanges. A morgue was available at Moto'otua hospital which held Tinā's body, while families travelled from outside of Samoa. It is also common practice for a family member to remain with the deceased relative until their body is brought home. This type of arrangement has continued in locations outside of Samoa, even in current times.

Preparation for this death meant purchasing cattle, managing the family plantation, raising a herd of pigs, and working to save money. Taulapapa reflects on his experiences:

I needed to get things organised to host families and guests who were arriving within hours or days of the radio announcement. A number of the *tūlafale* (orators) from Malie came to help me as hosts. They received the delegates while I organised the resources required. It was also my responsibility to host when my own extended families (*paolo*) brought their support. They [extended families] were there specifically to speak to me and my siblings about our mother.

Taulapapa also revealed that many people from the village came to help with various tasks that were required. Village *matai* were designated to '*eli le tu'ugamau o le olo'omatua*' (dig the grave). At this time, Taulapapa and his wife were responsible for organising and financing the majority of the resources required. The inevitability of death means preparation is a vital part of leadership.

As I discussed in chapter two and chapter four, when a major family *fa'alavelave* such as a death occurs, the extended family meets to seek an agreement on what each family will contribute. The process of meeting to inform and to gather resources is commonly referred to as *saogamea*. Although the intention of such practices is to share the load amongst members, more often the prescribed contribution is very difficult for those who are already struggling with their own regular responsibilities. I provide a discussion of these challenges and the need for its reappraisal in chapter nine. Taulapapa acknowledges that in such times, many families find it hard to cope with the pressure to contribute:

There are many families who continue to struggle to pay off loans [acquired for a funeral]. This is because of the requirements put on them by the family *matai* to gather excessive resources and money, even when it's beyond their ability. These additional expenses can accumulate over time and many families are burdened for many years because of it.

Rev Toea'ina also comments on the pressure to contribute during such times:

It is the same experience for the families who come from overseas. Those who live here, especially the *matai*, will demand money to finance what they think should happen, but it really affects the economic wellbeing of these poor people.

Tia concurs:

The health and resources of a family to address such occasions is entirely dependent on the ability of the head chief to apportion these responsibilities and to manage them appropriately. Some chiefs are unkind to their family telling them, 'you must give \$100 here or there' and then he uses these to show-off in front of other people. This creates an extra burden for its members. It also leads to intergenerational debts because such chiefs want to look wealthy and are ashamed if they are only seen to give a little.

Tia adds that the desire to be seen as 'wealthy' has dominated and falsely influenced the way Samoan people contribute:

In my own opinion, many Samoan people do not want to be seen as weak by others. . . This is one of the main reasons why our people are so overburdened with funeral customs.

A lack of resources is also a consequence of families being ill-prepared alongside being overwhelmed by pressure to give beyond their ability. The availability of highly inflated financial advances by loan sharks as they are sometimes described

becomes an easier way for financing such demands. But, such facilities are not always needed by those families who live prepared.

Taulapapa reported that all the resources were paid for without acquiring a financial loan to farewell his mother generously. A sense of satisfaction and pride was apparent amongst the whole group at its completion. Those present were able to take some resources for themselves in acknowledgment of their support and no expenses were left unpaid. Unfortunately, this is not always the outcome for many families today.

Some of my participants reported that lingering debts after a funeral is often the situation faced by many people. Rev Toea'ina comments on this aspect of funeral culture:

To me, the genuine aspect of this type of giving and support is motivated by love. It's also very important for people to know that when a *fa'alavelave* is finished, there shouldn't be any debts left to burden the family. Whatever comes from *s'i* should be enough to facilitate the funeral responsibilities. There shouldn't be any need for loans at all.

Rev Toea'ina echoes Tia's statement discussed earlier of pride being a motivation for excessive contribution. Families want to hear visitors talk positively about the funeral, saying something like: "*oka se maliu ua matua'i tama-o-āiga tele*", meaning 'wow, what an elaborate wealth of resources', when in reality, the family are left with a debt. It is this type of attitude to funeral performance that supports Tui Atua's (2009b) concern about the level of vanity and greed undermining these important cultural rituals. Rev Toea'ina comments further:

I was glad for my own family because we did not have any debts left to pay after the funeral. I have noticed that people are not as consumed with having lots of food as it may have been in past times. Instead, they are more satisfied with a funeral if they are left with no debts to repay.

However, the above statement is seldom the experience of many because one death is often followed by another. Rev Toea'ina reveals that with his auntie's funeral, the surviving son was left with a \$10,000 (SAT) loan to repay.

An *aitalafu* (loan) of any kind was a rare feature of Samoa's reciprocal culture in traditional periods, until borrowing and credit accumulation was

introduced by the early traders as a form of bartering with the locals. More emphasized within the perspective of Samoan exchange culture were the concepts of *aga'alofa* (compassion) and *loto fesoasoani* (genuine regard or kindness) (Mulitalo-Lāuta, 2000; Seiuli, 2004), where giving predisposed the expectation of receiving nothing but gratitude in return (Tui Atua, 2009b). Giving was a genuine act of humanity amongst the community and its members. Much of this way of giving is still evident today, but it has been negatively tainted by the influence of wealth and money being seen as more important.

Another participant, Pule, was pleased that his family did not accumulate any financial debts after his mother's funeral. Importantly, as his earlier comments revealed, his family did a good job of honouring his mother with their performance:

I was really happy because this was done for my mother and that every visitor that came was given a tributary meal (*sua*). To me, if things were not performed properly because of our lack [of resources], then we would be to blame. But if it is not done properly because of other people's efforts, then we're not satisfied because she is our mother. In the end, it was done well and we were really pleased because we had no loans or debts left after she was buried. When all were paid, the left over money was redistributed amongst the family.

Pule's experience reveals that although funerals are expensive, if they are well managed, then extra loans are not necessary. Pule's experience supports what Taulapapa indicated earlier with his family and the need for preparation. Well-managed arrangements reflect on the ability of leaders to exercise good stewardship and wise governance. Aside from alleviating unnecessary debts, a well-managed event such as Pule's mother's passing can leave family members feeling satisfied and honoured.

For many grieving families, the grand purpose of the final days is that: *ia manaia ma matagofie le toe aso o le tagata maliu*, that is, the final days must be done well. The value of public admiration and praise is what many Samoans desperately want to hear reiterated about the family's effort. Such commendation echoes approval, honour and satisfaction that a job is done well. The dead person is now memorialised and immortalised in the minds and hearts of those who attended their funeral. The unwanted sentiment is the sting and

stench of criticism that will be echoed even louder than any praise if ritual performance or material culture is perceived to have been poorly executed. Nu reflects on the possibility of an enduring sense of shame:

The critical gaze of the village and other parties is ever ready to give their verdict. Whether the funeral was a worthy or shameful affair is constantly on the family's radar. One of the most embarrassing moments for a family resulting in a lot of shame is for their resources to be depleted. They will be seen distributing meagre resources to honoured guests. Every family tries to avoid this stigma.

As Nu indicates, Samoan exchange culture has created a false perception that co-exists with genuine heart-felt gratitude and generosity. Such a mind-set has become a burden that Samoan society needs to address. Tia advocates that those in influential positions, such as ministers and family *matai*, need to take the lead on this important topic:

I have seen many ministers who seek personal benefit during such times. That is, they will attend a funeral because they want to get a beast (*povi*) gifted to them by the grieving family. In my opinion, it is the duty of the ministers to communicate and strive to help bring about good changes. The role of the family chief is also vital. That is, the customs of the land [*fa'asamoa*] should not be done to the detriment of its people, especially to continue the prideful practices of public appearances.

Unfortunately, such abusive behaviours demean Samoan traditions. Rev Toea'ina says:

I also believe that it is the role of the ministers within the villages to advise their communities concerning *fa'asamoa* traditions, similar to what I am trying to do with my own church. For example, I know that there are a number of families in my congregation who are not that well off (*lima vaivai*), so my expectation on them to perform extravagant rituals, or to try to honour us with large monetary gifts is discouraged.

But, as Rev Toea'ina has discovered with Samoan people and their sense of pride, his advice is sometimes ignored. Despite lacking resources, some people will still attempt to perform their *fa'asamoa* duties extravagantly, often to their own detriment.

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, leadership and decision-making is vital to Samoan people in the maintenance of their cultural imperatives,

particularly when they are faced with events such as deaths. This section has documented experiences of my research participants, particularly those with lead roles in their families or church communities. The narratives discussed so far have touched on the sense of collective grief and the role of family heads in organising their units to respond accordingly, while also upholding family honour in the process. Surprisingly, a key theme that has emerged from my participants' narratives is their desire to 'begin the dialogue' on this important topic. I explore the need for dialogue and preparation next.

### **The need for preparatory dialogue**

Prudent leadership is synonymous with preparation, a trait that is especially vital when it comes to funeral rituals. Such events provide options for renewing, revisiting, and reprioritizing core values within the family. Responsible leaders seek to instil important principles of generosity and responsibility in their wider network. Such occasions allow the natural family bond and identity to be strengthened amongst members. Taulapapa considers this lesson:

I have seen families rely on these gifts to service a funeral. But there are times when what they might receive is not enough to properly carry out their [required] responsibilities. Then, they have to get [financial] loans to buy what they need. I have taught my children to accept no resources or money given to them from *si'i*. Instead, [they need] to return these [back] to the giver.

Taulapapa seems to discourage unwise reliance on other people's generosity as a means of taking personal responsibility, even if such contributions were given with genuine intent. The proper way of acknowledgment within these cultural rituals is to reciprocate immediately and in kind.

Tia echoes Taulapapa's views on the value of preparation. He too has taught his own children to be prepared in case he or someone in the family dies soon. He says:

All these things that we are talking about lay heavy on my heart because I am the family chief [sa'o]. I spoke to my children, telling them to withhold [tapu] the giving of fine mats [at my funeral]. If people give fine mats, then it is best to return these back to the giver, plus a portion of their monetary gift.

Again, Tia reiterates his firm stance of avoiding the traps of pride where he spoke firmly with his children concerning other people's opinions which only leads to unnecessary burdens. Family heads such as Tia and Taulapapa sense the urgency of passing these important lessons on to their families, especially to their own children.

This domain of leadership and accountability requires wisdom and discernment in order to discard what is unhelpful and to keep what is good for the whole unit. However, attempts to prepare others for the likelihood of an impending death may be met with accusations of pre-empting death (see Te Awekotuku & Nikora, 2009) by speaking of it before its time. With such resistance, preparation for death is regarded as a topic that should not be discussed because it might provoke curses, sickness, or even death itself. Taulapapa gives the following example of a similar incident with his own family:

I suggested to a relative and her children to open a bank account so they could save towards her husband's funeral costs. He was very ill at the time. It's too late when he dies to be asking for money . . . Additionally, not all members . . . can contribute equally. I tried to be direct with them about the inevitable costs involved with funeral expenses. But I was told, 'do you want our father dead (*e te mana'o e fa'aoti le matou tama*)? We don't want to talk about him dying'. In the end, nothing was done. Their father died some months after that and they struggled to gather resources together.

Taulapapa's statement shows that leadership also involves navigating difficult terrain from time to time, especially those seemingly taboo or unspeakable practices that the family may not be ready to, or even want to, discuss. It seems that Taulapapa's attempt to encourage his extended family towards financial preparation was met with resentment and opposition by some of the relatives of the gravely-ill father.

Leadership decisions or endeavours are not necessarily supported or fully embraced by members. Nevertheless, it remains critical for a commanding chief to maintain course and to allow family members to voice personal opinions and to make known their desires. Rev Toea'ina's experiences with Samoan funeral culture supports the need to be prepared:

Not all funerals in Samoa are the same. They all have different levels. For example, if there is a death of a young man or girl in the

family, this can be quite easy to facilitate. But if the death is of a paramount chief in the village, then the cost of this funeral is high because of what is required according to Samoan customs. This type of funeral will be celebrated similar to the death of a king in olden times.

If the family is well prepared, then the weight of the occasion will not be so detrimental to their overall ability to cope. They will have sufficient resources available for addressing their cultural responsibilities.

The increased burden associated with death and funeral customs weighs heavily on many families as indicated by Tia in his earlier statement. Being ill-prepared for unexpected death means that, for many, the scramble for material and financial support begins only when a death is announced. As we have seen in previous discussions (chapters two and four), in earlier periods, Samoan funeral practices used simpler forms in death rituals while doing things well. Families need to be prepared as much as possible to face these events now. Indeed, a number of Samoan proverbs endorse the quality of readiness. For example, the saying “*e ‘ese le puni iloa, e ‘ese le puni matātogo*” encourages the individual, as well as the extended family to be ready and prepared (*tāpenapena*). In this process, the proverb endorses readiness for those visible (*puni iloa*) tasks without forgetting to expect those events that are unknown (*puni matātogo*).

Preparation is not an isolated or individuated task but must become the responsibility of the individual, the wider family, and the village. Taulapapa gives the following example when his family was caught out:

In 1979, a close relative of my wife passed away. We [Taulapapa and his wife] went to the ‘*talanoaga*’ meeting between the extended families. My wife and I were informed that they [other family] wanted to wait for those who were coming from New Zealand to bring their support to help with the funeral cost. They were waiting for money to purchase the coffin. They relied on others for financial support, something that happens a lot in Samoan circles.

Taulapapa and his wife paid for a relative’s airfare so he could attend the funeral. From this experience, Taulapapa has tried to ensure his family remains informed and ready. His personal conviction also led him to arrange funeral insurance for himself and his wife. Here, Taulapapa again demonstrates the role required in

good leadership to include assisting his children financially for when he passes away:

It's important that the children are prepared in their *tautua* to their parents. But it's also important for the parents to be ready and prepared themselves, and not to leave it to the children to carry the full weight of these events. We do not want our own deaths to cause our children more suffering.

This type of action will ultimately mean that the costs associated with their funeral arrangements are already taken care of. A similar situation concerning preparing for death is documented in chapter eight with Tauivi's father. He had saved his pension to take care of his funeral costs, leaving no debts behind for his children.

I must reiterate that preparation for a death is vital because there are multiple levels of relationships within Samoan communities that must be maintained and honoured. This extra burden impacts families directly because of their duty to reciprocate to church ministers, important delegates, the *matai*, and then to the wider family group at the end of the event. Nu says:

When the funeral is finished and the *fa'aaloaloga* to distinguished guests is completed, there is still the redistribution to the clans which makes up the wider family network. This is also done appropriately and according to *matai* ranks, starting with the designated spokesperson for the family (*fofoga o le aso*) and to the rest of the *'āiga* (clans) [who] are also given their portion of what is left from the combined resources.

Nu's statement here and Taulapapa's earlier statement emphasises the essential role of reciprocating leftover resources to family members. It is fair to say that by this stage of redistributing resources, there may not be much left. Nevertheless, it must be made known and shared out according to the order indicated by Nu's statement above.

### **Funeral exchange from earlier periods to contemporary times**

Funeral requirements in earlier periods were met by whatever resources were available to the family and village at the time. Families were led to be

prepared in practical ways. Taulapapa provides examples of these earlier practices:

A pig referred to as *'fa'atili'* or *'fa'aleoleo'* [to be slaughtered or to be set aside] was reared well in advance by a family or the village. The pig was slaughtered when the *'matua tausi'* [elder] or the eldest chief [*ali'i*] of the family dies. The family also prepared a plantation of *taro*, *ta'amu*, yams, and bananas. They may also raise chickens or cattle if they can afford these.

Efforts towards being prepared were not only to help the family earn some financial relief, but significantly ensured that the group suffered minimum hardship in times when these resources were required, such as for a funeral. Materialism and a monetary system meant increased costs as noted in chapter four (see Kiwi's funeral costs). In fact, the costs attached in meeting current funeral responsibilities are measured in tens of thousands of dollars and many of the participants have felt its substantial impact.

Below, my participants provide approximate figures of the costs associated with the passing of their relatives. Pule gives the first assessment of costs related to the death of his mother:

I brought \$18,000 (Tala) from New Zealand. I was very happy with this amount of money knowing that it would be enough for the funeral expenses. Our combined financial contribution came to about \$31,000 (Tala).

Pule's family contribution does not fully account for the extra money that was donated to the family through the *si'ialofa*, or their flights to and accommodation while in Samoa.

Rev Toea'ina estimated the costs associated with his auntie's funeral as follows:

When we pulled our resources together, we were able to come up with about \$20,000 (Tala). If you take all these expenses into consideration, I would estimate that this funeral would be in excess of \$50,000 (Tala).

Samoa deaths are expensive and the financial costs continue to climb. Taulapapa argues that *"funeral customs were not this burdensome in traditional times"* because a death was provided for by resources accumulated and prepared beforehand by the family. In those times, imported goods such as *pusa*

*apa* (canned corned beef or canned herrings), *paelo povi masima* (salted barrels of corned briskets) or *apa masi* (tinned crackers) were not available. In more recent times, such items have become a regular feature of funeral exchange ceremonies. Taulapapa comments:

Instead of placing high value on material possession as it is now, family spirit was prominent [in past times]. This meant that whenever a *fa'alavelave* occurred, the whole family came together to provide their support. The family resources were strengthened by sibling bond and family collaboration.

It seems that *fa'asamoa* customs and family spirit were paramount in earlier periods. Families were renowned for their compassion without boundaries to one's *āiga* and toward others. What Taulapapa emphasises is that the characteristics of communal accountability have diminished. As much as today's Samoan community seems to remain largely collective in their traditions and performance, the changing aspect of funeral customs are driven more by affluence and wealth than by the traditional intentions of such practices, which were family support and community cohesion.

Another major change to mourning practices in recent times is that, traditionally, a dead person was buried within a few hours of their passing, or at least by the next day. Now, it is more likely to be weeks before the person is finally buried. The more immediate burial kept costs to a minimum. Embalming or storage of the deceased was not necessary, and coffins were not used because the dead person was simply buried wrapped in a *tapa* cloth or mat (see Kramer, 1995; Turner, 1984).

Some of my participants who were born in the earlier parts of the twentieth century observed considerable differences between funeral arrangements in their younger days compared to current times. The enactments in earlier times translated to families preparing resources in advance to meet their obligations. Taulapapa suggests that the difference between traditional and present times is the role of those in leadership, particularly in leading their members appropriately. It is due to this lack of preparation in recent times that has negatively impacted families immensely.

It seems that the faster pace of capitalist societies like New Zealand has left many Samoan families with little time to prepare themselves and their resources in the manner of their ancestors in earlier periods. Interestingly, the death-related practices observed by some of my older research participants seem to share many similarities with those reported by Stair, Kramer, and Turner at least a hundred years previously. The next three statements refer to those earlier practices. Taulapapa comments:

In the past, when a person died, he or she was buried without a coffin. They were firstly wrapped in a *siapo* (tapa cloth) and were then wrapped again in a *falalili'i* (embroidered mat). They were buried as soon as possible because there is no refrigeration.

According to Tia:

In those days, when a person died, they were buried in a mat. But now, there are a lot of expenses such as a coffin. There is also the preparation of the *lau'ava* [grieving exchange] as well as the preparation of the corpse for burial.

Reverend Toea'ina reflects on the role of the minister as well:

In the past . . . only the minister of the church where the deceased person's family attended will perform the funeral. The person was usually buried within twenty four hours because their body began to rot causing a stench. It was a lot easier to prepare the person for burial immediately, and then a meal was served to those who attended.

Nowadays the eventual burial of the deceased person might be delayed for up to two weeks while the family wait for other members to arrive from overseas. This practice seems to be the norm in Samoa, New Zealand and in other places. As Rev Toea'ina noted, such delays added more financial costs for the grieving family.

As this chapter has shown, changing times correlate with expensive measures to maintain traditional funeral patterns. Once a person dies, the family will announce their passing on the radio, or on national television, informing as many people as possible so that they too can support the funeral instead of the family assuming full responsibility themselves. What is rarely considered with such approaches is the impending cost in hosting the arriving masses, as each delegation must be acknowledged and catered to accordingly, which can be

quite an expensive exercise in itself. Tia comments on this more recent practice of prolonged mourning periods by saying:

One reason for the higher expenses with funerals is the length of time the dead is left before being buried, while waiting for relatives to arrive from overseas. The prolonged wait before burial has led to accumulated costs associated with keeping the body stored in the funeral home.

As Tia indicates with his statement, delaying the burial so that family members living abroad can accumulate adequate resources is a common experience amongst many Samoans, my research participants included. For example, Pule's mother was held in the morgue for a week so he could travel to Samoa from New Zealand. During that week, Pule prepared resources, planned, and organised the arrangements for her funeral, even while he was still in New Zealand. This was especially important because he was the eldest son and a *matai* in his family. While the actual costs specifically focused on preparing the dead for burial are often much less, the requirements for hosting and catering to visiting delegations inflates these funeral costs exponentially. Family honour demands this takes place.

### **Resting with the ancestors**

Experiencing deaths and funeral enactments on a regular basis is something many Samoan leaders and their families have come to expect. Because of the regularity of their involvement in death rituals, some of my participants have a greater awareness from such experiences as they reflect on their own mortality, especially the tasks required of those who are left behind. The finality of death and the fear of being left alone, or being buried in some other place away from ancestral birthplace, causes many elderly Samoans to communicate a burial plan for when they pass away. Taulapapa says:

My children live all over the world and if I am buried in New Zealand or somewhere else instead of Samoa, there is a chance that I will be left alone in a foreign land that is not my home. But if I am buried in Samoa, then it doesn't matter where my children live . . . they will always find me lying there [in Samoa] because our family land cannot be sold as it can be overseas.

For many elderly people who live outside of Samoa, the desire to be buried in Samoa motivates continual connections with the home village (Kramer, 1995; Turner, 1984). Therefore, maintaining strong links to the village and the church through physical contributions will be acknowledged in time (Shore, 1982). Taulapapa gives the following example to reiterate this important connection:

When I am gone, people will ask you, 'whose son are you?'. You will say, '*o lo'u tama o Taulapapa*'. They might reply, '*Oi talofa e, ia afio mai, oute manatua galuega lelei a si ou tama*', [oh, please welcome, your father's reputation is renown [in our village]].

Taulapapa continues by arguing the point that his contribution as a leader is closely associated with his desire and decision concerning his final resting place. It is a significant act to him and his family where he is buried because he is the family *sa'o* (head). He says:

It matters to me and the family where I am buried. In my opinion, the family chief needs to be buried in the family plot because people will ask in the future, 'where is Taulapapa buried?'

Like Taulapapa, other family leaders such as Tia have also communicated his burial wishes to his children, especially as he now lives near Apia and not in his ancestral village:

We must talk about this topic so that people can make helpful changes. . . I have already spoken to my children, 'when I die, you need to bury me as soon as possible. Do not wait for other people to come from overseas because there is nothing they can do for me. Avoid the temptations of performing something extravagant and say, 'we are doing this because our father is the holder of the Tia title, he is the *sa'o* of the family'.

Tia is adamant that he does not want the traditions of *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa* to be observed at his death even when he is the *sa'o* of his extended family. He has urged his children to stay humble rather than becoming trapped by the notion of Samoan pride which he calls *fia tagata*.

The way Tia is preparing his children for his time of death appears firm and autocratic. Some family leaders see this preparation as a priority. Like Tia, Taulapapa has communicated to his children his plans for when he passes away in the next passage:

I want to be returned home [to Malie] to lie with my parents. Where one is buried is vitally important for future indigenous references. It is also important for my grandchildren and their children to have a solid place of reference to trace their ancestral roots and to know where we came from. Maybe in the future, my children will travel to Samoa and say, 'here is where our father lies, and here is where our mother lies'. This is why my wife and I want to be buried in Samoa so that our children will always know where we are.

Preparation and early communication means averting chaotic reactions and difficulties in later times. A person's ability to make good decisions can change dramatically in the emotional shock of the death of a close family member. The psychological impact of losing a parent is devastating, even though death is inevitable.

Good leaders do communicate, while they are still alive, not just plans for being financially prepared, but plans for their own final wishes (*mavaega*) for burial. As Taulapapa indicated earlier, the final resting place holds significance for the *sa'o* of the family, particularly as a poignant indigenous point of reference for future generations:

It is very important to me that I lie in Samoa because as the *sa'o* of the family, that is where my parents are rested and where I was raised. I want my children to visit the family in Samoa and being [buried] there will give them reasons [to return home]. In court cases where family titles are disputed, the location of previous titles holder's resting place is important. If previous title holders are not where the family title can be traced, then it can cloud the judgments given to the family by the court.

What Taulapapa is advocating here is the vital connections to genealogical links for the family head and for the collective unit. The task of locating ancestral resting places is crucial to the continuity of family history and identity.

Symbolically, the grave of his parents provides a visible connection between the dead and the living (see chapter four). Taulapapa says:

I have this sense that they [parents] are still with me. I might call out to them [parents], '*O a mai oulua?* – how are you?', as I walk around the family section in Malie.

Connection with those who have passed away remains vital for the continuing heritage of Samoan people and their future indigenous reference. A final

embrace, so to speak, with the village earth where they were conceived, served, and grew up. The dead are not just farewelled extravagantly at their death, but they are honoured through the actions of their surviving relatives, when they are taken home to rest. Samoan leaders like Taulapapa, Tia, Rev Toea'ina and others who are worthy of their position and status make it their priority to maintain family honour, while they enhance the legacy of their ancestors who have gone on before.

### **Chapter conclusion**

This first case study has illustrated the pivotal role that *matai* leadership and decision-making provides within Samoan culture especially in preserving end-of-life customs and associated rituals. Very few events showcase the significant role of leadership more prominently than when an important person within the family passes away, as this chapter has shown. Not only are important tasks involved within funeral culture a function of *matai* leadership, they must also ensure that their *āiga potopoto* responds generously to honour both the deceased member and their community of supporters.

Although chiefly leadership in many instances is a process that it is vested in a person, their function as a leader is very much collective in its accountability. In many respects, perceiving such leadership within Samoa culture as autocratic is a cross-cultural misreading. In practice, *matai* leadership is about the welfare of the collective, demonstrated by Taulapapa's and Tia's desire to serve and to lead their clans. Upholding family honour is a central function of Samoan leaders. Underlying such important roles within the family unit is the Samoan proverb, *o le tagata ma lona fa'asinomaga*, which defines how each person's duties serve the wider objectives of the family unit (Macpherson, Spoonley & Anae, 2001; O'Meara, 1990). The value placed on social order and unity amongst members remains central despite significant changes.

In the context of death and mourning rituals, chieftainship is the conduit for gathering, apportioning, and facilitating the sharing of resources and of finances to address their collective responsibilities. Hence, the responsibility of

elected leaders is to ensure that family members follow their counsel accordingly. Members seek to maintain internal protocols as well as externally sanctioned practices to minimize any dispute, particularly those that might bring shame to the family. Ablon's (1971) observations highlight how funeral ritual enactments provide a specific occasion where family solidarity manifests much more prominently than it does with other events. During such occasions, the ideals of family status are enhanced by what members provide for their guests, befitting their status and reputation as "*o se 'āiga e fai mea mafai*", or a family who is well able to *faifaima fa'atasi* (work cooperatively) (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2009, p.130). Those leaders who are able to guide their families through the impact of death thus demonstrate their ability as good decision makers, and prove their worth as the chief-in-charge. A successful outcome shows their level of wise preparation and foresightedness which effectively avoids dishonour and shame.

While the traditional function of *matai* leadership remains significant during ordinary periods of death and mourning, there are times when this leadership structure is disrupted by out-of-the ordinary events. As vital as preparation for death may be, sometimes there can be catastrophic or overwhelming events that no planning or preparation can ever absorb its full devastation. Such was the *galulolo* (tsunami), the weight of which is described in the next chapter (seven), through the experiences of death as well as the destruction of Jared's and Netta's lives.

## Chapter Seven

### Case Study Two

**I lenei olaga e fesouaina i puapuaga  
Se mafutaga mafana ae ua motusia  
Le mafutaga i le tino se mea a faigata  
A manatua au aga ma mea sa e faia  
Ma ou foliga e tu mai i o'u luma e le aunoa  
Ua ou inu i loimata e maligi ile alofa  
Ae a mavae loimata e liua ile fiafia  
(Felise Mikaele: Tsunami tribute song – verse 1)**

Life brings us face-to-face with adversity  
Loving bonds severed without warning  
Living becomes unimaginable  
A constant reminder of your presence remains  
You are ever-present – always here  
Daily consuming my tears of brokenness  
In time they will lead me to serenity  
(Translation: Seiuli, 2014)



This chapter presents my second case study which examines the effects of catastrophic death and ensuing trauma that resulted from a *galulolo* (tsunami) on 29 September 2009. The *galulolo* wave not only devastated many Samoans locally, but impacted the lives of those with Samoan connections globally. Jared and Netta Schwalger and their family were direct victims, suffering great loss not only of their property and material resources, but in the death of four family members. Their experiences of terror and pain, their on-going suffering, and their acts of remembrance form the core narratives of the case shared here. Also included are my own personal reflections, particularly those that came out of my experiences of providing therapeutic support to victims of the *galulolo* event. Jared and Netta were among them.

