

Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:

Ponton, Vaoiva

Title:

An investigation of Samoan student experiences in two Homework Study Groups in Melbourne

Date:

2015

Persistent Link:

<https://hdl.handle.net/11343/55641>



An investigation of Samoan Student Experiences in Two Homework Study Groups in Melbourne

Vaoiva Ponton

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

of the degree of Doctor of Education

February, 2015

Melbourne Graduate School of Education

The University of Melbourne



Abstract

This research examines Samoan student experiences in two Homework Study Groups in Melbourne using a researcher-practitioner approach. The study highlights the need for teachers to acknowledge students' preferred learning methods, especially those of minority backgrounds like the Samoan participants in this study. Samoan symbolic meanings from traditional tattoos and decorative ornaments are used as metaphors to describe the positive responses provided by participants in this study. Similar to the way in which the *tatau* (tattoo) symbols used in ritual tattooing for Samoan men and women represented readiness to serve one's family and extended community, educational aspirations and employment pathways are explored from a participant perspective as a way of serving and supporting their migrant families in Melbourne. Through a detailed investigation of the experiences of students in two homework study groups in Melbourne, this study finds that while students and their families place a high priority on learning, their cultural practices are not compatible with standard Western learning approaches. The homework study group provided a social space in which students could ask the teacher questions without fear of appearing foolish, and in which they could apply themselves to study. It provided a physical study space away from the demands that Samoan families place on their young people, and it provided a cultural space in which the students could learn according to *fa'aSamoa* (traditional values and beliefs).

This study makes a contribution to an understanding of the motivations of Melbourne-based Samoan students to learn, of what concerns them, and of impediments to their educational success. It also offers insight into the benefits that setting up a specific space for students offers, when its specific intent is influencing the merging of traditional Samoan and Western ideas to further learning and understanding. Participants in this study indicated that Homework Study Groups provided structure and learning strategies that improved academic outcomes. It was not only a space in which participants felt they could seek assistance and support from a teacher/researcher who understood the importance of their cultural values and beliefs, it was also a space where participants felt safe to share the highs and lows of their educational experiences.

Declaration

This is to certify that

- i) *the thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Education except where indicated in the Preface, due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,*
- ii) *the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices (55,000).*

Acknowledgments

This thesis is dedicated to my parents; my late father Matapo'o Natapu Siaosi Natapu and my mother Fuealina Lauina Natapu. I thank God for all that my parents have taught me and for their unconditional love. Were it not for the brave decisions my parents made in migrating to new lands for better opportunities, I would not have had this chance to pursue further study. Thank you for teaching me the beauty of *fa'aSamoa* and for instilling in me the desire to excel in education.

To my supervisor, Professor Johanna Wyn, words cannot express how grateful I am for your generosity in providing positive feedback and encouragement when I lacked confidence in what I was saying. I am so thankful for your faith in me, for your patience, support and care shown towards me during this long journey.

I would also like to acknowledge the support provided by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria, Australia).

Thank you to my extended family, friends and colleagues who have been supportive since the beginning of this study. I am grateful for your belief in me and for encouraging me during this research. Thanks also to the following people who not only read drafts of my thesis but also provided feedback during various stages when needed. They include Professor Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, Dr Roannie Ng Shiu, Mrs Maureen Powles and Mrs Valerie Burley. I also acknowledge the provision of resources, discussions and guidance from Dr Karlo Mila, Airini, Taemanuolo Pulumelo Faaea-Semeatu, Dr Katerina Teaiwa and siblings Lisha and Christopher Sablan.

Thanks finally to my husband Cole – for all the cooked meals I came home to and for caring for our kids during my absence when writing and attending conferences. Thank you for allowing me to pursue this dream and for being there to help me fulfil it. I am indebted to you for teaching me to stand strong and to never give up. To our kids Elijah, Keilana and Luka: thank you for all the times I dragged you all to the university library so I could write and search for books; thanks for understanding when I couldn't do fun things with you because mum had to write. I could not have completed this without you all cheering me on with love and patience during this journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	2
Declaration.....	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
List of Tables	10
List of Images.....	11
Image 2.1: Pasifika Education Plan (2013-2017)	11
 Chapter 1	 13
Introduction: Origin and Purpose of the Research	13
Education in Australia	14
Education in Victoria	14
Policy Changes in Australia: Implications for Pasifika Students in Australia	16
Pasifika Students in New Zealand	17
Table 1.1 Pasifika Tertiary Completion Rates.....	18
(Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017)	18
Positioning the Researcher	20
Defining Pacific Islanders	25
Pasifika People in Melbourne	26
Focusing on Samoan Student Learning:.....	29
Samoan Student Learning Experiences.....	30
Pedagogy - Incorporating Student Backgrounds	31
Table 2.1: AusVels : Standards and Progression Point Examples	34
Scaffolding Student Learning	35
Relevant and Appropriate Curricula	40
Pasifika Learning for Educators in Victorian Schools	41
Creating Roles for Understanding Student Perspectives.....	42
Setting High Expectations	44
Realities Within	45

New Zealand's Education Solution	47
Image 1:1 Pasifika Education Plan (2013-2017)	48
Pasifika Power Up Programme	49
Homework.....	51
Overview of Homework After-School Programs.....	52
A Strengths-Based Approach	53
Structure of Thesis	54
 Chapter 2:	58
Literature Review.....	58
RESEARCHING SAMOAN STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCES	58
'E sui faiga ae tumau fa'avae'	58
The form changes, but the underlying principles remain.....	58
(Samoan Proverb)	58
Introduction to the Literature Review	59
Part 1: Creating Spaces for Learning.....	59
Youth and Culture	61
Performing Identities	62
Performance as Agency	64
Part 2: Understanding Samoanness.....	67
Migration: A Collective Approach to Settlement in New Lands	67
Culture: A Balancing Act.....	71
Parental Expectations	74
Influence of the Church	76
Linking Participant Responses to Samoan Symbolism and Meanings	77
Image 1.2: Samoan Symbolism and Meaning (Sablan & Sablan 2014)	78
Tatau: History and Relevance	81
Image 2.3: Examples of <i>Tatau</i> Symbols and their Meanings	82
Image 2.4 & Image 2.5: Examples of <i>Tatau</i> and <i>Malu</i>	85
Conclusion.....	87

Chapter 3: Methodology	90
Research Design	91
A Qualitative Approach	92
Recruitment of Participants	95
Knowledge of Culturally Appropriate Methods (Attire, Speech and Approach).	97
Recording Data (Observations, Interviews, Focus Group Interviews)	99
Analysis of Data	100
Category Construction	100
Analytical Coding	101
Student Profiles	102
Table 3.1 Student Participants	103
Parent Profiles	107
Homework Study Group Curriculum	110
Table 3.2 Homework Study Group Outline 2011	112
Building Rapport with Participants	113
Conclusion	113
 Chapter 4: Samoanness	 116
<i>Fa'asamoa</i> (The Samoan Way)	116
Identity	117
Samoan Symbolism and Meaning	121
<i>Image 4.1: Gogo</i>	121
<i>Freedom and Direction</i>	121
<i>Image 4.2: La</i> (The Sun)	125
Symbol of Power	125
Strength in Knowing Who You Are ... to Know Where You're Going	126
<i>Image 4.3: Fa'a Aveao</i> (The Starfish)	128
Symbol of Protection	128
<i>Image 4.4: Atau</i> (The Hook)	133
Symbol of inner strength and willpower that gives protection	133
<i>Image 4.5: Laumei</i> (The Turtle)	137
Symbolises Wisdom and Leadership	137

Image 4.6: Fa’a anufe (Worm)	140
Symbolises Movement.....	140
Image 4.7: Fa’atumoa (Banana Pod).....	142
Symbolises Beginning of Life and Fullness of Life	142
Image 4.8: The Marlin Adze	144
Symbolises Skilfulness and Intelligence	144
Image 4.9: Fa’a lau ulu (Breadfruit leaf)	148
Symbolises Sustenance and Health	148
Conclusion.....	150
 Chapter 5: Space and Time	152
Importance of Space	152
Responses to the importance of Time and Space.....	156
Conducive Space for Studying.....	156
The HSG as a Physical and Metaphorical Space.....	157
The impact of the HSG Space on Study Habits	159
Space (At Home)	163
Cultural Space: Gender Roles.....	163
Space (At School)	165
Shame	166
Importance of Time.....	167
Learning Experiences of Samoan Students in Melbourne.	169
Conclusion.....	171
 Chapter 6: Research Reflections and Recommendations	173
Implications for Organisations:.....	174
Implications for Teaching Practice:.....	175
Implications for Policies:	175
Limitations	176
Glossary	178
References	180
Appendices	188

Appendix A: Plain Language Statements	189
Where can I get further information?	189
Where can I get further information?	191
Appendix B: Consent Forms	193
Appendix C: Letter sent to Principals.....	195
Appendix D: Tatau Designs and Meanings	197

List of Tables

Table 1.1	Pasifika Tertiary Completion Rates	17
Table 2.1	AusVels: Standards and Progression Point Examples	33
Table 3.1	Student Participants	100
Table 3.2	Homework Study Group Outline 2011	109
Table 4.1	Participant Responses to Preferred Homework Tasks	142

List of Images

Image 2.1: Pasifika Education Plan (2013-2017)	47
Image 2.2: Samoan Symbolism and Meaning (Sablan & Sablan, 2014).....	78
Tatau: History and Relevance	
Image 2.3: Examples of Tatau Symbols and their Meanings	82
Image 2.4 & Image 2.5: Examples of Tatau and Malu	85
Image 4.1: Gogo	117
Image 4.2: La (The Sun).....	121
Image 4.3: Fa’a Aveao (The Starfish)	124
Image 4.4: Atau (The Hook).....	133
Image 4.5: Laumei (The Turtle)	137
Image 4.6: Fa’a anufe (Worm)	140
Image 4.7: Fa’atumoa (Banana Pod)	142
Image 4.8: The Marlin Adze.....	144
Image 4.9: Fa’a lau ulu (Breadfruit leaf).....	148

Chapter 1

Introduction: Origin and Purpose of the Research

This study contributes to knowledge by informing educators in Victorian schools of the learning experiences and extra-curricular activities that Samoan participants have shared in Homework Study Groups established in the northern and western suburbs of Melbourne. It is an attempt to inform schools and stakeholders alike that existing educational programs are deficient in catering to the needs of Samoan students as learners. The main research in this field is by New Zealanders (Wendt-Samu T 2006; Atatoa R in Strachan J 2006; Anderson HB 2007; Cahill F 2006; Nakhid C 2003; Mulitalo-Lauata PT 2000) who report on low academic achievement for Samoan youth and the factors which contribute to this. Studies in Queensland, Australia also highlight educational and cultural barriers experienced by Samoan students attending schools with a high population of students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Dooley K, Exley B & Singh P 1999; Singh P 2001; Singh S & Sinclair M 2001). Against this background of literature that highlight the failings of Samoan students, this research will make a positive contribution through its focus on the better enabling of the educational experience of a group of Samoan students in Melbourne. It contributes to new knowledge about the use of supplementary educational experiences through research on the role of a homework study group that was specifically designed to document participant responses about teaching and learning practices that keep them engaged whilst undertaking academic tasks.

The literature review exposes the extent to which studies have overlooked Samoan young peoples' positive achievement patterns and qualitative responses to learning and teaching encountered in Victorian schools, whether at primary, secondary or tertiary level. In order to generate in-depth research on Samoan educational achievement, I focus on the educational experiences of Samoan students in Homework Study Groups.

The research will deliver benefits to the Samoan community and to local schools attended by the young people in the homework study groups, not to mention the stakeholders involved in policy-making decisions. It will identify the nature of positive strategies that enhance young Samoan people's learning. This will be of immediate benefit to the families and young people who will have access to the findings.

Education in Australia

Regulation and funding of government and non-government schools in Australia is partially provided by the various states and territory governments, with the intention that all students receive equitable access to education. The federal government has provided a national curriculum (The Australian Curriculum) as a guide for all schools to follow. In Victorian schools it is currently being phased in. Though the Commonwealth of Australia has the power to fund the six states and two territory governments to assist with the implementation of funded programs, it does not have the power to control the implementation or delivery of education policies (Barrett, 2014).

Significant reports have been published over the years outlining the need for schools to ensure student learning is maximised and barriers to it removed so that *all* students are successful learners. Barrett (2014) highlights two major reports; *Schools in Australia* (Australian Schools Commission & Karmel 1973) and *Review of Funding for Schooling - Final Report* (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations & Gonski et al 2011) which reveal the need for obstacles to learning that are ‘wrought by difference, disability and disadvantage’ (Barrett 2014, p. 28) to be removed. The question for educators in Victorian schools is: what is being done for Pasifika (Samoan students in this case) to maximise their success in education? This research will make a contribution to answering this question, adding to the literature that builds an understanding of strategies that will support Samoan student learning in Australian schools.

Education in Victoria

All schools in Victoria are guided by The Australian Curriculum but still incorporate aspects of the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* (VELS). These standards outline what students will learn and the educational development level they should be achieving at each year level.

The Standards are focused on learning for understanding and developing students who can apply their knowledge beyond the classroom to new and different situations. The assessment principles that will accompany the Standards are also designed to reflect how students actually learn and to support teachers to measure student progress against the Standards’ (Professional Learning in Effective

Schools 2005. [*The Department of Education & Training*], [Victoria], viewed 10 January, 2015p. 3).

These standards expect that curriculum will be designed to incorporate both the prior knowledge students bring to educational settings and new knowledge, according to The Australian Curriculum and Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS), otherwise known in Victorian schools as AusVels. Teachers currently design curriculum, selected from the Australian Curriculum and VELS, in collaboration with their school's leadership team (Principal, Assistant Principals and Leading Teachers). It is a collective effort to ensure all expectations are met according to AusVels, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL-teaching standards) and department guidelines. They are expected to select resources that will maximise engagement of learners so that students are equipped to transfer those skills to other subjects (cross curriculum).

Curriculum planning also involves ensuring that lessons incorporate computer literacy skills so that what is learnt at school is transferable to workplaces; hence, teaching involves planning content that caters for potential jobs for which students may apply in the future. This is a challenge as it is not always easy to determine what jobs or skills will be required by the time students complete high school; neither is there a guarantee that the skills learnt whilst at school will prepare students for the competitive job market. Professional expectations for Victorian teachers will be discussed in chapter 2, 'Literature Review', to show that teachers are encouraged to develop a learning environment which incorporates student prior knowledge, builds a positive rapport between students and teachers and between students themselves, and creates opportunities for community links, among other goals.

Students in Victorian schools have the option of either pursuing high school education through the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) pathway, with the option of pursuing university studies once completed, or completing high school through the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) pathway. The latter program enables students to select units or subjects covering foundational studies in specific industries or trades.

Policy Changes in Australia: Implications for Pasifika Students in Australia

Recent changes to legislation have allowed New Zealand Special Category Visa holders to access loans enabling students to apply for tertiary education places. From 1 January 2015, these students now have access to Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) loans, meaning they have equitable access to tertiary courses enjoyed by other Australian citizens (Australian Government, Access to HELP for New Zealand Special Category Visa holders brought to Australia as dependent minors). Prior to this, it was difficult for Pasifika students to consider tertiary courses as residents in Australia due to being charged international student fee rates. Not all educators are aware of this previous lack of access to HELP loans for Pasifika students in Australia, let alone parents being aware of processes for applying for university courses. A gap exists for parents in knowing about and accessing support networks that assist with ensuring their children receive equitable access to university institutions. Up until the 2015 legislation was passed, current arrangements meant:

- New Zealand citizens have access to Commonwealth supported places in higher education, and government-subsidised places in vocational education and training in some states and territories, but are currently not able to access Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) loans.
- While any children born in Australia to New Zealand Special Category Visa (SCV) parents may become Australian citizens at age 10 if they have been resident in Australia since their birth, there is currently no means for young SCV holders brought to Australia as dependent minors to access HELP loans (Australia, Fact Sheet, *Access to HELP for New Zealand Special Category Visa holders brought to Australia as dependent minors*; p.1).

Without the 2015 legislative changes affecting future opportunities for dependents mentioned in the categories above, there would have been little motivation for such students to aspire to a university level of education. The realities were that Pasifika (including Samoan) students were predominantly of low socio-economic background as new migrants to Australia, so pressure would be on parents to earn an income high enough

to not only support their family with the usual day-to-day expenses, but to pay international student university fees as well.

Pasifika Students in New Zealand

Statistics are not available from Australian institutions, as they are from New Zealand or United States, which highlight the educational attainment of Samoan people, and it is difficult to ascertain whether Samoan high school students in Australia consider tertiary education at all. Table 1.1 'Pasifika Tertiary Completion Rates', from the Pasifika Education Plan for 2013 to 2017 (Ministry of Education New Zealand 2012), shows the percentage of Pasifika students in New Zealand who have completed a tertiary course. This percentage includes Samoan students under the category of 'Pasifika.' The aim of the PEP is to ensure Pasifika students have access to strategies and programs that improve their success rate in graduating from tertiary institutions, success rates which are on a par with students from other backgrounds. The table highlights the differences between European, Maori, Pasifika and Asian students in New Zealand tertiary institutions. While statistics since 2006-2011 show improved completion rates for Pasifika tertiary students in courses such as Certificates Level 4, Diploma levels 5-7, Bachelor degrees, as well as Postgraduate programs, they are still presenting as the group with the poorest completion rates compared to the other nationalities in New Zealand. The same data is not available from Australian tertiary institutions. Without this type of information, it is difficult to ascertain the success rates of Pasifika students (Samoan included) in tertiary institutions. The data does not exist.

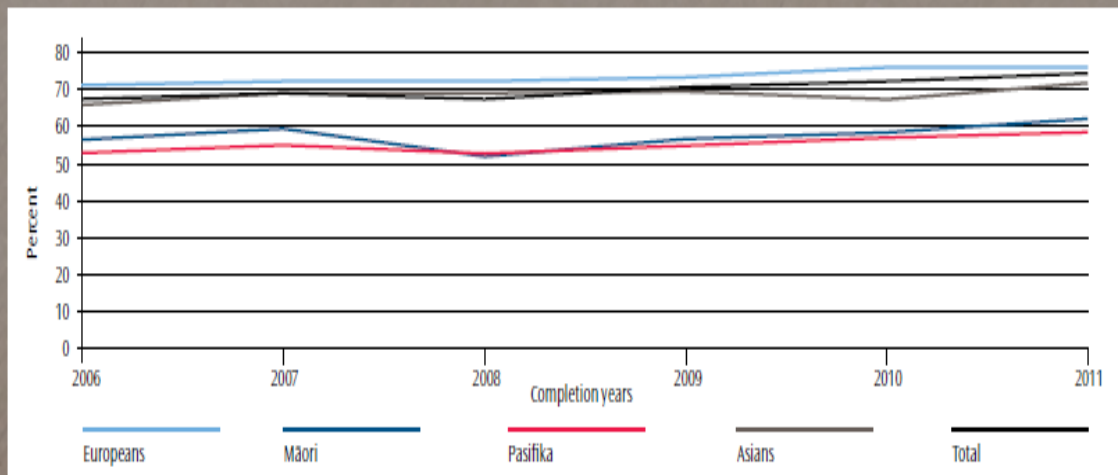
Table 1.1 Pasifika Tertiary Completion Rates
(Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017)

TERTIARY KEY STATISTICS

Five-year completion rates of full-time Pasifika students (including international students) by qualification level

Level of study	Completion years					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certificates Level 4	56%	57%	56%	56%	58%	61%
Diploma levels 5-7	50%	52%	54%	53%	55%	51%
Bachelors degrees	50%	48%	46%	46%	52%	54%
Postgraduate	58%	73%	66%	73%	78%	74%
Level 4 and above	53%	55%	54%	55%	58%	59%

Five-year qualification completion rates of full-time students at level 4 and above by ethnic group (including international students)



The goals of the PEP (2013-2017) are to ensure all Pasifika students not only have equitable access to the tertiary programs available, but also to remove any barriers preventing such access. There are government incentives issued to Education Partner Agencies to ensure their services enable students and their families to receive guidance in navigating through bureaucratic processes. The goals and initiatives of PEP include:

Goals:

- * Pasifika people are a highly skilled and highly educated workforce that fully contributes to New Zealand's economy and society.
- * Use research and evidence effectively to achieve the goals of the Pasifika Education Plan.
- * Pasifika learners participate and achieve at all levels at least on a par with other learners in tertiary education.

Actions:

The Ministry of Education and Education Partner Agencies, in particular the Tertiary Education Commission, will:

- Increase Pasifika learner enrolments by incentivising providers.
- Improve foundation education to lift the language, literacy and numeracy skills of the working-age Pasifika population and provide clear pathways into study at NZ Qualifications Framework Level 4 and above.
- Support Pasifika research priorities and build on current research and analysis about Pasifika learners to drive further performance gains.
- Create Pasifika tertiary research priorities to help researchers, including post graduate learners and teacher researchers, to select topics that will foster better achievement by Pasifika learners at all levels and ensure the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) gives due emphasis to both research by Pasifika researchers and research into Pasifika matters.

In my years of studying at La Trobe University (undergraduate) and The University of Melbourne (Masters and Doctorate Candidate), and while attending various educational conferences, it was clear that Pasifika people were under-represented in tertiary institutions in Australia. It would have been difficult for youth to consider further education beyond high school. This thesis analyses the disadvantage this represents for students of Samoan background.

Positioning the Researcher

As researcher and teacher in this study, I acknowledge I am in a privileged position as a person of Samoan ancestry. Similar to the way in which McGavin (2014) acknowledges that her genealogy as a researcher is an important element in the telling of her story, along with the stories of her participants, I mirror her situation as I present the findings of my research. Being both female and Samoan has enabled me to hear accounts from participants (who were predominantly female) that would not necessarily be shared with researchers who are not. My own cultural upbringing and socialization in Pacific Island culture (in Samoa, New Zealand and Australia) enabled me to empathise with accounts of participants. They included, for example, the gender expectations, career pathways, educational goals and the influence of the church on families as a support network and preserver of traditional practices.

As a person born and raised in Auckland, New Zealand, by parents who had migrated from Samoa in the early 1970s, it wasn't until my parents decided to migrate for a second time to Australia in the mid-eighties that I was made aware of a difference between being a Samoan raised in Auckland and being a Samoan residing in Melbourne. That was in 1986. Reflecting back to how new everything was when I first arrived in Melbourne, I realise what it must have been like for my parents when they first migrated to New Zealand. My parents were one of few families who migrated twice and established Samoan communities through the formation of churches not only for those who lived in Melbourne, but for other families who later decided to migrate to Australia. I was different from students whom I met at my first high school, not only because I came from a cultural background that was practically non-existent in Melbourne at that time, but because I was attending a school where the population was predominantly Anglo-Saxon and thus foreign to me. Fitting in became a challenge. It was the first time I realised what it meant and felt like to be from a minority group. Mila-Schaaf and Robinson (2010) discusses this in terms of being the 'Constitutive Other' whereby '...all of these ethnic groups as imaginaries form defining constituting co-constructing relationships for the diasporic second generation' (p. 154). That is, the way we experience others has an influence on how we see ourselves.

Years later, as an undergraduate student studying a unit on Anthropology during the early nineties, I became familiar with the notion of 'The Other' and that is exactly how I felt as a young Samoan female when I first moved to Melbourne. For me, there wasn't a sense of

belonging in Melbourne because it was a place where there were too many questions about being Samoan, too many restrictions imposed, and real challenge in trying to blend both traditional Samoan values and beliefs in a Western world. I mention these experiences here because they are the basis for undertaking this study. I was interested to find out: firstly, what Samoan students were experiencing as young people growing up in Melbourne; and secondly, how they were faring as students in Melbourne high schools. I wondered whether they too experienced mixed feelings as Samoan youth raised in Western countries.

The reasons for my parents choosing to migrate were no different from those of many other families moving from Samoa to New Zealand. They had aspirations of living an improved life, especially given the fact that a pending Goods and Services Tax (GST) was going to be introduced in New Zealand in the mid to late eighties. Ironically, a few years after settling in Melbourne, GST was implemented in Australia. It was a difficult time as a young person, having left what I considered to be my comfort zone: extended family, church community, and a great primary school that incorporated Pacific Island and Maori culture - all of which contributed to and enhanced my sense of belonging.

Growing up in New Zealand, I understood and accepted the way my parents raised me, learning what *fa'aSamoa* (traditional values and beliefs) was and respecting it as my world view. Weekly rituals consisted of going to church, visiting cousins, performing chores at home and going to school. It wasn't until I came to Australia though, and saw the way children from other cultures (Greek, Italian, other *palagi* or foreigners) behaved and expressed their opinions so freely (almost without filters), that I questioned my upbringing. This would have been the beginning of my struggles from being caught between two cultures or world views, *fa'aSamoa* and Western or Australian ways.

When people ask what my background is in Australia, I say that I am Samoan and have Tongan ancestry (my late grandmother being half Tongan). My Samoan origins are stronger than my Tongan ancestry as it has been difficult to trace my Tongan side with a lack of documentation on my father's side of the family. Just one name remains in the family memory, that of my Tongan great grandfather: Luani. When time and finances permit, I look forward to exploring the origins of my Tongan side; however, for the purpose of identifying where I am from, acknowledgment of my parents and where they are from is required. Both my parents were born in Samoa. My mother Fuealina Natapu (née

Lauina) is from the village of Moata'a, and my late father, Matapo'o Natapu Siaoosi Natapu, was from the village of Apolima Uta. I name their villages because, as Samoans, after the formal introductions with one's name and cultural ethnicity, follows the question of where parents are from. My parents were pioneers in the establishment of Samoan Congregational Churches in Melbourne once my father had passed the Malua Theological College exam to qualify as a lay preacher (*A'oa'o*). They were leaders of a congregation for a few years and then stepped aside once a religious minister (*faiifeau*) from Samoa was selected to lead the congregation. This happened twice during my first ten years in Melbourne. One thing I was not accustomed to in Melbourne was attending churches with very few people compared to the multitude of people attending the church I knew as a child in Auckland, Onehunga Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano I Samoa (EFKS), otherwise known as the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa.

From a young age, my parents always instilled in us (my two younger brothers and older sister) the importance of *aiga* (family), going to *lotu* (church), *fealofani* (fellowship) and *fa'aSamoa* (the Samoan way). We were always encouraged to do well in school, while our parents spent hours with us memorising biblical verses for the annual *suega* (Sunday school exams), as well as supporting us in training hard for inter-church games. Reflecting on these experiences now makes me aware of the competitive nature of these church events (whether it was church games held then at Grey Lynn Park, examinations or choral competitions). It is this background that I brought to the conversations I had with participants in this research study, without which a general rapport would have been difficult. I was able to relate to what participants experienced because we had similar experiences as Samoans living in Melbourne. These traditions were part of life in New Zealand as well as in Australia.

It wasn't until I started teaching in Samoa at Samoa College in 1998 (and also for a few months in the year 2000), that I began to understand why my parents migrated to New Zealand (where I was born). Life in the village of Moata'a was a fantastic experience, but there were challenges involved in managing my Westernised ideals so that they fit with the strict rules of my mother's village where I spent most of my time. These included: girls only wearing skirts or sarongs - no shorts or pants; having a prayer curfew; attendance at weekly church services; not leaving the house without elders' consent (even though I was then in my mid-twenties); and so on. My fortnightly wages of just over \$300 may have

been a lot for a single person, but I imagine that what my parents earned as office workers would have been quite modest for raising a family.

My curiosity regarding the learning experiences of Samoan students in Melbourne high schools also stems from my observations and experiences as a high school teacher in Melbourne private and public schools over the last fifteen years. Since commencing as a teacher in Melbourne in June 2000, I have noticed the gradual increase in numbers of Pasifika students enrolling in schools in the outer northern and western suburbs. The migration of families from New Zealand and Samoa to Australia was noticeable from the late nineties onwards. During that time I also started a Master of Education degree at The University of Melbourne where I observed a very low representation of Pasifika students studying in tertiary institutions in Australia. It was unlike New Zealand, where it was common to see numerous Pasifika students in universities. I then wondered why and thought that researching the learning experiences of Samoan students might shed some light on whether Samoan young people considered university pathways as high school students. Responses in Chapter 4, ‘Samoanness’, provided by participants (including parents), coupled with recent legislative changes for people with New Zealand citizenship, highlight why this has been the case.

Going to school and teaching in Melbourne proved very different from my experience of going to primary and intermediate school in Auckland, New Zealand. I remember as a primary student seeing teachers of Maori and Pasifika heritage in schools, as well as learning the languages (through song and dance) of various Maori and Pasifika cultures represented in the school I attended. Staff and parents created an environment where one belonged; we were all family, despite the diversity of cultures represented. When my family migrated to Melbourne in the mid-eighties, I lost the sense of security that this environment engendered. I felt as though I had been thrown into the unknown, into an environment where none of the students who attended my high school had even heard of Samoa, and where they asked questions such as whether people in New Zealand still lived in huts and wore grass skirts. I had not heard of people from Greece, Italy, the Middle East or what constituted an ‘Australian.’ It was all an eye-opener for me.

As a teacher, a few years ago, I asked my students during a humanities class in which we were studying a unit on Politics: “Who is considered Australian?” and “What does an Australian look like?” Though all citizens of Australia are considered to be Australian, the

surprising responses described the quintessential Australian as a person who had blonde hair, blue eyes, held a beer bottle, wore t-shirt and thongs (jandals), and spoke with a 'Dinky-Di' Australian accent. Given this context, where do Samoans or Samoans who hold Australian citizenship or permanent residency fit in? This research is an attempt to answer such questions from a participant perspective. Going back to New Zealand on family holidays, I witnessed the great initiatives in Auckland (Polyfest, for instance) in which students had the opportunity to join various cultural groups and perform competitively. Fairbairn-Dunlop (2013) writes of the importance for educators in seeing Pacific knowledge as valid and valued, so much so as to utilise this knowledge in allowing young people to connect to other 'social and educational spaces' (p.2). Cultural knowledge was shared in the school and rehearsed during school hours, led by teachers of Pacific background. Fairbairn-Dunlop's (2013) research is important because it explored student experiences as participants in a Polynesian club (Poly) in a high school setting. Not only were participants able to learn and impart cultural knowledge and perform as leaders, they were confident enough to apply it in their learning environment. The provision of and access to the Poly group in this high school was a positive experience for participants - it enabled the bridging of connections between the school and wider community.

It is only in the last five years that I have incorporated a similar group in my own school as I saw the value of sharing cultural knowledge, and, even more importantly, of enabling all students to take part in a phenomenal experience, a collective one. Surprisingly, more non-Pasifika students joined in rehearsals and assembly performances than Pasifika students (sometimes because not enough Pasifika students were enrolled in the school, and sometimes because Pasifika students were too shy). Collective efficacy is somewhat lost in schools in Melbourne; the emphasis is often on 'I' rather than 'we.' The Pasifika way though is 'us', not 'I.' We are all in this together.

Arising from a personal interest in searching for meaning in cultural practices, looking at Samoan symbols also derived from a curiosity about the links to the power experienced when being tattooed, as Wendt (1999) eloquently wrote:

... you have triumphed over physical pain and are now ready to face the demands of life, and ultimately to master the most demanding of activities: language and oratory (p. 400).

The tatau and malu are not just beautiful decoration, they are scripts-texts-testimonies to do with relationships, order, form, and so on (p. 403).

The ritual of receiving the *tatau* for men or *malu* for girls or women is symbolic also of the individual's readiness to serve and represent their *aiga* (extended family) through their actions. *Fa'aSamoa* (the Samoan way) involves a holistic approach, in which school learning, family life, and religious attendance are intertwined for individuals. As outlined in the Pasifika Education Plan, recognition of a collective approach to life is imperative in understanding the cultural dynamics of Samoan people (Ministry of Education, 2012). In this research I have drawn on one of these ritual frameworks (tattoo symbols) to provide a basis for interpreting the meanings expressed by participants as they drew on culturally-relevant and holistic symbols. In the methodology, I explain how the analytical coding process revealed a meaning system that was given coherence by the use of tattoo symbols.

Defining Pacific Islanders

How one identifies oneself is often dependent on the country in which one resides or the values and beliefs with which one is raised, from a cultural perspective. The New Zealand Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs defines Pacific peoples as originating from 13 different cultural groups. They include people born in New Zealand as well as those born in the Pacific Islands. These culturally diverse groups include Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Cook Islands, Niue, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Micronesia (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs; viewed 2014). The term Pasifika will be used in this Australian study in a similar way to that in which the term is used in previous research from New Zealand (Airini et al 2010; Penn, 2010; Siope 2011; that is:

Pasifika is a collective term used to refer to people of Pacific heritage or ancestry who have migrated or been born here in Aotearoa New Zealand. Pasifika people have multiple world views with diverse cultural identities and may be monolingual, bilingual or multilingual (Pasifika Education Plan 2008-2012, Ministry of Education, Wellington, 2008)' in Pasifika Education Research Priorities: Using research to realise our vision for Pasifika learners, 2012, Ministry of Education.

Penn (2010) refers to *Pasifika* people in her study as the six predominant Pacific Island groups residing in New Zealand which includes Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue and Tokelau. In this study, I use the term *Pasifika* to refer to people of Pacific Island heritage or ancestries who migrated to or were born in New Zealand, as well as to people

of Pacific Island heritage who have migrated to Australia or were born in Australia. When reference is made to students of Samoan heritage, this refers to anyone who identifies as being Samoan (either one or both parents are of Samoan ancestry).

In an Australian context, McGavin (2014) describes an emerging definition of Pacific Island people as being 'Nesian' (p.126). This term emerged because some people self-identified with a number of ethnicities. McGavin (2014) acknowledges that Pacific Islanders residing in Australia who are most likely to identify as 'Nesian' include

...concentrated groups of younger people (primarily those heavily engaged in social media) the same sentiment is expressed by community leaders of various Island groups at Pasifika meetings specifically those held by the Pacific Youth Association of Queensland (PYAQ) (McGavin, 2014; p.142).

Though Pasifika consists of diverse Pacific Island nations, there is unity in its diversity.

The Samoan participants in this study either migrated to Australia when they were of primary school age or were born in Australia. They did not necessarily identify themselves as being 'Nesian', but rather as Samoans who identified as Pacific Islanders or Polynesians; hence, in this thesis, where reference is made to people of Pacific Island, Pasifika or Polynesian heritage, this also includes Samoans.

Pasifika People in Melbourne

Establishing the percentage of people from the ABS database who identify as Samoan, or who are of Samoan heritage, is not easy. Mention of Samoan people in the ABS website included the percentage of Samoans living in Sydney who had Samoan ancestry or who reported they were Samoan-born.

Interestingly, half of New Zealanders in Claymore and 42% of New Zealanders in Tregear reported having Samoan ancestry. Claymore and Tregear were also the suburbs with the first and third largest proportion of Samoan-born migrants in Sydney (2011 Census).

Locating where Samoan people reside in Melbourne suburbs proves even more of a challenge, as in areas where it is known that Samoan people reside, like Greater Dandenong or Frankston for example, their birthplace is registered as New Zealand; no record exists

for people of Samoan ancestry. Most Samoan people live in the outer suburbs of Melbourne, where housing is more affordable; however, the statistics do not reflect this. In the data related to education levels completed, statistics show Samoan-born people living in the Hume area of Victoria as having only reached Year 12 or equivalent. There is no indication of any other educational achievement or completion of tertiary level qualifications.

Finding out the precise number of Pacific Island people in Australia is difficult due to the way in which people identify themselves on the census database (Cuthill and Scull, 2011). They are an under-represented migrant group who have undergone settlement challenges as reported by Cuthill and Scull (2011), including access to tertiary institutions, and inadequate support in achieving educational outcomes.