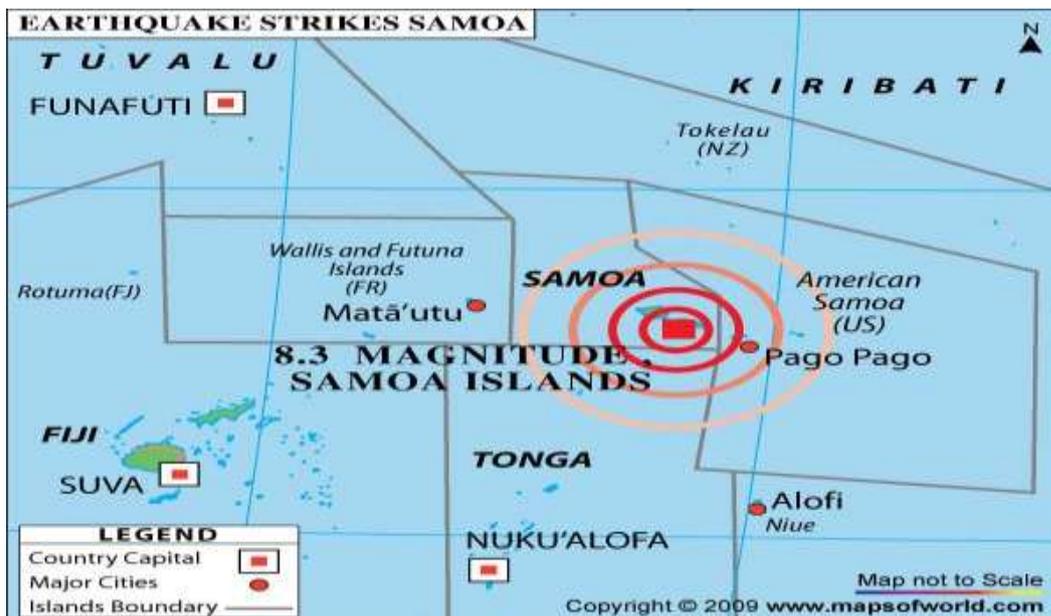
### **Mafui'e: ring of fire**

Earthquakes can be harmless, either because they are too weak to sustain physical damage or because they occur in unpopulated areas (McCaughey, Hoffman & Llewellyn, 1994). There are also many earthquakes that cause considerable damage, injury and death. Earthquakes are very unpredictable and can occur instantaneously without any warning. Victims can go from the calm of their normal routine to the sudden force of a mass destruction.

The giant *Mafui'e* (earthquake) was the keeper of fire who lived in the underworld according to Samoan legend (Henry, 1980; Kramer, 1995, Turner, 1984, Wendt-Young, 2010). *Mafui'e* regularly brought fear to mortals with his devastating shakes and tremors. Legend says that as the guardian of fire, the giant Mafui'e enslaved one of the locals as his chief cook, Ma'eatutala. At that time, mortals were limited to eating raw food because Mafui'e would not let anyone near his fire except Ma'eatutala. The account states that Ma'eatutala also happened to be Maui's father (Henry, 1980) who one day decided to explore the underworld by secretly following his father. Turner (1984) provides another version of the same legend, referring to Talaga as the father and Ti'iti'i the son. Ti'iti'i decided to steal some of Mafui'e's fire to take back to his world. Ti'iti'i was discovered by the giant Mafui'e and a wrestling match between them ensued.

Ti'iti'i twisted Mafui'e's arm so hard that it broke off, thereby causing the giant to surrender. Ti'iti'i, being the victor, demanded access to the fire so that he may cook his food. Mafui'e relented and from that event, fire is found in every tree, when one piece of dry wood is rubbed against another.

From time to time, Mafui'e still shifts and stirs, shaking the earth with his tremors to remind the descendants of Ti'iti'i of his existence and of his bitter defeat. The Asia-Pacific region, or 'ring of fire' as it is sometimes known, has been a regular roaming place of Mafui'e with more than thirty large scale quakes of magnitude 7.0 or more since the 1930s (Wendt-Young, p.6). On 29 September 2009, Mafui'e awoke in a full rage, emerging only 190 kilometres off-shore between Samoa and Tonga. It was around 6:50 in the morning when the trembling was initially felt and it lasted for almost two minutes. McCaughey and colleagues (1994) suggest that "an earthquake's full destructive force occurs in a brief period of time, usually less than a minute" (p.140). Although two minutes is only a brief calculation in a normal span of time, an earthquake that continues for two minutes is absolutely terrifying. The ruthlessness of Mafui'e was felt in American Samoa, Samoa, northern parts of Tonga, Wallis and Futuna and as far as Niue (see Map 3).



Map 3: Mafui'e Strikes Samoa (Source: www.mapsofworld.com)

Mafui'e's devastation was measured at a "magnitude of 8.3 on the Richter scale" (Potoi, Tautua & Fa'atauva'a-Vavatau, (P.S.R. Report, p.2), 2009). Wendt-Young (2010) describes some of the reactions to the 29 September 2009 earthquake in the following passage:

It felt far more consuming . . . terrifying. Panicked hearts beat faster . . . thoughts scrambled . . . what to do? Where to run? What to grab? Where are the children? When will it stop? . . . The earthquake felt like a monster, it was stomping around and it was shaking, it went on for ages. (Wendt-Young, 2010, p.7-8)

For those who experienced its fury, Mafui'e was relentless; the longest, and fiercest shakings many had ever experienced in their lives.

### **The Schwalger family of Malaela village**

The devastating and seemingly arbitrary nature of disasters causing death can reinforce the common belief that such events are random in their social impact (Elliot & Pais, 2006). Nevertheless, unforeseeable calamities can actually provide humanity with an ideal setting in which to examine core dimensions of life, especially the way in which people respond to and make sense of these times. Socio-psychological theory and research has an important function in helping us to identify and gain better understanding of human actions during such times (Merton, 1970). That is, calamities such as a *galulolo*, or similar tragedies causing death, offer opportunities as "research sites" for socio-psychological inquiry (Elliot & Pais, 2006, p.295).

Calamity and resultant trauma are a part of life. The technological cyber communication highway ensures that more than any other time in human history, we are able to access the latest catastrophic news media events from around the globe in many forms (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1998; Ursano, Fullerton & McCaughey, 1994; Reavey, 2011). The frequent occurrence of such events can leave many people desensitized to their tangible reality. Those directly affected are left devastated, scrambling for whatever means are available to help them to recover from or at least to resume some form of readjusted life after the adversity. Beyond individuals and families, communities also suffer the ruptures of trauma and disaster.

People respond to trauma differently, and, certainly, no one can escape the profound changes such life events bring. There is an intricate interaction between those affected, their supporters, and the event itself (Ursano, & Fullerton, 1990; Ursano et al., 1994). Trauma plays an important role in how recovery occurs, and how the lives of those affected are re-established. And although most individuals exposed to traumatic events and tragedies do not necessarily suffer prolonged ill effects, there are some who may suffer with ongoing impairment, behavioural change, or alterations in physical health as a result.

Soai and Metita Schwalger were from the village of Malaela, Aleipata (Map 4), which lies on the western coastline of Upolu. They had two children, a daughter named Lucia and a son name Jared.



Map 4: Malaela Village, Aleipata District (Source : [www.seaturtle.org](http://www.seaturtle.org))

The Schwalger family were typical of rural Samoan families whose subsistence living consisted of planting crops such as *taro*, bananas, and coconuts, while also rearing a few cattle for a small profit or family *fa'alavelave*. The Schwalger family were no strangers to adversity, with natural disasters damaging their livelihood. Jared recalls the effect of two cyclones on his family:

Cyclone Ofa destroyed our crop 1991. We lost everything. After cyclone Ofa, my father decided to supplement his crop by growing

passion fruit. It was hard work and it took over a year to get any produce after Cyclone Ofa. In 1993, Cyclone Val came through and destroyed this new venture.

The impact of natural disasters such as Cyclones Ofa and Val made life difficult for rural families like the Schwalgers. Jared married Netta and they had two children together, a son named Teancum whom they nicknamed Tean and a daughter named Abish whom they nicknamed Abby. Tean was just over 2 years old and Abby just over a year old when the tsunami struck. Jared and Netta had returned to Malaela to become full-time parents, and to care for Jared's elderly parents. It was while living in Malaela that Jared and Netta, Soai and Metita, and, Tean and Abish, were to experience the fury of Mafui'e. Both Jared and Netta describe Mafui'e in the following passages. Jared begins:

It happened on Tuesday morning. I slept around 1am that morning because I was trying to finish cutting up coconut husks for a customer in Apia. Netta and I woke up because of the shaking of the earthquake. Mum was telling us that we should move up to the higher areas, to the inlands of Pu'e just to be safe.

Netta recalls:

I woke Jared up because of the shaking and then we both went to the back of the house to where mum and dad were. It was around about 7am on the Tuesday morning. I looked outside and saw that it was a sunny day. There was no sign of anything bad happening.

Following the trembling shakes of Mafui'e, the Schwalgers, like many throughout Samoa were not expecting anything else apart from cleaning up the mess left by the earthquake. Unbeknown to them, the shakes were only minor compared to the utter devastation that came next.

### **O le galulolo: a tsunami wave**

Before a *galulolo* wave appears, a number of events generally predict its arrival. The first precursor is an earthquake of high magnitude, followed by a receding shoreline. Such physical signs can be particularly visible in the places where the wave is likely to be at its most devastating force. The ominous predictors were certainly the case on the south west coast, south coast, and east-coast of Upolu. These were the main locations that sustained the worst

damage in Samoa. According to the PSR report, “it only took 10-15 minutes after the earthquake had stopped for the wave to hit Samoa and Tutuila, at speeds of between 450-600 miles per hour, measuring between twenty to thirty feet in height at the worst-hit areas” (Potoi, et al., 2009, p.2). Wendt-Young (2010) recorded witnesses’ accounts of the waves:

We looked out towards the sea and there was no sea where the reef was and I said, ‘something’s going to happen’ (Poutasi resident, p.25).

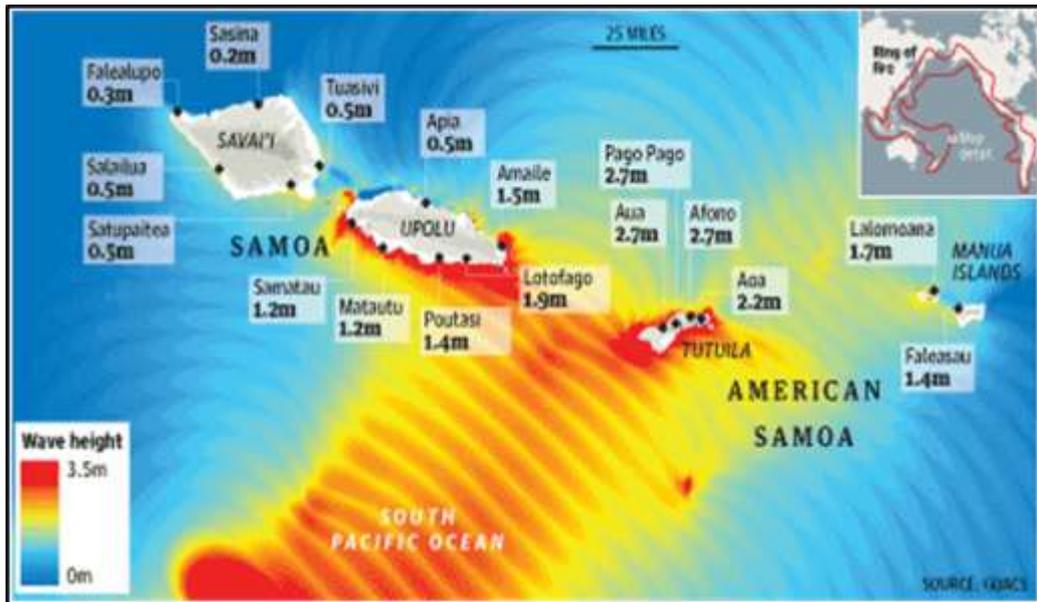
That was the scariest thing ever. Watching the water disappear over the reef, seeing the ocean empty . . . then we were running so hard (New Zealand tourist, p.25).

We knew after the earthquake there would be a high chance of a tsunami. We looked out of our *fale* (hut) . . . then I saw the top of the reef and I knew that something was wrong (New Zealand tourists – Lalomanu, p.26).

There are occasions when the ocean does not recede after an earthquake yet a tsunami wave results. The Sri Lanka tsunami in 2004 is one example of this happening. Without the water receding, a tsunami still arose causing the waves to travel further inland. This same phenomenon was also experienced in some parts of Samoa, where the “sea did not recede but was deceptively still, so the first wave took everyone by surprise” (Wendt-Young, 2010, p.27).

The *galulolo* wave (Map 5) arriving by surprise was certainly the experience of the Schwalger family. After the earthquake, Jared went to the front of the house to check the damage and if there was a need to evacuate. He heard an announcement on the local radio informing that a tsunami wave was already causing a lot of damage in the nearby villages. He ran from the front of the house towards the back, shouting to the family that a *galulolo* wave was heading their way. They all needed to get to safety, fast. Jared recalls:

A lot of this was in the space of about five minutes. I called out to Netta and the family [dad, mum and the two kids] to get into the vehicle, [a single cabbed 4x4 pick-up ute] because I could see that the wave was coming towards our house.



Map 5: Galulolo Wave 29 September 2009  
 (Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/>)

Netta adds to Jared's account:

I went to get Teancum because he was still asleep. When I got to the vehicle, Jared was already there and he ran to open the gate for us to get out. I grabbed Abby and our passport bag. By the time I got the vehicle, Jared's mum was already in the vehicle with Teancum. I jumped to the back of the pick-up. We were all waiting for dad to come out. As he was coming out, mum ran back into the house looking for their medication and other things. Jared was tooting the horn to get him to hurry up. When dad got into the car, the wave was already close to us. I kept shouting to mum but she still had not come out of the house. I could taste the saltiness of the sea in my mouth and the fury of the wave was fast approaching us. Jared was in the vehicle with dad and the kids, waiting for mum who was still inside the house.

The speed at which the tsunami wave swept to the Schwalgers' doorstep left them defenceless against its devastating onslaught. I recount the details of this encounter in later parts of this chapter.

Distressing events create shock, fear and anxiety – before, during, and after the trauma (Holloway & Fullerton, 1994). More than likely, it is through experiencing the ordeals of feeling vulnerable, being defenceless, and feeling powerless in the face of death that heightens the sense of susceptibility to such events. Maslow's (1943) hierarchical theory of motivational needs highlights how every person desires to be, and to feel safe, that is, to experience their

environment as stable and predictable (Ursano, et al., 1994). The need for safety is not often realised until something happens to threaten one's sense of security and protection (Sandler, 1987). When individual or family security and safety is attacked by a force as tumultuous as the *galulolo*, it creates havoc, bringing terror, panic, and fear to those under its siege.

### **The psychology of terror**

Traumatic events are generally precarious, overwhelming and unexpected (Figley, 1985; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). The impact they have on people and on the environment separates these occasions from other life events. Their sudden nature threatens the physiological and psychological wellbeing of people. These traumatic events are "marked by their extreme or sudden force, typically causing fear, anxiety, withdrawal, and avoidance" (Ursano, et al., 1994, p.5). There is a high intensity brought on by its unexpected and, often, uncommon appearance, and its devastation can range from severe to being long-term. Though the impact may be felt in minutes, the effects can last for days, months, or many years after. Traumatic events cause social disruptions, loss and damage to property, and mass casualties.

I return to Jared's and Netta's experience. The last moments of seeing their parents and their children alive remain terrifying and disturbing for them. As the wave was fast approaching, they both saw their mother run out of the house towards the waiting ute. Jared kept his gaze fixed on her while Netta shouted: *Mum o le galu! The wave!* The wave's first target was the house, smashing it into pieces and then it hit the pickup with Jared, his father, and his two children piled up in the front. The wave trapped them all in the vehicle as it was being thrown around in its destructive wake.

The wave moved with such ferocity that everything happened with instantaneous speed. The last thing Jared remembered was being hit by the full force of the wave, knocking him unconscious while simultaneously flipping the vehicle upside down, crushing his mother under its inescapable weight. From the deck of the pickup, Netta remembers the house being broken into pieces as if

was made from matchsticks. She turned to look at Jared when the wave collapsed onto her, suffocating her with its power. She was tossed off the vehicle like a ragged doll and dumped into a cascade of angry ocean that now filled the dry ground where their vehicle once parked. Jared says:

The wave flipped the vehicle and it cracked the windscreen. Water started coming inside. I did not realise that the kids were no longer in the vehicle. I thought about dragging them out and to resuscitate them. My window was stuck so I couldn't wind it down. It felt like 2-3 minutes and I was choking on sea water. I thought that this was the end for me. I was a dead man.

Jared attempted to break the driver's side window as he floated inside the vehicle full of ocean water. As he was scrambling for air, Jared realised that the vehicle had rolled onto its side from the sheer force of the wave.

The tossing motion of the wave finally shattered the cracked windscreen, providing Jared with a slim chance of getting himself out of the overturned vehicle. By some divine intervention, the wave pulled him out of the vehicle with such force that it propelled him towards the surface fast. Upon reaching the surface, Jared noticed that the merciless *galulolo* had dumped their vehicle into the *tōgā togo* (mangroves) swamp near their house. In fact, their vehicle floated about a hundred meters away from where they were trying to escape just moments earlier. Jared was left partly concussed while trying to stay alive from this ordeal. Netta gave her account of these moments in Wendt-Young (2010, p.52):

I struggled vainly in the blackness and then after an airless eternity, I reached the point beyond panic and beyond any fear. This is when one's survival instinct quits and acceptance just comes. I said to myself; 'if this is how God wants me to die, if this is God's will, then why fight it. Just accept it. I just let go and I sucked in a lot of water. I could feel my heart beating faster and faster. In my head, I was thinking about my kids and Jared and his parents. I was just hoping they would be okay.

Netta became unconscious from being trapped under water, having consigned herself to 'God's will', and believing that this was how she would die. It came as a surprise when she regained consciousness a little while later. Netta recalls this moment in Wendt-Young (2010, p.52-53):

When I regained consciousness, I looked around to see where I was but I could not recognise anything. It all happened so fast. I could not see a house at all. I saw a boat in a tree . . . that's when I started calling for my kids, hoping to hear just a cry. I called their names and I called Jared's mum.

Netta's growing awareness of the magnitude of their encounter with the fury of the *galulolo* not only left her partly unconscious, but also paralysed and helpless to offer any support to her husband. By this stage, Jared was calling out the names of his family members. As he surveyed the devastation around him, his gaze fell upon the body of his dear father whose face was still in the water. Jared mustered whatever energy he could despite being badly injured and partly-concussed to lift his father out of the swamp and on to the overturned vehicle. He attempted mouth to mouth resuscitation but it was to no avail. Netta, partly submerged and trapped helplessly watched as her husband tried to revive his father. Netta says this about what she saw:

I saw that his father was all blue around his fingertips and his face. When Jared turned him onto his side, the only thing that came out of his mouth was water and blood. I cried as I said to Jared, 'it's too late, he's gone'.

After heeding his wife's voice, Jared left his father's body on the overturned vehicle and swam towards Netta who was trapped underneath the deck of the ute so he could free her. He eventually succeeded.

### **Exposure to death and counting the dead**

While trauma and disasters are frequent global occurrences, this does not necessarily mean people are prepared for a first-hand experience. Direct contact with catastrophic disaster often means encountering victims who are ravaged by death's grasp (Ursano & McCarroll, 1994). Exposure to mass death, as well as those of individuals, can be both disturbing and frightening. Such experiences can embed lasting impressions psychologically, especially when the deaths are of people with whom there are meaningful connections or close emotional bonds (DeRanieri, Clements & Henry, 2002). The tasks of body recovery, identification, transport, and burial of the victims can prolong contact with the realm of the dead. This acute level of experience significantly contributes to the development

of psychological distresses that delay recovery for those affected. This was certainly the experience of Jared and Netta, and of many others who were impacted by the *galulolo*.

At this point, the wrath of the tsunami that had already destroyed much of the Schwalger family was not yet appeased. No one was expecting it, but there was a second wave surging through the damaged and depleted shoreline, searching for more victims to placate its fury. While waiting for the second wave to continue the torment of what was left by the first, some of the unaffected village people began combing the ravaged landscape for trinkets and possessions for their own gain. One unfortunate occurrence of this catastrophe, particularly for those immediately affected, was that some people became scavengers, even in such dark and desperate times. Netta recalls this incident clearly: *“There were people running past on the debris-strewn road beside the swamp. Jared called out to them for help”*. To their astonishment, the plea for help fell on deaf ears, or more precisely, on covetous ears of people whose only concern was for loot. Jared adds:

I saw people walking along the road and called to them to come and help. They responded ‘*o le ‘āiga o ai?*’ Whose family are you? I could not believe it! People asking you whose family are you at that time of devastation. It should not matter whose family you are when you are all in the same devastation! I responded something like, ‘*e pei o oukou e le o gi Samoa – you are not the Samoans I know*’.

Jared was holding his dead father in his arms while keeping a close eye on his wife when he pleaded with the looters. The lingering memory of the bystanders unwilling to risk their lives or their booty to help save his wife is something Jared still cannot fathom:

Can you imagine what it feels like? People you thought were your friends because you have known them all your life and thought they would help you? It is like one of your best friends doing something that hurts you badly, that’s what it was like. (Wendt-Young, 2010, p.57)

After being ignored by the looters, Jared could only hope that the second wave was not as deadly as the first:

I felt this great sorrow when I was holding my dad and Netta in my arms. I was standing there waiting for the second wave to hit us. I just asked myself, 'what would my father do at this point?' I'm not a very emotional person, but on that day, something in me broke.

Jared reported that his emotions became numb, where it seems that he could not feel any emotional or psychological attachment to his ordeal:

I became a machine with my emotions . . . just ticking off mentally what I needed to do at the time, instead of being stuck in that moment of being shell-shocked.

Malt (1994) suggests that the period directly following a traumatic injury which is generally referred to as "emotional shock, denial, or numbness phase" (p.106), often determines the way people respond when in life threatening situations. That is, the outward expressions of whether they fight, flee, or freeze, can dictate the outcome of action for both victims and witnesses.

Jared's state of numbness, or mechanical emotional state, helped him to act accordingly in order to keep his wife alive, and then to search for the missing bodies of his family. Jared's response immediately after the calamity concurs with what Malt (1994) suggests: "victims may still experience strong anxiety, without loss of behavioural control" (p.106). Hodgkinson & Stewart (1998) seem to also support what Malt is indicating by adding that numbing is a "defensive manoeuvre" (p.7). This way of responding is helpful for survivors, enabling them to disengage from the reality caused by the catastrophic event. Meaning, 'shock' helps them to block out much of the raw experiences, especially those that cause too much unbearable pain. The conclusion often associated with survivors expressing these symptoms is that they are "in control and coping bravely" (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1998, p.7), when, in fact, they have not yet begun to react to the calamity. Jared's comments indicate that he had mentally shut out those raw emotions associated with the destruction, and instead, he chose to maintain a sense of calmness, and of being in control to try to save, and to find, the missing members of his family. They, not himself, remained the priority.

Netta could see a second wave beginning to build momentum and fast approaching her and Jared. Netta pleaded with Jared to just hold her tightly, as well as his deceased dad. She was afraid that this second wave would separate

them again and this time, end her life. Other victims reported that in other areas along the coast of Aleipata, the second wave was much more devastating than the initial wave. This was not the same for Malaela, the village where the Schwalger family were already counting their dead. Jared held both Netta and his father tightly, while the second wave pounded them with its surge, trying to force them let go and give up the fight. Jared would not relent. After the second wave, Netta became unconscious again. Yet the *galulolo* was not about to give up.

The wave came back a third time but Jared would not surrender his family. This was the wave's final effort to claim more lives before it retreated back beyond the blue Pacific horizon. The final wave only pushed the debris around and rocked the vehicle momentarily and then it gave up. After the wave finally receded, in defeat so to speak, Jared began the painful task of freeing his wife from under the vehicle that held her captive. After his wife, he collected the ravaged and lifeless bodies of his family members, beginning with his father, then his mother, and finally he searched agonizingly for his children. His mother and his children were nowhere to be seen. Jared recalls:

I lifted my father onto the vehicle out of the water. He was close to 300 pounds but I still managed to pull him onto the roof of the vehicle by myself. I told Netta when she became conscious that she needed to move her leg because it was still stuck under the vehicle. I broke a piece of timber and tried wedging it under the vehicle so I could move her foot out.

Jared appealed a second time to passers-by to help him to free his wife from under the vehicle, pleading to them:

Do you have hearts? Are you not Samoans? Can't you see that I'm trying to save my wife, she's fighting for her life and you're just standing there? (Wendt-Young, 2010, p.53)

Netta recalls this moment:

When I came to, I could hear Jared yelling at some people to come over to help him. I could hear them getting louder and louder and then I felt my body being lifted onto something hard.

Some of the villagers finally came to help Jared and together, they were able to dislodge the vehicle enough to free Netta's leg. Jared continues:

We got her freed, and then she lost consciousness again. I tied up her crushed leg with a piece of dirty cloth that was floating in the water. This was to try to help stop the bleeding because it was pretty bad.

After Jared's quick-fix bandage to try to stem the bleeding to his wife's injury, he organised for her and his father to be ferried on makeshift rafts from the overflowed swamp and on to the dry ground.

Jared was informed by some boys from his village that they had found his mother's lifeless body. Jared recalls a sequence of his actions next:

I kissed my dad on the forehead and told him that I loved him. When they found my mum, her body was almost all uncovered. I asked one of the young men for an *ie lavalava* (sarong) to cover her body. I kissed my mother on the forehead and told her that I loved her too. I told the men to gently take my mother to the roadside while I go back into the swamp to look for my kids.

While Jared continued his search for his missing children, a number of vehicles quickly gathered to help transport the dead and wounded to nearby hospitals. One of these uplifted Netta and her deceased in-laws and drove them to Lalomanu Hospital, which was the closest. But the road was blocked and damaged by the debris dumped onto the road by the tsunami. There was no other option but to head for the national hospital which is situated in Apia.

The emergency trip on the back of the pickup from Aleipata to Apia felt like a 'life-or-death' journey for Netta:

I was losing a lot of blood and as a result, I was drifting in and out of consciousness. I didn't know where Jared was. All I could hear was the faint voice of someone saying, 'that poor man is still looking for his kids'. I just prayed to God, hoping that Jared would find the kids. The driver of the truck was going so fast that my body was bouncing around in the back . . . I thought to myself, 'If I don't die from the tsunami, I will die in the back of this truck'.

At some point in the journey, Netta was transferred from the back of the truck and into a police vehicle. The police transported her in their vehicle to Moto'otua hospital. Netta remembers the efforts of the policeman in trying to keep her awake. The police escorts feared that if their injured passenger became unconscious, she would die.

It was about fifteen minutes after Netta was taken to the hospital that Jared finally found the lifeless body of his beloved Abby. In this recollection, Jared had to pause for some time before he began:

When I found my daughter's body, that's when it broke me. I started to cry uncontrollably. I gently wrapped her body in a piece of cloth. I then told one of the village boys to put her on the dry ground by the roadside. I needed to go back into the swamp to search for my son. My task isn't over until my son's body is found. I continued looking for about half an hour . . . . After some time, I went up to the roadside to where my daughter was and to my horror, she was gone. Someone had moved her body. This was really hard because I had to try to find her all over again.

Although exhausted and broken, Jared would not give up his search for his Abby. He walked from one end of the village to the other, hoping to come upon his daughter's body. But she was nowhere to be found. Eventually, Jared met some young boys scouting for trinkets in the debris who told him that they saw a baby under the tree close to where his house used to be. Jared rushed to the spot as indicated by the young boys hoping to find the body of his beautiful daughter. Jared found Abby and gathered her into his protective arms, refusing to let her go this time until she was released to the hospital's care.

The journey to the hospital, while grasping tightly to the body of his beloved Abby stirred memories of their lives together. Jared says:

As we drove past my house and the swamp where our vehicle lay [driving towards the hospital], I promised myself that I would return to look for my son. . . I held my daughter close to my heart all the way from Malaela to Moto'otua hospital. . . As I was holding her in my arms, a lot of things were going through my mind. All the songs that I ever sang for my kids, all the times that we played 'peek-a-poo', all the times that they would cry, all the times that I would say, 'I love you', and all the times I'd say, 'I'm sorry'.

The stirring of these emotions seems to break loose upon cradling the lifeless form of his daughter. Here, the cherished bond between this father and his daughter would even lead to his wish of somehow being able to swap places: *[I] would give [my] life for hers.*

It is commonly reported that when people are faced with death-like situations, images of their own life flashes before them. This type of vision did

not happen for Jared. Instead, he describes his face-to-face encounter with death as the *“living looking at the dead”*. Jared clarifies this experience by saying:

It was the dead who were flashing their lives through the eyes of the living. It was just me and my daughter.

Looking into the face of death, Jared tried to remember his daughter’s peculiar voice, the memories of her last hugs or kisses, and even the funny little things they did together before the *galulolo* ripped their lives apart.

Jared finally arrived to the hospital still carrying his daughter in his arms, refusing to let anyone else take her away from him. Clutching tightly to Abby, Jared began searching for Netta who was now housed in a makeshift tsunami ward. Jared finally found the ward where Netta was held. As he approached Netta’s bed, he purposely chose to keep his gaze transfixed on the body of their daughter instead of looking at his wife. Netta was still hoping that their precious little Abby was still alive, but Jared’s silence gave it away. As he placed Abby into the waiting arms of her mother, Netta knew that their Abby was dead. Up until then, Netta had been praying against all hope that by some miracle her children were still alive. Her lifeless baby who was now being placed into her arms confirmed her worst fear. Netta broke into distraught screaming, allowing all her anguish and torment to break loose to fill the walls and space of the grief stricken ward. Netta held Abby tightly in her bosom, while sorrowfully speaking these words of regret to her precious little angel:

Abby, I am so sorry for not running faster. I’m so sorry I panicked, and I wasn’t thinking straight. If you see Nana out there, tell her that we are so sorry for not listening to her in the first place. Nana was right. She’s always right. Abby, if you see Teancum, please tell him we’re looking for him and we love him. We love both of you so much. (Wendt-Young, 2010, p.55)

The above scenario would be repeated again and again, as news of dead relatives is relayed by messengers to other wounded victims, now all housed in the makeshift tsunami ward.

Jared refused to be attended to by any medical personnel at the hospital until the body of his son was found. He needed to return to the death swamp (Figure 9) to search for his son. His sister Lucia and her husband transported him

back to Malaela to continue searching for Tean. When Lucia and her husband heard about the disaster, they drove to Malaela but found only scatterings of debris and carnage where their family home once stood. They searched the hospital for survivors, refusing to believe the news from the villagers that both her parents were dead. It was there that she met Jared, and after confirmation of the inevitable news about their parents, there was little they could do except to find the missing body of Teancum.



Figure 9: The death swamp in Malaela two weeks after the tsunami (Source: Author)

Before Jared and his helpers left to return to their village, he checked the morgue in case his son's body had been brought in by someone else. While at the morgue, he was also asked to identify the bodies of his parents who were some of the first deceased to arrive soon after the tsunami:

I had to make sure that someone else had not found my son. I went through the dead bodies at the morgue looking at babies: palagi and Samoan babies. They were all there and some were unidentifiable.

In one day, Jared felt that he had experienced enough pain to last him a lifetime. His son Tean's body was not at the morgue. He had no other option but to return to the deathly swamp to find his son. And, as Jared, Lucia, and her husband left

for the village to continue with the search, Netta pleaded with God for Teancum's life. Finding Tean alive would bring some minor relief to this family's torturous ordeal:

I prayed to God, saying to Him, 'God please, you've taken Abby, please let me have Teancum. I promise that I'll go to church all the time and take my son with me. I promise that I'll behave. I'll do anything and everything that you ask of me, just spare me one child, please'. (Wendt-Young, 2010, p.55)

Netta's pleading with God did not provide the answers she had hoped for. Tean's body was not discovered that day, or for some days after the catastrophe. Jared would not give up, just as he had refused to give up when he was battered by the *galulolo* waves.

Turner (1984) reported that in Samoa, the unburied aroused great concern for the grieving family in traditional times: the spirit of an un-retrieved body belonging to a family member was killed in war or drowned was regarded as left to "wander about, neglected and comfortless" (Turner, 1984, p.150). They do not rest in peace but drift restlessly and vengefully. Until a body is recovered, there is a belief that the spirit, or ghost of the dead will continue to haunt the family night and day. The wandering spirit will call continually from the realm of the dead, urging the family to bring them home (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1998). The spirits of the unburied manifest themselves in dreadful cries as they search restlessly, seeking to cling to and to press people down. Worse still, the disenchanted spirit will strike the living with sickness and disease (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1998, Stair, 1983; Turner, 1984). As a result, resting or sleeping may not come easily to the living until the relative's body is laid to rest. But first they must be found.

Such traditional perspectives are consistent with the experiences of Jared and Netta. Every time they tried to rest or sleep, all they could see - and hear - was Teancum running around in the mangroves, trapped and desperate to be reunited with them. He was calling out to them, "*mummy, daddy, where are you?*" (Wendt-Young, 2010, p.55). Jared responds to this time of separation by saying: "*I kept seeing him in the mangroves*". Because of his longing for his son's body to be recovered, Jared refused to give in to rest or sleep. On the third day

after the tsunami struck, Teancum's body was finally discovered in the mangrove swamp by some of the searchers. Jared comments:

I tell you this; you don't want to see a person after that long. When my son was found, his beautiful face was bloated and his body had begun to decompose.

Jared was faced with the emotionally difficult task of trying to identify whether this unrecognisable body was that of his much loved Tean. And because of Netta's condition and emotional state at the time, this painful task was not for her.

For many survivors of such devastating calamities, relatives are often left to battle with two sets of opposing emotions concerning their deceased or missing family members. On one hand needing an "immediate certainty of death at the cost of the truth", or on the other hand the "postponement of certainty to allow room for hope" (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1998, p.37). Concerning the tsunami in Samoa, it was reported that some survivors scrambled to quickly identify deceased bodies as those of their missing relatives. However, it transpired later that they sometimes prematurely identified bodies that were, in fact, not their relatives. This was particularly evident with infants or young children, whose features or clothing were beyond recognition. In one instance, a family that I personally interviewed revealed that a child belonging to them is buried in another family's burial plot. The child was incorrectly identified as belonging to the family who located the body immediately after the devastation. Perhaps also, the grieving family was prepared to take a body as their child, fearing that they might be left without one to bury. For others, repeated visits to the hospital were needed because relatives refused to believe, or accept, that the dead person actually belonged to their family (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1998).

The condition in which Tean's body was recovered convinced Jared that it was best for Netta not to see their son at all. Not now, and not this way. It was Jared and one of Netta's sisters who went to confirm whether the body discovered was that of their Teancum. It took some time, but they finally concluded it was indeed their Tean. Netta recalls being told that her son's body was finally retrieved:

I wanted to see him and to say goodbye but Jared stopped me. He did not want me to see what Teancum looked like when he was found. He wanted me to remember him as I had known him.

The decision not to allow his wife to see their son in the decomposed condition in which he was found was Jared's attempt of preserving the memory of their beautiful boy. Hodgkinson & Stewart (1998), report that there are always survivors who will suffer more as a result of viewing a dead relative. And because of the risk associated with Netta suffering more, it was important for Jared as the father to maintain this vital role as protector for his wife, especially during this testing period. Netta agrees and supported Jared's decision:

I could see it in Jared's eyes . . . the way that he looked at me. I could tell that it wasn't a good sight. I felt that he wanted me to remember our son as that good looking kid that he was, rather than the way that he looked when he was found. I accepted that.

The difficult dilemma faced by Jared and Netta, whether to view or not to view the body, is not uncommon amongst surviving victims of traumatic events.

According to Hodgkinson & Stewart (1998, p.183), at least "50 per cent of bereaved regret not viewing the bodies of their loved ones". Upon reflection, this was a tough call Jared had to make, one that he lives with every day. To have a body conveys a peculiar comfort because people know that they can say farewell. Despite the faintest of hopes, it confirmed for the Schwalger family that their child was dead. It also provided some form of closure in realising that their son was found, identified, and able to be buried with the rest of the family.

### **Burying the dead**

Tui Atua (2009b) observed that the impact of the tsunami created an ideal context for reassessing *fa'alavelave* in modern times, particularly those related to funeral practices. In particular, Tui Atua pointed out that Samoan funeral culture has been the target of fierce criticism and discussion because of corruption, exploitation, and greed amongst those who seek to benefit from these difficult times. On this occasion, the impact of the tsunami affected the way the dead were buried by their families: the tsunami imposed a context

where Samoa as a nation, was forced to re-examine the core values associated with contemporary funeral culture.

Burying his family post-tsunami hugely contrasted those practices Jared had witnessed some years earlier with the death of his grandmother. When his grandmother passed away, it was his family that was predominantly affected. Additionally, the village of Malaela and the LDS church *matai* assumed the hosting responsibilities on behalf of the family. Such routine deaths are in some ways similar to Taulapapa's account in chapter six. But with the *galulolo*, the whole village of Malaela, the affiliated district of Aleipata, and the entire country of Samoa were in a collective time of mourning. This national and international tragedy meant that most of the responsibility for funeral rituals and preparations were primarily consigned to the immediate family to perform for themselves.

In attendance at these makeshift burial services were relatives and friends, depending on who was able to be present physically. Both Jared's parents and his children were buried on a relative's land in another part of Samoa a week after the tsunami. Jared arranged for their children's funeral service with the support of Netta's family:

I went out with Netta's family to buy my daughter's dress. I told them what to do with the kids' pictures and the flowers. I told them what to do with the grave and how we wanted it. Netta and I participated in the service and then we took the kids to their final resting place.

Two days later, Jared and Netta had to re-experience the same pain as they buried Jared's parents.

Tui Atua (2009) has recorded that when people became preoccupied with the priority of caring for the injured and sorting through the destruction within their community, funerals became very simple affairs. More significantly, the immediate burial required for decomposing bodies dictated when to hold the funeral, how, where, and who should attend. Such records are consistent with Jared and Netta's experiences as reported in their accounts. This form of decision-making seems to contrast the experiences of Taulapapa in chapter six, or my own personal observations of family consensus as discussed in chapter four. In this regard, the context imposed by the *galulolo* dictated the role and

function of leadership in many ways. In Jared and Netta's situation, the devastation caused by the tsunami appears to have simply relegated the context of leadership and decision-making to those members who were available and able to perform the required tasks for funeral preparation.

The traditional function of such leadership positions became less important for a brief period, especially as family resources and their priorities were reassessed to take care of so many deceased people. Jared's and Netta's burial experiences fit with Tui Atua's (2009b) judgment that none of the funerals during the tsunami followed the traditional pageantry and ritual performance often associated with such occasions, including the role of leadership and decision-making. Jared's family were buried in coffins that were paid for by the Samoan government. His two children were placed into the same coffin, while his parents were buried in separate coffins and they lay next to each other. This was not the case for every family who lost members to the tsunami disaster. Some families had to bury their loved ones wrapped in Samoan mats or body bags from the morgues because all of their resources and financial wealth had been destroyed or compromised by the tsunami.

The regular pattern involving church services like those described earlier in chapter four were abandoned for simple arrangements to honour the dead. According to Jared, there was no family service for their children because of their own pain. Instead the LDS church leaders led the funeral service which was held at the mortuary. From there, Abby and Teancum were transported directly to their gravesite. Netta remembers the event:

With our children, both Jared and I wanted to do it the easy way. They were only young and that's what we wanted. My family came from overseas for the funerals. Even though my father has an *ali'i* (paramount chief) title, I did not want them to get involved because it would mean a lot of extra burden that we did not want at the time. I told my immediate family to not tell my father's family which is the Sātaua line . . . [because] . . . they will provide a whole *povi* (beast), boxes of *pisupo* (corned-beef) and so on.

These funeral services were completed quickly and without too much fanfare. During this grieving period, the decaying bodies not only dictated the speed at which funerals were being performed, but equally significant were the depleted

financial resources. Tui Atua (2009b) remarks that “the paraphernalia that are usually visible at a Samoan funeral, especially those held in the village settings, were noticeably absent” (p.4) during this time of emotional and financial turmoil.

According to Netta:

It wasn't only the bodies [that dictated the quick burials] but financially for us too. Some of Jared's family wanted to have a traditional Samoan funeral service with all the customs because they wanted to do it to honour Jared's father, a high chief. They were not thinking about Jared who had lost everything in the tsunami. We had to tell them that it was the children's [Jared and his sister] choice how they wanted to bury their parents. There was no time for them to get money together in order to reciprocate peoples' *si'ialofa* (gifts).

The extended relatives were not pleased with Jared's refusal to have a traditional funeral for his parents. Jared and Lucia were adamant that they were going to bury their parents the quickest and most financially viable way possible. Opting for a 'keeping it simple' (see Tauivi's account in chapter eight) funeral farewell meant keeping financial costs as low as possible. As reported in chapters four and six, Samoan funeral performance can be very costly (see Kiwi's funeral Api). In the context of the tsunami, many families like Jared and Netta were left with little or no resources to put on a lavish farewell, and accommodate extravagant cultural expectations.

Although this was a tragic event, some people continued to perceive funeral rituals as a means of showcasing traditional performance: to politically assert family pride, to outwardly demonstrate *fa'asamoa* values of reciprocated giving, to exchange resources and oratory performance, and to dispel any myth of weakness within a family group despite any challenge faced by its members. Realistically, many were suffering financial, physical, and emotional distress because of the devastation. For others, the reprieve brought on by the calamity, particularly the excessive demands required by customary obligations, provided space to reappraise these customs for their worth in the current climate.

Tui Atua (2009b) posed some important questions towards addressing the stigma attached to some current Samoan funeral practices. Some of his questions are: Will Samoan funerals and their cultural imperatives lose meaning and substance if people simply focus on addressing their grief and demand

nothing, or only accept the bare minimum in return? Would the dignity of the deceased and his or her family be undermined by simple but true gestures of reciprocity?

On this note, Jared's parents relayed to their children a desire for a simple but genuine funeral service at their death. Netta recalls:

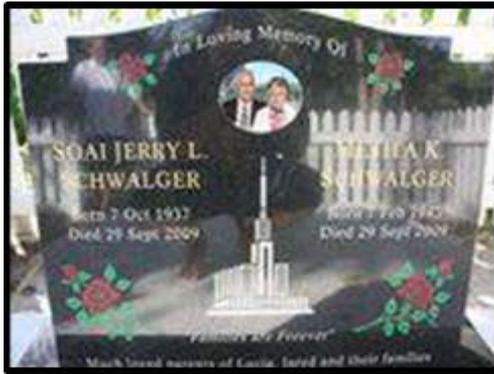
That was all they [Jared's parents] wanted . . . and in some way, they got their wish. Everything was stripped right back . . . but it had to come through a calamity. Their funeral was quite simple.

The funeral customs observed by Jared and Netta for their parents could be seen as converging with what Tui Atua is championing. Looking back to those events, Jared is at peace with what he did. His decision to keep his parents' funeral service and farewell simple means that he now lives with a clear conscience concerning his family. Such challenges, with some family members pushing for traditional funeral performance was also experienced by Tauivi with his father's death (see chapter eight).

### **Unveiling and memorialisation**

The anniversary of a death or the unveiling of a memorial headstone typically represents challenging memorial markers for many mourners. These challenges were faced by the Schwalger family in October 2010. Jared, who was already a New Zealand citizen, facilitated their move to New Zealand after Netta was granted permanent residency in mid-2010. The move was also to support Netta in her recovery from the leg injury she had sustained from being crushed under the ute.

For his parents' unveiling, Jared returned to Samoa on his own while Netta remained in New Zealand (Figure 10). The unveiling was held to coincide with the birthday of Jared's father on 7 October 2010, which was also the first anniversary of the tsunami event. The literature reviewed in this thesis does not record such anniversary events in earlier periods of Samoan funeral customs. This could only mean that either they were not that significant in earlier periods, or else memorial unveiling ritual is relatively a recent innovation within Samoan funeral culture.



Soai Jerry & Metita Schwalger



Teancum & Abish Schwalger

Figure 10: Schwalger family memorial headstones. (source Netta Schwalger)

In February 2011, both Netta and Jared returned to Samoa for the unveiling of their children’s memorial headstones. The reason for the two separate events was so the children’s unveiling would coincide with Jared’s mother’s birthday, honouring her memory at the same time. After the unveiling, Jared was finally able to bring some sense of closure to his prolonged journey:

Looking back, it really helped me when the kids’ unveiling finished. After that, I was able to sleep a lot better. Before then, I would be awake all night.

Even two years after the tsunami, it had been a long slow journey for both Jared and Netta towards a resumption of a regular life routine. Jared assesses their current situation by saying that: *“we are out of that bubble, where time stands still”*. Yet there are still many days when the pain and the struggles associated with the tsunami come flooding back. It is times like these that Jared admits to feeling that they have not yet moved forward:

There are days that, *‘e pei ua tagi lou tino atoa, e pei o le a masae atoa lou tino i le tiga’*, like your whole body goes into grieving. It is like your very soul is being ripped apart from the excruciating pain. That is when the pain is at its worse.

As Jared’s comments indicate, some days are better than others. And the worst moments are characterised by his ‘whole body’ grieving, where the pain remains ever present, accompanied by flowing tears, sorrow, and depression. Here, Jared points to the process of grieving not only in terms of the physical, social,

emotional, and familial, but an important part of the grieving process is the spiritual, that is, the 'soul' which is also being ripped apart from the excruciating pain of loss.

To combat these surges of excruciating pain, this couple continue to memorialise their loved ones in ways that make it easier for them to contain and to manage their on-going loss. For example, an important step in managing is by keeping the memories of their loss to themselves. Although their grief remains private, the process of healing is not done in isolation. For them, a unique part of moving forward is the obvious absence of any visual reminders, such as family pictures, albums, or photographs being displayed in their home. Some of the most painful reminders are those they have with their two children, which is why they have no photographs displayed in their home. This way of remembering, or forgetting, is a double-edged sword as well. Private memorialisation is a concept that Jared and Netta are learning to address slowly. In time, these visual reminders will be brought out again as they slowly move through healing. Jared reflects:

We find things that we are comfortable to deal with, and we try to reveal these slowly. In retrospect, we deal with these aspects slowly and according to our limitations. This is similar to what we did with the unveiling of the kids and our parents. It is still very hard for us but it is necessary.

Incremental steps are the preferred way for Jared and Netta to move towards regaining regular routines. They have also set some realistic goals for their overall wellbeing:

We took small steps back then, and now, we are here [in New Zealand] because of more small steps that took along the way. We were only able to do the things that we had the strength to tackle each time.

I initially talked to Jared and Netta in 2009 while they were in recovering at Moto'otua hospital. After a number of visits and conversations with them, one of the first steps that they took was to talk about their children: their happy times, their fun activities, their attitudes, and their pain. There was no expectation that our paths would cross again and that they would retell their ordeal for this study.

The first year after the tsunami was one of the most difficult times for Netta and Jared. This was primarily because they had to face the 'first' of everything without their children and without his parents. For example, just two weeks after the tsunami was the occasion of the annual *Aso Sa Pa'epa'e* or White Sunday. White Sunday is celebrated by Samoan church goers everywhere and children adorned in 'white' church outfits recite memorised scriptural verses, or perform bible dramas in front of their parents and the village. Parents then show their approval by heaping public and private affection and praise upon their children. With the events of the tsunami still vivid in everyone's mind, White Sunday was not a celebratory event for many Samoans in the regions where churches and resources were damaged. At the time of this event, Jared and Netta were still housed in the makeshift tsunami ward at the hospital. The loss of their children also made this specific Sunday almost unbearable.

After White Sunday, Christmas was the next big event. The Schwalger children had been generously showered with gifts, hugs, kisses, and special times of family bonding during the festive season. Again, such happy occasions in the past were forced aside because of the painful reminders they brought to the survivors of the tsunami like Jared and Netta. After Christmas were the birthdays for each of the four members of their family. Then, there was Mother's Day and Father's Day. Not only did Jared have no parents to serve and *tautua*, but Jared and Netta also missed the affections normally showered on them by their children, which made these events special and meaningful. Instead of laughter and delight, tears of sadness and despair filled their empty home during the early months of their recovery. The first year finally culminated with the anniversary of the tsunami, the singular event that started this whole unforgettable cycle. At the time of our interview, Jared ruminated that his son Tean would have been four years old now. His birthday was on 20 May. Netta still finds these memorial dates hard to cope with by revealing that:

I see a lot of children and families where I work which makes it really hard for me. Sometimes, I have to force myself to hold the tears in. I feel so empty inside . . . without them. We can't handle that they are not around anymore but we have to stay strong.

Despite all that they have been through with their loss and devastation, Jared and Netta are learning to cope with the pain on a daily basis. Jared clarifies his way of handling the memory of his children:

From October 2009 to January 2011, I have not slept well at all. At night, my mind kept wondering back . . . to the thousands of 'if only' scenarios. Like, 'if only I had done this or that, then it may have been different for them' or 'maybe I could have done something to prevent their deaths'. This kept playing over and over in my mind. Even when people kept telling me that it was over, and that there was nothing that I could have done to prevent it from happening, I could not help feeling useless.

For Jared, the main reason for his sense of inadequacy and hopelessness stems from the loss of those who are dear and near to him. That is, he is the only son of his parents, and at the time of the tsunami, his only son and daughter passed away as well. Although Jared still has his wife and sister, he cannot help but hold some sense of guilt and blame for not being able to save them. Hence, the call to 'move on' is one process that many do not understand, simply because they have not walked in his shoes or experienced his struggles with the loss of his family.

There is a general misunderstanding that at the anniversary of a loss, survivors should be feeling much better, and should have made some sort of progress towards a resumption of daily life patterns. However, Clements, DeRanieri, Vigil & Benasutti (2004) argues that it may actually be a lot worse for some people because the anniversary brings back all the memories of the event that caused the loss in the first place. The recollections made by Jared and Netta concur with the arguments made here by Clements and colleagues.

### **A road to survival**

How individuals and communities prepare for, behave during, and respond after witnessing a traumatic death often determines their ability to cope with the aftermath of such a crisis (Ursano & McCarroll, 1994). Psychological responses to traumatic and tragic events can be understood as "the reactions of normal human beings, to sudden, unexpected and terrifying events in their lives" (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1998, p.1). Such reactions can form the basis for surviving, for attempting to cope, and for trying to make sense of the events.

Beyond all these reactions and attempts is the task of recreating meaningful existence, and finding the will to move on. Such steps towards recovery need to happen in spite of the recall of memories that linger every day, and, everywhere. It involves some form of progression from the event and its aftermath towards a process of transformation (Bowlby, 1961 & 1980; Kubler-Ross, 1970; Levang, 1998; Rando, 1995).

Survivors of such profound devastation often seek to process the 'why' questions associated with their survival such as: Why me? Why did God cause this to happen to our family? Why is it that they died and not me? In addition to these questions are the reported feelings of guilt about whether their actions or lack of action could have made a difference to those who passed away in the calamity (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1998). Considering Jared and Netta's situation as survivors of the *galulolo*, their feelings of guilt were initially felt very intensely because they survived while their children, and Jared's parents, all died. Therefore, it is understandable that Jared and Netta avoid talking about the events of the tsunami because it invokes too many painful memories. A "death imprint" (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1998) caused by the calamity continues to provide haunting images of the Schwalger's encounter with death. There are a few exceptions. One is where Jared and Netta might share their stories with only with a few people they trust or are close family members who understand their pain. Another exception involves Jared's work where he is able to share a part of his experience as a way of helping others. I discuss Jared's work later.

Both Jared and Netta have experienced feelings of emotional depletion because of their multiple losses. The result of "cumulative effects of several losses and the virtual eradication of social support networks" (Hodgkinson & Stewart, 1998, p.40) leaves couples like the Schwalgers feeling totally alone in their grief. Significantly, their decision to move to New Zealand from Malaela, where village and family support were closely available compared with living in Auckland, precipitated a rise in the levels of depression, loneliness, and isolation. This was indeed, a very courageous decision despite the risk. Their move was also necessitated by the fact that they had no resources left in Malaela after the tsunami, and the physical reminders that surrounded them there were too much

to bear. Their house was eventually rebuilt on their family land, but no one lives there presently.

Upon arriving in New Zealand, the increased levels of emotional and psychological fatigue since the tsunami led to Jared's increased levels of insomnia. For this, he was referred to a psychiatrist who then prescribed him medication. Jared refused to take the medication and instead chose to maintain his accompanying pain because it was directly related to the death of his loved ones. He refused to allow his grief to be numbed involuntarily.

Some time later, Jared and Netta both attended counselling with a Pacific psychologist. This practitioner assisted them to make sense of their losses, as well as helping them to find better ways to cope with the memory triggers. It was not long after these therapeutic sessions that Jared also found part-time employment with a Pacific group called Vaka Tautua in Auckland. Vaka Tautua is part of the 'LIKE MINDS, LIKE MINE' national programme in New Zealand aimed at reducing discrimination and stigma associated with mental health illness. Jared's involvement with the programme also assisted him to process his grief safely. At the time of our interview, Jared was still employed as an educational facilitator with Vaka Tautua. He reports on the value of this role to his own personal journey:

I used this avenue to tell people my story about the tsunami. I tell them that I blamed myself for the death of my children. I also tell them the steps that I have done to deal with it. I tell people how I was affected by the lack of appetite (*leai se fia ai*) and not being able to sleep (*le fia moe*). I still had that [insomnia] when I came to New Zealand.

Jared's statement illustrates that a significant aspect of his healing journey is through the opportunities to help others through their own grief, thus indirectly providing a way of helping one's self.

His involvement with Vaka Tautua opened a path for him to talk about, and journey through his own trauma and grief. The process of retelling allowed him to release some of his inner turmoil slowly. Importantly, he also discovered that he could scale the magnitude of his trauma by sharing with his audiences.

Jared uses the scenario of movie ratings to express his approach to the retelling process:

My story is divided into certain parts. I have learned to use movie ratings such as G, PG, AO, and so on. The version I use is dependent on the audience I am speaking with at the time. The stories that I tell are usually in the G rated version where it doesn't get to the depth of what we [Jared and the author] have discussed. It is still enough for people to understand where I have come from, and what I have done to deal with depression because of my experiences.

The retelling of his tsunami experiences allows his audiences to identify with his struggles with recovery, similar to their own. Jared indicates that a G rated version of his narratives keeps him emotionally safe and not too vulnerable.

The death of a child severely affects and majorly disrupts the lives of parents like Jared and Netta, even for many years afterwards (Wijngaards-de Meij, Stroebe, Schut, Stroebe, van den Bout, & van de Heijden 2008). But what happens when there are two children that are lost, as is the case with Jared and Netta? Wijngaards-de Meij and colleagues (2008) suggests that the death of children elicits more intense and complex grief reactions for surviving parents than other types of bereavement.

According to Wijngaards-de Meij (et al., 2008), the heightened sense of loss being experienced by parents is because both parents are in grief simultaneously and therefore neither is able or available to support the other. The inability to give support intensifies the grief process. Jared admitted that their combined grief caused him to become clinically depressed, affecting his mind and body. He turned to food for comfort. The death of Netta's mother soon after the tsunami compounded her grief because her mother was another person with whom Netta had a very close bond. Netta was still undergoing skin graft operations to save her leg from being amputated when her mother passed away:

It was a devastating time for me because I had lost Jared's parents and our children the same year, and then the death of my mum. It was tragedy on top of tragedy.

The challenge for Netta of further loss in addition to her ongoing trauma and physical healing led to their eventual decision to relocate to New Zealand.

Relocating to New Zealand was also to fulfil a family dream they had shared with their children. Netta explains:

We were all supposed to come here [New Zealand] to live. It is not how we planned it. I find it hard because there are many times that I don't want to talk to him [Jared] about how I miss the kids. Sometimes, I just go into the room, lock the door and just cry. Jared would be calling to me saying, 'Netta, Netta, where are you?' I would quickly dry my eyes and call out to him, 'I'm here!' (Netta laughs as she recalls her ordeal).

Moving to New Zealand has not been an easy transition without their children. Despite these difficult times, Jared and Netta counted on each other for support. As difficult as it was to recognise, the strength of their love and support for each other in perilous times illustrated again the depth of their marital bond and commitment. They battled the tsunami waves together, and now they needed to battle depression, fatigue, loneliness, memory triggers, and grieving tears, side by side.

There were times when both Netta and Jared would hear their children's favourite songs on the radio, which triggered tears and sadness. One of these favourite songs is titled 'I'm Yours' performed by Jason Mraz. Jared and Netta candidly recall that whenever this particular song was played on the radio or television, both Tean and Abby would start dancing around their house, full of laughter, energy, and life. Such songs *"brings back all the times that [they] spent together with the kids"*.

The memories of the children and Jared's parents usually lead to an overflow of both emotion and tears, particularly when they are alone. Often, these memories are triggered by songs, smells, television programmes, movies, or environments where a lot of children are seen with their parents. These situations are hard to avoid according to Jared:

There are many times when tears come flowing out. But these are good tears of the good memories that we have had with our children. We would be by ourselves and then we would say to each other, 'remember when this happened, [and] remember when that happened'.

Such memories are treasures they continue to hold closely, but they can come unexpectedly. For example, during our initial interview together, and while we

were talking about the kids, a song called 'Don't want to miss a thing', performed by Aerosmith began playing in the background. Without any prompt, Jared immediately says to me:

The words of this song remind me of the kids. It seems like it's taking a while for us to get over the loss of our children, but it's because we spent a lot of time with them, even when it was a short time.

The chorus of the song run as follows:

*Verse 1:* I could stay awake just to hear you breathing  
Watch you smile while you are sleeping  
While you're far away and dreaming  
I could spend my life in this sweet surrender  
I could stay lost in this moment forever  
Where every moment spent with you is a moment I treasure

The lyrics of the Aerosmith song declare a poignant reminder of a close relationship between people who truly love each other. Like the first song, the lyrics of this ballad express the essence of a tight-knitted relationship between beloveds. For Jared and Netta, their undying love for their children is echoed by these lines of the second song with a reminder of their broken bond: *lost in this moment forever*. Through all of their trauma and journey to recover, there is a glimmer of hope for the Schwalger family to begin as a family again one step at a time.

### **To begin again**

As this chapter has documented and discussed, the lives of the Schwalgers since their encounter with the tsunami continue to be marred by moments of sadness, moments of pain, moments of regret, moments of despair, and moments of suffering. However, as the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes declares: everything has its time (Ecclesiastes 3: 2-8) - the time of turning tears into joy, of dying into birthing, of pain into healing, and of mourning into laughter. Slowly but surely, a new lease of life has emerged for this couple with a new addition to their family, a beautiful baby daughter named Amelia (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Jared, Amelia and Netta Schwalger. (Unveiling 2011: Source – Netta Schwalger)

To be parents again has led to the shedding of many tears for Jared and Netta. These are tears of relief as they continue as a family and tears of sadness because Tean and Abby did not have the chance of meeting their baby sister. Jared firmly believes that baby Amelia is God's gift to help them through their journey. He declares:

She is a gift from God! He knows that we have been through a lot of pain. She is here to bring joy back into our lives again. She's growing really fast. We like to believe that the reason she is such a fast growing girl is because of the other two [Tean and Abby] helping her to grow. The tears she [Amelia] had in her eyes are for them [Tean and Abby].

Their faith in God and the role of the church have always been very strong and important to the Schwalger family. Jared compares his church life to the foundation of a house. Although his physical house was partly destroyed by the tsunami, the strength of his faith has helped them immensely with their recovery:

I was taught the love of God as a child. He is my salvation and I draw comfort from that [understanding]. My house is gone but the foundation of my faith in God is still strong. This has enabled us to rebuild again and to move forward into our future. This is a wonderful part of our Samoan culture, that we are a God fearing people.

Like Jared, Netta's perspective of God is based on her experiences of His provision of miracles during and after the catastrophe. Despite their multiple losses, God's gracious hand was still evident when she was in the waves:

Looking back to the tsunami incident, we almost died ourselves. It's a miracle that we have both survived because there were a lot of big rocks that were thrown from one side of the road onto our side. Any one of these rocks should have squashed us but it didn't. In addition, one of the doctors at the hospital was quite amazed that I was under the water for a long time and should have drowned. But somehow, I survived. The only injury that I sustained was my leg, not any internal bleeding or head injuries. This is just simply amazing. It can only be because God had other plans for our lives. He wanted us to live, both of us!

A second chance to live provides continual motivation for Jared and Netta to pursue the dreams that they had planned with their children.

Part of living out their family dream is so that they can offer support to others who are dealing with mental health challenges through experiencing loss themselves. However, there are still lingering feelings of guilt that surface now and again, questioning whether this calamity was due to some personal evil, injustice, uncaring, or unkind nature. When this happens, Netta says that she finds herself seeking solace in the support of her husband or close relatives, eliciting their opinions on whether she was a good person, and whether she had done the right thing. She says:

[We believe that] Amelia is our gift from God because of the way we honour Jared's parents, and [the way we] took care of our kids. They [Jared's parents] died with us being there with them. We stayed by their side and did not run away. We have been blessed with Amelia and we also have successful jobs in New Zealand.