People who identify as Samoan are also lost in the system when they apply for New Zealand or Australian citizenship; that is, once citizenship is granted, their identity then becomes either New Zealander or Australian (Kearney, Fletcher & Dobrenov-Major 2011, pp. 147-148). The same applies for children born in Australia who have Samoan ancestry.

Very little is known about the educational outcomes of Samoan migrants in Australia. Few papers have been written to gauge an Australia-wide perspective on how Samoan students are progressing in schools or what programs are available to assist with their educational achievement. When seeking information about the educational achievement of Samoan students in Victoria, it is apparent the data is not available. A few studies have outlined the difficulties experienced by Samoan students in Australian schools, but further investigation is required to acquire knowledge about success factors in their education and how such factors are defined from a Samoan student perspective (Singh & Sinclair 2001; Kearney et al 2008).

Among the data available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, information on Samoan student educational achievement levels is limited.

Table 1. Education Levels Completed of Samoans Living in Hume Region (Victoria)

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2011 Census of Population and Housing			List of tables
1505 Samoa LGA23270 Hume (C)			Find out more:
			Sex
B01 SELECTED PERSON CHARACTERISTICS BY SEX (2 of 2)			
Count of persons			
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Persons</i>
Age of persons attending an educational institution(d):			
0-4 years	0	0	0
5-14 years	9	9	18
15-19 years	3	14	17
20-24 years	0	0	0
25 years and over	8	9	17
Highest year of school completed(e):			
Year 12 or equivalent	135	167	302
Year 11 or equivalent	35	49	84
Year 10 or equivalent	46	35	81
Year 9 or equivalent	21	14	35
Year 8 or below	27	13	40
Did not go to school	8	8	16
Count of persons in occupied private dwellings(f)	788	796	1,584
Count of persons in other dwellings(f)(g)	0	0	0

The table above highlights the education levels of Samoans living in the Hume region but does not identify the factors influencing these outcomes from a learner's perspective. For instance, what barriers or enhancers contribute to these levels of educational achievement?

Similar ABS information is not available from other regions of Victoria where Samoan people are known to reside.

Access to this information Australia-wide would enable researchers to analyse distinctive Samoan achievement patterns which would contribute to the development of strategies to improve success in education that is, implementing what works to improve educational outcomes. It would also serve to answer questions regarding the career choices of Samoan young people living in Australia, and whether they see those choices as reflecting their original goals. The provision of this information will assist in allocating resources and directing education partner agencies in supporting Samoan students in their choice of employment.

Focusing on Samoan Student Learning:

The decision to focus on Samoan students represented a way to contribute to knowledge while drawing on a manageable study size. Focusing on a broader group of Pasifika was not feasible for this study, especially given that there was very little Australian research to draw on at the commencement of my study. No literature in relation to high schools, from a Melbourne perspective, was available; the existing literature in Australia only dealt with Samoan student experiences in Queensland (Singh 2001; Singh & Sinclair 2001). Initially, this research was to focus on learning experiences of Pacific Island students per se; however, finding participants who identified as Pasifika or locating them in Melbourne high schools was both difficult and undocumented by the ABS. Only one college director permitted access to statistics (parents identified as born in New Zealand or Pacific Islands) and to students in that school for recruitment to the study (most of whom were of Samoan background). Permission from other school principals in the northern suburbs was denied when contact was made in an attempt to recruit Pasifika students for this research; that is, emails received and messages relayed by reception staff to me indicated that school principals were not open to meet with me to discuss the purpose of the research. This will be discussed in the final chapter which outlines limitations experienced from a researcher perspective.

Communication between Samoan people in formal and informal settings has always been of an oratorical nature. The exchanges between high chiefs, for example, often are and were interspersed with legendary aphorisms that the average Samoan would not necessarily understand. This was because the ceremonial speeches delivered were ancient Samoan proverbs. Not all Samoans had access to learning; it was only those who had the desire to

follow in the footsteps of relatives and become a chief themselves. Many cultural practices begin and end with oratory delivered by well-versed and knowledgeable *matai* (high chiefs) or well-respected leaders; whether it is for special ceremonies (church gatherings, weddings, funerals, birthdays, chief bestowal events) or family get-togethers. Lessons in *Aganu'u* (cultural protocols) are passed on to young people through formal and informal teachings either at home or in church-run programs (Macpherson, 2011). Stories have often been shared by parents or elderly members of families with their young people during evening gatherings (usually at bedtime).

Hence, the idea of continuing similar exchanges in the form of a homework study group for Samoan students seemed to be the logical way to seek answers to research questions posed. It made sense that the way in which parents or leaders communicated knowledge by demonstrating and teaching could also be used to guide Samoan students in the homework study group environment. There were protocols in educational settings that needed unpacking for Samoan students so that they could understand expectations, and then act to achieve learning outcomes.

A number of factors enable Samoan students to achieve in schools and to confront challenges that can minimise student engagement. These include the need for teachers to select curriculum that is culturally appropriate, since research points to topics that are taboo according to Samoan traditions (Singh & Sinclair 2001). This review discusses different perspectives on the need for educators to recognise the cultural backgrounds of students in educational settings to enable students to feel empowered and to experience a sense of belonging. Moreover, the need to explore suitable pedagogical methods is highlighted to reflect the various learning styles preferred by students in classrooms. Cultural background does matter: some students learn better using an applied approach to learning that offers them examples and topics to which they can connect; they learn by doing and knowing, not always just through listening.

Samoan Student Learning Experiences

The literature provides valuable insights into the educational strategies that enable Samoan students to engage actively in learning and build confidence, as a first step towards addressing their academic performance. I draw on literature from New Zealand, Samoa and the United States as well as current Australian research as a basis for understanding

and comparing what has been investigated by researchers in efforts to improve Samoan student learning.

A critical review of the literature on Samoan student learning provides an understanding of their experiences and the strategies being utilised by teachers to assist academic improvement. At the time of writing this thesis, little research had been undertaken in Victoria (compared to international research and practice) to identify strategies that could be used at a systemic level to improve academic outcomes for Samoan students. Studies have documented factors leading to or causing the challenges experienced by Samoan students in education in New Zealand, the United States and in Queensland, Australia. These include: feeling undervalued, being stereotyped, not fitting in, and struggling with being caught between two cultures, to name but a few. There is also an emerging evidence base on which to develop strategies to improve the outcomes of Samoan students which will be discussed later in this chapter (Kearney, Fletcher & Dobrenov-Major 2008; Singh and Sinclair 2001; Nakhid 2003; Hawk and Hill 1996; Podmore, Tapusoa, and Taouma 2006; Wendt-Samu 2006; Ofahengaue Vakalahi & Godinet 2008; Mulitalo-Lauta 2000).

Data that indicates achievement patterns of Samoan young people and that describes qualitative responses to learning and teaching encountered in Victorian schools, whether it is in primary, secondary or tertiary level, is missing. Furthermore, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) does not distinguish the population of Samoan people. The details about where they live, their employment status or their educational achievement are obscured by their being categorised broadly as 'ethnic' or 'other' (Takeuchi and Hune; 2008).

Pedagogy - Incorporating Student Backgrounds

The learning styles and educational outcomes of Samoan (and Pasifika) young people have become a focus because of their legacy of poor academic outcomes and the struggles of living between traditional Samoan values and beliefs and Western educational practices and ideologies (Penn 2010; Wendt-Samu 2006). Despite the high value that Samoan families place on educational achievement, many Samoan students experience low levels of academic success in Australian schools (Singh and Sinclair 2001; Kearney et al 2008). As reported in the findings of this study:

A significant cohort of Samoan students is at risk of not meeting nationally agreed benchmarks for literacy as these students progress through school (Kearney et al 2008, p. 5)

There is emerging support in the literature for educational research that is designed to contribute to an understanding of the practices that assist Samoan students to achieve better educational outcomes, and acknowledges where young Samoans 'are at (Wendt-Samu 2006; Kearney et al 2008; Singh and Sinclair 2001). This research is in response to approaches that attribute blame to students because of assumed lack of interest or enthusiasm at school. It recognises that unless educators understand where students are coming from, (their lived experiences and cultural practices), effective learning is unlikely to take place (Allen, Taleni & Robertson 2008). This is particularly the case with regard to Pasifika and Maori students who appreciate the importance of teachers relating to them and understanding their perspectives and backgrounds.

This research is significant because it acknowledges that in order for teachers to be effective in making a difference with the education of Maori and Pasifika students, they need to be aware of their preconceived notions about these students. That is, rather than focussing on a deficit approach - seeing these students as 'at risk' or of setting low expectations for them - these researchers found that the adoption of a 'critical awareness and understanding of their own culture as well as that of their students by teachers made a difference' (Allen et al 2008, p. 3). Immersing teachers in a cultural setting from which the majority of their Pacific Island students came (in this case, Samoa), enabled teachers to empathise with their students and to utilise their experiences of that other culture to create relevant curricula to which students could relate. Not only would teachers build rapport with students as a result of their understanding of the cultural context in which their students are socialised, but teachers would also be able to utilise student prior knowledge and experiences to engage them in the classroom, demonstrating 'a high level of sensitivity to the needs of their children' (Allen et al 2008, p. 7). Students were empowered as teachers made more effort to ensure lessons included topics that Samoan students could discuss in front of their peers. This is not to say that all schools should pay for staff to attend field trips to gather data or become experts in Pacific Island values and beliefs; there are communities within Australia where such information or experiences can be sought or observed.

This study influenced a change in teacher thinking, pedagogy and attitudes by immersing teachers in a culture different from their own and enabling them to see why things were the way they were for Samoan students and their families. That is, teachers understood why structured lessons were important for Samoan students as opposed to the more student-centred classrooms. One teacher reflected:

They go from something that is completely structured you sit in your chair and you don't get up unless you're told to – you don't talk unless you're told to ... and they come to NZ and it's: "come and sit on the mat";... "now it's time to come and chat"; ... "it's time to listen"; "it's time to whatever..." and there's too much freedom...' (Allen et al 2008, p. 8).

For students who were accustomed to learning a certain way, adapting to a new education system and learning new teacher expectations proved quite challenging. This study showed that teachers being aware of what works to engage students and transitioning Samoan students to the student-centred style of learning from a previously structured one would ensure effective learning took place. An awareness of the need for teachers to better communicate with families and the general Pasifika community was key to supporting student academic achievement. As teachers shared experiences with parents of their students of staying with host families in Samoa, improved communication took place as parents no longer shied away from teachers but were willing to converse with them as the opportunities arose. This research confirmed the importance of teachers relating to both students and parents such that barriers to communicating effectively were broken down by the sharing of common knowledge about cultural practices.

Interestingly, the Australian Curriculum has a unit of study called 'Polynesia' which schools, if they choose to, can incorporate in their curriculum as part of Humanities study (Year 8). In Victorian schools, as both the Australian Curriculum and Victorian Essential Learning Standards (AusVels) are followed, teachers are guided by the Progression Points and descriptors for units of work. In assessing students in the Polynesia unit, teachers use their professional judgment to determine whether students have shown evidence of reaching the required level of achievement. Table 2.1 is an example of descriptors used by teachers to plan curriculum and assess students according to whether outcomes have been met for the History unit of study at Level 8. What the table shows is the type of skills

students are taught when learning different history topics (whether it is about the spread of Christianity, the spread of Islam, or the migration experiences of Polynesians, for example).

Table 2.1: AusVels: Standards and Progression Point Examples

(History-Progressing towards Level 8)

(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority)

History –Level 7 Achievement Standard	Progression Point 7.5 At 7.5, a student progressing towards the standard at Level 8 may, for example:	History – Level 8 Achievement Standard
By the end of Level 7, students suggest reasons for change and continuity over time. They describe the effects of change on societies, individuals and groups. They describe event and developments from the perspective of different people who lived at the time. Students explain the role of groups and the significance of particular individuals in society. They identify past events and developments that have been interpreted in different ways.	- Identify patterns of change over periods of time, for example the spread of Christianity after the Roman Empire or the spread of Islam at the end of the seventh century. - Explain causes and effects of events and the motives of people, for example, reasons for the Crusades; the effects of the Crusades such as trade, the rise of the merchant class, new ideas in medicine, mathematics and astronomy and changing relationships between Islam and Europe. Describe events that have been interpreted differently, for example; origins of Polynesians and their migration across the Pacific.	By the end of Level 8, students recognize and explain patterns of change and continuity over time. They explain the causes and effects of events and developments. They identify the motives and actions of people at the time. Students explain the significance of individuals and groups and how they were influenced by the beliefs and values of their society. They describe different interpretations of the past. Students sequence events and developments within a chronological framework with reference to periods of time. When researching, students develop questions to frame an historical inquiry. They analyse, select and organise information from primary and secondary sources and use it as evidence to answer inquiry questions. Students identify and explain different points of view in sources. When interpreting sources, they identify their origin and purpose, and distinguish between fact and opinion. Students develop texts, particularly descriptions and explanations, incorporating analysis. In developing these texts, and organising and presenting their findings, they use historical terms and concepts, evidence identified in sources, and acknowledge their sources of information.

As mentioned earlier, unless schools specifically choose to incorporate the study of Polynesia in their Humanities curriculum, it is not taught. What needs to be investigated is whether teachers feel adequately equipped to teach this as a unit to students, as well as how the Pasifika community can work with schools to utilise the expert knowledge that many have, especially regarding language, customs, protocols and performances, for instance. The unit of study described in Table 2.1 provides a perfect opportunity for teachers to incorporate student cultures into the learning environment, especially considering the need for Samoan students to feel as though they belong and can contribute in the classroom. The difficulty in my specific research was seeking approval from individual schools to ascertain teachers' views, as access to them was denied (see Appendix C); hence, the focus was specifically on Samoan participant perspectives.

Scaffolding Student Learning

The vital role of an educator (teacher) is to extend the knowledge a student has and utilise multiple ways of differentiating tasks so that understanding occurs. Where there is a gap in knowledge, teachers should be minimising the gap by ensuring students are equipped with the skills and resources required so that what is learnt can be transferred and used in multiple ways. One way students learn is to incorporate cultural elements (their prior knowledge and cultural context) into their learning. The idea of scaffolding student learning derived from Vygotsky's theory which promoted the need for the learner's context to be incorporated into the learning environment to maximise student learning:

Vygotsky (1978) believes that the social context of a child, language and social interactions are all important in the development of thinking of children. Vygotsky views culture as the most important influence in determining the development of a child. Children grow in the context of a culture which provides much of their thinking and knowledge as well as the processes or means by which their thinking is conducted. In his view, the way children think and the tools at their disposal have much to do with the social interactions that take place (Utumapu-McBride et al 2008, p. 157).

An example of successful educational approaches used for pre-school students in a study undertaken in New Zealand by Podmore, Tapusoa & Taouma (2006) outlined the significance of pre-school children being taught in the Samoan language using methods that best engaged and developed the learning skills that would be used once they commenced primary school. The theory is that students who are immersed in a school which teaches only in the Samoan language will not only develop self-confidence in achieving various tasks set by teachers, but also develop a sense of community and pride in their learning environment.

School-based research by Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005) affirms the importance of immersion and bilingual Pasifika languages programmes for children's self-esteem and identity, and for effective learning in their first learning (L1) and then in their second language (L2) (Podmore et al 2006, pp. 73-74).

When students are learning in an environment that is adorned with Samoan artefacts, and in a communal setting completing guided tasks, they are exposed to an environment that is reflected in the home. Teachers used techniques that 'included indirect error correction and the use of repetition, restatement to ensure that children understand, role modelling and frequent use of praise' (Podmore et al 2006, p. 79). This research identified effective strategies used with students from Samoan families, demonstrating that deeper understanding is achieved as a result of using the students' native language in the learning environment. Since participants in the Homework Study Group are of Samoan background, both languages (Samoan and English) were used to clarify terminology and explain strategies to students in the group when required.

An earlier study undertaken by Dooley, Exley and Singh (1999) in a Queensland school highlighted learning experiences of Samoan students and their perspectives on the challenges faced at times in the classroom as well as in the school environment. This study is important because it divulged Samoan students' feelings about teachers and their classes, with importance attached to their sense of belonging and of feeling respected at school, as well as describing their preferred learning styles. Students interviewed indicated the importance of teachers modelling *how* a task should be undertaken, not just speaking about it. Not only did this allow students to observe what was being taught, it provided Samoan with the means to imitate what they had been shown by doing it themselves. Comparisons

are made between the pedagogy used by teachers that engage students in specific subjects, and the lessons where ‘teachers are talking on and on and on ... It just becomes very boring for me’ (Dooley et al 1999, p. 83).

The narratives presented in the research by Dooley et al reveal the need for Samoan students to be exposed to methods of teaching that cater to their preferred learning styles. Sometimes, the methods used in the classroom are not helping them at all in learning the skills required to provide correct responses. Samoan students are easily discouraged when teachers do not explain information in a way that develops understanding. In addition, this study illustrated a disconnect between the way in which the topics were taught and the ability of Samoan students to relate to and understand the information conveyed. For example, when two of the students interviewed were asked about a text currently studied in English (*The Outsiders*), they indicated that while they could understand the film version of the text, the difficulties experienced when reading the book were due to the vocabulary being too difficult.

Crucially, while the students repeatedly pointed to elements of instructional discourse as problematic, they appeared not to notice the hand of regulative discourse at work in the ordering, sequencing and evaluation of instructional discourses. ... Rather, the problems were more to do with the ‘*how*’ of transmission, or the rules of sequencing, pacing and evaluative criteria (i.e. discursive order) (Dooley et al 1999, p. 87).

Research on young Samoans in a Queensland secondary school also stressed the need for teachers to understand Samoan culture (Singh & Sinclair 2001, p. 74 & p.80). The study outlined the importance of understanding ‘which pedagogies might make a difference, for which clientele of students, and in which contexts’ (Singh and Sinclair 2001, p. 80). It was recognised that Samoan students were one of the ‘least advantaged’ school cohorts who experienced various negative circumstances that affected their ability to excel academically. One of the findings of this study was that students experienced difficulties in understanding curricula because the activities and topics were irrelevant to their daily lives.