As Netta declares in her statement, she and Jared chose to stay in Malaela to take care of Jared's parents and their children. The significant role of family and of *tautua* to one's parents epitomizes what being a Samoan is about (see chapter six). Moreover, family support remains central in their recovery. Since our interviews, two new additions have arrived to the Schwalger family, a boy named Jared William Soai Teancum Schwalger II and a baby girl named Charlotte. God has not only blessed Jared and Netta with Amelia, but also added two more bundles of joy to help them in their journey to recovery.

Looking back over the course of our times of *fono fa'atalatalanoa* with Jared and Netta, amidst the tears of sorrow were the moments of laughter as we reflected upon their lives as a family. Despite the new additions, there is still a gaping hole which Tean and Abby once occupied. This is a relationship that was lived to the fullest: full of life, full of joy, full of memories, full of laughter.

The earlier days of recovery were very rough and with many unintended triggers, particularly while they were still in Samoa. These unexpected psychological triggers left Netta emotionally exhausted and desperate to find a way to deal with these confrontations. She recalls:

I just wanted to talk to someone about it. But at the same time, I thought to myself, 'I really just want to get drunk so that I could release my anger and my sadness'. Then I thought to myself, 'if I just got drunk, what good will come from it?' Looking back, if I could get drunk and then pain is gone, that would be okay. But in reality, when you sober up, the pain is still there.

Choosing alternatives to deal with memory triggers associated with such trauma is a task every grieving person has to face for themselves. For both Jared and Netta, they chose to face their pain and fears directly instead of getting drunk as Netta was contemplating in her statement above, and, in Jared's case, by refusing medication. They chose to push through the pain, even when it left raw emotional scars deep within their souls. Their experience demonstrates an undeniable sense of resilience and purpose based in their strong faith, which affirmed and carried them through. This way of dealing with death concurs with what Ablon (1970) reported earlier (see chapter four); that despite painful events of whatever magnitude, 'life must go on'. But for Jared and Netta, it is a life grounded in purpose and spiritual faith, and an unbreakable love and respect for each other.

## **Chapter conclusion**

The catastrophic *galulolo* not only destroyed the physical landscape of Samoa but devastated individuals and terrorised their families, causing death for many and long-term trauma for others who survived. The second case study has closely examined the impact of the *galulolo* from the experiences of Jared and

Netta Schwalger: their survival, the death, funeral and burial of their family members, their personal resilience, and learning to live with this memory now. Many of the customary enactments during the aftermath of the *galulolo* did not follow the traditional bereavement practices such as those I have discussed in chapters four and six. Neither were the traditional roles assigned to leadership and decision-making such as chiefly duties exclusively maintained, as was the case with Taulapapa's account in chapter six. In many instances, Jared and Netta had to assume the lead for the way the burial services for Jared's parents and their children were carried out. In normal circumstances, customary chieftainship practices are very important and are observed according to *aga'ifanua* or the usual practices of the village involved.

A key point that was highlighted by this case study is the way which the Schwalger family had to contend with their own survival while also having to deal with the emotional and psychological impact of losing people of two generations close to them. Their experiences of loss provide a contrast to the deaths that I had discussed in chapter four (Salafai and Kiwi) and chapter six (Taulapapa's parents). Those earlier accounts of death revealed the more common form of enactments within Samoan community, allowing the bereaved to count on the regular support structures that are available that intact community to grieve collectively and ritualistically.

In the present case, my participants were caught in the death process absolutely, along with those family members tragically killed by the event. Because of this way of experiencing death, the Schwalger family had to enact simpler ways of burying their deceased relatives because of the lack of resources and the important issue of decomposing bodies. The issue of available resources remains important to the way enactment rituals are carried out, not only in normal circumstances, but especially when many of these resources are depleted due to catastrophic events such as the tsunami.

One of the areas that remains vital to the overall objective of this thesis is the psychological and emotional impact of death upon the lives of my Samoan participants and their families. The specific situation faced by the Schwalgers not only left them to deal with the traumatic aftermath of their personal ordeal, but

to find ways to memorialise their loved ones despite their own need for support. As Jared and Netta have indicated in their accounts, they are finding pathways, many of them embedded in Samoan cultural and Christian values, to help them towards their journey of healing. An important insight shared by both Jared and Netta in their accounts is their acceptance of therapeutic support outside of the usual context of family support available. Their engagement with a Pacific psychiatrist was helpful in their recovery, especially towards understanding what the loss meant for them. Additionally, Jared's involvement in the Vaka Tautua group provided him another avenue to share his experiences with others. In this way, his efforts to help others in their journey through depression assisted him with his own recovery.

While this chapter examined some unusual death and mourning practices caused by the catastrophic impact of the *galulolo*, the next chapter investigates death and funeral culture in a New Zealand context. In this final case study, the concern over what aspects of Samoan funeral culture are maintained and what are adapted becomes a central theme for examination, not in the face of catastrophic circumstances such as those faced by Jared and Netta, but in overseas situations. The life of Tauivi, a New Zealand-born Samoans with a mixed Samoan/European heritage, provides the key focus of this presentation.

## Chapter Eight

### Case Study Three

I am - a Samoan, but not a Samoan. To my 'āiga in Samoa,  
I am a Palagi.

I am - a New Zealander, but not a New Zealander.  
To New Zealanders, I am a 'bloody coconut' at worst,  
a 'Pacific Islander' at best.

I am - to my Samoan parents, their child. (Anae, 1997)



Identity as a function of cultural adaptability and social acceptance continues to present a myriad of challenges for Samoan migrants, even after generations of citizenship in a place like New Zealand. As Aponte, Rivers and Wohl (1995) explain, identity conflict is a major socio-psychological issue that many migrants face. As such, the conflict, or tension, might become more evident as people shift from seeing themselves in one way in one location, and then have to consider themselves as something else in another setting.

This chapter presents my final case study. The chapter documents how death and mourning is experienced by my participants who identify themselves as New Zealand-born Samoans, or those who migrated to New Zealand at a young age and whose experiences are predominantly the same as or very similar to those experienced by New Zealand-Samoans. One of the important areas of interrogation in the case study is the interchange between my participants' unique identity as Samoan men while engaging in death and mourning rituals as New Zealanders. Tauivi (pseudonym), who shares a mixed Samoan and European ancestry, provides the core narratives for the case study. The key events surrounding his father's last few weeks of life and his death, are examined in this section. Of significance to my research objectives is the identification of customary Samoan rituals that were observed and those that were challenged.

### **Toloa dreamers**

One reason for the tension being experienced by migrants is the challenging "attempt to deal simultaneously with two (sometimes inconsistent, sometimes conflicting) cultural contexts" (Berry, 2012, p.96). When multiple cultural contexts are involved in diasporic locations, particularly those that are different to a migrant's indigenous reference, it can cause them to panic as they try to survive. On this point, Manuela & Sibley (2012a & 2012b) have contended that multi-ethnic Pacific members suffer poorer subjective wellbeing compared with single ethnic groups. The evidence concerning the unique struggle faced by Pacific people of dual, or sometimes multiple, ethnic identities in New Zealand conflates experience with the "identity classification" of belonging to one or a number of ethnic groups (Anae, 1997, p.128). Anae's quotation that opens this

case study is a poignant reminder of how many of these New Zealand-Samoans feel about ambivalence in their identity and belonging within the New Zealand context. And although recognition for shared identities, as well as the processes of enculturation, has improved in recent years, there is no denying that tensions still exist, particularly for those who fall into the Samoan categorisation I have described.

Samoan people living in New Zealand account for more than half of the total Pasifika population. As a group, the Samoan population consists of relatively young members, with 38% identified as 15 years old or younger (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). At the time of the 2006 Census capture, the median age for Samoans was 21.1 years compared with the total New Zealand population median age of 35.5 years (Table 4, Statistics New Zealand, 2007, p.7). New Zealand-born Samoans equate to 60% of the Samoan population in New Zealand, or 77,247 out of the total of 131,100 (Statistics New Zealand, 2007, p.5). Many choose to live in urban centres such as Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin (Tiatia, 2012).

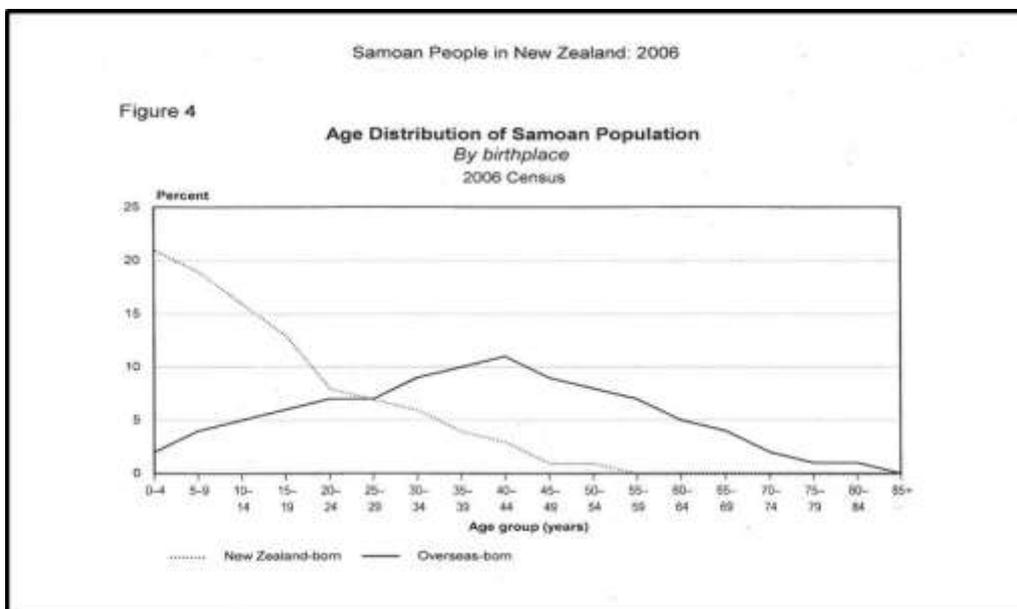


Table 4: Samoan Population Birthplace Distribution (2006 Census)

For the youthful population indicated in Table 4, the strong affiliation to New Zealand as their primary home base plays an influential role in their choice to raise their families in their country of birth rather than migrating like their parents. As with any group, there will be a small percentage that will move elsewhere for employment or accommodation rather than remain in New Zealand.

Samoans are generally represented in the literature as belonging to a homogeneous entity (Macpherson, 2001). On the basis of this observation, it might also be assumed that most Samoans share commonalities within the realms of “cultural universals” (Berry, 2012, p.96). Enculturation has a way of influencing people’s experiences and their unique responses to ecological, socio-political, and cultural contexts, even with shared identities. Additionally, the diaspora has led many to contend with readjusting their lifestyles, their language, and their patterns of address in order to survive in the new land.

The practice of cultural maintenance for many New Zealand-born Samoans revolves around the code of *fa’aaloalo* (honour and respect), obedience, and contributions, particularly to care for their parents or elderly family members. The principles of honour have also steered many in this group towards competing and sometimes conflictual outcomes (Bush, Chapman, Drummond, & Fagaloa, 2009; Culbertson & Agee, 2009; Tiatia, 2007; Tupuola, 1998). Nevertheless, identity continues to play a fundamental role in understanding how Samoan people create meaningful relationships with other family members (see chapter three), and with the greater Samoan community to which they belong (Figel, 1996, Tamasese, et al., 1997).

For the majority of New Zealand-born Samoans, their identity consists of the relational and the independent aspects of Pacific and the dominant western patterns, and of the collective and the individual (Anae, 1997; Tiatia, 1998). For this particular group, the tension between integration and separation becomes an important issue for discussion, where traditional connections and modern adaptation demand cooperation (Berry, 2012; Tiatia, 2012). In the context of death and bereavement practices, the structure of the *‘āiga* in current settings serves a vital function in the observation and maintenance of traditional rituals

and customs, many of which are being attended to by New Zealand-born Samoans.

### **Connections that connect: interview context**

Traditional and, to some extent, current Anglo-American western research approaches have encouraged obtaining information from communities without any prior connection at all, as long as the research is governed by approved ethics criteria and consent. This way of accessing information for Pasefika people is a foreign concept because relationships are the “foundation on which most Pacific activities are built” (Morrison, Vaioleti & Vermeulen as cited in Vaioleti, 2006, p.25). What Morrison and colleagues are emphasising in this quotation supports what I have already discussed in chapter three, where I stressed the importance of prior and of continued relationships in researching Samoan communities. Such connections serve as a crucial component of the engagement process when researching a sensitive topic such as death.

Pacific ways of researching their people and their inherent traditions might be seen as opposed to those of dominant western research practices (Vaioleti, 2006). For example, the importance of ‘prior’ connections is a vital part of Pacific research strategy. The importance of having prior interpersonal connection “removes the distance between the researcher and participant, and provides . . . a human face they can relate to” (Vaioleti 2006, p.25). Aside from the human interaction, there is the significant role that prior connectedness assumes in establishing and providing credibility and reliability, not just in the professional or academic world but in the local and church community as well. In this context of connection, the researcher and the participants represent the values of their family, their church, and their ancestral birthplace.

A friend and professional colleague of the author, Tauivi has worked in the health sector for over fifteen years providing counselling support throughout New Zealand. Prior to the interview being conducted, Tauivi and the author met on several occasions to talk about their shared interest in working with Samoan men. These early discussions convinced Tauivi to participate in this present

research. After the initial consultation, an agreement was reached that the interviews were to take place at Tauivi's home in Moana. Tauivi suggested other possible participants for the research project, particularly Samoan colleagues whose lives had been impacted upon by a calamity in his city. Tauivi felt that one-to-one interviews with these participants might be a useful way for other participants to consider their own trauma and recovery from the devastation they have experienced with the disaster. These participants were involved as frontline responders to Pacific communities affected in the city. This snow-ball technique (Fife-Schaw, 2003) is both accepted and supported within Pasefika research practice.

Tauivi also invited the author to lodge with him during the visit to Moana. As a Samoan and a close acquaintance for many years, lodging with Tauivi was not only appropriate but imperative. In reciprocal performance recognizing this pattern of relationships, the author offered a meal and *meaalofa* (gift) as an acknowledgement of the generosity from his host. The reciprocation process demonstrates and maintains proper patterns of *teu ma tausilē vā*, that is, nurturing the relational space (see chapters four and five). To neglect the reciprocation process or to assume western research patterns of non-association can lead to the relational space being disrespected, therefore trampling on the dignity and reputation of New Zealand-born participants like Tauivi. To honour the invitation of lodging together and of sharing a meal together affirms our authenticity as Samoan men in this regard. Such actions speak to the heart of being Samoan and of the engaging in Samoan-led research methods.

### **Samoan and Palagi: New Zealand-born struggle**

Tauivi was born to a Samoan father and a *palagi* mother while they were living in Haka, a southern city in New Zealand. Tauivi's father has ancestral lineage to the villages of Apia, Taugamanono, and Sa'anapu. His mother comes from Scottish, Irish, and English bloodlines. While his father passed away some years ago, Tauivi's mother is still alive. The relationship between his parents led to deeply held anguish and tormenting painful memories for Tauivi and his siblings. The marriage of their parents and their life together, was, according to

Tauivi, a “*cross cultural match made in some other place, not heaven*”. Tauivi has two other brothers, Ropati and Peteru.

The severity of their parents’ relationship led the three brothers to fill the void left by their lost identity. Tauivi’s family were one of the very first Pacific Island (PI) families in Haka. In the early years, there were extensive travels to visit his father’s extended family in Moana, where Tauivi now resides. Many of the older members in his extended family have passed away, leaving Tauivi and many of his generation unable to speak the Samoan language or have much to do with the Samoan culture at all. Tauivi is adamant that reflecting back upon his experiences, the unstable environment of his childhood years strongly correlated with his destructiveness in later years.

Tauivi’s father was one of the first groups of migrants from Samoa to New Zealand in the mid-1940s with high expectations to succeed in New Zealand. Any personal dreams were abandoned to serve the wider purpose of the family in the strict traditions of *tautua*. Tauivi describes his father’s struggle with serving his family:

He [father] told me that he came to New Zealand because [after] he visited American Samoa and saw their [European styled] houses and wanted to build a [similar] house for his parents. He was supposed to go to Medical School in Fiji but an opportunity arose to work in New Zealand. This is why he worked hard, doing double shifts in a factory to send the money to Samoa.

Tauivi’s father’s migration experience finds similarity to my other participants’ parents who also migrated with the expectation of being successful and of accumulating financial capital to help the family back in Samoa. Two examples illustrate this level of expectation:

My father migrated to New Zealand after being a police officer in Samoa. In addition, he was one of the earlier scholars who wanted to be a minister but instead chose to provide for his family. It was the lack of opportunities that led him to decide to work in a dirty factory for over 30 years, to simply provide for our needs. (Sone)

My dad was one of the first scholarship students from Samoa to study at a university in New Zealand. He didn’t finish his degree but when he went back to Samoa, he got a well-paid job because of his education. When mum’s dad saw how diligent and faithful they were with their three little kids, they organised things for them to

come here (New Zealand), so they could raise us up for better educational opportunities. (Lupe)

The earlier migrants to New Zealand were sent either to family members or to village associates who tried to help them in the new country. Other Samoans in the area also became important in supporting them to find employment.

Like these early migrants, Tauivi's father lived with his sister in Auckland upon his arrival. He later moved to Haka where he found more permanent work at a paper mill. These migrants took on any opportunity for employment despite the working conditions:

He had a hard life. His first jobs involved picking and packing potatoes. Part of the job involved carrying the sacks of potatoes to the market on his back. One day while carrying his sack of potatoes, he fell and hurt himself. It took an hour for him to try to get up again. Not wanting to give up, he crawled to the bus stop and eventually made his way to the market with his sack of potatoes.

Life was hard and as illustrated by this statement, conditions were tough for many of these early migrants, including Tauivi's father. Tauivi sympathises with his father's struggles in such a foreign environment far removed from the familiar village life of Samoa. A little while later, Tauivi's father met and then married his mother.

The family obligation cycle is still expected in today's generation of Samoans living abroad. Tauivi laments that his father became a broken man because of the pressure and struggle to pursue the migration dream:

My dad worked two or three jobs at a time. He would do shift work in one factory and when he finished there, he started a shift in another place. Most of his earnings were sent back to Samoa to finance the building of their first family home.

The burden of responsibility to remit much of his earnings to his family in Samoa meant very little money was left for his own wife and children to buy the weekly necessities. Tauivi captures his father's struggle with trying to succeed in New Zealand in a verse from one of his songs titled *Crossroads*. He writes:

I am living in a stranger's land  
Trying to listen, trying to understand  
What it was that brought us to this place?  
I'm on my hand and knees but I don't feel like a saint

The title 'Crossroads' and the last line of the ballad suggest that life in the land of 'milk and money' as it was sometimes referred to was a burden rather than a dream. This burden had brought many to their knees as they tried to fit in and at the same time service family obligations back in Samoa.

Sending financial support to relatives in Samoa is a regular experience amongst families living abroad. Seiuli (1993) reported that families involved with his research were frequently sending funds back to *'āiga* members in Samoa. The level of remittance particularly increased in times of natural disasters or family *fa'alavelave*. At the time of Seiuli's research in 1993, Cyclone Val and Cyclone Ofa had recently devastated Samoa two years apart (1991 and 1993). Formal and informal assistance provided to members in Samoan included "food, clothing, gifts, money, phone calls and actual visits to Samoa" (Seiuli, 1993, p.23). Such regular contributions can become quite costly, especially for members who also have responsibility for their own families in New Zealand.

For Tauivi's father, the on-going expectation in Samoa of financial and material support while he was trying to address his own relationship challenges eventually led to the dissolution of his marriage. Tauivi recalls this period as 'hard times' because his mother tried to organise finance to facilitate their move to a new home. In recalling his relationship with his father, there were still many mixed emotions lingering and many unanswered questions.

Tauivi remembers his father with some degree of ambivalence; on one hand, respect for a man who held true to his values despite pressure to conform, and then on the other hand, a sense of bewilderment and disbelief for a man who severely punished his children for minor indiscretions. Tauivi recalls the following incident to illustrate his father's actions:

He [dad] got me to recite my 2 times table. He kept going up to 2 x 16 and I kept saying, 'I do not know dad,' because I had only memorised it up to 2 x 12. He became so angry that he whipped me with his belt until I went unconscious. When I woke up, my mum was sitting next to me crying. It was then that I realised that I had lost my father and that I had to be careful. I did not know who this man was.

After the incident, Tauivi lived with little expectation of a meaningful father-son relationship. Severing any affectionate bonds was a way to avoid future

disappointments and their relationship was *“just the way it was”*. He still struggles to make sense of his emotional turmoil because the memories of that difficult relationship continue to influence his life even many years after his father had passed away.

As a health clinician and addiction researcher over many years, Tauivi has observed clients in psychological distress similar to that experienced by his father. These observations helped Tauivi to draw the following conclusion about his father’s situation:

It was psychological damage that he was experiencing at the time.  
It was not until the latter stages of life that he found peace, but it came in the expression of his spiritual faith.

It was also at this latter part of his father’s life that their relationship began to develop for the better; his father having become more dependent on Tauivi for physical and financial support. It was at this period that he attempted to reconnect with Tauivi in a meaningful way. Tauivi remembers his father’s trying to talk about love being important, but such attempts became difficult for Tauivi to interpret because of the depth of the trauma and pain he still held inside. It took many years after his father’s death before Tauivi was able to recognise and acknowledge many of his father’s struggles, as well as his own.

### **When a man grieves: concealing turmoil**

After a stroke that left his father debilitated, Tauivi cared for and nursed him until he died. The time of caring for his father coincided with Tauivi studying counselling and he used the counselling training to examine his own *“story of origin”*, something which he shared with his father. Through his counselling training, Tauivi was able to recognise his father’s unique struggles and the emotional demands attached to their father-son relationship. Tauivi realised that his father was carrying *“a lot of emotional baggage that entangled him and that he didn’t know how to undo it all”*. Although helpful in understanding his father’s plight, this was not an easy discovery for Tauivi.

He attempted to reach out to his father by sharing his discoveries which slowly opened the door for the reciprocation of his father’s own life. His father in

turn shared his own stories of being physical beaten while growing up in Samoa. This type of emotional vulnerability led Tauivi to say of his father that: *“it was his [father’s] way of saying to me that he remembered hitting me, and he also remembered what had happened to him”*. Tauivi captures this moment of openness and vulnerability, between a father and a son, in a verse to one of his songs titled *Lash*.

I’m sitting in the front row watching all the things in my head  
Showing me all the things I’ve done, and all the things I’ve said  
Some I remember  
Some I’d rather forget  
I do not know how much time I’ve got,  
But I do not want any regrets  
Where are all the kings’ horses and all the kings’ men?  
The part of him is who I am  
I was a child; you were a heavy man,  
Part of you is who I am.

“Some [things] I’d rather forget” remains a difficult part of the journey for Tauivi and his father because it also means a trauma-filled path to reconciliation. Tauivi’s complete healing remains elusive because of the void that remains due to this challenging relationship.

Despite such on-going struggles, Tauivi reflects back on this time with his father as one of soul searching and of looking for a way forward.

I tried to look after him, but there wasn’t a sense of a father-son relationship. It was more of a carer-patient relationship. I also realised that I was still really angry with him. I know that in life there is forgiveness but his generation was never going to say, ‘forgive me son’.

The emotional turmoil during his final weeks with his father continues to evoke various emotional responses, but his ability to cope has developed over the years.

Tauivi was assigned to sort through his father’s belongings after his death. Managing his father’s belongings enabled him to examine some of the correspondence and letters his father had kept. Tauivi recalls:

It was while I was sorting through his stuff that I found a letter in which he described his experience of migrating to New Zealand. He describes feeling like he was treated like the blacks in apartheid South Africa.

Tauivi found out later from an uncle that, like his father, Pacific migrants to New Zealand were treated harshly in some places and were never accepted as genuine New Zealanders.

The desire to acculturate and to be accepted as New Zealanders led many like Tauivi's father to enlist with the New Zealand Army. This was a way of demonstrating their commitment to serve and to protect New Zealand citizens. Despite this outward pledge, they were still not accepted as genuine New Zealanders by the general population. Somewhat similar to New Zealand-born Samoans' struggle to be fully accepted as Samoans, these early migrants had to battle through their own struggles for acceptance as full members of New Zealand society.

### **Managing death: roles and responsibilities**

Recounting death-related experiences evokes many painful and distressing memories for those who have already journeyed this path before. For Tauivi, the retelling also meant re-experiencing the rawness and continuing tenderness of this father-son relationship.

Leading up his father's passing, Tauivi and the family were advised that there was no further medical intervention left. His father's serious stroke and resultant illness left him with a period of only six to eight weeks to live. Tauivi enacted the carer role for his father which meant *"making decisions around the amount of morphine required to relieve his pain"*. Tauivi's eldest brother Ropati returned home from Papua New Guinea (PNG) to relieve him from sole carer duties. Ropati engaged with his dying father in a way that suited him. Tauivi reports:

I knew Ropati would find a way to cope. He was a school principal and very action oriented. That was really helpful. He knew what he had to do . . . he massaged, cleaned up, and did all those things. He found his own way to reconnect and to say goodbye to dad.

Tauivi's financial situation restricted him from taking on the full responsibility for his father's care. Upon his father leaving the hospital, Tauivi acquired a rental house across the road from his own house in order to facilitate his father's care

more effectively. Tauivi reflects back with sorrow because of his father's physical condition and emotional wellbeing:

I remember visiting him [dad] when my brother returned from PNG before he was taken to the hospital [the last time]. Dad was in the house across the road. As we were leaving, I happened to look back into the house and saw that he [dad] was crying. He was a broken man, just weeping [Tauivi is again tearful with long silent pauses between narratives].

His father's condition deteriorated dramatically which led to him being transferred back to hospital where he remained until he passed away.

Although the return to the hospital was in itself a tragic turn of events, it also gifted Tauivi with precious time alone with his father. It was especially during these final few weeks together at the hospital that they began to better reconnect than before. These final moments together slowly drew them closer.

Tauivi explains:

It was just me and him. I just looked at him as I stroked his hair, smiling. Just me and him [Tauivi was openly weeping while recalling these final moments together]. He (dad) knew that he was really loved by his son. That was the most intimate time I had with him.

Tauivi made a difficult choice to nurse his father in his final days despite all that had taken place in their lives. He was there to "*brush his hair*" and to let his father know that:

Your son loves you and you are not alone. Even to the door of death, someone is here to love you.

Forgiveness is an important part of the grieving process displayed here by Tauivi towards his father. I examine forgiveness in later parts of this chapter. Additionally, the intimate conversations between father and son provided an unexpected pathway for Tauivi to begin to understand his father's own difficult journey. Tauivi's father was finally opening his heart to his son, letting him glance momentarily into the struggles of his soul, and that, for many reasons, his life had been mostly spent as an unhappy person.

Despite all that had transpired in the earlier years of their relationship, the possibility of death arriving soon provided a pathway for Tauivi to show compassion and empathy, and to administer care that could only come through

his Christian faith. Tauivi holds on to these moments as some of his most treasured memories in their relationship together. For him, what really mattered was that he loved his father by his actions: *“he knew without a doubt that he was loved”*.

The medical diagnosis of his father’s impending death provided an opportunity for Tauivi and his siblings to explore ways to farewell their father appropriately. Tauivi informed his extended family of his father’s deteriorating condition and medical prognosis. Oftentimes, the sight of death approaching can be a cause of quick-fix reconciliations. Some of these can be genuine attempts to heal a rift between family members, but they can also become just a façade. There are times when even death cannot repair the damage in relationships as was the case between Tauivi’s other brother Peteru and their father.

Aside from performing the caregiving roles or massaging their father, the siblings facilitated visitors. The extended family descended upon the hospital room where they took turns to massage their dying relative, and also to offer each other support. Tauivi recalls:

The family were in and out, caring for him. There was always someone from the family there with him throughout the whole time he was in the hospital. The last night before he passed away was the only exception. The nurses at the hospital marvelled at the care we showed him [dad], giving him massages and so forth.

Tauivi continues:

The last words I said to dad were at the hospital. Dad sat up so he could kiss us. It was then that I knew he was dying. His last actions of kissing us were his way of saying goodbye. As I was standing there, I looked him in the eyes and said, ‘God will give you strength’. He just smiled and then lay back down. He had a real peace over him and I knew that I had comforted him.

Although they did not have the opportunity to attend church together, these final moments provided a connecting point for their spiritual faith that also opened the door to healing. Tauivi says:

We’ve known what it’s like when all the other things have fallen over and we’ve become so desperate, it’s only God that has stood by us.

This journey of faith strengthened Tauivi's growing love for a man he once feared and despised.

God remained a source of comfort for Tauivi during his time of mourning. This spiritual path is not one that is deemed a mystical journey, but is one that is ever-filled with a sense of renewing hope, etched by the power of forgiveness despite life's challenges. Tauivi describes these pathways as:

Powerful, these are not the glamour . . . or . . . the glory, but [about those] who have gone through the horror, pain and suffering, and can still speak about forgiveness.

The connections with God continues to be an abiding force in Tauivi's life, ensuring immense support and space to examine God's role in his own life and that of his father. Tauivi expresses that his Christian faith also provided him the space and relationship to question God concerning his father's life. He says, *"How do you deal with a God of love when there is all this evil in the world? How do you alleviate suffering when you have been victimized?"* Questions like these are important in the life of those who proclaim to have a relationship with God. The ability to ask such questions to a divine power does not indicate a sense of weakness or superficiality in relating, nor does it diminish the importance of the 'mortal-divine' connection at all. Rather, it is a reflection of one's fervent desire to know that God is interested in all areas of one's life; the peaceful and the challenging, and the living and dying.

Other New Zealand-born participants also reported questioning God in their journey through mourning. Two examples are provided below by Sone and Sala:

I just put my hand around his [dad's] head and whispered to him, 'get up', but he wouldn't get up. Physically, I was convinced that he was gone but spiritually, I was still holding onto hope. I got down to my hands and my knees. I prayed hard out to God that night to bring dad back, pleading with God for one more chance with him. I just went outside and looked up to the sky and just said, 'Here you are, you didn't save my dad'. When God didn't bring him back, that was the last time I prayed until recently [late last year] when I started to get back into re-connecting with God again. (Sone)

I thought he [deceased] was going to come back. I thought God was going to bring him back. I spent a lot of time praying and singing songs. I didn't really get a chance to say goodbye to him because I

still thought he was going to come back. If he was going to come back, he was going to come back into an environment of worship. It wasn't until the family service that I realised that he was not coming back and then I just poured out my grief because he was so close. (Sala)

Many Samoans like Tauivi, Sone and Sala cherish their on-going relationships with God. The vitality of such a relationship provides the altar for one to plead, to hope, to pray, to acknowledge, to demand answers, to question divine motives, and even to reject God's ultimate will concerning death. These aspects, despite their appearance, actually represent a healthy and intimate connection between God and humanity.

By questioning and examining his own faith in God, Tauivi wanted to find answers. Much of Tauivi's clinical and academic work now is driven by a desire for equity and justice in society, particularly for those people of Pacific ancestry, like him. Memory triggers of his childhood experiences means Tauivi constantly remembers and relives certain disturbing situations over and over, which is why his Christian faith remains a vital part of his coping arsenal. The practice of reading and memorising Bible verses, and listening to songs or encouraging messages helps to fill the void in his soul. He says:

Somewhere in the scripture it says, 'none of your tears are wasted. God stores them up, all tears are precious to him' [see Psalms Chapter 56 verse 8]. Come to think of it, there is a song that I had learnt early in my Christian life which says, 'Something beautiful, something good, all my confusion, he understood, all I had to offer him was brokenness and strife, but he made something beautiful out of my life'. This is what it has been like for me.

As much as his spiritual life helps in most situations, the night his father passed away was not a pleasant experience. Tauivi recalls this particular night with resentment and regret still evident:

When I got the call that my father had died, I came in to find my uncle asleep on him. My uncle got drunk while I was at home getting some rest. I was angry and got him off my dad. I just wanted that time to myself. I remember walking around not really knowing what was going on.

The moments described above are important because Tauivi and his siblings had cared for their father round the clock. His father was entrusted into his uncle's care that fateful night, one that continues to be remembered for the wrong

reasons. Such memories continue to stir anger and resentment because of the way that his uncle appeared to have disrespected his dying father. Tauivi still wonders what his father might have been thinking in those final hours of his life, something that has haunted him over the years.

### **A mavaega Will**

Personal observation of Samoan death practices confirms that it is uncommon for the deceased to completely dictate how the living may perform their final farewell services, or burial. The ritualised *mavaega* (see chapter four) by the dying person may carry exceptional authority, particularly with the appointment of a new successor as inheritor of a soon to be vacant chiefly title. The *mavaega* process, as explained in chapter four, allows the title holder to bequeath to a successor the right to continue in their place as the family patriarch upon their own death. In rare instances, the successor may possess, or be requested to assume, a family title even while the title holder is alive. More recently, especially in places like New Zealand, the implementation of a Final Will or Testament (hereafter Will) provides the departing person with a legalised process to ensure that their final wishes are performed accordingly by their living relatives.

Tauivi's father chose to challenge the traditional conventions of Samoan death patterns by taking control of how his funeral service and burial arrangements were to be performed. According to Tauivi, these were to be conducted in a "*no-fuss, keep it simple, palagi-style*" farewell. But for many who maintain strong preference for *fa'asamoa* funeral patterns, the palagi-style approach is highly contentious. Palagi-styled alternatives can be regarded with some uncertainty by both the family and other Samoans attending such gatherings. Nevertheless, enforcing a legal process to dictate the final proceedings was Tauivi's father's way of removing control from his Samoan relatives:

Dad just made the decision that he did not want us involved in any of that [fa'asamoa] stuff. He arranged for a lawyer to write out his Will . . . [and] . . . to make sure that there was no pressure put on us

by the rest of the family about his burial. He did not want any [fa'asamoa].

Tauivi considers that his father's foresight in instigating a Will ultimately relieved him and his siblings from the burdens that are often demanded by surviving relatives such as those discussed in earlier chapters (four and six). His father realised how much pressure and control the extended family may assert because of his own experience of coming to New Zealand. Tauivi interpreted his father's action as a fore-warning that he was removing such expectations from his own children:

He [father] said to me on his death bed, 'I know the old world and I know the modern world. I choose the modern world'. Basically, what he was really saying to me was, 'even though it may have been a bit late, I choose to put you [Tauivi and his siblings] first than [fa'asamoa]'.

The above statement indicates that Tauivi's own father could not live with the demands of *fa'asamoa* and its negative impact upon his relationship with his children. His earlier experience led him to establish a Will to negate the family's influence over determining how and what should be performed when he finally passes away.

He also saved financially to pay for his own funeral expenses. Tauivi remarks about this financial commitment by his father, indicating the seriousness by which he wanted to alleviate his children from any financial commitment:

Saving the money to take care of his funeral expenses was something he [dad] wanted to do. He was a pensioner, so he lived a poor life just to make ends meet. When he died, he had saved enough for all of the expenses to be paid.

Despite these efforts to relieve the family of any financial burden associated with his passing, achieving total harmony was another matter altogether, particularly because of his father's position as the eldest son.

Once the Will was written, Tauivi, his father, and a lawyer gathered to discuss the document, and also to inform Tauivi of the funeral plan. It was not long after this meeting that his father died. Because of his passing, the Will and its clauses were revealed to the relatives. Although preparing a Will was meant to avert possible contentions amongst the living, it actually caused a lot of

pressure that was emotionally draining for Tauivi to address. The revelation of the accompanying rituals to be performed and those to be omitted at the funeral shocked those who heard about it, especially older family members. As a result, effecting the Will was a major struggle which had to be negotiated during the mourning period.

The provisions outlined in the Will did not go unchallenged. In fact, the directives were contested and refuted by those members who felt that Samoan traditions were being undermined by western influences. Tauivi recalls the ensuing tension:

It was hard for me because I had to ring the family in Moana to tell them that this is what is going to happen with dad's funeral, and burial. They were all shocked because the family are well known and respected [in the area].

Even at the funeral service, a rift continued with the family concerning the proper processes. In some Samoan settings, allowing a Will to dictate family action carries with it the risk of the family being perceived to be abandoning ancestral and cultural ties in preference for western alternatives.

The pressure to either conform to traditional ways or to adopt modern alternatives can ultimately lead families to the brink of breakups, long term feuds, or even physical altercations. In locations outside of Samoa, huge tensions continue to exist for many as they try to negotiate these converging and conflictual paradigms. Death customs, together with their various interpretations, are significant markers to end of life memorialisation practices for Samoan people generally. If families simply accept palagi-led directives without demonstrating outwardly their rejection of such instructions, or without advocating a return to traditional patterns, the family might be perceived as uncaring towards their dead relative. Even worse is to be labelled as "*fia-palagi*" (be like a European) and devaluing their Samoan heritage. Mageo (1998, p.26) asserts that *fia-palagi* is a deprecatory term that is often used to criticize or to condemn a person for their non-Samoan type behaviour. To Samoan families, this label is a threat to their dignity and to family pride because to "be palagi means that you really sold your soul, [and] you would forget your Samoan-ness" (Mila-Schaaf, 2011, p.19). To some extent, to publicly voice displeasure while

advocating for traditional customs visibly demonstrates genuine love and respect. In accord with these beliefs, Tauivi's extended family rallied in their support of *matai*, elders and siblings to apprehend the body so that he could be buried in Moana instead. Further, they demanded the right to assume personal responsibility to organise the necessary resources that would reflect Samoan traditional patterns of farewell.

For many who are New Zealand-born or have a mixed ethnicity such as Tauivi, funerals can place them in a marginalised position, either being recognised or excluded as authentic Samoans. That is, they do not possess sufficient "cultural capital or competence to claim or to be recognised as Samoan" (Mila-Schaaf, 2011, p.14). Anae (1998) stresses that because New Zealand-born Samoans generally do not speak the Samoan language fluently or participate fully in normal Samoan activities and practices, and predominantly live their existence in palagi-oriented society, they are "bereft of the 'real' *fa'asamoa* and a 'real' Samoan identity" (p.348). This means that although Tauivi and his siblings provided an essential part in carrying out their father's final wishes, the senior members of the wider family network take precedence in all decision making areas, particularly when *fa'asamoa* rituals are to be performed. In the wider context of decision making, New Zealand-born concerns and contributions are seldom, if ever, considered equal or substantial enough to contribute to any major outcome. If Samoan culture is to expand and to thrive in the future, these Samoan identities must be seriously considered in all matters of decision making and leadership structures.

### **Loyalty and expectations**

Whispers surfaced that some family members were insulted by Tauivi's insistence on proceeding with his father's wishes, to the exclusion of any *fa'asamoa* prerogatives during and after the funeral services. This resoluteness was met with a tense detachment by his father's family, not just through the funeral period but lingering on many years after the burial. The whole task was a difficult ordeal for Tauivi to manage as he tried to honour his father's final wishes. Significantly, his father's status as a pioneering member of the Samoan

community in Moana and the eldest son in the family fuelled expectations for a traditional farewell. Notwithstanding such expectations and demands, Tauivi was unwilling to conform in order to appease them. His father's *mavaega*, together with having to live with his own conscience was far more important than any condemnation by the family or community at the time. Tauivi explains:

They needed to know that everyone has the right to be respected and to grieve in their own way. To honour what he wanted in his Will meant more to me than all the expectations that the family were putting on me to conform. I felt that to honour my father was the right thing to do.

Tauivi's decision to remain resolute despite the pressure to relent has given him the peace of mind that he had made the right decision. If he had reneged on his father's Will because of family pressure, he would just be honouring someone else's expectations instead of doing the right thing by his father. Tauivi attributes his strength in remaining resolute to his father's influence upon him in the last part of his life.

There were some mixed feelings within the extended families over how the funeral should be performed. For instance, some demanded that the funeral service should be performed the Samoan way while others were more lenient in supporting whatever arrangement was agreed upon. Tauivi felt that he himself and his siblings had a legitimate right to dictate the funeral arrangements for a number of key reasons. Firstly, the Will outlined the wishes of his father, giving them authority to proceed with pre-determined processes. Secondly, the extended family had been absent from their lives for many years. Thirdly, he and his brothers were no longer children but were responsible adults and they knew what their father wanted at his death. Finally and more significantly, Tauivi himself was the main person to care for his father before he died. It was also he who had been given responsibility for carrying out his father's final wishes. Yet the extended family maintained pressure to change these plans in favour of reverting back to what they considered to be culturally appropriate.

Tauivi also feels sympathetic towards his relatives because they meant well with their request. It was their lack of consideration due to their perceived cultural authority that hindered any meaningful collaboration. The tense stand-

off resulted in a rift between the family networks. Searching for a way forward, a relative who was a counsellor approached Tauivi with a request from the extended family members:

She said to me, 'we are in a bit of a bind here because your dad is the eldest son and the others are not going to die for a while. We need to find the right way of doing it [the funeral rituals] that honours the whole family'. But for me, it was important to convey to them that what we were doing is what dad wanted for his funeral.

The extended family reluctantly accepted the Will's authority to dictate the formalities of the final service and burial. Tauivi continues:

It was hard for all of us being in that position because I knew they were also grieving in their own way. It is not right to take away someone else's way of grieving, especially when it is their customs and traditions from childhood. But it was a difficult decision because one cannot honour both sides in all situations. You must choose. I chose to honour him [dad]. The living get to live; the dead do not get that choice.

What Tauivi is advocating is that his father's *mavaega* needed to be honoured in this palagi-type context just as one would be in honoured in a traditional setting. The *mavaega* of the deceased should be honoured at all costs because there are ramifications upon the living when these are disobeyed as I have documented in chapter four. Tauivi felt that his father's life was not one that really honoured him, and therefore, it was his duty to honour him at his death.

The extended family's reluctant agreement to allow the Will to dictate funeral arrangements left Tauivi and his siblings able to proceed with their father's request. However, acknowledgment does not necessarily equate with acceptance for many Samoans, as was the case here with Tauivi's relatives. He explains:

I also knew that people thought less of me and my brothers because of what they were expecting as the proper way to do it [funeral]. Actually, I was beyond it all at that stage.

Tauivi sought out his father's siblings to be part of his farewell because they too were grieving for him. However, the physical distance between the relatives' location and where his father passed away added to the challenges of organising the funeral service.

On the day, a simple palagi-styled funeral service was organised. A few designated family members performed parts in the funeral service. The conclusion of the funeral service was followed by a simple meal together before the extended family dispersed. Tauivi and his brothers were the only ones left to enact the final part of the farewell, their father's cremation.

### **Ashes to ashes: cremating a new path**

The Will not only dictated the funeral service, but how his father's body was to be disposed of. Tauivi's father opting for a cremation appears to be a separation from traditional Samoan Christian patterns of burial. This departure is especially significant due to Tauivi's grandfather's status as a lay minister in the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa. Traditionally, the most appropriate form of body disposal is a burial. Christian Samoan belief opposes cremation on the basis of its impacts for eternal resurrection, a belief that many Samoans like Rev Toea'ina support when he says: *"where they lie is where their resurrection will take place . . . [and] . . . if they are burned or scattered, what happens then?"* By opting for cremation, it may appear to outsiders that the message being relayed is that Samoan religious traditions are negotiable. However, some like Va'a (2013, p.9) disagree by arguing that "it does not matter whether a body is annihilated through burning or blown to bits, God has the almighty power to put it together again." Whether for religious reasons or otherwise, the pathways provided by western legal authority now allow long-held traditions and beliefs to be challenged, or superseded.

More recently, Samoa declared boldly that the nation was prepared to embrace cremating as an alternative approach to burial customs (see Figure 12).



Figure 12: Samoan Prime Minister with Crematorium owner during the opening of the new crematorium premises. (Source: Samoan Observer, 2013)

On 6 May 2013, Samoa opened the doors of a brand new crematorium memorial facility, operated by one of the long-standing families, Pa'u Sefo, offering this end-of-life service to Samoan people. The Prime Minister of Samoa opened the facility and a ceremonial blessing was conducted by the Chairman of the Council of Churches, Reverend Kasiano Leaupepe. The Prime Minister views a crematorium as part of the future development of nations like Samoa. He emphasises that "the service [cremation] is helpful to those tourists who visit Samoa and die here. . . there is a lot of mess in sending bodies overseas but cremating them will be useful to make transportation easier and cheaper." The Prime Minister advocates further the benefits of cremating people who die from accidents according because "it's expensive to put them in morgues, but being cremated will make it cheaper and can be done right away . . . it takes years until you can turn into ashes, with cremating, that will be done in less than a day" (Tupufia, 2013b).

Such a facility provides a modern alternative to the normal patterns of burial practiced by Samoan people. Pau Sefo who owns the facility says that the new crematorium provides "answers to our land issues where some families don't have enough land to bury their relatives" (Tupufia, 2013a). Surprisingly,

Va'a (2013), editor and columnist for the *Ini Ini Samoa* newspaper reported that there is growing interest in Samoa for this modern alternative. He advocates that cremation is a "much needed service in Samoa that should be applauded because it provides a service that is clean and healthy and helps those families who do not have adequate land for burying their dead" (p.9).

Despite these early optimistic appraisals, support for this venture is yet to find wide acceptance. Samoa is still a nation that prescribes strongly to Christian burial rituals and beliefs, and where the majority still prefer to bury their loved ones in their family plot. As Halio (2013, p.3) reports, "*e umi lava se taimi fa'ato'a talia e le to'atele o Samoa leni auaunaga ona o le manatu lava e fa'apelepele i 'āiga ua maliliu ma e fa'apelepele i o latou tino*" [it will take a long time before the majority of the Samoan population will accept this practice because for many, they treasure their loved ones and want to also treasure their physical remains]. Nevertheless, the service is up and running, and according to the owner, there are already families inquiring about utilising the premises. It remains to be seen whether this transition will benefit Samoan families in their mourning periods, while still maintaining cultural mores that honour their dead. Va'a firmly believes this could be the case, stating that "religious sentiment and cultural expectations can be met", where the only difference is that if a burial is chosen, then "the funeral procession merely head[s] to the cemetery or family land, if cremation, the funeral procession heads the other way to the funeral parlour" (2013, p.9).

Cremation was also a new experience for Tauivi's family, raising further questions about the value of palagi-styled funeral processes. His father's position as the eldest son in the family also led to concerns over his father's decision to be cremated:

This was significant in the history of our family because dad was the eldest in the family. There was always the expectation that he would set the example for the rest of the family to follow. We were also the eldest boys in the family and there was something expected of us as well.

Once the family had reluctantly accepted that the Will would dictate the funeral and cremation, it relieved any further sense of obligation for Tauivi and his

brothers to conform to traditional Samoan ways. When it came time for cremation to begin, only Tauivi and his two brothers accompanied their father on his final journey. Recollection of these final events remains distorted due to Tauivi's level of fatigue at the time, as well as the overwhelming turmoil he experienced leading up to the death. Tauivi remembers being semi-detached from it all:

It was such a weird thing and physically I was tired. I was there but not there. I was just watching all this stuff going on. Ropati unscrewed the lid of the coffin to say goodbye to dad. It was just the surrealness of it all. For me, it seemed like something was not right.

Despite his dream-like state during the cremation event, Tauivi does vividly remember his own sense of hyper-vigilance, like one huge emotional wave had just crashed on him. The full weight of this emotional wave was most noticeable when he was instructed by the funeral director to screw tightly the coffin lid before proceeding to the burning chambers. The result was a cathartic implosion which Tauivi refers to as "*internal hysteria*". These were his emotions that were bottled deep within him. The surrealness of the whole funeral and cremation experience left Tauivi emotionally stunned for some time after with the disjointed memories of his ordeal

A little while later, Tauivi was contacted by the crematorium to retrieve his father's ashes. He was appointed by his brothers to safeguard their father's ashes, something which he regards as a treasured role:

I am the one who was given dad's ashes for safekeeping. When I go back to Samoa, I will take it with me. Maybe when I do that, there will be a final peace there somewhere.

Returning their father's ashes to Samoa, to be interred in the family cemetery, is expected to provide a final release for Tauivi and his brothers. In the context of Tauivi's healing journey, Samoa represents a vital part of the restoration process to the relationship between the dead and the living, between a father and his sons, and between the past and the future. Such restorative processes are significant factors that support loss and grief journeys, such as those travelled by many New Zealand-born Samoans, including Tauivi.

## Finding forgiveness

I return to examine the importance of forgiveness as I alluded to in earlier parts of this case study. The quality time that Tauivi spent with his father prior to his death has not alleviated his on-going pain or brought complete closure of this incident. There are times where he battles with the internalised guilt feelings and self-blame which demand that he *“should have done something more for [his] father”*. The most distressing memory Tauivi regularly confronts is when his father was left in the care of his uncle on the same night that he passed away. His turmoil leaves him wanting to *“know what [his] father was thinking before he passed, because he died looking towards the pictures of his children on the window”*. These are persistent because he was not by his side when his father took his last breath. In order to move forward, Tauivi has to find the place of forgiveness for his father, for his uncle, and for himself:

I had not forgiven him [dad] [tearful]. I had not talked to or faced him. This haunted me for a while because of the love that I could have given to him but instead, I held this back from him. I did not give him what he had needed. This was my old man who had nothing much left in life. I thought I was a better son than what I really was. I told myself, ‘what an awful son I have been’. At that point, I realised that the guilt was still there. I had to acknowledge it so that I could forgive myself for my part.

As mentioned earlier in this case, acknowledging his anger, resentment, and unforgiveness allowed healing and peace to slowly enter into Tauivi’s life. It finally came years after his father’s death. Tauivi says:

The one memory that I hold onto now is that [choking back the tears and paused] . . . I have forgiven dad. I have that peace now.

Another of my participants, Sone, provided the following comment about his journey of forgiveness with his deceased father and the impact of this aspect of grief on his own life:

I believe that when dad was alive, he *malaia* (cursed) us which is why we were not able to have kids. I knew that dad did not like S (ex-wife) and we had a difficult relationship. There was a period that I didn’t contact him for a whole year. It took his father to bring us back together and I think he still had a lot of resentment because of who I married. I believe that he lifted that [curse] after his death because straight after the funeral she [ex-wife] was pregnant. Dad knew that I was hurting a lot and my brothers were

hurting as well. I truly believe that he spoke to God to send us a son. My son has dried up a lot of my tears. (Sone)

Curses, and their absolution, are important aspects of Samoan life and wellbeing, particularly because they are possible causes for mental health challenges (see chapter four for a detailed discussion on curses). Many New Zealand-born Samoans have a reasonable idea of how these are experienced in their own lives or those of other family members. The Te Rau Hinengaro Report (Oakley-Brown, Wells & Scott, 2006) reveals that, for many Pasefika groups, the cause of mental illness is sometimes attributed to spiritual, familial, or ancestral connections. In such scenarios, explanations and treatment may be sought from a spiritual healer (Culbertson & Agee, 2009; Lui, 2003) or through traditional methods of healing (*taulasea*). In some instances, the presence of physical or mental illness may be associated with punishment sent by God or a curse due to a family wrong that has not been made right. As Sone indicated in his statement, the curse of barrenness was lifted when his father passed away. His wife's pregnancy was an outward sign of forgiveness and pardon being granted to them. Now, their son is a tangible way of remembering his continuing connection with his deceased father.

### **Emotional tide: wrestling with empathy**

Nursing and caring for his dying father helped Tauivi to realise that his father was a man who was riddled with sadness and despair. This insight helped to turn Tauivi's internalised anger into empathy, and his long-held bitterness into compassion. He was able to acknowledge that his father was a broken man who was overwhelmed by his family's weighty expectations:

I finally reached the place where I was okay with the fact that he had died and that he was no longer in pain but I wished his life was better. I wished he really got to live his life. Why was not there more love in his life?

As Tauivi reflected upon the tension he had experienced over his father's funeral and cremation service, he was still wrestling with many of these aspects and was not "*at peace with it all*":

I was honouring him but there was an existing tension . . . because I did not really care what they [extended family] thought [or] how they felt. I have never thought about this [tension with the relatives] before [Tauivi pauses to contemplate and then continues after a sudden moment of realisation]. I wished I could have known more about what they [extended family] needed. And wish . . . I knew more about 'who' I needed to work with around [fa'asamoa].

Knowing what to do in such situations may have eased the tension between Tauivi and his relatives. The infrequency of connections with his Samoan side left him with very little knowledge of what he could have done differently. His personal experiences led him to empathise with others who belong to mixed ethnicity like himself:

If you are from a single culture, then its patterns are already established and everyone knows the rules of engagement and performance. But if you are multi-ethnic like me, then you have to negotiate with both cultures. Worse yet, if you are multi-ethnic and do not know the rules of one but others do, then you are likely to be caught out. Unless you have someone who knows what to do and can deal with those ambiguous situations. Sometimes, it does not matter what you do, you do not end up feeling right anyway because you are left with the only option of making a choice one way or the other. This happened to us.

As I have already discussed in this chapter, Tauivi could not satisfy all parties about the funeral and he made the choice to support the Will. As difficult as it was for him during his father's death, Tauivi kept searching for the "*middle road somewhere*".

As found by Manuela and Sibley (2012b) and supported by Tiatia (1998), the pressure to conform to either one or both cultures simultaneously can lead to feeling torn between honouring one and rejecting the other. For Tauivi, the only choice left was to walk the path paved with conflicts, yet one that ultimately meant memorializing his father's wishes dictated by a Will. He recalls:

Looking back to dad's funeral, we had to create the rules along the way. We made the calls at the end of the day.

The risk of making such a call, like the one he made with his father's death, can lead to prolonged alienation from and ostracism by the wider family group. As Tauivi reported earlier, he paid the price by being excluded for a long time, and his extended relatives blamed him for the way the funeral was held. It has only

been in recent years that their relationship has been rebuilt. However, the rebuilding is carried out mainly with his cousin and younger relatives, many of whom are also New Zealand-born themselves and who are sympathetic towards Tauivi.

The “*internal hysteria*” I discussed that greatly affected Tauivi’s overall ability to cope with his father’s death often came like “*a tide*” or “*a wave*”. Even after many years since the death, Tauivi still experiences the emotional surges created by this event:

It comes like a tide. Yeah, like waves. I would be walking and like . . . [makes a wave sound] . . . it hits me at the weirdest times. I think to myself, I can’t stop it. I have to just let it wash over me.

The “*waves washing over*” him are associative memory triggers which emphasise the non-performance of important responsibilities while his father was still alive. These emotional waves are often accompanied by self-accusations, false guilt, self-blame, mixed with the immense trauma involved in his loss. Tauivi describes this part of his recovery journey as being “*in [his] own world with it all*”. Other participants experienced similar surging emotional waves with their own traumatic experiences. Some explains:

I just went numb. I was stunned and I didn’t know what to do. Here was a significant person in my life dying and I didn’t know what to do.

Some advocates the need for a safe outlet to express the emotional anguish from a loss such as the loss of his father. Further, the expression has to be constructive so that the emotional pain will eventually subside. Some continues:

If it’s someone you’re close to, or someone that you truly love, no way can people tell you how to grieve. Pretending to maintain control is just wrong, especially when you see your dad lying there. They [family] have no right to tell me how to grieve, or not to grieve.

For many people, death stirs a lot of emotion that needs to be expressed in appropriate ways. Some remains adamant that when someone close passes away, one needs to find the outlets that connect one’s emotions to the loss being experienced.

Another of my research participants, Nafa, spoke about ways he found helpful in processing his own grief. Besides the inherent value of his Samoan upbringing, his academic training as a social worker helped him to recognise his need for outside support:

In my social work role, there is a requirement to have external supervision as a part of maintaining safety. But I also had a period where I just ignored everything and just threw everything into my work. This was unethical practice, but at the time, this was the only way that I knew to kill the pain. In the end, I had to have a serious talk with some people who had a lot of mana, like people that I respected. (Nafa)

Like Nafa, other research participants also used their employment as an initial form of coping. They worked longer hours to distract themselves and process their grief, and it had further benefits (see chapters six and seven). Such extra shifts enabled them to earn extra income to financially prepare for funeral costs.

The wave of guilt brought on by the emotional tide involved with losing a close relative led some into destructive methods of coping. Such avenues were an attempt to forget the weight of guilt and blame as Isa explains:

I threw myself into working a lot of overtime to help me to forget and to stop thinking about Savi [pseudonym]. I got drunk to do the same thing. After drinking, I would go home to sleep and not have to think about what had happened, wishing I could do something to change it. I also began thinking that there might be another incident [death] from my drinking. My brother's death is enough for our family to bear. My [drinking] would not bring him back.

As Isa reveals with his statement, when at their worst, the emotional waves are filled with deep regret and much longing for a second chance to make it right. Like Isa, Tauivi wished that he could have provided a better place for his father to live out his last days:

When he got into that last phase of his illness, I could not afford to take him into a better place. I was watching my father dying and I felt that something was really wrong here. I also remember thinking, 'I wish I had done this'.

Despite the unforeseen barriers to providing better care for his father, the voice of guilt and blame generally drowns out any attempt at justification for Tauivi.

A further example concerns Isa's brothers. Two who live in North America gave their accounts upon hearing that their brother had been killed in a tragic accident. Rika (pseudonym) lives in San Francisco while Reti lives in Los Angeles. Reti provides the first account:

I was totally shocked when I heard that my brother was dead. I refused to believe it. I was angry and deeply hurt because we were really close when we were growing up in New Zealand. It was usually him and I, spending a lot of time together because we were the younger ones. I remember yelling and crying because I was in so much [emotional] pain. I also got drunk a lot and went out looking for fights. It took a long time for me to eventually calm down.

Like Reti, Rika was shocked and angry when he received a phone call from New Zealand that their brother had died. The way he had been killed angered him more because it was reported that his brother was a victim of a hit and run accident. For Rika, the anger he felt and the reports he heard about the attitude of the driver when he was finally caught left him wanting to avenge his brothers' death. He says:

I couldn't believe what I was hearing about the driver once he was caught. He kept denying that it was him and refused to take any responsibility for his actions. This got me wild and it stirred vengeance in me. I told my older brother (Isa) that when we get to Samoa, I will find that person and shoot him. This is how angry I became.

The initial impact of finding out about the death of a family member left many participants, like Rika and Reti, trying to manage the surging emotional tide. As Rika indicated in his statement, the news of his brother's death led him to contemplate retribution. It takes a long time for this type of wave to find its appropriate outlet.

For Tauivi, it took nearly two years after his father's death for him to begin to address his regret and guilt associated with his care. Upon reflection, Tauivi realised that his father tried to reconnect with him in his last moments. But these attempts had negatively intensified the surging emotions surrounding their strained father-son relationship:

He was trying [to mend the relationship] even before he got sick. I should have gone to him more. I should have included him more.

Similar to Tauivi's struggle discussed here, another participant, Tui, reported that it has been five years since his father's death:

It has taken me five years to finally accept it and be able to talk about [dad] being gone. I cry a lot today because it's the first time I have talked about the whole passing away, but I also know that crying is not going to bring him back to us.

Other research participants also reported that their grieving process has been on-going similar to Tui; a process that they were not forced to finish abruptly as suggested by Bowlby and Freud discussed in chapter three. Sone for instance, declares that because of his relationship with his father, the *fa'asamoa* values that he now represents are closely felt on celebratory occasions:

I cry at every special event. We don't celebrate Father's Day for me; we do it to honour the memory of my father. *E fai lava lau kakalo* [I say my prayer], and I cry because he's no longer here with us. It's still on-going. You don't ever get any permanent closure.

For Sone, this way of grieving forms a vital component of his closure, that is, he is now able to move on with many parts of his life which represent his father's legacy. In dominant western grief psychology, the refusal of grievers to sever ties with the deceased could be characterised as complicated and maladjusted grief (Bowlby, 1961). Yet in the Samoan realm of mourning and honouring, Sone's longing to maintain connections with his father is not only accepted, but strongly encouraged. Such vital connections provide a crucial part of healing for Samoan men like Sone, and indeed many other Samoans.

Some of my other participants also considered their experiences with loss as motivation for helping others. The next two statements from Sala and Tui are examples of this type of progression.