Students were asked to provide responses to questions: about their identity as Samoan students living in Australia; about the rapport between teachers and students in their school;

about what they thought of the subjects they were learning at school; and about their ideas for teaching methods or work that would produce positive outcomes for them. Responses ranged from students feeling stereotyped as being of a lower class due to their cultural background, to reports of racism from a teacher who suggested ‘Polynesians should go back to their island’, and concern about the mundane teaching methods used by teachers in the classroom which were seen as ‘boring’ (Singh & Sinclair 2001, p. 79). The implications of Singh and Sinclair’s research is that unless students feel valued in their learning environment and treated with respect by people in authority, the desire to achieve academically against such odds slowly dissipates. I found the questions posed to participants in this study useful when it came to designing particular interview questions for my research, which were later used to investigate student learning experiences.

Issues such as the discipline of Samoan students in this study were a regular problem. Too often the Samoan community leaders or paraprofessionals were asked by the school to intervene in ‘fixing the problems’ encountered with Samoan students instead of trying to understand the underlying issues, that is, why these problems were occurring in the first place.

Fofoa Safotu was interviewed for the study on three separate occasions. ... she often talked about teachers’ interactions with students categorised as ‘Samoan’ or ‘Polynesian’. She stated that Samoan students might have been disadvantaged by these interactions. ... Rather than attempting to understand the problems experienced by Samoan students in schools, administrators and teachers often turned to members of the local community for assistance. Thus, Samoan community members were expected to ‘fix the problem’ of Samoan students (Singh 2001, p. 321).

The school needs to be seen as making an effort to liaise with stakeholders to ensure that together they are partners in dealing with the various issues pertaining to Samoan students, instead of fully relying on one party to come up with solutions.

Wendt-Samu’s (2006) research, undertaken in New Zealand, found that teaching and learning was not made specific to Pacific Island students, contributing to their failure to succeed academically. This study found that Pacific Island students experienced difficulties in understanding because the activities or topics were seen as irrelevant to their

daily lives. A common theme occurring in the research presented thus far is the need for educators to consider providing curricula that responds to students' cultural background and incorporates their prior knowledge and experiences. That is, as Wendt-Samu's research outlined, the Ministry of Education in New Zealand began to recognise that teachers needed to 'know their students' by learning about cultural expectations, family issues and the Samoan way of life or *fa'aSamoa*.

Research undertaken by Kearney, Fletcher and Dobrenov-Major (2008) emphasised that specific teaching methods had to be used in the primary classroom for Samoan students to be engaged, to participate, and to retain what was learned. The research found that fundamental strategies were

(1) visual support for verbal explanations; (2) high expectations; (3) explicit instruction with an emphasis on modelling both products and processes; and (4) extra time with the same teacher ... I think the interaction with others is really important to that group (Kearney et al 2008, p. 39).

Effective learning takes place when teaching styles reflect the styles of learning with which Samoan students are familiar because such styles are modelled in their own homes and community environment,. These findings have influenced the approach that I took in designing the Homework Study Group for Samoan students. This is discussed in detail in chapter 3 (Methodology).

While reiterating the significance of effective teaching pedagogy for improving literacy skills amongst indigenous and ethnic minority groups in schools, the work of Lai, McMaughton, Amituanai-Tolosa, Turner and Hsiao (2009) also highlights the need for evaluation of programs to be conducted over longer periods of time. Not only is there acknowledgement that intervention programs are not as effective as they could be, but recognition that what makes a difference is the explicit teaching undertaken by staff to model expectations to students until understanding and independent learning is evident. In addition, importance was placed on the 'teacher's role in incorporating cultural resources, including event knowledge ... and in building students' sense of self-efficacy and more general engagement and motivation (Lai, McNaughton, Amituanai-Tolosa, Turner and Hsiao, 2009, p. 33). Moreover, students from schools in low socio-economic areas tended

to be exposed to teachers who had low expectations of their students' academic achievement. Hence, setting high expectations for all students is imperative, as is understanding the theoretical underpinnings of teachers' pedagogical methods (Lai et al 2009 p. 44).

Relevant and Appropriate Curricula

There is a myriad of studies that highlight the need for curricula and pedagogy to include content and demonstrations to which Pacific Island students can relate, as cited in Singh and Sinclair's research (2001). There is a long legacy of research that reports on this issue. Not only was there continued 'misunderstanding' of the context of Pasifika students represented in approaches to school discipline, but the curriculum selected for students in some subjects was also at odds with what Pasifika students were raised to learn. A lesson undertaken in a Queensland high school illustrated the discomfort Samoan students experienced during one of their classes. As a Samoan teaching aide reported, when students were watching a video in class of a woman giving birth, she noticed their uncomfortable squirms and giggles, hiding their embarrassment. The Polynesian kids:

... kind of giggled and covered their eyes and they were ashamed,
because we're taught that our body is as sacred as a temple, it's
something we ahm, you know, not for everyone to view (Singh, 2001,
p.323).

Based on this research, educators would find it useful when planning curriculum to be mindful of topics that will cause embarrassment or shame for Samoan students, as their ability to participate and remain engaged in class would be affected. This account identified the discomfort Polynesian students felt when viewing an intimate experience compared to how the European students responded to the footage. Topics of a sexual nature are taboo and not for discussion in the homes of Polynesian students, so seeing explicit footage of a woman giving birth would have been quite confronting. Park and Morris (2004, p. 232) described 'the irony of conducting through talk a study of an area that is often noted as being "unspeakable" by Samoans in the Samoan language' when they sought to find out attitudes to contraception from a Pacific Islander perspective. Careful planning of culturally sensitive practices was carried out, and advice sought from community advisors so as not to offend participants in the study.

As this example illustrates, inappropriate content can be alienating for students, so ensuring that the curricula is relevant and appropriate to students would encourage student engagement in the topic studied, as well as encouraging discussion on subjects with which students felt comfortable. Though the intention of teachers may not be to exclude students from participating in class activities and discussion, being unaware of sensitive topics in the classroom can be detrimental to the learning environment - it can lead to disruptive behaviour that hides student embarrassment about a sensitive issue.

Pasifika Learning for Educators in Victorian Schools

Effective pedagogy enhances learning outcomes for students and thus provides an environment of, and for, success. The studies referenced thus far testify not only to the importance of knowing students and how they learn, but also to the value of evaluating and assessing whether students have experienced improvement in their learning in the classroom. A study undertaken in New Zealand outlines the need for teachers to be better equipped to assess for improvement, while acknowledging that this type of evaluation, and the training that supports it, does take time (McNaughton & Lai 2009). It highlights the need for schools to be professional learning communities that provide relevant training for teachers so that they can become experts in their field.

Effective education starts from the repertoire that exists and builds greater expertise from that. This is the basic principle in professional development as much as in beginning literacy instruction. The fourth reason is that designing a whole-scale change in programme, unless it is consistently and impressively implemented, runs the risk of being counter-productive to the need to treat teachers as, and move them towards being, adaptive experts (McNaughton and Lai 2009, p. 65).

Too often teachers are expected to adopt theories to improve learning for their students but are not given the time to learn the associated strategies or reflect on whether the practices implemented over time are making a difference. This study shows the importance of ensuring that theories or lessons from research are applied in the classroom setting and that appropriate time is allowed to elapse for effective change to be noticeable. It would be noteworthy, once the Victorian Department of Education implements such training for teachers, to consider evaluating whether any change takes place. I argue that the incorporation of recommendations similar to those outlined in the Pasifika Education Plan

(2013-2017) in Victorian professional learning for teachers will be influential, if not in the practical operations of a school then in the mindset of people in educational institutions. There have been many conversations had with educators over the years who are surprised and grateful for learning strategies that have enabled effective communication with Pasifika (including Samoan) and Maori families.

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers spells out expectations for teachers in their role as educators. Importance is placed on teachers knowing their students and how they learn. Under 'Standard 1 - Know students and how they learn' (Australian Professional Standards for Teachers 2011, p. 8) in 'Focus Area 1.3' ('Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds'), it describes various expectations for teachers. They are listed under 'Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead' categories. What is important to note here is the nature of the curriculum to be designed to these expectations which includes, for example, under the 'Lead' category, to:

Evaluate and revise school learning and teaching programs, using expert and community knowledge and experience, to meet the needs of students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds (Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, p. 8).

The participation of all learners during discussion and activities in class is part of what teachers are assessing and reporting to stakeholders (parents, staff and students). Therefore, learning about the background of Samoan students, including their cultural and social expectations, will support educational achievement and empowerment for these students. At the moment, little or no training is provided to educators in Melbourne schools for meeting the educative needs of Pacific Island (including Samoan) and Maori students. In order for these students to excel academically, it is vital that professional learning is made available for educators to ensure that they are informed about cultural sensitivity as well as being made aware of the need to utilise pedagogy that makes a difference.

Creating Roles for Understanding Student Perspectives

Sanunder High School is one of the few schools in Queensland that employed two Social Justice Coordinators whose role it was to support low achieving students, develop English as a Second Language (ESL) and cultural equity programs, and manage provision for

students with disabilities, as well as develop a reader program involving teacher aides from the local community (Singh & Sinclair 2001). These researchers not only emphasized the importance of acknowledging the need for schools to elicit help from community leaders to better understand Samoan students, but also showed the need for cultural awareness and sensitivity when writing curricula. The importance of having these roles created to specifically take into account relevant experiences for students meant Samoan students could participate more in classroom settings. Moreover, it ensured a better understanding by school staff of the student perspective: their feeling that they were not accepted or appreciated in this high school. Similar connections are required with Samoan community leaders and parents in schools attended by the majority of Samoan students to minimise learning barriers created by offering curricula that prevents students from contributing or participating in tasks because topics are taboo.

Traditionally, when males and females come together, a relationship of respect or *va tapuia* presides, especially among those considered 'brothers and sisters'. This relationship has sacred and *tapu* dimensions. The risk of breaching these dimensions is considered high in an environment where sexually connotative jesting is considered a norm (Meleisea, Schoeffel-Meleisea and Meleisea 2012, p. 39).

As a teacher in Melbourne, I am reminded of novels, footage and images that are used in various subject classes (Health, English, Humanities) that continue to expose students of Pasifika backgrounds to taboo matters that are not discussed in the home. This has been outlined in research mentioned so far by Singh and Sinclair (2001) where an uncomfortable feeling is experienced by Samoan students when footage is viewed such as a woman in labour and giving birth to a child. Such images are not shared in the presence of Samoan boys and girls (whether related or not) since in a public setting a boy would respect another girl and treat her like he would his sister (Kramer, 1994).

Barrett (2014) wrote of the importance of the roles social workers have in Victorian schools, placing emphasis on ensuring they identified students from minority groups who required assistance with removing obstacles (disadvantages) to receiving a high quality education.

Victorian school populations now include Sudanese, Burmese, Maori, Indian, Afghani, Russian, Iraqi, Samoan and many more. An ecological

systemic approach to bio-psycho-social-educational assessment, including the voices of children and young people, considers complex problem definition, often in multiple personal and cultural contexts, rather than relying on cultural labels, myths and pre-conceived generalisations about teaching, learning and school social work intervention. Many school social workers hold within their practice wisdom the evidence of effective practice, which needs to be exposed to the scrutiny of formal evaluation (Barrett 2014, p. 362).

Not only was there recognition of the growing number of minority groups requiring support (which included Samoan students), Barrett's study emphasised the need for evaluation of support to be undertaken. In essence, how effective was the support provided by social workers to the clients they were supporting? What was noted was the lack of accountability for schools in evaluating the services they offered and then using the results of such evaluation to inform school social work and student welfare policies.

Setting High Expectations

A study undertaken in an all-boys college in Auckland, New Zealand (Evans, 2011) investigated, for instance, pedagogical factors that engaged and motivated Pacific boys at school. The themes explored included the 'importance of home and school partnerships' and ensuring the curriculum reflected the Pacific boys' interests and goals (Evans, 2011; p.12). This study highlighted the basic requirement, from a student perspective, for inspiration and motivation to learn. Essentially, participants in this study said they just wanted teachers to pronounce their names properly, as well as to get to know them in a genuine way. As Deputy Principal of a boy's college in South Auckland, Brian Evans researched ways in which Pacific Island boys experienced successful educational achievement at school. He utilised both teacher judgments as well as student experiences to account for outcomes that explained improved learning and engagement from boys at this college.

Not only did the findings of this study outline the need for high expectations to be set by teachers, but it also attributed improved academic results for Pacific Island boys to specific pedagogic practices undertaken by teachers. This included specific learning intentions of staff, feedback provided by staff to students in the college, and the provision of professional

learning to the staff in acknowledging and understanding the culturally diverse backgrounds from which students came.

Teachers interviewed in this research ...believed that a range of teaching and learning processes needed to be used when teaching Pacific boys, as opposed to being trapped into preconceived ideas about how the students would best learn. These teachers believed that teaching practices needed to be tailored to the students and skill in differentiation was seen as a key ingredient. Pasikale (1999) concluded that teacher empathy towards individual students' needs, as opposed to understanding of their ethnicity as the key to success (Evans 2011, p. 20).

Such expectations are reinforced in current Victorian teaching practices which place emphasis on utilising strategies and ideas to engage the learner, including differentiating pedagogical methods to cater for their needs. However, one can say that there is still a need for professional development on what differentiation looks like in the classroom. It remains a need for staff as it is a teaching skill that has not been a major focus for professional learning until recently in Victorian schools. Much is preached about what teachers should do, under the guise of establishing rapport between teachers and students, but, when it comes to putting this into the learning context, it is somewhat lost in the busyness of catering to whole class contexts. Teachers are aware of the need to differentiate tasks for learners; however, there is the acknowledgment that what one teacher accepts as catering for students at, below or above the expected level, another would dismiss.

Realities Within

Evans' study is interesting because he acknowledges what was lacking in schools (educators not understanding the realities facing their students, the Pacific Island boys who were participants in the study), and the need for schools to create an environment for success (at home and at school). Too often, assessment does not take into account the realities students face, nor consider whether the tasks set are actually achievable given both time limitations and the lack of a suitable learning environment in some students' homes.

...consider the idea of the portfolio NCEA assessment in view of a study by Fletcher et al. (2006) that reported for many Pasifika students

doing homework was out of the question, when they were required to look after younger brothers and sisters or cousins. So this study shows how a school chooses to organise its senior NCEA assessments can influence Pasifika students ongoing opportunity to achieve. ...In summary, the curriculum literature seemed to suggest formative or internal assessments best suited Pacific boys (Evans 2011, pp. 22-23).

Evans' study was acknowledging the need for teachers to consider what motivated Pacific boys to learn, as well as how much it meant for students that teachers empathised with their inability to complete set tasks. It also took into account the particular learning programs required for individual students since not all students shared similar learning abilities. What also guided Evans' (2011) research was acknowledging the importance of educators knowing student needs.

Fusitu'a and Coxon (1998) looked at pedagogy in the context of interactions in a homework centre for Tongans. They found that students saw definite learning advantages for themselves because of the fact the tutors at the centre were also Tongan and their bilingualism made it easier for students to interact and ultimately learn better. This study also found the Tongan parents saw benefit in the fact the Tongan tutors could provide values and expectations in terms of behaviour that they felt may be missing from the mainstream at school (p. 20).

When educators make an effort to know their students and their preferred learning methods, it is more likely that they are able to develop curricula that incorporate topics of interest to their students, and this in turn tends to improve engagement with learning (Evans 2011). In Evans' study, student responses indicated that what worked to encourage their learning was the inclusion of 'hands on' activities that minimised the boredom of lessons presented by teachers. Pasifika boys in this research also appreciated the passion teachers put into their teaching, seeking to ensure that students passed their subjects. When asked whether they thought their teacher cared about their learning, the overall response was positive.

Comments in response to Question 14 also supported this view with several students stating that one of the things that they liked about their teachers is the sense that they care and want them to succeed. The positive outlook can assist in the building of relationships within the

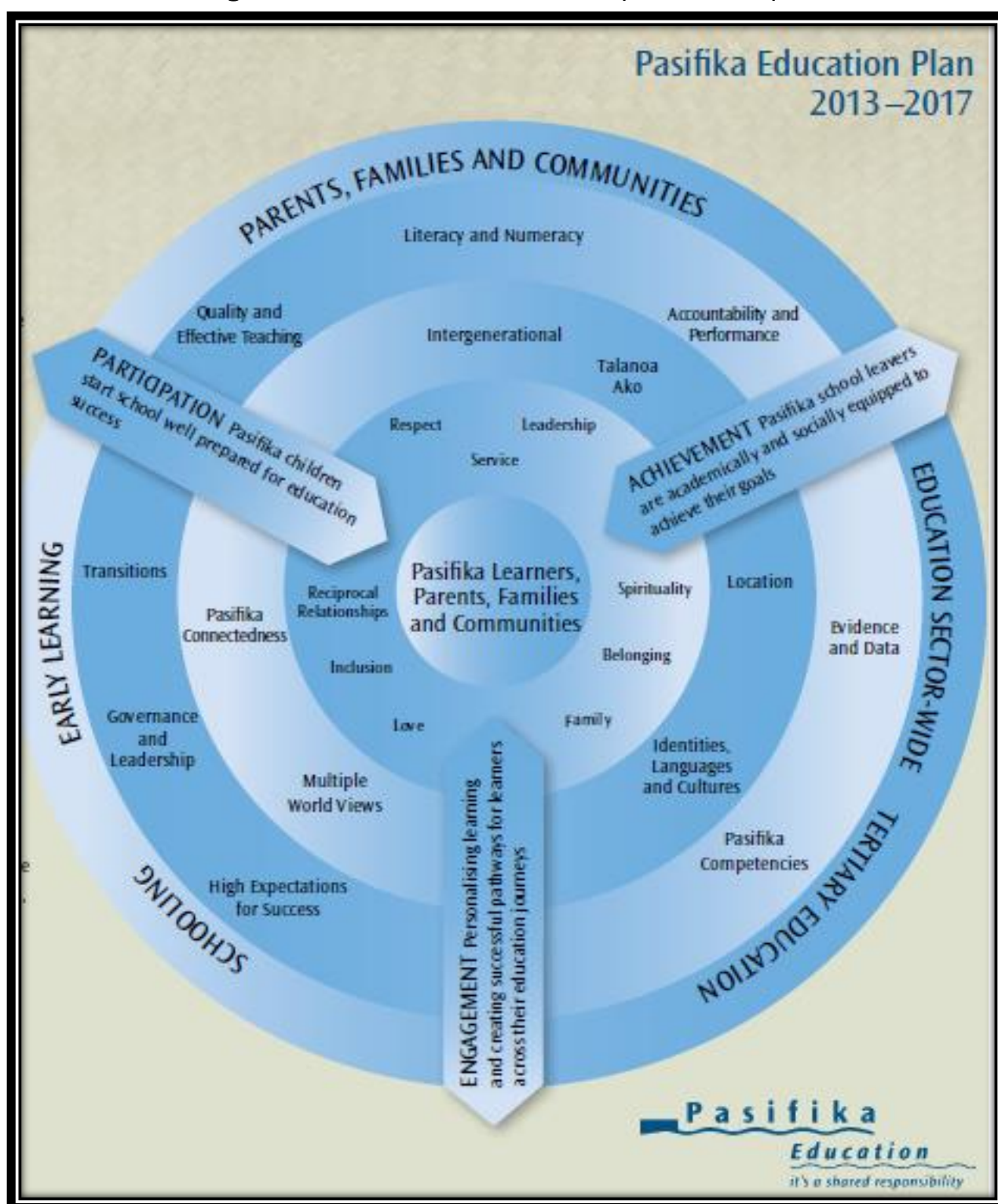
classroom and give students a genuine sense of belief that their teachers are working for them and their academic success (Evans 2011, p. 52).

This was key to establishing and maintaining positive rapport and, hence, enjoyment in classes for participants in this study, primarily because ‘they know our backgrounds and are able to connect with us’ (Evans 2011, p. 54).

New Zealand’s Education Solution

In response to and in recognition of the need for educational institutions to cater to the learning needs of Pasifika students (including Samoan), the New Zealand Ministry of Education implemented the ‘Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017 (PEP).’ This is not to say that the PEP is the only solution to improving educational achievement for Pasifika students, but, in a context where no other program is available, this approach represents a starting point for Australian schools (specifically, Victorian schools). The PEP includes a goal to ‘put Pasifika learners, their parents, families and communities at the centre of the education system, where they can demand better outcomes’ (Ministry of Education New Zealand 2012, p. 1).

Image 1:1 Pasifika Education Plan (2013-2017)



This policy highlighted the need for educational institutions to work together with families, communities and Education Partner Agencies on using influential data to guide successful educative strategies for young people. It confirms the practices selected to guide this Homework Study Group research to ensure teachers, researchers and parents, as well as

community organisations (in this case, the church), band together to create positive learning environments that will enable students to excel academically. These ideas particularly influenced the set-up of the Homework Study Groups in the northern and western suburbs of Melbourne which will be explored in more detail in Chapter 3, Methodology.

The PEP diagram shows the interconnectedness between ‘Pasifika Learners, Parents, Families and Communities,’ which covers a number of factors that need to be considered for success in education to be realised. These include the recognition that Pasifika students have multiple world views which encompass their cultural background, their involvement in church or religious ceremonies, and the world view of the Western country in which they currently reside. There are numerous ideals, beliefs and expectations that Pasifika young people are assumed to know, to adopt, and to demonstrate with ease. Having these demands can be quite overwhelming for those who find it challenging to manage multiple expectations. Together with Education Partner Agencies, the New Zealand government proposed programmes such as the Pasifika Power Up Programme to bridge the gap between schools, families and communities.

Pasifika Power Up Programme

One of the initiatives implemented in New Zealand which affirms the importance of this study is the creation of the ‘Pasifika Power Up Programme’ across communities in Auckland and Wellington. This programme provided the educational support for students to improve academic and social outcomes. As one of the initiatives endorsed by the Pasifika Education Plan (2013-2017), the Power Up Programme offered educational support in various libraries and community centres, recognising the importance of students of Pasifika backgrounds having a space in which to receive academic assistance.

Pasifika Power UP is an education programme that actively supports Pasifika parents and families to champion their children’s learning, providing academic support for secondary and primary students. This programme is delivered at Power Stations located in community settings.

This year, Pasifika Power UP is bigger and better. We are powering up to accelerate:

- 1) early learning participation,
- 2) National Standards success, and
- 3) NCEA success.

And let's not forget – that the key to Pasifika Power UP is the strength and collective power of our parents, families and communities championing Pasifika educational success (Ministry of Education New Zealand 2014).

It would be beneficial for the national department of education in Australia to develop a similar policy that specifically acknowledges and targets culturally diverse groups, thus raising awareness of and support for Samoan students (and those of other minority groups in Australia). There is a gap in knowledge and research into the achievement patterns of Pasifika students in Australia and in evaluation of programmes specifically catering to those students.

Research undertaken by Smyth, Angus, Down and McInerney (2008) not only looked at culture and encouraged schools to acknowledge who they were teaching, but also suggested that schools needed to develop curricula that acknowledged the locational and cultural contexts of students' lives. Smyth et al emphasised the importance of recognising that space can be exclusionary for disadvantaged groups in educational settings. It was therefore imperative that all students were prepared to participate in these spaces.

We agree with Gulson, Symes & Sumsion (2007) that with few exceptions 'the ideas of space and place are more often used by social scientists as metaphors, rather than as complex theorizations of material and symbolic life' (p.99). Gulson, Symes & Sumsion (2007) consider 'space and place as integral, yet under-examined and under-theorized, components of educational studies (Smyth et al 2008, p. 100).

The establishment of the Power Up Programmes for students and their families in Auckland and Wellington is an acknowledgement not only of the need that existed but a response that provided practical assistance in the form of academic support in a familiar space (in libraries and community halls). What will need to be evaluated over time is the goals that participants sought to achieve, and whether those who attended were successful in achieving those goals with this type of intervention programme in place. In addition, the responses from parents, leaders in the community, and schools themselves is required, to see whether academic improvements were noticeable, and, specifically, what steps were undertaken to show, maintain and sustain any progress.

Homework

Increasingly, strategies to support better educational outcomes for Pasifika students have focused on homework. Homework is defined as ‘any assignment from the regular classroom teacher that is intended to occur outside of regular school hours, regardless of where that assignment is completed’ (Cosden, Morrison, Albanese & Macias 2001, p. 211). Studies regarding the significance of setting homework for students of different educational levels have reported both positive and negative findings in terms of whether students benefit from completing educational tasks set by their subject teachers outside of school hours (Bond & Smith 1965; Voorhis & Frances 2003; Cosden, Morrison, Albanese & Macias 2001). In this section I provide an overview of studies undertaken on the issue of setting homework for students from the perspective of potential benefits or harms in relation to the academic and social experiences of students. Following on from that, I discuss the homework undertaken at home compared to the different environments of homework study groups and after-school homework programs, that is, comparing support from people at home (parents or guardians) with that of professionals or volunteers in after-school homework program settings.

One of the first studies, which focussed on the importance of questioning the *purpose* of distributing homework to students, discussed how crucial it was for students to be given homework that could be completed by parents as well as their children (Bond & Smith 1965). Parents often found it difficult to deal with the demands of assisting their children with the completion of homework, due to not having the educational skills themselves; hence, faculties need ‘to be sure that homework assignment [is] made in such a way that parents are not involved in the responsibility of teaching’ (Bond & Smith 1965, p. 141). This study also specified the need for a clearly defined school homework policy which informed parents and students of ‘the goals, purposes, and procedures to be followed by the faculty in making out-of-school assignments (Bond & Smith 1965, p. 140). The practice of issuing homework to students was never really questioned, as parents did believe that the more homework a child received the better off academically they were, and that this was an indication of a “quality” education, a teacher who issued more homework being perceived as a “good” teacher (Bond & Smith 1965, p. 139).

Although schools have been demanding homework from children for decades, almost no research has been done to determine its effectiveness. Our attitude on homework is like our attitude on spinach: “Here, eat it,” we say. “It’s good for you.” On the subject of homework, we seem to be saying, “If a little homework is good for a child, more homework must be even better” (Bond & Smith 1965, p. 139). It was not until the mid to late 80s that research began to focus on the ‘relationship between time spent on homework and achievement’ (Cooper 1989; Cooper et al 1998; Epstein 1988; Keith 1982; Keith & Cool 1992; Paschal et al 1984; Fraser & Welch 1986 cited in Voorhis & Frances 2003). These studies carried out in the U.S. highlighted negative outcomes for elementary students completing homework, compared to middle and high school students who received positive academic outcomes with increased time spent on the completion of homework. In terms of directing my proposed research of Samoan participants in the Homework Study Group, these studies represent a useful comparison for the proposed study in Melbourne. That is, will students who spend more time on homework-related tasks experience or notice improved grades on their assessment tasks?

There are also other factors which influence and contribute to positive academic outcomes experienced by students who complete homework. These include being supported by parents who not only supervise their homework time but also guide children with their tasks when they experience difficulties (Voorhis & Frances 2003). However, there are still concerns which echo what Bond & Smith (1965) raised in their study regarding ‘legitimate concerns over current homework practice’. For example, many students complain that they are assigned too much homework or “busy” work (Voorhis & Frances 2003, p. 324). Parents are reported as willing to help their children with school work but are less enthusiastic in supporting the learning of their children when they too struggle with the demands of completing the workload.

Overview of Homework After-School Programs

One study that examined factors influencing the establishment and analysis of an after-school program looked at ‘the influence of school-based homework programs, the function of these programs ... within the broader context of what children do after school each day’ (Cosden, Morrison, Albanese & Macias 2001, p. 212). Not only were there academic improvements noticeable from students attending the after-school homework program on

a regular basis, but there were also improvements in social and personal attributes identified in the young people.

A review of the literature suggests that after-school programs can serve four major functions: (a) increase safety and supervision, (b) enhance cultural and community identification and appreciation, (c) develop social skills and increased competency, and (d) improve academic achievement. Programs typically address one or more of these functions, with the focus varying by design and because of student and community needs (Cosden et al 2001, p. 212).

The sourcing of participants for the Homework Study Group was influenced by studies stating that the leaders of Samoan communities, such as those involved in youth groups or the church, were starting points to for seeking support (Macpherson & Macpherson 2011; Singh and Sinclair 2001). Young people spend most weekends either playing sports together or involved in rehearsals for important cultural events. Every Sunday it is expected that Samoan families would also attend church services, as well as take part in choir practice held on Fridays; hence, weekends are predominantly taken up by Samoan community-based events. The Homework Study Group was envisaged as an extension of that communication, a program that not only functioned to assist with academic improvement, but also sought to assist participants to use the time ‘promoting cultural and community identification’ (Cosden et al 2001, p. 212).

The improvement of student academic outcomes was due to the following factors: ‘the provision of (a) time; (b) a structured setting for homework completion; and (c) instructional support for students (Cosden et al 2001). The provision of a similar homework support group for Samoan young people will investigate whether they experience improved learning outcomes. Further analysis of research undertaken regarding positive academic outcomes will be explored.

A Strengths-Based Approach

The Homework Study Groups that are the basis for the research analysed in this thesis were established by me in the northern and western suburbs of Melbourne. The intention was to create a positive learning environment for Samoan students, as a milieu for analysing their learning experiences. The design of the study groups was influenced by the approach

undertaken in a New Zealand study by Mila-Schaaf (2010) which acknowledged a more positive way of studying the experiences of Pasifika students. Mila-Schaaf (2010) emphasises that against a backdrop of literature that reports Samoan student underachievement, looking at ways to assist students ‘to identify potentially transferable behaviours and enabling factors which are useful’ (Marsh et al 2004 in Mila-Schaaf 2010, p. 27) can assist in making educational experiences for Samoan students more productive. The strengths-based approach focussed on ways in which participants could do their best to maximise improvement and knowledge in educational settings. This involved asking participants what strategies were adopted in maintaining their success in various settings, whether it included exploring ways to understand educative tasks or successfully blending both traditional cultural values and Western values when required.

The strategies undertaken by Pasifika families include the use of what Mila-Schaaf coined ‘polycultural capital,’ that is, recognising the ‘ability to accumulate culturally diverse symbolic resources, negotiate between them and strategically deploy different cultural resources in contextually specific and advantageous ways’ (Mila-Schaaf 2010, p. 2). My use of these ideas is expanded on in more detail in Chapter 4 where I explore stories about ‘Samoanness’ from the parents of the students in the Homework Study Group. These stories acknowledge the role of church and extended family support networks in maintaining cultural identity, as well as being a crucial support network, not only for Samoan migrants new to Australia, but also for families who sought comfort and familiarity in such spaces and places.

Structure of Thesis

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter analyses literature on Samoan student experiences in various educational settings and locations from a national and global perspective. It analyses the literature related to Samoan student experiences to inform best practice for the design of the Homework Study Groups and for the analysis of this study. Since very little research existed in an Australian context (in particular, Melbourne), compared to places like New Zealand and the United States, exploring the strategies that worked elsewhere enabled a

more structured approach to the establishment of Homework Study Groups in two suburbs in Melbourne.

Chapter Three: *Methodology*

Exploring research undertaken previously with Samoan participants established approaches that were appropriate and suitable for this study. In consideration of the need for ethically appropriate interaction when communicating with minority communities, it was apparent that the research would not be possible without insider knowledge, or without affirming the methods of other indigenous researchers, to avoid causing offence. In this chapter I outline strategies employed in recruiting participants, ensuring that the methods used as the practitioner-researcher were in accordance with the university's ethics expectations. Culturally appropriate strategies were utilised when working with people in the Samoan community. A qualitative approach was adopted to answer research questions posed.

Chapter Four: *Findings: Samoanness*

Factors contributing to the definition of Samoan culture are explored and perspectives from migrant stories are shared. Literature regarding Samoan values and beliefs are considered as foundation to an understanding of influences on families living in Western countries. The understanding of educators about cultural influences is imperative for positive dialogue to be engaged in with families of Samoan students. Symbolic images and meanings derived from Samoan traditional tattoos and contemporary ornamental designs are utilised as metaphors for participant experiences.

Chapter Five: *Findings: Space and Time*

Participant responses affirmed the importance of a designated space for completing homework tasks, enabling not only access to resources, but the provision of a space where a more focussed approach to studying could be consistently maintained. Moreover, participants' responses during focus group discussions and individual interviews revealed the need for skills in organising time to be a priority so that educative tasks could be completed (with assistance from a qualified teacher) within the time available.

Chapter Six: *Implications and Recommendations*

Recommendations are made regarding strategies that will best assist Samoan students to experience improved learning outcomes whilst undertaking assessment tasks in Melbourne schools. Cultural influences and obstacles that prevent Samoan students from maximising educational opportunities are explored. Educators in Australian schools will find that explicit efforts to communicate with stakeholders (parents, community leaders, and the like), would build positive links and contribute to seeing educative goals achieved. With regard to the implications for teaching practice, improved rapport between student and educator is important. The provision of a space for students to connect with the educator/researcher was made in public libraries in the form of a Homework Study Group. What this space provided was an opportunity for understanding, rapport and an exchange of ideas, a concept that was transferable to the school environment.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

RESEARCHING SAMOAN STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCES

‘E sui faiga ae tumau fa’avae’

The form changes, but the underlying principles remain.

(Samoa Proverb)

Introduction to the Literature Review

A review of the literature outlining Samoan student learning experiences begins in Chapter 2, presenting perspectives from research undertaken in Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Important themes from these studies will be discussed to highlight the increasing need for positive strategies to be considered and implemented by teachers so that Samoan students can experience the benefits enjoyed by other students.

Part 1 ‘Creating Spaces for Learning’ discusses the benefits of setting homework for students and implementing homework after-school programs to assist with understanding. This part discusses the evidence for educational approaches which provide young people with a designated space in which to study. The evidence suggests that not only is this a physical space, but a metaphorical space, a safe space where relationships are formed and rapport established, thereby encouraging trust and positive communication with people who enter that space. This safe space can allow exploration of whether Samoan students experience challenges with the blending of Western and traditional values and beliefs. The literature review provides insight into the educational strategies that enable Samoan students to engage actively in this space, in learning and building confidence, as a step towards addressing their academic performance.

Part 2 of the literature review, ‘Understanding Samoanness’, offers background information regarding the migration of Samoan people to Western countries (in this case, more than once) and the collective support provided by the Samoan community for settlement in new lands. What is included in the literature is the metaphoric use of Samoan symbolism to describe the experiences of Samoan families as residents in Australia. Traditional tattoo patterns and decorative shapes are shown to represent the migration and educational journey of the Samoan people.

Part 1: Creating Spaces for Learning

Based on the research mentioned so far regarding the positive impact that after-school programs had on academic improvements for students (Cosden et al 2001), the decision was made to find a space where participants could meet on a regular basis. Having access to a purposeful area where learning and engagement can occur (whether it is outside or enclosed) enables people to perform actions that lead to positive outcomes. Achieving this is more likely when like-minded people act with purpose and intention. The selection of libraries as a space for the Homework Study Groups to meet regularly seemed logical

because there are resources available there for learning. Mila-Schaaf (2010) shares the notion of negotiated space where it is

a place of purposive re-encounter, for reconstructing and balancing ideas and values in complementary realignments which have resonance for Pasifika peoples living in Western oriented societies (p. 158).

Mila-Schaaf (2010) sees the negotiated space as a model that 'shifts from deconstruction to reconstruction', an appropriate notion adopted for this research.

You try to rebuild a frame for your own lived experiences and realities and revision the terrain of your own imaginaries using broken tools and what remains standing of deconstructed ideas (Mila-Schaaf 2010, p. 162).

If anything, this thesis uses traditional meanings to reconstruct ways of thinking for Samoan youth in Melbourne schools. Rather than seeing culture or traditional ways of knowing as something that remains in a separate space (at home, church or community setting), they are tools that can be sourced and used in one's learning environment to strengthen one's place, wherever it is (home, school, church, society in general). Discussions with participants regarding the blending of Western ideology and *fa'aSamoa* as a way to succeed in fulfilling set goals were therefore undertaken in the space provided.