My research now is about what it means to be Samoan. I got into social work because I wanted to work with people who have experienced identity crisis leading to suicide attempts. Many don't know how to deal with their own grief. They have not had a chance to honour their deceased parents. (Sala)

I think it was after my [father's] death that I started working with youth. Before then, I was doing a lot of dead end jobs, like bouncing at night clubs. (Tui)

Similar to Sala's and Tui's experiences of loss, Sone's turmoil with his father's death inspired the honour of his memory through his academic achievement. For example, Sone wore a memorial badge with a picture of his father at his graduation ceremony. This way of memorialising means that the life of the deceased relative remains present and important. More recently, Sone founded a Pasefika youth mentoring service called TYMS, also in memory of his father's legacy:

TYMS is part of the healing process for me. If I was just doing it for the money, I would have done it under a different name. But I wanted to honour him [dad] and I wanted to tell people that the mentoring programme is named after my father. He was my mentor and he my true hero. I want the kids [that I mentor] to realise that if they don't have a positive family or positive male role models, 'I can be that person' for them. I am not there to be their dad or to replace him, but to be a positive role model in their lives.

The abiding presence of Sone's father in his life finds similarity with Tauivi's experience with his own father. For instance, during one of his conference addresses, Tauivi suddenly became overwhelmed with the sense of his father's presence. He explains:

I shared a few things about my relationship with my dad to help contextualise what actually brought me to this place [of presenting on the topic]. Then afterwards, I regretted saying what I had shared, so I went back to my room. I remember lying on my bed thinking, 'maybe I should not be saying stuff like that about my dad, maybe it was dishonouring of his memory'. Suddenly, I had this experience that I thought I saw dad. I heard a voice just like dad calling softly, not too loud. I turned and saw something like an image pushing through a translucent veil, and then I felt this real peace around me. It was like he was around, and, letting me know that where he is now, there was no more pain. It did not matter to him what I was presenting because he was somewhere better and what I shared could not hurt him.

Tauivi's experience of his father's presence still guiding him represented a call from the past, from beyond the grave so to speak, to assure him that he "*could share and use his experiences because he [dad] was okay*". This peace was about him as a Samoan man, who was now walking with his past towards the future, and his father's presence as his guide. Such moments, of being in the presence of the ancestors without reprisal, in some ways declare that the *tapu* is lifted and

that any wrongdoing is pardoned. In Tauivi's situation, his encounter with his father's transcended presence "*started [to lift] things from that point on*".

### **Healing journey**

As documented throughout this case study, reflecting back on the life and death of his father remains sensitive for Tauivi. It is seldom shared with outsiders, particularly the painful and chaotic aspects as discussed already. As much as there has been some movement towards healing, Tauivi admits that there is still some way to go before his healing is fully realised:

Some people like to talk about their parents but not me. The reason is because our relationship caused a lot of damage. I don't talk too much about that life now. I am normally the one asking the questions which is why I am in this line of work [therapeutic].

Despite the time lapse, the depth of the past trauma and its residual pain means that for Tauivi much of this journey continues. Yet it is his desire that his life, his pain, his suffering, and his emergence as a New Zealand-born Samoan man who has travelled through death experiences become useful to others. Tauivi pushes through many obstacles to offer hope and support:

If others can learn something and if my experiences resonate with them, then it is really humbling that it can be helpful to someone else.

It seems that helping others continues to be the motivation for Tauivi sharing his pain and experiences. Tauivi also finds relief in many creative ways as a form of releasing pain, and in honouring of their father-son relationship, both the good and the bad. His songs, poems and artwork reflect his life journey. Such collections of creativity are hewed from the depth of his pain, his anguish and his suffering, all a part of his struggle to give meaningful expressions to these life defining moments. *Crossroads* and *Lash* are two songs that poignantly reflect Tauivi's life and relationship with his father. His painting and sculptures have provided more therapeutic release. It is still too early for Tauivi to separate himself from his father fully and completely:

What had happened to him happened to me, so I wrote a song that goes 'where are all the kings horses and all the kings men, the part

of him is who I am. I was a child, you were a heavy man, and part of you is who I am'.

Tauivi further describes the lingering impact of these associative memory triggers and emotions as being like *“going back to certain chapters of a book and experiencing all those emotions again”*. He quotes lines from his song *Crossroads* to illustrate his emotional tension further:

If I could turn back time would I change my mind?  
I'm looking back now on the end of the road,  
And I'm wondering if I'm still travelling the road I chose.  
Sitting in the front row, there's a film playing in my head,  
Showing me things I've done, the things I've said.  
Some I remember, some I rather forget,  
I don't know how much time is left, I don't want no regret.

In the hopeful anticipation of finding his healing place, time plays an important role in this journey. The yearning to *“turn back time”* as the song indicates could well provide an opportunity to change some parts in his life. And although time is in some ways lineal, the emotional association in grieving remains *“ever present”*. This understanding of grief and its associative emotions seems to reflect Levang's (1998) argument that grief is more cyclical than lineal as it has traditionally been regarded (see chapter three for a detailed discussion on grief theory). The significance of understanding the impact of the healing journey can in some way determine the healing path for others as well, such as children. Likewise, Tauivi acknowledges that in his situation, he wants his two daughters to avoid ever having to experience the same level of relational damage and trauma that he had with his father:

My hope is that my daughters wouldn't have to experience what it was like between me and my dad. The healing for me is that both my daughters know that they are the most important people to me. I could die tomorrow and be confident that I have made that connection with my daughters.

Knowing that his daughters will be able to handle the grief and the pain of his eventual death is a comforting thought for Tauivi. Importantly, he holds firm to the knowledge that they share a faith in God as their ever-present hope and helper.

Tauivi is finally able to distinguish his own actions separately from those of his father. The path of healing is slowly producing the desired results, which is why he is passionate about getting the message out so that others may connect to his life story, and in doing so find help for themselves.

Like Tauivi, some of my New Zealand-born participants also suggest that an important part of their own healing comes from making better choices. These choices are part of the memorialisation process. Examples from Sone and Tui show their effort to maintain their connections with the memory of their deceased parent:

Dad is still alive through my son because he is named after dad. Dad is also honoured through the mentoring trust (TYMS) and through my actions. A lot of my teaching stems from the way dad taught us. This is a part of dad's legacy. We never forget who we are. (Sone)

Dad retired just before he passed away. It was the prime of my relationship with him because he had the time and we were going out regularly to play golf together. Our relationship had moved from father/son to really beginning to become good friends. This is where a lot of my pain and anger comes from. But now, I have made some peace with it, although it has been a difficult part of my life journey. (Tui)

These New Zealand-born Samoan men recognise that the grieving process and the path to healing are firmly anchored in their continued connections with their loved ones, both departed and the living. For example, the lyrics from a verse in Tauivi's song titled *Lash*, together with the lyrics of a verse from his song *Crossroads*, epitomise his intimate connection with his father, and his desire to help others through their death and bereavement experiences.

*Lyrics from Lash*

Where are all the kings' horses  
And all the kings' men  
The part of him is who I am  
I was a child, you were a heavy man  
And part of you is who I am.

*Lyrics from Crossroads:*

Can I walk with you  
Can you walk with me  
Can I walk with you  
Can you walk with me.

As much as culture provides a familiar foundation in the restorative process, the depth of personal relationships helps grievors to acknowledge and honour their loved ones in significant ways. The vital role provided by their identity as New Zealand-born Samoans helps to maintain their deceased member's living legacy as poignantly captured in Tauivi's songs discussed earlier.

### **Chapter conclusion**

The third case study has closely examined the impact of living with a mixed Samoan/European heritage through the life of Tauivi. The chapter has documented Tauivi's father's struggle to acculturate into New Zealand society, the challenges faced by Samoan migrants with familial ties and cultural expectations, the struggles of interracial relationships, of dying and being buried or cremated in New Zealand, and, of challenging traditionally-held Samoan death and burial practices. This chapter has presented the challenges of being a New Zealand-born Samoan, particularly when "values, thoughts, and behaviours that are formed from both the western world and Pacific Islands . . . [have formed] an almost distinct identity" (Tiatia, 1998, p.19). The result of this convergence is not always harmonious, and all too often it can become conflictual either for the individual or for the family in general. As Tauivi's experiences show, his mixed heritage led to the abandoning of the original cultural traditions of his father in favour of westernised alternatives. The result of this shift, from communal and collective identification towards independence and self-reliance, has often led to "role confusion and on-going conflict with parents or elders" (Tiatia, 2012, p.2). These types of tensions and confusions indicate the issues of belonging and of being caught between cultures, which was and is the experience of Tauivi and his father.

The enactments of death practices with the passing of Tauivi's father did not follow the traditional bereavement practices such as those I have discussed in chapters four and six. In fact, not only were these practices by-passed, a legalised Will mandated the only protocols that were to be carried out in this funeral. In some way, the denial of traditional Samoan funeral practices in taking precedence, a result of the firm stance taken by Tauivi and his sibling's to follow

their deceased father's Will, duly paved a way for others in similar circumstances to follow suit. Challenges such as those experienced by Tauivi's family, where the traditional conventions are reappraised or questioned, show that Samoan families impacted upon by death continue to wrestle with the important task of maintaining their indigenous references while trying to survive in their adopted homes. For some like Tauivi, his account shows that they had made their own ways of ceremony and mourning to honour his father.

In keeping with the overall objective of this thesis, the psychological and emotional impact of death upon the lives of participants and their families shows the various ways of coping whether in Samoa, New Zealand, or in other places. The situation faced by Tauivi not only left him to deal with the traumatic events leading up to, and after the death of his father, but to find ways to memorialise him despite their difficult father-son relationship. The search for a way forward led to much soul searching, despite the ever present emotional waves that accompanied him throughout his journey. Tauivi's desire to understand his own life and the struggles he and his father had undergone led to his training as a therapist. As he indicated in his accounts, his own struggles and emerging confidence as a New Zealand-born Samoan may help others who have been through similar situations. In this way, Tauivi's own efforts to help others in their journey through challenging life events such as death also assisted him with his own recovery.

This chapter, the third of the major case studies, completes the presentation of my research findings. The findings from the three case studies – leadership and decision-making, addressing grief in the face of calamity, and New Zealand-born Samoan experiences of death – will now be analysed in detail in the concluding discussions which follows. Additionally, the next chapter draws this thesis to close by considering the main conclusions that I have reached from engaging in this research.

## **Chapter Nine**

**Fofola mai le fala se'ia tatou talanoa (Samoan proverb)**

Spread the mat and let us engage in a discussion



Death is universal for human beings but in Samoan communities, conversations about death and dying are seldom treated lightly (Braginsky, 2003). On the whole, Samoan people have consigned the topic of death to the domain of *tapu* and *sa* (Suaalii-Sauni, et al., 2008; Tui Atua, 2009b; Va'a, 2001). In exploring Samoan responses to death, this thesis has had two primary objectives. The first has been to document how some Samoan men responded to and gave meaning to their experiences of loss and grief. This was done by examining some of the significant customary practices they engaged in during death and bereavement situations. The second has been to demonstrate that embedded within many Samoan traditions and rituals, such as those used during mourning periods, are intrinsic patterns which enable recovery. These avenues of support not only assist individuals and their families to manage death's impact, but provided vital stepping stones for returning to normal life routines. I have pointed out that these cultural processes have significant and worthwhile therapeutic value, supporting many Samoan people in their grief journey (Ablon, 1970 & 1973; Simanu, 2002).

The thesis was guided by these two main questions: *How do Samoan men respond to, and make sense of death and mourning experiences? What are the customs and cultural rituals that have helped them to grieve and give meaning in these times of emotional upheaval?*

This final chapter begins by rolling out the metaphorical mat (*fofola le fala*), offering a space to discuss the conclusions reached by this study. This chapter is organised into four sections. The first section provides an overview summary of the thesis and important points for consideration are highlighted. The second section provides a discussion of the implications of my research: for grief counselling and recovery that offer support to Samoan men; for Samoan communities in New Zealand, Samoa, and other places; and for perspectives of Samoan death and mourning traditions. The third section emphasises the contribution of this thesis to Pasefika research perspectives. The Uputāua Therapeutic Approach is revisited to highlight its contribution as an important part of an action-oriented, community-grounded, Samoan-specific research method. The fourth and final section outlines further research possibilities that

arise from this study, together with some concluding remarks to bring this chapter to a close.

### **Thesis overview**

My own world and my evolving understandings of *fa'asamoa* and of being Samoan have been examined and discussed alongside the narratives of my participants, and the literature that I have reviewed. This thesis began with my own narratives of the tragic death of my brother. Reflecting back on these life events, it seemed that important questions needed to be asked to better understand how Samoan people, and men in particular, respond to such times of loss. Approaching the topic in this way aligns itself with auto-ethnographic scholarship in the social sciences (Ballard, 2009; Ellis and Bochner, 2006; Hemmingson, 2009). Such an approach to qualitative research provides a means of situating the knowledge produced by me in the context of scholarly literature and historical documents that pertain to Samoan customs.

Chapter one provided the setting in which this current research project emerged. I briefly outlined my own work as a Samoan counsellor, particularly my role in providing trauma and recovery counselling for victims of the *galulolo* that devastated Samoa in 2009. Here, I emphasised the effectiveness of those professionals providing therapeutic care and intervention who were fluent in the Samoan language and culture. Therapy in this regard, must engage culture and language familiar to those in grief, especially for such therapeutic support to be effective.

A historical overview of Samoa and her people, which included recent customs, traditions, social organisation, and migrations from Samoa to other parts of the world, is the focus of chapter two. *Fa'asamoa* cultural traditions remain central not only in the formation of Samoan cultural identity, but also in the provision of meaningful practices that reconnect the living with their ancestral lineage. Many end-of-life practices find their origins in the earlier patterns of Samoan ancestors and despite changes, many of these earlier practices have remained.

Chapter three examined Samoan identity, with a particular consideration of how identity functions in a foreign setting like New Zealand. Understanding what it means to be Samoan in the current environment helps in contextualising associated rituals and customary practices during periods of mourning. A significant contribution of this chapter to the overall objectives of the thesis is my investigation into the ways that men grieve. Understanding the way men grieve assisted me in considering the impact of death upon my own life, as well as the lives of Samoan men in general.

I critically examine the literature on Samoan grief in chapter four. The written observations of early Christian missionaries from the 1830s to about the 1880s, and those of some German ethnographers who were resident on the islands around 1900, provided information on the traditional patterns of Samoan death and bereavement customs. More recent accounts from other scholars' record later practices which enabled earlier periods to be contrasted with contemporary times. Such accounts allowed identification of changes in death rituals over time. An important contribution to these later accounts was made by those scholars of Samoan ancestry such as Simanu (2002), Tavale (2012a & 2012b), Tui Atua (2009b & 2011a), and Va'a (2001). The change to Samoan death-related rituals in recent times is an important part of this chapter. The continual reappraisal of such long-held traditions raises concerns for the future of Samoan death and mourning culture, with implications for the Samoan language and Samoan customs overall.

The methodological approach taken to gather, analyse and disseminate the *fono fa'atalatalanoa* (narrative dialogue) with participants becomes the key focus of chapter five. In this chapter, I demonstrated that specifically Samoan and Pasefika research approaches form a vital part of the qualitative research design used in this current research. A significant contribution of the methods chapter in this thesis, and in future research concerning Samoan people, has been the presentation of the Uputāua Therapeutic Approach. The UTA emerges from the need for a Samoan-specific approach to research that is aligned with therapeutic intentions of supporting participants who have been impacted by death. The sensitive nature of their experiences renders vital the use of Samoan

protocols that privileges their indigenous reference, while also engaging more modern ideas of therapy that consider the wellbeing of those being researched. The Uputāua Therapeutic Approach provides both requirements.

Chapters six, seven, and eight presented the major findings of this research through three specific case studies. The first case study, chapter six, examined the vital role of traditional leadership and of decision-making during a death. Taulapapa's experience as a paramount chief and *sa'o* was explored in some detail. The central message of this case emphasised the vital role of leadership as the conduit for preparing, gathering, apportioning, and facilitating the sharing of resources to address collective responsibilities during such times. Leaders are responsible for upholding family honour and minimising any disrepute that might bring shame to the family. While the first case study focused on traditional forms of leadership during death rituals, there were some unexpected occasions when leadership and decision-making were enacted in other ways because of the situation.

The second case study, chapter seven, examined how some of my Samoan participants dealt with death caused by a calamitous and unanticipated event. Jared and Netta Schwalger's experience of the *galulolo* wave that destroyed their livelihood and killed four of their family members is examined in this chapter. Although the tsunami ravaged their lives, it could not rescind the strength of their cultural heritage and Christian faith. The importance of family support and of religious faith to assist grievors in their physical, psychological and emotional recovery is a key feature of this case, in addition to the value of professional therapeutic care.

The third case study, chapter eight, investigated the impact of Samoan death practices on New Zealand-born Samoans, particularly within a New Zealand context. The narratives provided by Tauivi, who has a mixed Samoan/European heritage, informed the core findings of this third case study. An important consideration from this case is the need for Samoan traditions to be reassessed so that they take into account the evolving context of all Samoans living outside of Samoa itself. For some New Zealand-born Samoans like Tauivi,

his account shows that he and his siblings had made their own ways of ceremony and mourning to honour his father.

Although each of the three case studies is distinctive, there were many similarities which connected the experiences of these three men and the other participants. Each of the chapters identified gave examples of the importance of continuing bonds in the lives of Samoan people to their overall recovery. For men in particular, the significant function of physical performance expressed through *tautua* (service) and memorialisation rituals strengthen connections to ancestors and family members who have passed away. Maintaining such vital connections is seen as a culturally preferred way of learning to live with grief and loss.

The idea of severing connections with those who have passed away as suggested by Freud (1961), Bowlby (1961 & 1980), and others, is not only a foreign concept, but can also become a barrier to grief recovery when engaging with Samoan people who have experienced bereavement. As Rosenblatt and Wallace (2005) observed, grief theories that are defined from dominant western perspectives, particularly the notion of severing connections with the deceased person, have often been misleading and unhelpful. This present study provides significant support for those theoretical perspectives and therapeutic practices that are culturally embedded in the world of those affected (Ablon 1970 & 1973, Levang, 1998; Stroebe, et al., 1992). Not only are the performance of many rituals that I have discussed throughout this thesis effective in Samoan mourning culture, some of these can be crucial in the process of recovering from grief. Inasmuch as there are concerns about the impact of material culture being experienced as burdensome, the way families pool their resources and support each other remains vital in the grief journey. In light of this study's findings, the best solutions for Samoan recovery from death impacts are those processes that find their connection to Samoan cultural mores and collective community.

### **Fa'amāmā avega: grief and recovery**

Research suggests that men tend to grieve differently to women (Cochran & Rainbowitz, 2003; Miller & Golden; 1998; Stroebe, et al., 1998), and that men tend to experience greater changes in mood compared to women (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1997). One result is that men may experience more consequences for their physical health, and their approach to coping. This phenomenon might explain why some of the men's narratives as discussed in chapter eight reacted in destructive ways to cope with their loss. For example, one participant reported battling the impulse to avenge his brother's death by seeking retribution despite any negative consequence. Other participants reported drinking alcohol excessively or using physical violence as an outlet for expressing their pain and anger. Others participants stayed away from home for long periods, choosing to stay with friends to avoid feeling left alone, which was also a trend with the young men the author spoke to during the tsunami interventions. These destructive ways of coping only made matters worse for many of these men. Such avenues for coping with death seems to align with what Golden (1996, 2000) suggested were the ways men dealt with death. That is, such practices as absence or anger outbursts reveal that men are more than just silent or solitary mourners.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, one of the reasons for my specific focus on Samoan men in grief was due to my work with many victims of the tsunami. For some of the men who were asked to recover bodies of the dead, dig makeshift graves, and search for missing bodies amongst other tasks, their coping with the devastation revealed their inability to make sense of their loss adequately. However, what is also revealed in my research that is absent from Golden's (2000) work is the significant role of cultural practices that validate and affirm those parts of life and of living as Samoans. That is, the physical service of *tautua* was helpful for them to mediate their negative mood states and in turn it became a therapeutic path. Furthermore, the key role of their ancestral connections (see chapter two), their Christian and spiritual faith (see chapters four, six, seven, and eight), and their strong link to family and community (see chapters two, four, and six) serve as support in the recovery journey for many of the men in my research. The existing social structure within the *'āiga*, the village,

and the church could well become an added avenue for the encouragement and training of such therapeutic support as well. In fact, many of the psychosocial and grief recovery trainings that I was involved with after the tsunami were carried out in churches throughout Samoa and attended by church ministers and key members of their congregations.

This thesis also revealed that Samoan men sought support from other respected members in their community. For example, in chapter eight, some of the men reported seeking a trusted and respected person within their family or community network for counselling-type support at some point in their recovery. The level of seeking support was more prominent amongst those who were New Zealand-born than those who were born in Samoa. It could be argued here that the preference for seeking counselling by New Zealand-born Samoans compared to their Samoan-born counterparts is because counselling is more readily available and accessible in New Zealand than it is in Samoa. Despite the greater profile of professional counselling, for the majority of my Samoan-born participants, counselling is still seen as the advice provided by elderly *matai*, or a church minister, rather than someone outside their personal community (Seiuli, 2004 & 2010). This perception about the provision of counselling is exemplified again by a recent movie called *O le Tūlafale: The Orator* (Tamasese, 2011) which addresses issues of shame, loss and ultimately, death. Interestingly, since the tsunami the recognition of counselling help and the value of providing professional therapeutic support following a death is finding acceptance alongside the traditional advice from elders or church ministers. This can only serve to benefit Samoan people overall, provided that it is culturally responsive.

A factor in managing and working through the various levels of emotion experienced is the length of time that has elapsed since the death event itself. Concerning this time factor, many of the men in this study reported that their lives are much easier to manage now, especially as they continue to journey forward. Despite this progress, it does not equate with complete recovery or life routines unhampered by some resurging memory associated with their deceased relative. In actuality, men like Jared (chapter seven) and Tauivi (chapter eight) continue to ride the emotional waves associated with their loss on a regular

basis. These men are slowly transitioning themselves from the realm of chaotic to calm spaces, especially as they become better aware of adverse memory triggers.

Grief resolution within Samoan culture is difficult to pin-point because its processes are often taken for granted. Although death itself is an unpredictable event, its associated rituals are generally routine and familiar for many Samoans in mourning. Yet it is within these moments of unpredictable disruption that lives are punctuated by familiar rituals that also provide meaningful connections. The ordinariness of such occasions conducted across a “landscape of despair” provides “spaces for care” so that Samoan men find support and healing in their acts of service (Hodgetts et al., 2013; Stolte & Hodgetts, 2013). For many Samoans, the landscape of despair refers not only to the physical severing of relationships by death, but also the loss of the emotional, psychological, social, and familial bond with their beloved family member. The journey of returning to normal life patterns embraces the need to create spaces of care. In the context of Samoan funeral patterns, it does this by recognising the importance of Samoan cultural rituals, and of their adhering values, in facilitating avenues of healing for those in grief.

Considering grief resolution that recognises the importance of cultural performance creates spaces for care that support Samoan men in and throughout their mourning journey. In this regard, my participants encourage other Samoan men to maintain their collective identity during times of loss and to be cautious about opting for individuated *palagi* grieving styles. Through their own experiences of addressing grief, individuation can lead to isolation, as suggested by Miller and Golden (1998), where men are encouraged to process their emotional world through the lens of ‘manliness’. Ultimately, remaining isolated, staunch, or stoic (Ablon, 1970) can prolong the painful associations with loss. The benefit of communal membership shared by Samoans allows the load to be shared amongst a loving and supportive community. This thesis has shown that addressing grief in many Samoan contexts is not a silent, lonely, or isolated process. Grieving provides opportunity to embrace one’s relatives and a wider network of support. This way of journeying through death is reported to assist

Samoans in recovering much more quickly than the general population in urbanised centres (see Ablon, 1970 & 1973).

Assigned responsibilities provide the men in this study with meaningful activities that kept them occupied. The various roles and tasks involved in mourning rituals became a tangible path that transitioned them through the processes of loss and grief, as well as allowing them to prepare for and be resolved about the loss itself. Their *tautua* expressed their love for their deceased family member in practical and in useful ways (Braginsky, 2003; Kramer, 1995). The cultural activities engaged in by the men in this study focused on their contributions towards *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa* (food items, *toga*, money, and service), particularly family leaders or those who were involved with decision-making processes (Holmes & Holmes, 1992; Va'a, 2001). These practical responsibilities concur with Golden's (2000) perception of the way men dealt with loss. Men tend to immerse themselves in symbolic activities that help them to make sense of their thoughts and feelings associated with the loss. Their duties embodied the code of family honour (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2006; O'Meara, 1990). Considering the contribution of these vital cultural rituals to healing after death's impact, it is imperative that Samoan patterns of addressing death and grief are validated, like many of the perspectives that exist in grief theory currently. This thesis offers a unique cultural alternative to contemporary grief work that supports Samoan men and their families in returning to regular life routines.

The acknowledgment and inclusion of these important cultural patterns is imperative to Samoan men's, and indeed all Samoan people's identity and belonging (Tamasese, et al., 1997; Tui Atua, 2009b). In this regard, Samoan men's participation in funeral customs not only helps them to actively engage with the event itself, but also allows them to respond to the challenge of embracing the cultural patterns of old that have been passed down through the generations. Their direct involvement in funeral culture helps them to maintain their knowledge of such practices. Funeral customs materialise history and culturally-patterned relationships by keeping them alive and evolving through their continuous enactment (Hodgetts et al., 2013; Webber-Dreadon, 1999). It is

through the enactment of this heritage that their cultural skills and their language are strengthened. This *tulagavae* (a place to stand) is a place of strength, where their Samoan identity and their collective sense of belonging serve them well wherever they are located (Anae, 1998; Lee-Hang, 2011; Suaalii-Sauni, 2006). It is through such interactions that Samoan heritage for many of the men in this research came alive. Their involvement transferred these cultural ideals into a living identity that validates their Samoan heritage (Seiuli, 2004 & 2010). It is a living legacy that is worthy to be embraced, and to be passed on to future generations. This has been a vital call that cannot be ignored, compelling many, including my participants, to continue to wrestle with its prerogatives.

### **Tōfā mamao: knowledge transformation**

This thesis has shown that it is the universal response to bereavement that provides the foundations from which cultural disparity can be observed and examined (Vaioleti, 2003 & 2006). Understanding the unique Samoan cultural perspective has been an important part of this research project's methodological processes. Insights and understandings have been gained as a result, through the discussion of the narratives of my participants alongside my own experiences from the foreground of Samoan cultural rituals (Buckle et al., 2009 & 2010). The work here remains significant for many Samoans experiencing grief, as well as for those who have the capacity to provide support during such emotionally intense events.

An overarching therapeutic objective of this thesis was that the lessons and experiences gained are shared with and passed on to others. Knowledge transformation is one aspect of this research that my participants felt could be valuable for other Samoan men experiencing grief. The following areas offered the greatest contribution of support that assisted my participants during their experiences of mourning: *Ola fa'aleagaga* (Spirituality); *Nofo sauni* (Preparation); and *Tausi le vā* (Honouring relational spaces).

*Ola fa'aleagaga* in contemporary times is governed predominantly by Christian practices and beliefs (Field, 1991; Taule'ale'ausumai, 1997a & 1997b;

Va'a, 2001). Spirituality is especially vital during times of death and mourning. The function of Christian duties, such as seeking God for help or spiritual guidance, supported many during their moments of distress (see Kiwi's family in chapter four, Jared's account in chapter seven, and Tauivi's experiences in chapter eight). Acts of communal worship helped to draw members together in an attitude of unity and devotion. Death impacts reminded these men of their dependence on God, and their need for God's comfort during such emotionally stressful events. Oftentimes, the various church services also became helpful in transitioning families throughout the mourning period.

The realm of spirituality must also make room for genealogical links to divine ancestors. And although the emphasis of inherited links to *Tagaloa-a-lagi* is generally muted due to strong religious influences, they still represent vital connections to the progenitors of Samoan heritage. The significance of this cultural link is shown in the performance of death rituals such as the *lagi* or *aualasi'i* as I discussed in detail in chapter seven. As Anae (1998) points out, the co-existence of the church and *fa'asamoa*, in their respective roles, exemplifies the desire for culture and church to live side-by-side.

Such spiritual connections emphasises that Samoan people are intimately connected to both the natural and the divine (Tui Atua, 2009b). Both have a place and a function in the grieving patterns of Samoan people everywhere, not just in Samoa. The men who held chiefly positions indicated that spirituality is much more expansive and inclusive beyond the realms of Christianity or religious affiliation. The ability of Samoan people to facilitate and navigate these seemingly opposing paradigms is to be commended. Each has learned to co-exist, both have chosen to work alongside the other, and both have found a place to lay their unique claim (Anae, 1998). Like any social union, they each demand attention, time, and resources.

Secondly, the inevitable nature of death means preparation (*nofo sauni*) is vital in order to avoid the overwhelming emotional and economic burdens present during such times. To perform cultural duties well requires good preparation (see chapter six). The circumstance of death often arriving unannounced left many reacting in the 'spur-of-the-moment' because they

lacked adequate resources to respond appropriately. Hindsight has become an invaluable tool towards future preparation for similar events, either for themselves or for their loved one. Because of this, many of the men who are family heads (*sa'o*) urged their own family units towards appropriate preparatory action (see chapter six).

Preparation in the current environment is primarily concerned with acquiring adequate financial resources to take care of funeral expenses. But just as important is the role of educating family members about the lessons and expectations required in Samoan death patterns. Within this educative role is the strong message about keeping those parts of *fa'asamoa* culture that are good and valuable, and reassessing or replacing those that lead to unnecessary burdens. And some even go as far as cautioning their members about the acquisition of chiefly titles because their own experiences correlate with heavy financial demands that they want other members to avoid (see Tia's quotations in chapter six).

My participants reported that death practices observed thirty to fifty years ago were carried out in much simpler fashion (see chapter six). Samoan funeral patterns have since become quite elaborate and expensive partly influenced by the financial resources available nowadays. The crisis imposed by the tsunami in 2009 (chapter seven) left many families with little choice but to downscale the way funeral customs were managed. This trend was particularly noticeable in villages that were affected during this catastrophic event. As Tui Atua (2009b) reports, these events did not leave families with a sense of "losing face" (p.7) over simpler ceremonies, but instead allowed them to focus on what was of importance, that is, celebrating the life and memory of their loved ones and grieving for them.