Woodman and Leccardi (2015) acknowledge the interest in the youth studies field with the ways in which young people use or occupy space. In some instances, young people have used public spaces such as bus shelters as a place to meet or hang out, because it is open and unsupervised as opposed to other public spaces that are under surveillance. Another public space frequented by them is where street art is created or visible to the public. As outlined by Woodman and Leccardi (2015), a stigma was attached to young people who congregated in such places - they attracted a 'gang' label. On the other hand, there is a space they occupy that provides safety and recognition, namely the cyber world. The use of social media to express one's activism and ideas is an example of space being something that is no longer confined to what the individual can see, but rather becomes something that is for anyone and all to view. Young people can create their own public forums/spaces to voice and share opinions. Spaces can thus be used as a place for them to come together and share narratives. Woodman and Leccardi's (2015) study confirms the way in which space is valued because:

Space is created through social practices, practices that necessarily unfold over time. Massey uses the concept of ‘spacialisation’ to denote an activity or practice rather than ‘space’ as a dimension and argues that space is the bringing together of multiple ‘trajectories’ or ‘narratives’ (Massey 2005 23-24). Creating shared territories is also about creating particular experiences of time (Adam 2004). Time and space are intertwined in concerns about young people (Woodman and Leccardi 2015).

What is of importance is what is shared in occupied spaces. This will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5 ‘Space and Time.’

Youth and Culture

This part of the literature review focuses on the importance of youth as a stage in life and on understanding what young people see as important. It focuses on their learning of cultural practices while residing in Melbourne as a basis for the development of their sense of identity. Young people not only learn about their ancestry this way, but establish an anchor or a foundation that can guide their future. Most young people from minority cultures, like Samoans, place a high value on the cultural knowledge shared by leaders and parents in the Samoan community of Melbourne. This is discussed here to provide an understanding as to why time is allocated to the teaching of traditional knowledge to young people who have migrated from Samoa with families, or were born and raised in Western countries like New Zealand and Australia. There is a myriad of cultural practices that illustrate the diversity of experiences that are embraced by young people. Depending on the country in which young people may be living, identity formation is practised in different ways. Young people and specific cultural practices in which they perform or engage has been a topic of interest over the years to various academics (White & Wyn 2008; Wyn 2009; Baker, Bennett & Homan 2008; Heath 2008). Oftentimes, being a young person is described as an exciting stage of life for some people, but for most it is a challenging time with numerous uncertainties. Not only are there physical changes taking place in one’s body, but there are also emotional and sociological factors that influence changes in one’s life, changes that are not always controllable. How a young person perceives themselves and the world they live in can be quite different from other people’s perceptions.

Performing Identities

Young people have been inventing and re-inventing themselves through narratives explored on a daily basis; for instance by establishing identity through purchasing clothes that give them a certain style or feeling of belonging to a group, one with artistic interests such as music or the performing arts (Bennett 2008). Other young people form identities by engaging in particular activities offered by community groups; they do so because they identify with other young people who engage in the same behaviour. In some instances, as will be discussed later in Chapter 4 ‘Samoanness’, there are gendered roles played by individuals which may not necessarily signify their acceptance of an expected role, but be reflective of a role one plays to conform to traditional expectations, either willingly or unwillingly. Nonetheless, they experience a sense of belonging when accepted by their peers who perform similar acts.

These ideas about identity, self and subjectivities are important because the behaviours that directly impact on young people’s health and wellbeing are related to young people’s construction and performance of self (Wyn 2009, *page number unclear online*).

The identities adopted and lived out by young people vary according to the societies in which they live; however, some similarities are evident in the lives of young people who have comparable social economic status.

In exploring young people’s identity, we take a social view of identity. ...identity is tied to social context. Social context is a broad term that is used to describe the sets of relationships (through family, friends, and school), economic conditions (jobs, wealth), and cultural influences that impact on individuals. These and many other elements of social context are the circumstances that shape identities (White & Wyn 2008, p. 192).

The common assumption regarding young people or youth in general is that it is a category: ‘you’re all youth’, and this is viewed as a universal experience with pre-determined stages; however, the sociological concept of youth is that this stage of life is a process that is shaped by young people themselves. It is a process of interaction with others depending on context: young people from Western countries would have experiences and understandings about the world in which they live that are different from those of young

people living in small island nations with traditional values and beliefs. It is different again for those who reside in Western countries yet are raised by parents who bring with them the traditional values and beliefs with which they were raised. Such is the upbringing for participants in this study. Living in Melbourne has not necessarily meant living the way in which other young people live - as if the norm is freedom to do what one desires. If anything, respect for authority and the expectations set by parents are their norm, and not to be taken for granted; hence, the cultural background of young people plays an important role in the ways in which young people express themselves.

Adolescents are commonly mythologized in media, literature and in political discourse, often stereotypically represented as victims, potential criminals or agents of social disorder (Kelly 2003; Giroux 2000; Bessant and Watts 1998; Wyn and White 1997). Giroux points out that this stereotyping of youth can affect young people's sense of who they are and undermine their sense of agency (Cahill 2006, p. 19).

In this research project, the establishment of the Homework Study Group enabled participants to exercise their agency by making changes, to ensure new educational strategies and skills were learnt in order to improve their learning outcomes. A shift in thinking for participants was vital in order for stereotypical roles to be minimised. Such roles included the lack of aspiration for tertiary education: these young people were not encouraged by parents to pursue tertiary education as it was not a familiar pathway for those parents who had not experienced it for themselves. The research project involved the provision of information to parents so that barriers like financial or social constraints would not limit opportunities for Samoan participants in this study.

There are structural social processes in place which influence young people's experiences; for example, being poor affects how one's life unfolds - our understanding of the world comes from our class or background. With education, for instance, there is the 'parallel between the poverty of many unemployed workers and the failure of many students in school (Teese 2000, p. 1). Young people from families whose parents had limited education (that is, dropped out of high school or had achieved only a high school certificate) or who lacked the required financial and educational support to succeed in school, tended to repeat the cycle of underachievement and social inequality experienced by their parents

(Lareau 1977; Teese 2000; Teese 1994; Becker 1952; Bourdieu 1974). Thus, the class into which one is born does influence the type of youth experience one has; for better or worse.

Performance as Agency

Young people have been known to form their own identity through performing an act; it is in the performance that they become somebody. The same can be said of the participants in this study, who see performing traditional Samoan songs and dances in concerts or community events as actions that capture the essence of who they are. There is a strong sense of pride in their cultural origins, which develops into a confidence in particular social, church and community gatherings, but this is not always evident in the classroom or other educational settings. One of the objectives of this study was to highlight to participants the importance of transferring skills exercised in cultural practices, along with their self-confidence, to their educational environments. These skills included, but were not limited to, being bold and asking for clarification when topics were unclear or exuding confidence in responding and participating in group discussions or class presentations.

Young people express themselves through dramatised performances in a theatre. An example of a program for young people performing their identities can be seen in the dramatic play directed by Dave Kelman called *My Story/Our Stories* (O'Brien & Donelan 2008). Young people from disadvantaged multicultural backgrounds in the Western suburbs of Melbourne were able to use art (drama workshop) to perform their narratives which 'constructed meaningful moral frameworks and explored and challenged their own values' (O'Brien & Donelan 2008, p. 6). As students who were considered 'at risk' in their schools, this program provided an opportunity for students to 'develop self-narratives of social agency' (O'Brien & Donelan 2008, p. 6). Moreover, rather than perform plays that portrayed them as victims or delinquents, these young people were able to 'perform stories that were significant to themselves and their community' (O'Brien & Donelan 2008, p. 6).

Similar demonstrations of agency are apparent when Samoan young people perform at community events (church or community fundraiser), sharing similar narratives which are empowering, preserving as they do their language and cultural traditions in an ever-changing world. Very few performances have negative connotations; rather they contain biblical themes in which leaders overcome challenges or individuals achieve goals through a collective effort. Some performances consist of story lines portraying mythical Samoan characters who succeeded in transforming the island landscapes with their strength or love.

There are programs established for Samoan young people in Melbourne that enable the experience of cultural story telling utilising various skills. Individual or group plays teach skills including projecting the voice, making eye contact, memorising lines, being creative and flamboyant in role, to name but a few. Moreover, young people learn team-building skills, and develop emotional and social understandings of the value of working long hours to achieve a goal.

The diversity of cultural practices and expression of youth identities is also evident in music programs created for marginalized, underprivileged young people. Research into the ways in which music has proved a pathway to success, or a means to express ‘agency’ for young people, has highlighted benefits such as ‘employment and socio-economic inclusion’ experienced as a result of these initiatives (Baker, Bennett & Homan 2009). Local government agencies have implemented a number of creative programs to cater to the musical or dance interests of young people; for example, in order to reduce unemployment rates within a local area, funding was allocated for specific programmes aimed at keeping young people engaged and participating in the community.

...the City of Playford’s planned development of the Northern Sound System, a regional community music centre with a “youth accent,” endeavours to create a “cultural industries incubator” (City of Playford, 2005). As part of broader Council plans to provide Playford’s youth and unemployed with opportunities to gain life skills, training, and pathways to employment and social inclusion, the Northern Sound System will offer “a range of performance, training, rehearsal and recording facilities (Baker, Bennett & Homan 2009).

These programs, while ideal in preventing the emergence of youth problems or allowing the status quo to remain (high unemployment, young people not fitting in, for instance), can only run successfully as long as funding is available on an ongoing basis. Understanding their experiences and knowing how young people see themselves is crucial to ensuring that the programs and initiatives introduced by external parties for young people will empower them. This mirrors the value the Samoan community (parents and elders alike) place on the performances of cultural acts (songs, plays and dances). Usually the existence of such programs is due to volunteers sharing cultural knowledge so that traditions are continued and not lost over time. They are self-funded, or community fund-

raising provides for the future hiring of venues, purchase of resources to make costumes, and the like. It provides young people with an avenue for learning traditional practices through song and dance, but also teaches the lessons of unity, collective efficacy and sharing, values that are often missing in Western culture. What is needed is a balance both in time allocated to learning cultural performances as well as time committed to fulfilling educational tasks to the expected levels.

Various cultural practices are performed by young people in different settings to express their identity. The expression of youth has included young people engaging in acts that are considered positive and rewarding to participants involved. Different programs have been highlighted in which the need for an alternative solution was manifest for assisting young people ‘at risk’ or enabling those unable to fit into conventional settings to feel a sense of empowerment and belonging through the experience of performance. What is imperative to mention here is that this does not automatically mean that participants in such programs (past or present) are necessarily ‘at risk’; rather, the programs recognise what it is that engages young people’s interest.

Being involved in these activities enable youth to express themselves in ways that conventional learning in the classroom does not. What I have proposed to participants in my research was the transference of these skills to the classroom, whether in the delivery of a speech, participating in group discussions, or preparing for assessment tasks. All require time dedicated to preparing and practising so that one’s confidence is developed in what sometimes feels like, in the learning environment, to be unfamiliar surroundings. At times, this includes not having the confidence to question what the teacher is saying, or the confidence to ask for assistance, for to do so is culturally inappropriate. For some, admission of ignorance makes individuals feel a sense of shame and embarrassment. Ongoing encouragement is required for young people to become familiar with educational content so that they can ‘perform’ confidently in their learning environment.

Youth is a stage of life that is problematic for most due to the numerous changes occurring and the numerous identities to be performed in the search for belonging, or to be recognised as “somebody”. Comparisons have been made between the value Samoan people (parents and leaders in the community) place on performance and the provision of programs that engage young people, with that which is offered in Western locations. As reiterated earlier, Samoan young people could utilise cultural experiences to enhance educational

capabilities. The impact of extended family influence on individual success amongst Samoans is profound, since the success of one is seen as success for all. Exploration of collective efficacy will be discussed in chapter 4 ‘Samoanness’ in relation to support from parents banding together to car pool participants to reach Homework Study Group sessions each week.

Part 2: Understanding Samoanness

The term ‘Samoanness’ derives from work undertaken by Fairbairn-Dunlop which explores what it means to be of Samoan ancestry and the practices underpinning the Samoan way of life. Almost all Samoan families who have migrated from Samoa to New Zealand, Australia and the United States have done so with the hope of improving employment and educational outcomes for their families (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2010; Macpherson, Bedford & Spoonley 2000). Samoans value hard work and strive to achieve improved living standards in their adoptive Western.

Migration: A Collective Approach to Settlement in New Lands

‘Ua sau le va’a na tiu, ‘ae tali le va’a na tau,

o lo’o mamaulago i le va’a na faoafolau.

One boat returns from the catch; the other

is tied to the shore; the third is resting in the boat shelter’

(Meleisea, Schoeffel-Meleisea & Meleisea 2012, p. 8).

Samoans have overcome challenges not only with migration to different parts of the world as navigators and explorers, they have overcome various challenges in adapting to different environments; whether their own or that of a foreign country. This proverb is representative of the collective effort undertaken by many Samoans to both support and encourage (practically and spiritually) loved ones in life ventures. This includes, but is not limited to, supporting each other in making changes as in migration, educational support such as taking in family members so that they can attend schools in neighbouring villages, or providing moral and financial support for significant events like weddings, funerals or chief-bestowing ceremonies. So’o (2013) explains the Samoan proverb above as reflecting practices and perseverance shown by Samoans over time.

It's a sort of Samoan metaphor, using the *va'a* (canoe) as the main object and can reflect Samoa's journey over the past 50 years: the daring fishermen, conquerors of the oceans, the chiefs, orators, the young men and the fish carriers (*au taliva'a*) who await their return in the shallow lagoon; the old people who keep vigil at home, praying for the seafarers' success and safe passage (*tapuaiga*) (So'o 2013, p. 3).

It was common practice for my grandparents in Samoa to take in children of extended family members to reside in their home in Moata'a so that they could attend schools nearby. Though my grandparents during different periods had more than ten children of their own to care for, the collective responsibility of family members was to take in whoever needed support. That was and still is the Samoan way (*fa'aSamoa*). My parents continued this practice and were hosts to a number of relatives for short and long term stays so that they could pursue education and employment aspirations in Auckland, New Zealand.

For many Samoan families who migrated to Australia from New Zealand, the collective practices established and encouraged in traditions from Samoa, continued in Australia. I remember as a teenager arriving in Australia, residing with my mother's brother and his family in a small unit for three weeks until we moved into our own home. In addition, I recall my father's relatives visiting us with bags of groceries, enough food and supplies for a month. Such is the generosity and love ingrained in Samoan culture.

As it stands, Samoans **have** succeeded in New Zealand but they have done so by tapping into their own social resources, especially their *aiga* and the church. The practice of doing this can be likened to Wenger's theory of communities of practice (1998) but in this instance, the practices are geared towards supporting their family through the often harsh challenges of living in a foreign country:

That they have had to do so reflects in some measure the insufficiency or inadequacy of institutions in the host society. More significantly, that they for the most part succeeded in doing so reflects the strength of the social institutions that migrants brought with them to New Zealand, especially the *aiga* and the church (Pitt & Macpherson, 1974, p.113).

The above shows that Samoans not only bring their culture with them but as new arrivals, they also rely upon their culture as a lived experience to guide their children, to achieve success (Penn 2010, p. 17).

Families have continued to support those in need regardless of whether there is an actual family connection, purely because of the custom of Samoans showing genuine care and support where needed. Cultural sharing has always encouraged more of an 'us' mentality as opposed to the emphasis on 'I' (the individual). Not only is it a cultural understanding about helping others succeed, but it is the influence of the church as well in following Biblical teachings to 'do unto others what you would want others to do unto you.' This is one of many strengths Samoan people can count on, and it explains why traditions are continued: many benefits accrue when collective efforts are harnessed to maximise positive outcomes. It is not only evident in the communal sharing of resources but also seen in social support networks that exist to build morale; for example, when challenges arise for families settling in Western communities. The types of support available from existing families include employment contacts, provision of accommodation until families can move into their own residence, and supply of basic necessities like groceries and transportation to various places (church, work or school).

The motivation for migrating to other countries was usually financial gain. Given the low wages received in Samoa for working long hours, the financial incentive was quite appealing. Despite the financial rewards though, the initial stages of transition could sometimes prove difficult due to unrealistic hopes of the 'easy life', which is far from the reality that faced Samoan migrants. For example, unless Samoan people have a confident command of the English language, matched with suitable qualifications for jobs for which they apply, finding work that is both high paid and satisfying is not an easy task. Also, without the support from community friends or family who may have come before them, the transition from a more traditional third-world type of living in Samoa to a contemporary life becomes harder (Macpherson 1999; Ng Shiu 2011).

To combat a sense of homesickness and isolation in a new country, the practice of cultural traditional beliefs (*fa'aSamoa*) is continued in the home, in meeting places like the church, and in Samoan community events. Studies carried out in Australia, United States and New Zealand indicate that no matter where Samoan people migrate, they place high importance

on imparting the traditional beliefs to children even if they are contrary to western ideals and expectations (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2013; Siope 2011; Singh 2001; Vaoleti 2006; Ofahengaue Vakalahi & Godinet 2008). Continuing traditional practices can be both rewarding and detrimental at the same time, as it can create confusion amongst young Samoan people who struggle with accepting the complex values and beliefs that contradict Western ideology.

For instance, the term *fa'alavelave* encompasses obligatory participation in familial events such as weddings, funerals, chief title-bestowing ceremonies, and the like. Though contributions to such events have the advantage of reinforcing a sense of belonging to one's extended family, they also cause emotional and financial stress that sometimes leads to people straying away from traditional practices and becoming disconnected from family members. The study by Ofahengaue et al (2008) explains the pressures experienced from a Samoan perspective:

In general, parents acknowledged the sometimes excessive demands of the Fa'asamoa as a possible source of risk for the well-being of the entire family. For instance, parents expressed that the *fa'alavelave* is often practised to the point of negatively affecting the care of children and meeting the basic needs of their families (p. 243).