Thirdly, there is a well-known Samoan expression concerned with safeguarding relational boundaries: *ia teu le vā*. This mandate urges Samoans to take care of and to nurture both the visible and concealed spaces deemed vital in their social relationships (see Uputāua Therapeutic Approach - chapter five). Relational spaces need continuous attention to avoid the possibility of trampling the honour or dignity of others in the process. Such interpersonal spaces form a

protective boundary that organises and guides the manner by which one member relates to and communicates with another, and with the wider community (Pereira, 2011, Seiuli, 2012). This is critical, particularly when considering the complexities of *fa'asamoa* cultural practices during times of loss and grief. Understanding the context of *va fealoaloa'i* helps people understand their appropriate connections with one another. Understanding these important cultural protocols has an important part in the healing journey.

Honouring spaces also safeguards against the risk of inadvertently offending or trampling on the *mana* of others. For the majority of the men in this study, protecting family and communal relationships, as well as giving respect to others, is a duty performed with sincerity. The performance of these important values allows the beauty of Samoan culture and traditions to be displayed. Such values are foundational to the Samoan people's ethos (Holmes, 1964 & 1980). The role of taking care of the relational space is an explicitly profound task, one that is grounded in the fundamental practices of honour and respect (O'Meara, 1990; Tamasese, et al, 1997). Honouring spaces provided a clear pathway for the blending of the participants' cultural traditions with contemporary life.

As the *fautua* advice from participants indicates, the overarching contribution of spirituality, preparation and honouring of relational spaces when recovering from death impacts remains central in their lives. The strength of these distinct yet interdependent aspects of recovery helps to incorporate the beauty of Samoan culture, particularly when they are enacted during times of death and mourning.

### **Implications: Samoan communities and recovery**

This research project updates and extends many of the earlier observations reported in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Kramer (1995), Stair (1983), Turner (1984), and also the later work of Ablon (1970, 1971 & 1973). A significant portion of the information updated on this topic includes the recent work of Samoan authors, especially Tui Atua (2009a, 2009b & 2011a), Tavale (2012b), and Simanu (2002), who provide cultural insights into

contemporary Samoan death rituals and mourning practices. Significantly, the present thesis contributes new information about and insights into the many cultural rituals that are performed during death and mourning observances.

Samoan culture in general is perceived by many Samoans, including many of my participants, to embody intrinsic value. Being Samoan offered them a unique heritage that became a vital part of their self-identity. Having a Samoan identity helped many of these men through the journey of losing a loved one to death. While acknowledging that much has changed in the way that traditional Samoan death and bereavement practices are enacted currently, there are many aspects of those traditional patterns that have stood the test of time. This thesis illustrates that while Samoan funeral culture is complex, it has the capacity to display the essential nature of Samoan cultural identity, in turn fostering an important sense of belonging. Funeral observations and mourning rituals are primarily centred on a working union between *fa'asamoa* and spiritual responsibilities (*ola fa'aleagaga*).

In many instances, the death of a loved one is experienced as a 'double blow' to the bereaved due to the emotional turmoil involved with the loss, and the added burden of generating sufficient resources to respond generously. Experiencing this double blow dichotomy led some of my participants, particularly New Zealand-born participants, to question whether *fa'asamoa* funeral practices really do provide assistance to griever's in their recovery journey. Seeing their parents and extended relatives become stressed by financial commitments, or struggle to supply material resources to enact cultural requirements, has left them questioning the meaning and purpose for maintaining such traditions in the current environment. Such questions are particularly aimed at the financial cost involved with maintaining some of the cultural traditions such as *fa'aalologa fa'asamoa* (see chapters seven and eight). I provide a more detailed discuss on reappraising *fa'aalologa fa'asamoa* later in this chapter.

As was highlighted with the documentation of Kiwi's passing (chapter four), the overall financial cost involved in that instance was in excess of \$45,000 (NZD). I also documented in case study one (chapter six) that it cost Pule

approximately \$40,000 (SAT) to take care of his mother's funeral expenses. More recently, the funeral costs associated with an elderly Samoan grandmother in central North Island came to about \$65,000 (NZD). These examples do not take into account other costs, such as travel between Samoa and New Zealand, or if they decide to enact an unveiling, which most Samoan families do. These are astronomical financial commitments compared to a palagi-styled funeral that may cost around \$5,000-\$8,000. The continuation of prevailing expectations to front up financially and materially led to some participants voicing their desire for relief, together with the need to reconsider current situations amongst the many that now live outside of Samoa. This is an urgent situation that needs attention, not only within the family structure, but the church, the village and the country as a whole.

Like many aspects of Samoan culture, funeral performance is caught up in the materialistic and commercial nature of capitalism. The entanglement of western influences and of capitalism continues to greatly impact upon families, especially in taking care of their cultural responsibilities during a death. Tui Atua (2009b) suggests that many of the funeral enactments in recent times are driven by greed and vanity rather than by the original purposes of these practices. The concerning nature of excessive funeral performance needs to reconsider family life for those living outside of Samoa. I offer two alternatives from my participants' narratives as possibilities for moving forward: reassessing *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa* (reciprocal performance); and, adopting more palagi-styled funerals, especially by those living outside of Samoa.

### **Reappraising *fa'aaloaloga fa'asamoa***

*Fa'asamoa* traditions (*fa'aaloaloga*) and *fa'alavelave* performance are so intricately intertwined that it can be difficult to distinguish between them. Compared to earlier records of Samoan death rituals, contemporary funeral customs have become more elaborate and expensive (Tui Atua, 2009b). This has resulted in many individuals and families feeling overburdened and stressed. Additionally, the current practices of reciprocal performance invariably mean that those who are receiving the *si'ialofa* gifts feel obligated to respond in kind,

and most often, to do so more extravagantly than the gift they were given. Many experience these rituals as extremely costly, and sometimes a pointless exercise, particularly for those who are already suffering deeply from their loss.

The difficult economic situations faced by many Samoans, my participants included, should encourage limitations on the amount of resources donated, together with large financial gifts to clergy and *matai*. In some Samoan circles, the display of wealth is closely associated with honour. This dilemma is significantly highlighted by my research participants and their families during times of bereavement. The call of '*taofi le malo*', that is, to withhold the traditional exchange, reflects the cries of some with the burden of traditional fa'asamoa exchange as I discussed in chapters four and six. It is the immediate reciprocal nature of the exchange that is problematic for many Samoan people, not the exchange process itself. Giving at a time of loss is an act of compassion that is valued and appreciated but the genuineness of this act is tarnished by the expectation to reciprocate immediately, and in kind.

Cultural obligations and mutually supportive practices can be functional in a village setting and a source of strength and unity (see Ala'ilima, 1986; Holmes & Holmes, 1992; Meleisea, 1987; Va'a, 2001). However, these practices have been transformed through colonialism and the imposition of a monetary system that now quantifies contributions. The strained and distanced relationships and tensions experienced now may exemplify and extend Simmel's (1908/1979) proposition that money can pervert socio-cultural and interpersonal relations, and impoverish community life. In more recent periods, the negative reputation attached to the way money and resources are sometimes badly managed has impacted upon the way these cultural practices are perceived by participants and observers of such traditions. For many of the men in this study, to receive support at a time of crisis is a humbling and honouring experience. Compassion and humility are the critical values that embody the practice of *si'ialofa* (gift-out-of-love), which in turn becomes the foundation for wellness in communal relationships, especially in times of death and mourning.

Much of the leadership required to champion this cause of action is in the important domain of family leaders (*sa'o o le 'āiga, matai*) and church ministers

because they are the esteemed group that are attributed public honour at such occasions. Tui Atua (2009b) urges family leaders to help reassess old or irrelevant practices, and to embrace the ideals and values that are “life-affirming, love-affirming, and faith-affirming” (2009b, p.9). It is this hierarchy of authority that holds the ultimate responsibility to pave a more equitable and affordable path to funeral performance for all Samoan people. Many will agree that a move to easing the material burdens associated with such customs will invariably help to relieve physical and psychological burdens with Samoan funeral culture altogether.

As revealed in the preceding text, some aspects of *fa’asamoa* customary practice disadvantage rather than benefit the community, but most aspects remain useful and effective. It is common knowledge that there are many valuable practices in most cultures, together with aspects that need attention and possible adjustment or modification, and Samoan culture is not exempt. Despite some of the undesirable characteristics associated with some *fa’asamoa* customs, there are also many aspects of Samoan end-of-life rituals which are still useful, in fact vital, and must be maintained.

Even though parts of Samoan death practices remain challenging, a complete overhaul of end-of-life customs is not required. Many of my younger participants, New Zealand-born included, are supportive of the revitalization of such Samoan patterns. However, they want to see greater consideration for those who live and are raised outside of Samoa. Many men in this study have expressed that the true essence of *fa’asamoa* cultural practices are aligned to biblical values such as unity, family support, humility, and honour. To give up the culture because of challenging practices would also involve relinquishing these essential values that uphold the integrity of their identity as Samoan men.

### **Palagi-styled funerals**

A reasonable number of my participants advocated for the adoption of palagi-styled funeral services by Samoan people. The focus at such events is the commemoration of the deceased person’s life, instead of the desire to respond

to cultural expectations as would be deemed appropriate if the death occurred in Samoa. Some Samoans see this form of farewell as 'keeping it simple' and its adoption will adequately reflect the process of acculturation along the lines of the proverbial expression: "*when in Rome, do what the Romans do.*" In this context, the use of palagi-styled funeral practices would embrace to a greater extent the lifestyles of Samoans who want to engage in end-of-life rituals that they prefer, whether they are living in Samoa or other part of the world, such as those enacted by Jared and Netta, and Tauivi.

It must be stated that palagi-style funerals have also been influenced by other indigenous cultures such as Maori death practices in New Zealand (Te Awakotuku & Nikora, 2009). Therefore, even the notion of a palagi-style funeral could be problematic for some because there are no specific markers of what this may actually mean in practice. As a result, palagi people may well enact funeral customs according to their preference at the time, whether strictly European, or mixed with other cultures, or both. This preference will vary from one palagi family to another. Nevertheless, such differences have not deterred some Samoan people from considering that palagi-style funerals are much easier to enact. Underlying the greater desire for a palagi-style funeral is the lesser financial expense incurred compared to Samoan-styled funerals.

The adoption of palagi-styled death customs could also lead to the exclusion of *fa'asamoa* customary traditions, similar to experiences that were reported by Tauivi in chapter eight. In that situation, the Will left by his father dictated the terms of his funeral service and cremation. The palagi-style funeral plan aimed to keep his farewell 'easy and simple' rather than the extravagant farewell generally observed with Samoan led funerals. The outcome of such exclusions means withholding any exchange of money, food items, and cultural goods to ministers, *matai*, and esteemed guests like those I documented in chapters four and six. Abstaining from such cultural exchange may relieve some of the added stresses associated with Samoan death and mourning practices as discussed earlier.

Palagi-styled funeral practices would allow for the consideration of other alternatives to traditional death practices such as cremation. The movement

towards cremation as a legitimate option for body disposal becomes a way of reducing costs associated with death, but only in locations outside of Samoa. The perceived value of cremation as reported in case study three (chapter eight), particularly the emphasis on Tauivi's father's death and the discussion on the Crematorium facility in Samoa offers new insight into this end-of-life practice. In Samoa, the dead can be buried in the family plot at no cost. Additionally, a person can still be buried in Samoa while being wrapped only in a *siapo* instead of needing an expensive coffin. This cultural alternative was prominently displayed with victims of the *galulolo* (chapter seven) in 2009. The *galulolo* left many families with little option but to bury their relatives with the simple resources available to them at the time. The capacity to reduce costs is not the same for those who live in locations like Hamilton, New Zealand, where the cost associated with purchasing a burial plot is approximately \$5000 (NZD), with additional costs for digging and refilling the grave. Local government regulations stipulate that the dead must be buried or be cremated, and the body must be transported in a containment unit and many people use a coffin for this purpose. Burying a deceased person with a *siapo* as their only wrap is not prohibited in New Zealand, but this is not a practice that has been enacted by Samoan families living abroad. The simplicity of such burial practices can be perceived as dishonouring or shameful to the family. It seems that the only exception was the context imposed by the *galulolo* which allowed simplified practices that were deemed appropriate, but only for such extraordinary events.

A possible result of adopting a palagi-style funeral response is that some could be left with the stigma of 'wanting to be like a palagi', commonly referred to as *fia-palagi*. The label *fia-palagi* is taken as a rebuke and opposes the true nature of Samoan cultural heritage. This way of living, or acting, is discouraged because it seems to emphasise self-centredness rather than family focus. The life of a palagi is perceived to be simpler because of their independence and perceived freedom that leads to limited financial obligations. The claim of *fia-palagi* could also be used as a manipulative point of leverage, the possible outcome being the life that was experienced by Tauivi and his father (see chapter eight). In Tauivi's case, there are also issues of disconnect caused by

distance, both physical and relational, that resulted in Tauivi's family living more palagi-led lives, even when his father maintained financial contributions to his family in Samoa. When people like Tauivi and his father are not in regular relationship with the wider extended network, problems are inevitable when they are only perceived as a source of income during *fa'alavelave* occasions.

Such discontent highlights the need to return to foundational values that are embracive and expansive instead of damaging or manipulative. It is easy to perceive Samoan death and grief practices as offering limited support for Samoan men psychologically but there is room to offer hope. Indeed, the challenges faced by Samoan people living abroad render the concerns raised by this thesis critical for on-going consideration. As reported by the men who participated in this study, many *fa'asamoa* rituals continue to be important because they offer a physical pathway to demonstrate their heartfelt affection during these difficult times in their lives, many of which have therapeutic value in the recovery journey.

### **Galuega fesoasoani: unique contribution**

In light of the evidence that I have presented and discussed throughout this thesis, there are two key areas of original contribution that I want to focus on in this section. The first revisits the contribution of the Uputāua Therapeutic Approach (chapter five) to Samoan research perspectives. I highlight the importance of a participative action approach (Gilmore, Krantz & Ramirez, 1986) as being central to researching Samoan communities, one that is grounded in the many ideals of its Samoan cultural heritage. The second area is the uniqueness of Samoan therapeutic perspectives in addressing grief. Here, I draw from the *fautua'aga* (words of wisdom) narratives that were gifted to me by my participants in the process of *fa'atalatalanoa*. The gift of their wisdom was offered to support and encourage other Samoan men in their healing and recovery journey.

The unique contribution of the UTA to Pasefika research perspectives is centralised under three important areas: *ancestral foundations*, *therapeutic focus*, and *embrasive principles*.

*Ancestral Foundations:* If research models are to have beneficial outcomes for those communities that are being researched, then it is important that they are grounded in the customs and traditions of these same communities (Gilmore, et al., 1986; O'Brien, 2001). The various components of the UTA represent many of the values inherent in Samoan cultural traditions. Their cultural foundations provide the anchor for maintaining vital connections with the core values, beliefs, and practices of their ancestors (Ala'ilima & Stover, 1986; Anae, 1997; Le-Hang, 2011; Lima, 2004). In the case of the UTA, the imperative to transform Samoan culture, particularly in diasporic societies, allows the flexibility to acknowledge western ideas and integrate them into its structure (Lui, 2003, Tamasese, et al., 1998; Taule'ale'ausumai, 1997a; Va'a, 2001.) In doing so, the approach becomes embrasive of the locations and diversity of identity that now contributes to the make-up of Samoan communities outside of Samoa itself. Although there are many multi-ethnic Samoans, their important rituals and cultural patterns, particularly those involved with death customs, are still predominantly Samoan in orientation. Addressing these culturally-embedded contexts provides important insights into their unique perspectives upon health and wellness, especially in contemporary times (Winter, 1996).

*Therapeutic Focus:* The UTA was conceptualised with the key objective of supporting and achieving therapeutic outcomes when researching Samoan people. The significance of a therapeutic focus is the primary result of my own personal experience when I evaluated a 'health focused' research project on Samoan communities (see Seiuli, 1997). In the talanoa interviews, one of the participants declared: "*we are not brown palagi*". Although this statement might seem severe to outside observers, in actuality, this pronouncement echoes the unspoken weariness that many in the Samoan community feel towards the experience of being regular 'subjects' of academic research, with minimal beneficial long-term outcomes for their communities (HRC, 2004, Seiuli, 1997; Tamasese, et al., 1998). In my role as a Samoan researcher, this statement

ensures that my own research approach is one that endorses cultural support, honouring principles, and therapeutic care (Seiuli, 2004, 2010 & 2013). As an experienced counsellor, paying attention to the emotional, psychological, and spiritual wellbeing of my research participants as they narrated their harrowing experiences of death and mourning remained crucial, even after the interviews.

*Embracive Principles:* This approach is wholly consistent with supporting holistic perspectives of health and wellbeing for Samoan people (Morice, 2006, Tui Atua, 2008b, Suaalii-Sauni, et al., 2008). In acknowledging their journey, the current context of their experience is extensive and far-reaching (Webber-Dreadon, 1999). It is no longer just within the confines of Samoa or Samoan-only households that Samoan experience materialises. Much has changed in the landscape of Samoan identity and cultural make-up. That is, while the core values of Samoan life remain relatively intact, the environments in which many of these values are practiced have evolved too (Samu & Suaalii-Sauni, 2009). It is therefore prudent in this regard to embrace such principles and patterns to support their on-going wellness (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). Seiuli (2004 & 2010) advocated for the integration of Samoan values and principles with some western perspectives of therapeutic care as the best approach for counselling Samoans living outside of Samoa. Weaving Samoan cultural knowledge and understanding with western models of wellbeing can create a synergetic alignment that often exceeds the outcomes of the one predominant perspective (Seiuli, 2004 & 2010). Furthermore, if the therapy is facilitated by another Samoan person, the likelihood of achieving success in recovery increases dramatically.

### **Future research possibilities**

In this section, I explore three areas of importance in which the findings of this research project could be extended in future research studies. The three areas to be discussed in the following section are: *Tulagavae* (identity and belonging); Cyber-world and Death (technology in Samoan death patterns); and Cremation.

Samoa culture in contemporary contexts comprises both traditional and current elements in its performance and maintenance. This is certainly the case for death and funeral patterns, especially given the ever-increasing transnational context of people. Death culture continues to challenge the core of the Samoan self and its place in diasporic locations. Identifying as Samoan does not necessarily foster or provide a place of belonging (*tulagavae*) (Obst & White, 2005). More research is required to better understand how the Samoan people's sense of identity is related to such rituals and end of life patterns that they may observe, perform, or maintain in their designated localities. Questions that could be raised in such an inquiry are: How is identity strengthened or weakened as a result of personal involvement in ritualised performance, or lack thereof? Do identity and belonging change as a result of living in New Zealand compared to Samoa, or do they remain the same? How seriously are these rituals performed, accepted, or validated when enacted by those of mixed Samoan heritage (Samoan/Maori, Samoan/Palagi, Samoan/Chinese, etc.) in places outside of Samoa and New Zealand?

Specifically for death and funeral patterns, one area that requires further research and examination is the impact of technology on the way death is observed and supported within Samoan communities. For instance, a small part of this thesis touched on the recent advent of social network sites such Facebook, and the use of photography and video footage as aids for mourners in sharing their collective grief with worldwide audiences. The availability of such avenues not only increases the profile of such events significantly, but it also raises questions about their use, maintenance and confidentiality. Some concerns raised in chapter seven might usefully be reiterated here because they highlight the need for future research in this direction. Questions could include: to what extent are photographs or video footage capturing dead people perceived to be acceptable for public viewing? What are the perceived and tangible benefits of technological interventions? What impact does technology have in maintaining cultural mores, versus cheapening these core values by being 'overtly displayed'? Questions like these provide an important starting point for further exploration because insights gained will deepen our understanding of the influence of

technology upon the transformation processes in Samoan funeral culture. Admittedly, technology is already being used in a greater capacity than ever before and the likelihood of its continuance with future generations is unquestionable. However, as this thesis has highlighted, it needs to be governed with care and sensitivity, especially in ways that retain the sacredness of many important practices.

Critically, with the increased use of technology, it is important to keep in mind its impact in transforming the culture through the transformation of the language. The key concern here is that, with the proliferation of telephone texting and cyber language as a means of communicating events, the words being employed by users within such forums could mean different things from what they customarily meant, or be spelled differently. Language does evolve and change as people and generations change. Also, some words will fade and new words will emerge, which is inevitable. The result of this transformation could lead to the language, words, and meanings associated with death practices becoming partly removed from their original or traditional nuances. This could also lead to the possibility of losing words, or the replacement of words that are deemed inconvenient in cyber-language practices or characterisations popular among younger generations. An important part of this technological change is the likelihood of text-based communication being void of emotion, feelings, and nuances. This could also result in the presence of many visible or absent 'voids' that people may fall into. These could then become replaced by more modern or western alternatives that appeal to younger user preferences. On one hand, the result of this change could be detrimental to the survival of the culture and its language over forthcoming generations in diasporic locations. On the other hand, it could enhance and extend it further. More research could be done in this regard.

An area that would also be worthy of further investigation is the emergence of cremation as an alternative for body disposal instead of burial. Case study three (chapter eight) examines cremation briefly, particularly with a discussion of the Crematorium Facility in Samoa. More research is required here to examine its wider acceptance, usage and associated costs within the wider

Samoan community. Additionally, it would be useful to understand some reasons for Samoan communities in Samoa, New Zealand, and other places choosing to cremate rather than to bury their relatives. An exploration of the role provided by family leaders, the church or others who may have a say in the decisions regarding the option of choosing cremation compared to burial would be important. Some questions that might be helpful in beginning this exploration are: What were the processes that led to choosing cremation over burial? How were these decisions reached and how were they received by others (extended relatives, church, etc.)? What are the challenges and benefits in opting to cremate instead of having a burial? Does it help to alleviate the financial burdens for the family? If cremation is chosen for one death, does this mean that the rest of the family will follow suit, or is each a one-off decision? Added to this level of inquiry is the need to also explore what people do with the ashes of their beloved members. That is, after cremation, are the ashes then buried in some significant place, or kept in the house somewhere, or taken back to Samoa to be buried with other relatives. These areas of inquiry would provide valuable insights to burial and cremation issues.

### **Fa'amanatuga: concluding reflections**

Death is a universal phenomenon and different cultures deal with its impact in ways that are common and meaningful to their specific indigenous reference. Patterns that are used to address death's presence may vary from one group to the next, or be similar. In providing some concluding thoughts, I want to state three key areas of significance from this current research as a way of reemphasizing how this study answered the two guiding questions.

Firstly, Samoan men respond to death in practical and ritualistic ways to show their on-going connections with their ancestors, their living community of support, and their deceased relative. Although death brings an end to a physical relationship with the deceased, it does not constitute a severing of connection altogether. Death presents an opportunity to engage in specific rituals that remain central to their cultural heritage, requiring these men to demonstrate their commitment through the enactment of their *tautua* service. Much of this

performance relates to practical tasks, as well as physical activities that keep them occupied in useful ways. Yet in this space and through these important tasks, heaving emotions are calmed, meaning is made, and lives are slowly being restored. Their involvement in end-of-life rituals helps them to mourn in culturally relevant and appropriate ways that are familiar to them. Some of these are inherently therapeutic and worthy of recognition, even if some remain challenging. They provide pathways to walk hand-in-hand with their emotional distress, while transitioning them through the course of the grieving processes.

Secondly, my involvement with the tsunami recovery work raised concerns in my mind as a Samoan clinician about indigenous approaches to recovery for Samoan men. This thesis has shown that Samoan men do grieve, but they do so in ways that are specific to Samoan cultural identity whether located in Samoa, New Zealand, USA or other parts of the world. Samoan men's responses to grief and recovery reflect their renegotiated identities with those places and people who share their lives. Inasmuch as these men have made sense of their experiences through physical and practical activities, or by involving themselves in spiritual activities such as church services or *lagi* performance, a significant part to their return to normal routines is the commitment they put towards memorialisation practices. This study is significant in this regard because it is out of the depths of despair and painful experiences that these men offer hope and courage to those who find themselves in similar situations, a living legacy in a way, to help them to remember their beloved (Culbertson, 2011). Their collective *meaalofa* (gift) helps to knit the men of this research project with Samoan communities everywhere. This work offers a love-gift from my participants to their fellow Samoans, a *meaalofa* that will endure through the generations (Seiuli 2004 & 2010; Tupou-Turner, 2007). When therapeutic support engages with such shared qualities, it becomes a reflection of the legacy that connects the past, the present, and the future (Seiuli, 2004; Webber-Dreadon, 1999). As Suali'i-Sauni (2010, p.84) advocates, "Samoan traditional knowledge [has] much to teach the world, the academics, the clinicians, and the cultural world about the human spirit and about its opportunities and designations". For this research project, it is the prevailing

spirit of Samoan men, who have stood in the place of service (*tulagavae tautua*) which offers the gift to this work to cross-culture grief resolution.

Finally, on the basis of expanding current understanding about culture and grief, it remains vital to also acknowledge that healing and recovery from death is a culturally-entrenched process. Culture is central to the wellbeing of people and their sense of belonging. For many of the men in this study, mourning rituals that are done the Samoan way become the ultimate signifier of their Samoan identity. The findings emphasise the centrality of indigenous perspectives of grief resolution when engaging with people from non-western cultures. Conventional (ethnocentric) psychological approaches to grief resolution can learn a great deal about healing and recovery from evidence-based, cross-cultural research such as this study. This can be especially significant in the movement towards addressing the continued disparity between long-held privileging of mainstream perspectives and the complete disregard of indigenous knowledge, especially for disaster models of psychosocial recovery (Cassim, 2013). If psychology and grief work is to better address the underlying needs of diverse communities impacted by such life events, then it needs to acknowledge, understand, and integrate cultural beliefs into its grief theory and practices.

I return to the metaphor of *lalaga o le 'ie toga* that I offered in chapter one and extended in chapter five to engage a Samoan method of closure to this thesis. The thesis has been woven, using the various information strands that I have gathered over the past three to four years that reflects: Samoan history, customs, and traditions; grief, bereavement, and mourning rituals; and approaches to researching Samoan people impacted by death. Importantly, I have taken care to interweave the treasured narratives of my participants into this thesis, supplemented by my own personal journey through these challenging times. The *'ie toga* that has emerged reflects a woven cultural artefact that fuses together indigenous insights, empirical data, and western approaches. This is our *meaalofa* (gift) to contemporary Polynesian scholarship on indigenous perspectives to death and grief resolution. *Ia saō le fa'alalelei! Ia fa'amalo le soifua maua! Fa'afetaia le Atua alofa! Tulouna lava Samoa.*



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## **Appendices**



## **Appendix 1: Covering Letter**

*Participants name:*

Talofa lava. E vi'ia ai pea le Atua le Tama ona o lona alofa ma lona agalelei ua tatou maua ai le malosi ma le soifua manuia, ao feagai ma galuega, ae fa'apea foi le tausiga o aiga pele.

I le ava tele lava ma le fa'aaloalo lava, e fa'amomoli atu ai se fa'afetai i lau afioga, ona o le alofa ua fa'atinoina mai i lenei tagata faatauva'a, ua talisapaia ma lagolagoina mai i lenei vala'au fa'avaivai. O lea ua ou lafoina atu ni tusitusiga e fa'amatala atili atu ai le autu o lenei fa'amoemoe, fa'apea foi le su'esu'ega ma ni fesili o lo'o fia talanoa atu ai i lau Afioga po'o le aiga foi.

Talofa lava. I thank God for his love and mercies, and in hopeful expectation that you are in good health, enabling the important role of nurturing and taking care of family responsibilities.

I want to express sincere thanks and gratitude for being generous in showing interest with my research. I want to especially thank you for agreeing to consider my invitation to participate in an interview as part of the research

Please find attached an information pack outlining my research, together with a consent form for you to sign and send back to me in the pre-paid envelope provided, if you agree to be interviewed by me. I have also included some proposed questions to give you an idea of things around Samoan customs I would like to discuss with you.

If you have any questions or queries about any part of this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact me on (07)855-4650, (027)321-1715, or by email [acs.byron@xtra.co.nz](mailto:acs.byron@xtra.co.nz).

Fa'afetai tele lava ma ia manuia

Byron Malaela Sotiata Seiuli

*PhD Candidate (Researcher)*

## Appendix 2: Information Sheet

University of Waikato  
Maori and Psychology Research Unit (MPRU)  
Faculty of Arts and Social Science

**Project title:** Gāpatiaga i le maliu: Examining customs and cultural practices that support Samoan men and their aiga through bereavement.

**Researcher:** Byron Malaela Sotiata Seiuli  
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Psychology Department  
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## Introduction

The key questions this research seeks to examine are; *how do Samoan men respond to, and make sense of death, bereavement, grief and mourning experiences? What are the customs and cultural rituals that have helped them to grieve and give meaning to these times of upheaval? What has changed in the way that Samoan death customs is carried out today in contrast to those of traditional periods?*

The overall focus of the study therefore seeks to examine and describe customs and cultural practices engaged by Samoan men - in the context of the *aiga* (immediate and extended family networks) – in dealing with death, grief and bereavement impacts.

It is anticipated that this study will examine and describe customs and practices engaged by Samoan people and their *aiga* in response to bereavement. This will involve an examination of

1. Samoan beliefs about death and afterlives;
2. Samoan death ritual;
3. Death impacts upon the *aiga*;
4. Experiences of loss and grief;
5. Pathways towards normal life routines for the *aiga*

### **What are you as a participant invited to do?**

This study specifically focuses on findings from Samoan men's perspectives of mourning and bereavement practices. It seeks to understand how they make sense of their experiences and what they use of Samoa culture to help them return to normal life routines, as well as what they use from western or other perspectives to do the same.

- Participants must be males over 18years old, who identify themselves as Samoan, currently living in New Zealand, or have lived in New Zealand for at least five years in the past.
- The research involves an initial 45mins – 1.30mins one off interview. This can take part with you individually or with support people you may want to invite such as a spouse, sibling or family member. The session will be recorded so I can listen to it later and provide you with a summary report of our talk.
- I also invite you to bring any special 'objects' or 'photos' that are significant to you, of those you know who have passed. This will help with our talk. I want to highlight here that I am a qualified and experienced counsellor with many years of trauma and grief work in New Zealand and the Pacific. You have my full support to help address any issues that may arise out of our discussion or

suggest any referrals for on-going support. However, I also want to emphasise that this is NOT a counselling session, but a semi-structured talanoa/interview.

- Please refer to a copy of questions I propose to explore with you. I hope this will give you an idea of the type of information I want to cover in our discussions. The questions are a guide only, not a 'must follow' procedure. I am interested in a flexible conversation with you. There is a possibility that not all of the questions provided here will be discussed.
- It is my intention that each talanoa interview will be carried out with integrity and sensitivity that is respectful at all times. You have complete freedom and control to answer or not answer any questions you don't feel comfortable with. You also have complete freedom and control to withdraw any comment you may have made in earlier interviews after you receive a summary report from our interview. I will send these to you for your comments, corrections or additional information.
- Your rights to confidentiality will be respected, and your name and other identifying descriptors will be disguised in the final write up, unless you consent otherwise. The report will be submitted to be assessed as partial fulfilment of the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree at the University of Waikato. You are invited to contact any or all of my supervisors if you need to query or discuss any part of this research.
- Participation in this research does not imply consent to participate in any further work arising out of this study. However, it may mean that in future, I will use the research findings for presentation or to write articles or publications. Again, confidentiality will be respected at all times. All data is safely stored at the Psychology Departments Archives filing system kept at the University of Waikato.

Once again, thank you for taking time to consider this request. Fa'afetai lava. Manuia ma ia Soifua

Byron Malaela Sotiata Seiuli

*(Phd Candidate – Researcher)*

## Appendix 3: Fono Fa'atalatalanoa – General Interview Guideline

Proposed questions as our guide

### Samoa protocols and observations

- This initial stage will be governed by whatever format is preferable when we meet. This could be formal or informal. We can discuss this together. This will also include agreement on the most preferred way of conducting the interview. For example, will the conversation be conducted in Samoan or in English?
- I will then seek to explore with you the following questions.

#### 1. General History Information Gathering

Tell me about your *aiga* in Samoa? Childhood? Teenage? Adult?  
Tell me about coming to New Zealand? Who/When/Where/How?  
What were the some of the main reasons for coming to NZ?  
Tell me about your role, position or status in the *aiga*?  
What is your marital status and what is the ethnicity of your spouse? Does it affect your life as a Samoan?  
Does *fa'aSamoa* play any significant role in your family? Explain  
How do you or your family respond to *fa'alavelave*  
From your experiences of addressing *fa'alavelave* is there anything that you would consider keeping or changing? Explain

#### 2. General Experiences of Bereavement

- Tell me any of your recollections of customs, rituals and practices around Samoan death that you can remember?
  - Earliest memories in Samoa (if relevant)
  - Earliest memories in New Zealand
  - Most recent memories
- Tell me about your experiences of Samoan death rituals, customs and practices since being in New Zealand?
- Are there any differences or similarities that you have noticed when a death happens in Samoa versus New Zealand? Explain
- What roles does the church/spirituality/religion play in the lives of Samoan people when death happens?
- Do you think Samoan death rituals and customs (funeral/mourning practices) are similar or different to non-Samoan deaths you have been to? Explain
- What (if anything) has changed? What has stayed the same? Is it good/bad thing? Explain

### **3. Specific Experiences of Bereavement**

- Can you share about an experience of a significant person (relative or friend) who passed?
- How were you related to the deceased?
- How did you find out about their passing?
- Was it 'sudden' or 'expected'?
- What were the settings / layout for the bereavement? (laying of deceased, funeral home, family service, private home, sleeping and eating arrangements, for the families, *fa'aSamoa*, buried here or Samoa)
- How did you participate in the funeral? (time, roles, responsibilities and contributions)
- What significant rituals (eg family service, sitting by the deceased, carrying the coffin, saying goodbyes, etc) were you witness to, a participant in? How did these 'happen'? Explain
- Did the church/spirituality/religion play any role in the life and passing of this person? Explain?
- What was helpful and was not?
- Did you notice anything different from what you are used to?
- General comment on experience

### **4. Customs and Practices that helped in recovery**

- Tell me if anything (customs, prayers, gathering of the aiga, church services, testimonies, roles) you thought, did or felt helped you cope with the loss you experienced in the past or recently.
- What was it about the above (remedy, actions, etc) you tried that you think helped you the most or the least?
- What is your understanding of how it came to you to use that (particular remedy) to help you cope with your loss?
- Did you try to talk to or sought any support or help outside of yourself or family? (eg, minister, family friend, counsellor, doctor)
- Was there anything that (customs, prayers, gathering of the aiga, church services, testimonies, roles) you thought, did or felt hindered or made it worse for you to cope with the loss?
- Where do you think you are now with the grief that you had experienced?
- How do you think other members of your family coped with the same loss? Did they do something similar to you or did they try something else? Explain
- Is there anything else that you consider helped or is helping you or your aiga return to normal life routines? Explain
- As a Samoan man, what are/were there any particular considerations given to the way you dealt with death and grief?
- What were the considerations, challenges and things that helped/didn't help?

### **5. Other comments**

- Is there anything else you would like to comment on, mention or any questions that you might have about anything we have discussed or the research project?

**Fa'afetai tele lava.**

## Appendix 4: Case Study Interview

### Fono Fa'atalatalanoa – Case Study Interview Guideline

Proposed questions as our guide

#### Samoan protocols and observations

- The case study interviews will follow the same format as suggested in the individual face to face interviews pertaining to fa'aSamoa and cultural protocols.
- In addition to the questions discussed in the initial interviews, we will specifically focus on the following themes.

#### Case Study Discussion Themes

- i) **The life of the person who died** – here we are interested in building a cultural picture and life narrative of the person who died, and of those immediately bereaved.
- ii) **Prior funeral arrangements and understandings** – exploring expressed wishes made with respect to funeral arrangement (both within the *aiga* and outside - church, village, work, etc).
- iii) **The funeral sequence** – what happened between the time of death, to the point of disposal (burial, cremation)? What were the considerations, challenges and things that helped?
- iv) **Looking back on what happened** – if things were to be done differently, what would change, what would remain the same? why?
- v) **Looking forward and memorialising** – having had the experience of the funeral, what are/were there any particular reflections given to unveiling/memorial events/ *lotu fa'amanatu* (annual memorial service)?

**vi) Healing pathway** – looking back over your experiences, what helped to support you and your family return to daily life routines?

**vii) Samoan men and death/grief** – as a Samoan man, what are/were there any particular considerations given to the way you dealt with death and grief? What were the considerations, challenges and things that helped/didn't help?

**viii) Other comments** - Is there anything else you would like to comment on, mention or any questions that you might have about anything we have discussed or the research project?

**Fa'afetai tele lava.**

## Appendix 5: Consent Form

Project title: **Gāpatiaga i le maliu: Examining customs and cultural practices that support Samoan men and their aiga through bereavement.**

Researcher: Byron Malaela Sotiata Seiuli

Supervisors: Associate Professor Linda Waimarie Nikora (Chief Supervisor),  
Professor Te Awekotuku & Associate Professor Hodgetts

- I confirm that I identify myself as a Samoan.
  
- I am currently living in New Zealand.  
or
- I have lived in New Zealand previously for at least 5 or more years.

The research has been explained to me and I understand why it is being conducted and how this will involve me. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered. I understand that taking part in this project does not put me under any obligation and that I can decline to answer any particular questions.

I have been informed that the discussion can be held in either Samoan or English, to my preference and comfort. I also understand and agree that Byron Seiuli will record our conversations and will keep a copy of this recorded conversation in a safe and secure place. I also understand that materials (e.g. photos or artefacts) I choose may be used in our discussion. I also understand that photographs of me or my family may only be taken with my consent, and only for the expressed purpose of this research or publications that may arise from this research.

I understand that Byron Seiuli will forward me a copy of the summary report of our conversation for comments, corrections or additions. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research project at any time without having to provide any reason for my withdrawal and also to still be eligible to keep any benefits offered to me. I agree to provide information to Byron Seiuli on the understanding that my identity will not be revealed in any way, unless I consent

otherwise. I also understand that Byron will share the information we discuss with his abovementioned supervisors.

It may be that the findings of this research will be presented to other audiences as a research paper, training forum or conference presentation at a future date. I understand and agree to this. I understand that a copy of this study will be made available for me to access after completion of the project through Byron Seiuli, or, through the University of Waikato Library.

I agree to participate in this research project under the conditions set out on this consent form.

Signed: .....

Name: .....

Date: .....

## Appendix 6: Reimbursement Sheet

Participant identity: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

As a participant in Byron Seiuli's research titled: *Gāpatiaga i le maliu: examining customs and cultural practices that supports Samoan men and their aiga through bereavement*, I acknowledge that I have been given a *meaalofa* to the value of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in voucher/cash.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 7: Translated Research Information

### Fa'atomu'aga

O le fesili o lo'o taumafai lenei iloiloga fa'aleaoga e tali o le: *pe fa'apefea e ali'i/tane Samoa ona latou tali i fa'anoanoaga ma le o'otia o latou tagata pe a feagai ma le maliu?* Ua iai le manatu o le a su'esu'eina ma fa'amatalaina tu ma agaifanua fa'aSamoa o lo'o fa'aaogaina e tamaloloa/tane Samoa ma o latou aiga e tali atu ai i le tulaga fa'avauvau o lo'o a'afia ai latou ona o le maliu ma le oti. O le a aofia i lenei iloiloga le su'esu'eina o:

1. Talitonuga fa'aSamoa e fa'atautu i le maliu ma le oti ma le ola i tua atu o le maliu;
2. O tu ma agaifanua fa'aSamoa e fa'atinoina i se maliu;
3. O auala e a'afia ai se aiga ona o le maliu;
4. O ni fa'ata'ita'iga fa'alesoifuaga o a'afiaga ona o le toesea ma le loto fa'avauvau;
5. O ala e aga'i i mea e masani ai aiga i aso ta'itasi

### O mea e fai e oe lea ua valaaulia e auai i lenei iloiloga

O lenei sailiiliga e fa'asino tonu lava i le sailia o manatu ma lagona o alii/tane Samoa e fa'atautu i le auala e fa'atinoina ai lo latou o'otia ma le agaga fa'anoanoa ona o le maliu ma le oti. O le a taumafai lenei sailiiliga e malamalama i le auala e talia gofie ai e ali'i/tane lea a'afiaga i o latou soifua, ma tu ma agaifanua fa'aSamoa latou te fa'aaogaina e toe fo'i ai lo latou olaga i mea e masani ai i aso ta'itasi. O e o le a fa'aaogaina i lenei sailiiliga o ali'i/tane Samoa, pe tupuga mai i tagata/matua Samoa; o lo'o alala i totonu o Niu Sila nei, pe sa nonofo i Niu Sila, ma sa auai pe na molimauina le fa'atinoina o se maliu e tusa ai ma tu ma aga'ifanua fa'aSamoa, aemaise le fa'aalia o lo latou fa'anoanoa.

O lenei su'esu'ega e aofia ai ni fa'atalatalanoaga e le silia ma le lua. E mafai ona e auai na'o o oe, po'o lou valaauina o nisi e te mana'o e sapaapaia oe, e pei o lou faletua/tausi, se uso/tuafafine, po'o seisi tagata o lou aiga. O le a pu'eina nei fa'atalatalanoaga, ma e tusa o le itula i le lua itula le umi. E taliaina foi lou aumaia o se mea taua po'o ni ata o le sa pele ia te oe, po'o nisi o lo'o taua ia te oe, ae ua maliu/maliliu. Ou te fa'aailoa atu o a'u o se tagata ua iai le agava'a ma le tomai fa'apitoa, le poto masani, ma ua pasia i le avefa'afautua, ma ua tele tausaga o o'u galue i Niu Sila ma le Pasefika i tulaga o mataupu po'o fa'afitauli matuia ma le faanoanoa. Ou te tuuina atu lo'u sapaapaia atoa o outou ma lo'u fesoasoani i ni mataupu e tula'i mai i lo tatou fa'atalatalanoaga ma e mafai ona ou avatuaina nisi fautuaga e mafai ona maua ai se fesoasoani. Ae ou te fia

fa'amamafaina atu foi, o lenei fa'atalatalanoaga e le o se tulaga faufautua, ae o se fa'atalatalanoaga fa'asamasamanoa.

E talosagaina lou taga'i ane i le kopi o fesili o le a ta su'esu'eina. O le fa'amoemoe o le a mafai ona e silafia ai le ituaiga o fa'amatalaga/fa'amaumauga o le a aofia i le ta talanoaga. O fesili nei e na o ni ta'iala, ae le fa'apea o le a tausisi pe fa'amamafa e mulimuli i ai. O le naunauta'iga o lo'o iai o le mafai ona talatalanoa fa'asamasamanoa. O lo'o iai foi le manatu e le aofia uma fesili nei i le fa'atalatalanoaga.

O lo'o iai le fa'amoemoe o lenei fa'atalatalanoaga o le a fa'atinoina i se auala e fa'amautuina ai le mea moni ma le sa'o, ma e faia ma le fa'aeteete ma i se agaga fa'aaloalo i taimi uma. E ia te oe le sa'olotoga ma le malosi'aga e te mafai ai ona e tali ai i se fesili, po'o le le talia pe a le fiafia i le mea o lo'o fesiligia ai oe. O lo'o ia te oe foi le sa'olotoga ma le pule e te mafai ai ona toe ave'ese se fa'amatalaga sa e faia i se fa'atalatalanoaga muamua pe a mae'a ma ua e mauaina/u'umia se kopi o fa'amaumauga tusitusia o le fa'atalatalanoaga. O le a ou lafoina atu ia te oe se kopi mo ni ou manatu e fa'aalia, fa'asa'oga po'o nisi manatu/fa'amatalaga fa'aopopo, a o le'i faia le ta fa'atalatalanoaga lona tolu, ma o le ta feiloaiga mulimuli fo'i lea.

O le a aloaia ma amanaiaina lou aia tatau mo le le fa'aailoa fa'alaua'iteleina o ni fa'amatalaga sa e faia, ma e le fa'aילוaina fo'i lou tagata i le lolomiga fa'aiu o lenei su'esu'ega, se'i vagana ua e malie ma e fa'atagaina le fa'aילוaina o lou tagata. O le a tuuina atu le lipoti o lenei su'esu'ega i le lunivesite o Waikato mo lo latou iloiloga aua le fa'amae'aina o se vaega mo le fa'aailoga o le Fa'afomai i Mataupu Fa'afilosia (Doctor of Philosophy PhD). O lo'o iai lou avanoa e te mafai ona e fa'afeso'ota'i so'o se isi o o'u polofesa po'o faiaoga pe a iai sou fesili, pe e te mana'o e te talanoa iai i se mea e fa'atatau i lenei su'esu'ega.

O lou auai i lenei su'esu'ega o le a le avea lea ma manatu ua e malie e te auai i nisi su'esu'ega e ono tulai mai i aso o i luma. Ae ono mafai ona ou fa'aogaina nisi o fa'ai'uga sa maua mai lenei su'esu'ega mo ni fonotaga, po'o ni tusitusiga fa'aleaoga po'o ni tusi e lolomiina. E toe fa'amanatu atu o le a aloaia lou aia tatau e le fa'aילוaina lou tagata pe a le mana'o ai. O tusitusiga ma fa'amaumauga uma o lenei su'esu'ega o le a teuina i le potu o fa'amaumauga o le vaega o mataupu tau suega fa'alemafaufau (Psychology Department Archives) o le lunivesite o Waikato.

Ou te toe fia momoli atu lo'u fa'afetai tele mo lou taimi sa fa'aavanoaina e talia ai lenei fa'atalau'ula atu. Afai ua ae'a lou finagalo sou naunauta'iga e te auai lenei su'esu'ega, ou te talosagaina lou sainia o le pepa maliega ma faafoi mai ia

te a'u i le teutusi ua mae'a ona tologiina o lo'o avatu fa'atasi ma le pepa maliega. E mafai foi ona e fa'afeso'ota'i mai a'u i le numera telefoni po'o le emeli o lo'o tuuina atu e fa'atulaga ai se taimi lelei ma se aso tatou te feiloai ai.

Fa'afetai tele lava. Manuia ma ia soifua.

Byron Malaela Soiata Seiuli  
Tagata Su'esu'e

## Ta'iala mo le Fono Fa'atalatalanoa

### Fono Fa'atalatalanoa - Ta'iala mo le Fono Fa'atalatalanoa

Fesili ua tuuina atu e avea ma ta'iala

#### Vaega fa'atulagaina mo saililiga fa'aSamoa

- O le vaega muamua leni e fa'atinoina i se auala e talafeagai mo le taimi ta te feiloai ai. E mafai ona fa'atalatalanoa i se tulaga aloaia pe fa'asamasamanoa. O le a mafai ona ta talanoaina fa'atasi lea tulaga. O le a aofia ai foi i lea talanoaga muamua se maliliega i se auala talafeagai e fai ai le fa'atalatalanoaga. Mo se fa'ata'ita'iga, pe fa'aaogaina le gagana Samoa po'o le gagana Peretania i le fa'atalatalanoaga.
- Ona ta sailiili ai lea o fesili nei.

#### 1. Aofa'iga o Fa'amatalaga i lou Tala'aga.

- Fa'amatala mai lou *aiga* i Samoa? Le taimi o lou laitiiti? Talavou? Tagata matua?
- Fa'amatala mai le auala na e o'o mai ai i Niu Sila. O ai na e malaga mai ai? O anafea? O ifea na e alaala ai? Pe na fa'apefea na e sau?
- O a ni mafua'aga na mafua ai lou fai malaga mai i Niu Sila?
- Se'i ta'u mai lou tofiga, galuega fai, tulaga i totonu o lou aiga?
- Ua e fa'aipoipo pe leai, ae o le a le tagata nu'u o lou faletua/tausi? O aafia ai lou olaga o oe o se Samoa?
- E fa'atauaina le fa'aSamoa i totonu o lou aiga. Fa'amatala mai.
- E fa'apefea ona tali oe ma lou aiga i *fa'alavelave*?
- Mai lou silafia i faiga o *fa'alavelave*, e iai ni vaega e te u'umau ae pe i ai foi nisi vaega e te suia? Fa'amatala mai.

#### 2. Iloa lautele i Fa'anoanoaga.

- Se'i fa'amatala mai lou silafia o tu ma aga'ifanua fa'aSamoa e fa'atatau i maliu o lo'o e manatuaina?
  - O mea e te manatuaina mai lou laitiiti i Samoa (pe a talafeagai)
  - O mea e te manatuaina i lou fa'atoaitaunuu mai i Niu Sila.
  - O mea e te manatuaina e lata mai nei.
- Se'i fa'amatala mai ni mea e te manatuaina i le fa'atinoina, o tu ma agaifanua fa'aSamoa o maliu talu ona toaitaunuu mai i Niu Sila.
- E iai ni mea e eseese pe tutusa ai le fa'atinoina o maliu i Samoa ma maliu i Niu Sila?
- O le a le matafaioi o le lotu/ola fa'aleagaga/talitonuga fa'aleagaga i le olaga poo le soifuaga o tagata Samoa pe a maliu se tasi?
- E te manatu e tutusa, pe eseese, le fa'atinoina o maliu i le fa'aSamoa ma

maliu o isi atunuu/tagatanuu. Fa'amatala mai.

- Ua iai ni mea ua suia? (pe afai ua iai ni suiga) O a ni fa'atinoga o lo'o tumau pea lona fa'atinoina? E lelei pe leaga. Se'i fa'amatala mai.

### **3. Iloa Patino i Fa'anoanoaga**

- E mafai ona e fa'asoa mai se vaega o lou olaga na e o'o i ai ina ua maliu se tasi e taua ia te oe (seisi o lou aiga po'o se uo)
- O le a lou faia i le na maliu?
- E fa'apefea na e iloa le maliu?
- O se maliu na tupu fa'afuase'i pe na e iloaina o le a tupu?
- O a tapenaga o le fa'anoanoa? (le mea e taoto/lagomau ai le na maliu, o le fale maliu, sauniga lotu a le aiga, o mea e tofafa ai le aiga ma gaogoga o mea taumafa mo aiga, fa'aSamoa, pe sa teuina iinei poo Samoa) Fa'amatala mai.
- O a ou mea na fai i le maliu (taimi, tulaga, matafaioi ma lou lava tapenaga/tusaga mo le maliu).
- O ai ni vaega taua sa e molimauina pe sa e auai ai (Mo se fa'ata'ita'iga; sauniga lotu a le aiga, au osilagi, tausii maliu, avega o le va'a o le maliu, fa'amavaega). Na fa'afelea ona fa'atinoina ia mea? Se'i fa'amatala mai.
- Na iai se taua o le ekalesia ma le lotu/ola fa'aleagaga/ talitonuga fa'aleagaga i le soifua ma le maliu o lea tagata? Se'i fa'amatala mai.
- O a ni mea na fesoasoani ia te oe, ae o a fo'i ni mea e le'i fesoasoani ia te oe?
- Na e silafiaina ni mea e 'ese mai mea na e masani ai?
- E i ai ni isi fa'amatalaga lautele e te fia faia?

### **4. O tu ma mea fai na fesoasoani i le aveeseina o le fa'anoanoa**

- Se'i ta'u mai pe i ai ni vaega o le maliu (tu ma agaifanua, faiga talosaga, potopotoga o aiga, sauniga o le lotu, molimau, mea fai) na e manatu, pe na e faia, sa fesoasoani ia te oe i le taimi o le maliu i aso ua mavae po'o se taimi lata mai.
- O le a le vaega o mea ua ta'ua i luga na e fa'aaogaina e te manatua sa fesoasoani tele ia te oe, pe le'i iai tele sona fesoasoani ia oe?
- E fa'apelea na e mauaina le lagona e fa'aaoga lena vaega ina ia fa'afaigofie ona e taliaina le maliu?
- Na e talanoa i se isi pe na e sailia se fesoasoani mai ni isi i tua atu o lou aiga (mo se fa'ata'itaiga; faifeau, uo, faufautua, foma'i)
- E i ai se mea (tu ma agaifanua, faiga talosaga, potopotoga o aiga, sauniga lotu, molimau, matafaioi) na e manatu e le'i fesoasoani i lou fa'anoanoa?
- I lou manatu, o le a le tulaga o lo'o e iai i le taimi nei e tusa ai ma le fanonanoa sa e iai?
- Ae fa'afelea na fa'ataliaina gofie e le isi vaega o lou aiga le fa'anoanoa? Na latou fa'atinoina pei na e faia pe ese fo'i se latou auala sa latou fa'aaogaina?

Se'i fa'amatala mai

- E i ai se isi mea e te manatu na fesoasoani, po o lo'o fesoasoani ia oe ma lou aiga i le tou toe fo'i i le olaga masani? Se'i fa'amatala mai.
- E i ai ni mea/vaega patino mo le foia ai le loto fa'avauvau i alii/tane Samoa?
- O iai ni vaega patino po o ni lu'itau ma isi mea sa fesoasoani pe e le'i fesoasoani ia oe?

#### **5. Fa'amatalaga fa'aopoopo**

- E i ai se isi fa'amatalaga e fia faia pe ta'ua, po o se fesili i so o se mea na talanoaina i leni su'esu'ega?

**Fa'afetai lava.**

## **Fa'atalatalanoaga mo le mataupu su'esu'eina**

### **Fono Fa'atalatalanoa: Ta'iala mo le Fa'atalatalanoaga o le mataupu su'esu'eina**

Fesili o le a avea ma ta'iala

#### **Tu ma aga'ifanua fa'asamoa ma mea sa maitauina**

- O le a mulimuli le fa'atalatalanoaina o fa'ata'ita'iga ta'itasi (case study) i le auala sa fa'atinoaina ai le fa'atalatalanoaga fa'afesaga'i (interview) e uiga i tu ma aga'ifanua masani fa'asamoa.
- O le a fa'aopoopo i fesili o fa'atalatalanoaga muamua ia nisi o mataupu e fa'aautu i mea nei.

#### **Mataupu e fa'aautu iai fa'atalatalanoaga**

**i) O le olaga o le ua maliu.** O le a sa'ilia se tala'aga o le soifua o le ua maliu ma lona a'afiaga i le aganuu, faapea ma i latou sa fa'asino tonu iai le maliu.

**ii) Sauniuniga o le maliu ma feutanaiga.** Su'esu'eina o mavaega, manaoga, poo manatu fa'aalia sa faia i le tapenaga o le maliu (i totonu o le aiga ma fafo atu - ekalesia, nuu, galuega, ma isi).

**iii) O le fuafuaga fa'ata'atia mo le maliu.** O mea sa tutupu i le taimi o le maliu e oo i le taimi ua teuina le maliu. O a ni mea sa faatalatalanoaina, o mea sa avea ma lu'itau, ma mea sa fesoasoani ai i le maliu.

**iv) Toe tepa i tua i le mea sa tupu.** 'Ana faapea e toe maua se avanoa e toe fai ai le maliu, o a ni suiga e te faia i le fa'afoeina o le maliu, pe tumau lava i le mea sa fa'atinoaina ai le maliu. Aisea?

**v) Va'avaaiga i luma ma le fa'amanatuina o le maliu.** Ina ua uma le maliu, o a ni mafauauga o loo e to manatu iai e tusa ai ma le talaga teu ma le fa'amanatuina o le maliu/ lotu fa'amanatu.

**vi) Auala sa fofoina o le agaga faanoanoa.** O a ni mea sa fesoasoani ia te oe ma lou aiga e toe fo'i ai le tou aiga i le olaga sa masani ai ina ua ma'ea le maliu.

**vii) Alii/tane Samoa ma le maliu/fa'anoanoa.** O a ni mea sa e manatu iai e fesoasoani ia oe e feagai ai ma le maliu ma lou faanoanoa. O ni manatu, lu'itau, poo mea sa fesoasoani ia te oe/ pe le'i fesoasoani ia te oe.

**viii) Nisi mafauauga.** E iai seisi mea e te manatu e talanoa iai, ta'ua, poo ni fesili e te mana'o e fai e uiga i mea sa talanoaina po'o le su'esu'ega. **Fa'afetai lava.**

## PEPA FA'AMAONIA LOU MALIEGA

**Mataupu su'esu'eina: Gapatiaga i le maliu.** O le su'esu'eina o tu ma agaifanua faasamoa o loo faalagolago iai tamaloloa/tane Samoa ma o latou aiga i taimi o faanoanoaga.

**Le o lo'o fa'afoeina le su'esu'ega:** Byron Seiuli

**Faiaoga o lo'o fa'auluulu iai le su'esu'ega:**

Polofesa Lagolago Linda Waimarie Nikora (Chief Supervisor)

Polofesa Te Awekotuku ma le Polofesa Lagolago Hodgetts

Ou te fa'amaonia o a'u o le Samoa.

O lo'o o'u nofo nei i Niu Sila.

po'o

Sa ou nofo i Niu Sila mo le lima tausaga po'o le sili atu.

Ua mae'a ona fa'amatalaina mai ia te a'u le autu o le su'esu'ega fa'aleaoaoga lenei, ma ua ou malamalama i le mafua'aga ua fa'atinoina ai lenei iloiloga, ma le auala ua a'afia ai a'u. Sa iai le avanoa e fesiligia ai a'u ma ou tali ai i fesili. Ua ou malamalama o lo'u auai i lenei su'esu'ega o le a le tu'uina ai a'u i se tulaga e tatau ona ou tali i ni fesili o le a tu'uina mai, ma o lo'o iai pea le avanoa e mafai ai ona ou le tali i se fesili ou te le taliaina.

Ua mae'a ona ta'uina mai ia te a'u e mafai ona faia lenei faatalatalanoga i le gagana Samoa po'o le gagana Peretania, ae o le gagana ou te mana'o iai ma e faigofie ia te au. Ua ou malamalama foi ma ou malie o le a pu'eina e Byron Seiuli le ma fa'atalatalanoaga ma o le a ia teuina se kopi o le ma faatalatalanoaga sa pu'eina i se mea e malu puipuia ma saogalemu. Ua ou malamalama foi e mafai ona faaogaina i le ma faatalatalanoaga soo se ata poo seisi lava mea ou te mana'o iai. Ua ou malamalama foi o le a mafai ona faaogaina so'o se ata o a'u po'o lou aiga ou te fa'atagaina, mo na'o lenei su'esu'ega po'o ni tusitusiga o le a lolomia e mafua mai lenei su'esu'ega.

Ua ou malamalama foi o le a lafoina mai ia te a'u se kopi o se lipoti o le ma faatalatalanoaga mo so'u fa'amatalaga, fa'asa'oga, po'o se mea e fia fa'aopoopo. Ua ou malamalama o lo'o iai le avanoa e mafai ona ou tu'umuli mai lo'u auai i lenei su'esu'ega i so'o se taimi e aunoa ma le tu'uina atu o se mafua'aga mo lo'u le auai ai, ma o lo'o iai pea lo'u avanoa e tu'u pea ia te a'u so'o se tau sa ofoina

mai ia te a'u. Ua ou malie e tuuina atu ia Byron Seiuli so'o se fa'amatalaga po'o ni fa'amaumauga i lalo o se malamalama'aga o le a le fa'aailoaina lou tagata i so'o se auala, se'i vagana ua ou malie iai. Ua ou malamalama foi o le a talanoaina e Byron Seiuli ma ona faiaoga so'o se fa'amatalaga e tuuina atu ia te ia.

O lo'o iai le avanoa e mafai ona fa'aaogaina ia ni fa'aiuga o leni su'esu'ega i nisi feiloaiga e pei o se pepa i se mataupu sa su'esu'eina, se fonotaga fa'aleaoga, po'o se pepa i se koniferenisi. Ua ou malamalama ma ou malie i lea tulaga. Ua ou malamalama o le a maua lou avanoa e mafai ona o vaai i se kopi o leni su'esu'ega e auala mai ia Byron Seiuli po'o le faletusi o le lunivesite o Waikato. Ua ou malie ou te auai i leni su'esu'ega fa'aleaoga i lalo o aiaiga ma tu'utu'uga o lo'o ta'ua i leni pepa o maliega (consent form).

Sainia: .....

Suafa: .....

Aso: .....