These cultural responsibilities have a significant impact on Samoan student experiences in education because of the amount of time family members expect students to spend on participating and serving in ceremonies in order to retain cultural practices, sometimes many hours, sometimes weeks. One may see the direct impact this has in terms of time students spend away from school, as well as time not dedicated to the completion of homework tasks or the revision of topics outlined in class. Moreover, making financial contributions to family, cultural or church events can take priority over paying for school texts or resources required to complete specific tasks (including, for example, buying a home computer or the purchase of internet credit or Wi-Fi connections which most schools expect families to be able to access, without question).

The significance parents place on their children learning the core values of what it means to be Samoan has a major impact on their education. Such core values include: '*fa'aalo'alo* or respect, *loto'alofa* or love and compassion, *fealofani* or mutual support, *aiga* or kinship,

tautua or service to family and village, *to'aga ile lotu* or commitment to Christian faith' (Macpherson 1999, p. 54,).

The greatest influences on success at school are the relationship between children and their parents, and in schools, effective teaching and leadership. Partnerships focused on learning between parents and teachers can also greatly enhance children's achievement. While Pacific parents want to help their children at school, they sometimes don't know how. Similarly, many teachers and schools do not know how to engage effectively with Pacific parents' (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010; p.11).

It is expected that the cultural values imparted to Samoan young people are practised within the education system. Young people are expected to reflect the parental values instilled at home in the public domain so that the good reputation of the family name can be upheld wherever young people go. Moreover, parents are keen to instil values such as these as residents or citizens in Western countries because, at times, they are not always visible amongst young people in Western society. It is not only a connection to a lifestyle that Samoan people left behind, but also a mechanism for the continuity of cultural practices that offer a sense of belonging and familiarity. These are the core values that shape the context of families of participants in this study.

Culture: A Balancing Act

Striking a balance between knowing and performing dual cultural identities is a common theme in the literature; a range of researchers have provided evidence that Samoan young people commonly struggle to fit in. Cahill (2006) and Singh and Sinclair (2001) found that Samoan young people were expected to know and live the 'Western lifestyle' as well as learn the *fa'aSamoa*. These two expectations contradict each other at times, leaving students feeling confused and distressed. The following extract highlights this concern, as outlined in this study:

Amoga N identified as Samoan, claiming 'I'm proud of being Samoan'. ... He was achieving well above average in Mathematics and English, having progressed [from] a lower to a higher academic class during his time at Sanunder High School. However, his ambition to pursue

university studies was not totally supported by his parents, who wanted him to consider religion as a vocation (Singh and Sinclair 2001, p. 80).

Though parents are proud of academic achievement, sometimes what their child aspires to achieve does not align with the fulfilment their dreams: having a son successfully meet the entry requirements for study at a religious college. Religion plays an important role in Pasifika society where leaders of ministries are treated like gods themselves (as representatives and teachers of biblical knowledge). From a hierarchical perspective, in some Pacific Island communities, religious ministers occupy one of the most respected and highly esteemed roles to which one might aspire (Macpherson & Macpherson 2011). The influence they have on leading the community, as well as the material resources they acquire (house, car, food, and money), is what many parents want for their children because it is a life that offers security (financial as well as cultural). However, as argued in studies undertaken thus far for Samoans living abroad (and can also be said of other Pasifika people living in Western countries), such expectations are unrealistic for Pasifika young people (including Samoans) who have experienced a taste of Western life and who seek career paths more in tune with their aspirations. The influence of the church in the lives of Samoan families will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Understanding from both parents and educators regarding the experiences faced by Samoan students educated in Western schools is imperative so that there is minimal confusion, especially for Samoan students who strive to do one thing but confront conflicting expectations from parents. That is, there may be educational norms for Samoan students, , having a structured time to complete homework during the week for example, but, due to their required involvement in extra-curricular or cultural events and ceremonies, students would be hard pressed to meet the school's expectations. Sometimes the communication between schools and Samoan families is so irregular; notification of important dates is overlooked, or information about the school's expectations is lost or not followed up.

Cultural factors can be significant barriers to Pacific families' effective engagement with schools. These can include lack of English fluency and the 'respect for authority' that prevents parents questioning the school, or children questioning their teachers. If teachers do not understand these differences in beliefs, school expectations can be an early barrier to effective learning for many Pacific students [including

Samoa], and to effective engagement with parents (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs 2010, p.11).

The social and educational experiences of young people are described in Mageo's book, *Theorizing Self in Samoa* (1998), which identifies Samoan society as "sociocentric." In this description, Mageo refers to the importance to Samoans of knowing the 'social roles that people play rather than emphasise the feelings, thoughts and perceptions of the individual' (Cahill 2006, p. 58). One's desire in life as an individual may not necessarily reflect the goals parents may have that young person. That is, as suggested by Amoga, a Samoan student who dreamed of going to university because he had other goals in mind was not totally supported by his parents who had expectations of Amoga going to theological college (Singh and Sinclair 2001, p. 80).

Samoa young are caught between two worlds where one often contradicts the other. Rather than seeking the path towards individual success, for example, what is emphasised in Samoan society is the importance of doing what is best for the community (including extended family and church). Conflict therefore arises at times: which set of values should override the other: Samoan or Western?

In the everyday classroom experience, Samoan students are positioned precariously by these practices as subjects of two worlds, neither of which provides the skills to allow interpretation of the other (Cahill 2006, p. 58).

It is this contention that Maori researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has argued at length: the education received by students who hail from different backgrounds is predominantly Westernised in its approach. Hence, an imbalance exists between the provider of the knowledge and the recipient of that knowledge. Fairbairn-Dunlop cites Linda Tuhiwai Smith in outlining the need for recipients of knowledge 'to reclaim, revalue and own Maori knowledge' (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2013, p. 3). Melbourne schools need to incorporate the prior knowledge and experience that students bring to their learning environments to enable student ownership of what is learnt in educative settings, irrespective of cultural background.

Parental Expectations

A study of Samoan participants in the San Francisco Bay Area (Borrero, Yeh, Tito & Luavasa 2009) found that external factors had contributed to Samoan young people experiencing low academic achievement. These included cultural and some family expectations being at odds with Western educative expectations. While parents have high expectations that their children will do well in school and gain employment, the means of supporting their children to reach these goals have not always been evident to those parents. That is, due to lower education levels, parents have found it difficult to assist their children with homework or provide strategies that might ensure academic success. In addition, though parents valued education and the importance of doing well in school, evidence of supporting their children in terms of allocating required time and resources towards educational goals was not apparent. Similarly, as reported by Ng Shiu (2011) in her study undertaken in New Zealand regarding the experiences of tertiary health students, parents could only guide their child's learning at home to a certain degree.

The Youth '07 results showed that over half of Samoan and Pacific students received help from family members with their homework. This was slightly lower than the New Zealand/Pakeha rate but it would be desirable if most students were able to receive help with their homework from family members. As many Pacific adults are employed in shift work it may be difficult for caregivers to help secondary school students with their homework after school. Also Pacific caregivers may find helping senior secondary school learners a challenge particularly if they have no experience with the subject matter and curriculum. Pacific caregivers and parents may want to help and support their children with their homework but will find it increasingly difficult to do so once students have surpassed their own level of schooling (Ng Shiu 2011, p. 89).

Education is valued by Samoan families, with parents having some involvement in the educational experiences of their children (Takeuchi and Hune 2008; Macpherson, Bedford & Spoonley 2000). One of the motivating factors for families migrating to countries such as New Zealand and Australia was the availability of better opportunities for young people in education and employment. The study undertaken by Macpherson et al (2000) revealed

New Zealand-born Samoans faring better than their parents in education, then earning higher incomes as a result of securing better employment. These young people were exposed to more cultural capital that enabled communication and blending of traditional Samoan practices with Western values – these practices and values were able to be either critiqued or accepted by them. Here, New Zealand-born Samoans redefined their Samoanness as something other than being like their parents, mainly due to being exposed to and raised in different ‘political, economic and social conditions’ (Macpherson 2002).

Where parents would see a need to maintain Samoanness by passing on traditional customs, values and beliefs as new migrants to the land, young New Zealand-born Samoans incorporated both traditional and Western expectations into their lives. This is evident in the example of the older generation of parents sending remittances back to Samoa to support families, whereas New Zealand-born Samoans did not always feel obliged to do so. They were free ‘from economic dependence on friends and relatives and the requirement of compliance with parental and community requests for support’ (Macpherson 2002, p. 86). What would be interesting to see in an Australia-wide study is whether Samoans born or raised in Australia have similar experiences to those of New Zealand-born Samoans in education and employment opportunities, that is, whether Samoan students raised and living here have the cultural capital to successfully navigate the Australian education system and enter into tertiary institutions.

Parents have expressed concerns about not understanding the requirements of the education system at times, their own educational experiences being very different. Moreover, parents fear that ‘my English is half-half’ (Cuthill & Scull 2011, p. 7), meaning they were unable to communicate effectively in English (their second language) when responding to whatever issues teachers raised. It is something that they are embarrassed to admit, so, rather than parents communicating directly with teachers, as expected by schools, that role usually defaults to students themselves. In addition, though it may be seen as their disinterest in not discussing student experiences at school, Samoan parents have adhered to their own expectations and cultural norms which dictate that the *teacher* is responsible for the education and discipline of their children at school; hence, their involvement in educational issues is, at times, limited. As reported in a study by Cuthill and Scull (2011):

Pacific Island parents who participated in interviews acknowledge the important role they play in the education of their children, and indicate that they have high expectations for their children’s performance at

school. However, parents educated in the Pacific Islands may be limited in levels of support they can provide, as there is a general lack of understanding as to how the Queensland education system works, and more specifically what their young people are learning at school (p. 7).

What is required for improved communication between Samoan families and schools is for community leaders and organisations to work together to utilise ‘brokers’ (Cahill 2006, p. 61) who will provide understanding and clarification of issues presented thus far.

Kearney et al (2008) reiterates the need for the alignment of school, community and family expectations to improve Samoan student learning outcomes. Many parents relied on their educational experiences to support their children, but often lacked the knowledge to relate to, and assist them with, their homework. Parental responses often admitted to their own lack of educational achievement which limited their capacity to adequately assist their children with their work.

Influence of the Church

It is not uncommon for Samoan young people to attend weekly activities offered by church organisations, including the church services on Sunday (which can often include a morning and evening service, depending on the country in which one resides). Since parents were raised in religious families while living in Samoa, it was common practice to continue this in Western countries. The experience of Samoan students from the San Francisco Bay Area (Borrero et al 2009) is one of young people finding it difficult to cope with the demands of participating in or attending cultural and church obligations. These Samoan young people usually belonged to church organisations that fostered the *fa’aSamoa* (Macpherson & Macpherson 2011). Commitment to this tradition was expectation of young people from their families, and opposing such parental expectations was deemed ‘un-Samoan.’ It is important for educators to be aware of the influence of the church in the lives of Samoan families as, since religious leaders are esteemed and highly respected role models in their community.

Not only is the church seen as a place of worship for Samoan families, it is the meeting place for social gatherings and the maintenance of cultural traditions: the *fa’aSamoa* (Ng Shiu 2011; Cuthill and Scull 2011; Macpherson 2002). By garnering support and

encouragement from these influential leaders of the Samoan community, both the church and schools could together influence more positive educative outcomes; that is, since families spend a lot of time at church-related functions (be it choir practice, church services, fundraisers, cultural ceremonies), working together to understand the demands and expectations required for young people to succeed at school would be very beneficial.

There are shortcomings in parents' understanding of the demands young people at school are experiencing, and of their ability to support their children with the homework tasks expected. Schools in general need to support families in building effective strategies that will enable the completion of learning tasks that may be quite daunting to parents whose educational experiences are vastly different from their children's. One of the ways in which assistance can be provided is setting up spaces for learning to occur for Samoan students and their families. This has worked successfully in New Zealand through utilising the influence of, and respect for, the church that Samoans feel through establishing educative spaces like *Aoga Amata* – preschool for Samoan children, run initially by church leaders. This is something that could be developed in Melbourne.

The first Pacific Early Childhood Education (ECE) was established in Auckland in 1985 and the 1990s was an era of significant growth for Pacific ECEs. This growth was driven by Pacific communities and churches and based on bilingual ECE models like the A'oga Amata for Samoan communities (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010b in Ng Shiu 2011, p. 71).

There is a need for the Australian education system to recognise some of the factors contributing to the reported low academic achievement of Samoan students so that support networks can be made available in Victorian schools. Furthermore, the literature argues that families of Samoan students share a responsibility to become familiar with the expectations required for academic success in all schools in Australia. Without the support and acknowledgment of one towards the other (families and schools), and vice versa, progress towards educational improvement stagnates.

Linking Participant Responses to Samoan Symbolism and Meanings
During my journey in learning more about traditional Samoan *tatau* (tattoos), the idea came to me to connect the meanings of the art and ritual of *tatau* with the positive educative

The symbolism selected comes from traditional designs that can be seen on adornments in various settings in the home, on tattoos, and on traditional island wear like shirts or the female formal dress, *puletasi*' (Sablan, 2014). I acknowledge that Samoa has a rich oral tradition that has transcended the influence of colonists. Not all oral history has been documented, however, leaving unknown some of the meanings that artists, *tufuga ta tatau* (master tattooists), have placed on symbols seen in a myriad of Samoan tattoo patterns. The following images are taken therefore from a few interpretations of Samoan symbolism located in studies undertaken by Wendt (1999), as well as from information provided by Sablan and Sablan (2014). While one artist sees an image as representing one thing, another may argue it stands for something else. The following are the symbols that have been specifically selected to signify participant responses during the collection of data:

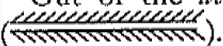


The Samoan symbols in this thesis are used metaphorically to reflect the experiences of participants voiced during the homework study sessions; their responses are given significance by comparing them with the powerful symbolic meanings of Samoan traditional designs (see images above). Each symbol, full of meaning, has been used by Samoans over time to decorate fabrics, use in paintings and tattoos, and to carve into decorative homeware). The inspiring words shared by participants as they explained what it meant to them as individuals were just as powerful as the symbolism portrayed in this traditional artwork that has outlasted colonial (mainly missionary) censorship. The symbols have a historical reference that will be explored in what is widely known as *Tatau*.

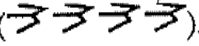
Tatau: History and Relevance

The history of *tatau* has been documented by explorers, missionaries, academics and writers over time as they explored the traditional ritual from the *tufuga ta tatau* (tattooist) perspective, as well as from the perspective of those who had been *tataued* (tattooed). In Samoa, the *tatau* has always signified not only one's perseverance and ability to withstand the pain of undergoing the ritual, but also one's identity, and readiness and capacity to be of service to one's extended family (Marquardt 1984; Ellis 2006). The *tatauing* of both genders in Samoan culture has withstood the influence of missionaries who wished to ban such practices when they first arrived in Samoa during the 1800s (Marquardt, 1984). In fact, the intent of missionaries to halt the *tatau* practices only led Samoan people to travel to neighbouring islands in Samoa, like Tutuila (American Samoa), to receive their *tatau*. The *tufuga ta tatau* were well respected, and are still highly esteemed in Samoan culture, receiving hundreds of *ie toga* (fine mats), plus plentiful food and material goods for skillfully exercising their craft (Mallon, Thomas and Adams; 2010).

Over its long history the basic motifs of the tatau and manu developed out of representations of atua or out of nature—plants, objects, creatures. For example, the *tuli* was the bird of the supreme Atua, Tagaloaalagi. Out of the tuli's footprint came the *faavaetuli* (>>>>>>>>)—like the tuli's footprint. (See Figures 1 and 2.)

Out of the *atualoa* (centipede), the long god, came the *faaatualoa*: .

Out of the *pandanus* leaf came the *faalaupaogo*: .

Out of the *gogo* (tern), an aiga atua, came the *faagogo*. .

The *faagogo* motif may face any direction.

The single line is called *aso* (—), that is, the name of the ribs of the roof of a fale. *Ivi asoaso* are also your ribs.

Two single lines (=====) are *aso moehua*, two lines sleeping together.

Out of the *upega* (fishing net) came the *faupega*: .

Out of the *anufe* (caterpillar) came the *faaunafe*: .

Out of the male pandanus flower (*sigano*) came the *faasigano*: .

Many of the motifs also have symbolic meanings, according to Suluape Paulo:

1. The *va'a* (canoe), which is the black strip about 20 cm wide across the back, with faaulutao at both ends going towards the front under the armpits, represents the aiga, which the wearer of the tatau must protect (with spears).
2. *Pula lait*i are also known as *tama'i pe'a*, the young of the flying fox, which she carries under her wings. The wearer of the tatau must protect and nourish his immediate family.
3. *Pula tele*: the same principle of caring but for the whole extended family. The proverb is "*Ia pupula ou mata, ia malama ou ala, aua nei e soli aiga, ina nei vaipaaia oe!*" (Be aware, may your paths be clear, don't commit incest, or you'll have no heirs.)
4. *Aso lait*i are small lines or ribs. The first row are your genealogical lines on your paternal side, which conclude the *tafani tapulu*. The second row of *aso lait*i are the genealogical lines on your maternal side, concluding at the *tafani tau*. Mothers and sisters are your *feagaiga*; they must always be respected and given first preference.

Some *aso lait*i rows are those of adventure and accomplishment.

Image 2.3: Examples of *Tatau* Symbols and their Meanings

(Wendt 1999, p. 405 & p. 408)

As discussed in Wendt's paper (1999), the *tatau* represented the readiness for one to serve one's family and community. It was, and still is to some extent, symbolic of a man and woman's role in Samoan society irrespective of their country of residence. The value of the *tatau* for men and *malu* for women, as documented in historical accounts (Krämer 1994), remains today, as do, I believe, the symbolic meanings mentioned below by Wendt:.

...tatauing is part of everything else that is the people, the *aiga*, the village, the community, the environment, the *atua*, the cosmos. It is a way of life that relates the *tufuga ta tatau* to the person being tatau'd and their community and history and beliefs relating to service, courage, masculinity, femininity, gender, identity, sexuality, beauty, symmetry, balance, aptness, and other art forms and the future, because a *tatau* or a *malu* is for the rest of your life and when you die, your children will inherit its reputation and stories, your stories about you and your relationships. The *tatau* and *malu* are not just beautiful decoration, they are scripts-texts-testimonies to do with relationships, order, form, and so on (Wendt 1999, p. 403).

In documenting the meaning for women who are undergoing the ritual of receiving a *malu*, Wendt states:

The *malu* was essential wear for women before they married. Clothed not to cover your nakedness but to show you are ready for life, for adulthood and service to your community, that you have triumphed over physical pain and are now ready to face the demands of life, and ultimately to master the most demanding of activities: language and oratory (p. 400).

I believe the meanings behind the *malu*, and reasons why women would undergo the ritual of getting a *malu*, are similar to the meanings behind and reasons for seeking educational achievement - and for using that achievement to serve one's family and community. Similarly, I take the meanings of *tatau* to be symbolic of academic achievement. With the high value Samoan families place on education, successful academic achievement, and the attainment of a well-paying, respectable job, the gaining of all of this by an individual represents success for all stakeholders. By 'stakeholders' I refer to parents, aunts, uncles,

cousins, siblings, and anyone else connected to the family through extended kinship. Some may argue it is controversial to compare a traditional ritual and its meanings to educational journeys and achievements; however, I use these comparisons metaphorically, viewing the importance of receiving traditional *tatau* and *malu* as comparable to the esteem and recognition one receives when educational success is achieved.

It is a celebration for all because educational achievement meant success in conferring a good name on the family. It meant the success of not just the individual, but the entire family and community to which one was connected, as such success reflected positively on that family and community. Any successful employment attained from high educational achievement meant not only the ability to earn a good income, but also financial support for one's immediate and extended family. This is where the greater part of income earned by Samoans would be shared: supporting one's family, whether married or single (Macpherson 2002).

Image 2.4 & Image 2.5: Examples of Tatau and Malu
(Hereniko & Wilson 1999, p. 407 and p. 406)

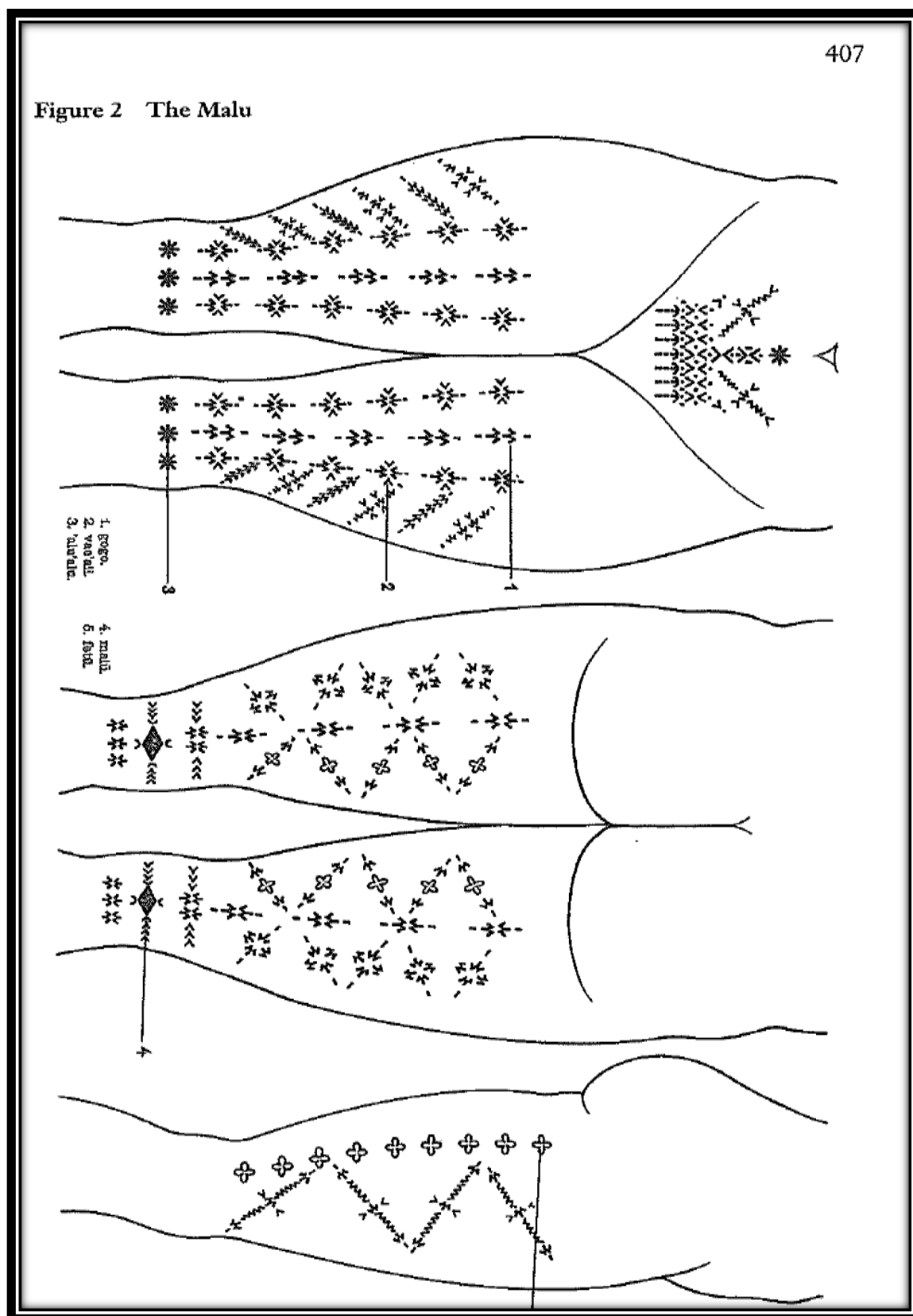
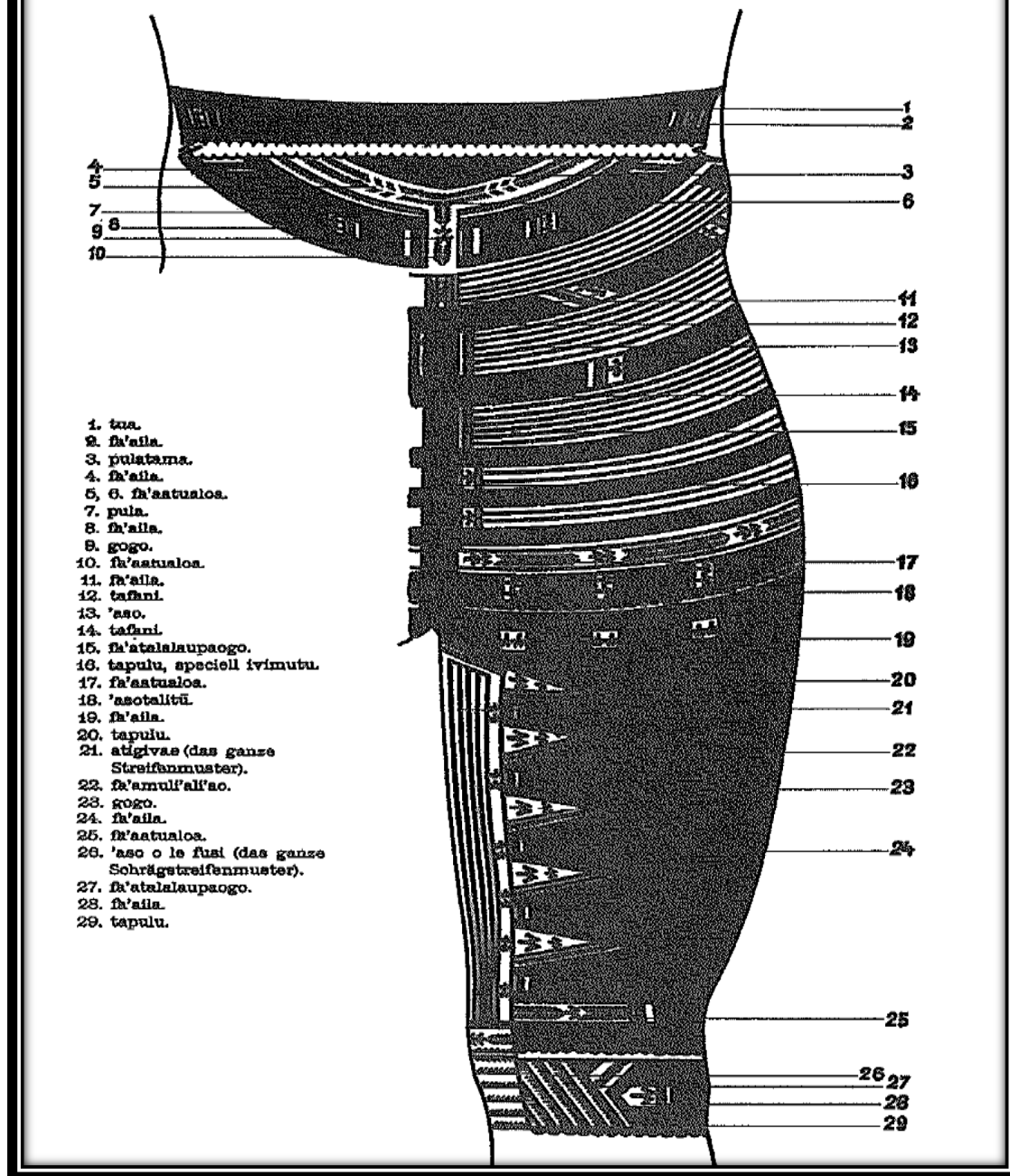


Figure 1 The Tatau



I explore the correlation between symbols used in traditional Samoan patterns used in the art of *tatau* (tattooing, fabric designs or art work) by various artists, and the ways in which the participants in my research responded to interview questions. Wendt (1999) describes various designs as ‘basic motifs of the tatau and malu developed out of representations of atua or out of nature – plants, objects, and creatures’ (p. 405). As the late *tufuga ta tatau* Suluape Paulo II stated in an interview, it is up to the tattooist whom he wants to tattoo, as is the design that will be bestowed on the recipient (Mallon, Brunt and Thomas 2010).

The resurgence of Samoan females now receiving the *malu* may be attributed in part to the empowering actions of strong female characters who underwent the ritual of being *tataued* in recent novels by Sia Figiel *They Who Do Not Grieve* (Treagus, 2008) and Lani Wendt-Young's *Telesa: The Covenant Keeper* (2012). The pride expressed in the completion of one's *tatau* or *malu* is not misplaced: it displays true courage and perseverance.

Parallels can be drawn with the pride families feel in young people who succeed educationally. The success of an individual in education is also the success of one's extended family and community, as it is not through just the individual's perseverance that challenges have been overcome, but rather through the collective contribution of all. Whether it has been as a result of the labour parents have endured to earn wages so that their children could receive a high quality education and participate in life in a Western country, or through the efforts of the Samoan providing social, religious and cultural networks to ensure success, such success belongs to all connected with that individual. What will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4 is the empowerment participants experience in the pursuit of educational goals.

Conclusion

As outlined in the literature thus far, recognition and understanding of the cultural practices and learning preferences of Samoan students in schools is a major factor in schools' building of rapport that will engage these students as learners, thereby maximising their academic success. There is a gap in what is known about this group in educational spaces from a Melbourne perspective, so this research will provide insight into what supports Samoan students to achieve academic goals. Previous studies have reported that Samoan students have a number of responsibilities (other than those from school) that need to be understood by educators so that they understand how their students' time is allocated. Educators often assume families have resources and knowledge that will ensure the completion of homework tasks sent home with students, but that is not always the case. Teachers and those in educational leadership will find this research helpful in aiding their understanding of how they can best communicate with students and their families so that all are working towards the same goals; that is, this research will assist educators and parents to appreciate the complexities of the education system and the value of utilising support networks (such as a HSG) to navigate through obstacles which may prevent learning for Samoan students. Not only is time allocation an issue that has been explored,

but the provision of an appropriate space - other than the kitchen table or bed – for homework purposes, a space that represented an important benefit in completing set learning tasks for participants in this study. The library proved to be a space that was needed and appreciated as it held all the resources that participants could access for effective research, learning and development of understanding.

Acknowledging the learning preferences of students is fundamental for educators so that appropriate curriculum is used and effective pedagogical methods are implemented in schools. The literature review has quoted consistent studies showing how teachers can assist Pasifika students, describing ways in which schools can provide support networks and programs to assist stakeholders, such as families, community leaders and those in charge of writing educative policies, to effect change. A strengths-based approach is adopted in this research, following on from various successful programs and strategies implemented in New Zealand and Queensland that can be replicated in Melbourne, Victoria. The Homework Study Groups for Samoan participants in Melbourne are an example of what can work to build rapport with, and develop understanding in the Victorian education system of Samoan students and their families.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter discusses the way in which the research was designed in order to answer my research questions. The broad aims of this project are to explore learning strategies and experiences of Samoan secondary school students, with an emphasis on highlighting the learning approaches and strategies that enable Samoan students to experience successful educational outcomes. The key questions are:

1. What learning strategies are associated with positive academic outcomes?
2. What factors influence effective learning for Samoan young people?
3. What difference did the set-up of Homework Study Groups make to the learning of participants in this study?

The students who participated in the study were from Homework Study Groups (HSG) that I initiated. This chapter will outline how the participants were selected and also the methods I utilised to approach a specific Samoan church community to propose my investigation. Awareness of specific cultural protocols in such circumstances was something to be mindful of as a researcher (something I knew as a person of Samoan background). It is helpful for other researchers to note this requirement if they are thinking of approaching, or doing research with communities of Pacific Island (namely Samoan) ethnicity.

As a researcher and teacher, the recognition of general low academic achievement of Samoan students, also noted in various studies discussed in chapter 2, prompted me to explore positive approaches to learning for Samoan students through the establishment of Homework Study Groups. Although the motivation behind the Homework Study Groups was to improve the academic outcomes for participants, this was not the main focus of the research. The Homework Study Groups provided a setting in which I could explore the opportunities and barriers to learning that the students routinely experience in their homes and in school; a setting in which I could trial strategies to increase student engagement in learning; and a place where young people could ask questions, voice concerns and express their sense of identity as young people living in Melbourne. Rather than focus on a deficit model (Penn 2010), I wanted to set up a specific homework group with a positive approach in order to explore an existing concern.

This research takes the form of a preliminary study about Samoan student experiences in two Homework Study Groups in Melbourne, and describes the research practices employed to determine the teaching and learning strategies that would assist in improving academic outcomes for this group.

The schools that participants attended were contacted at the beginning of the data collection phase with the aim of determining teachers' perspectives on the academic progress of participants over time. Principals were contacted and messages left seeking discussions about the purpose of the study, but permission was infrequently granted. Only the colleges in the western areas of Melbourne were forthcoming in allowing access to information about their students of Pacific heritage, and supporting me to meet with students to find out who would be keen to participate in the study. This process was led by a Leading Teacher in one college and by the Principal in another, both of whom gave me permission to approach students and arranged for those students to meet me in a local library. To gauge interest from students, the Leading Teacher of a high school in the western suburbs discussed with potential participants the overall idea of the investigation, acting as a disinterested third party to ensure students did not feel compelled to take part.

Research Design

The broad aims of this project are to explore the learning strategies and experiences of Samoan secondary school students. Samoan students have traditionally had poor academic outcomes (Wendt-Samu 2006; Singh 2001; Singh & Sinclair 2001; Kearney, Fletcher & Dobrenov-Major 2008; Podmore, Tapusoa & Taouma 2006), and this project aims to make a contribution to developing learning strategies that improve their academic outcomes.

The research is based on a qualitative research design involving a case study of two Homework Study Groups for Samoan students from the northern and western suburbs of Melbourne.

The research focuses on young people taking part in a study group in order to develop an evidence base about positive learning strategies that improve Samoan students' academic results. Participants in Years 7 to 12 in the Study Group met every week during the school term. These participants were asked if they would like to participate in this project on a voluntary basis. Participants were selected from a Samoan Youth Group (Thomastown). Study Group participants brought their homework or unfinished school work to the group, where they worked in a supervised environment to complete or continue their work. The

sessions were supervised by a qualified secondary school teacher (who is also the researcher). The supervisor provided assistance with the homework according to individual student learning needs, and, where relevant, recommended a tutor or arranged a time for the student to receive help from their teacher at school.

A Qualitative Approach

The methodology selected for this study is a qualitative one because such methodology provides the depth and detail of data that enables analysis of the complex processes that contribute to improved school performance, including students' views of various educational, social and cultural experiences. Qualitative methods of research are used to establish the meaning of something that is questioned. When considering how answers to the research question were to be collected, the interview process was selected in preference to the distribution of surveys due to the fact that it was a more personalised approach. I was aware of cultural protocols and knew which community groups to approach during the recruitment process, and I took into consideration the research findings of other academics with similar participants. Mila-Schaaf (2010) writes of the benefits in collaborating with participants and being guided by their responses, rather than following a researcher-driven agenda.

This approach was “participative” in the sense that the themes and focus of further data exploration and follow up qualitative work was instigated by participants, as opposed to being generated from the literature or being investigator driven (Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie, 2003, p.351). The decision to take this “participative” approach to my research was driven in part by my own awareness as an insider researcher, cognisant of very high stakes, that there was a danger and risk in an entirely investigator driven agenda (Mila-Schaaf 2010, p. 49).

Awareness of cultural sensitivities, and knowledge of research findings related to Samoan students in educational settings, influenced the way my data collection and the recruitment process were designed. Topics for discussion and interviews were carefully selected so as to avoid creating an uncomfortable atmosphere in the study groups. These included avoiding conversations around participant family history. The focus was to elicit participant learning experiences and to see whether the space created for the Homework

Study Groups made a difference to those learning experiences. I knew potential participants in my research from networks already established in the Samoan community, but I was also aware of ethical expectations in university guidelines, so my plans to recruit would have to be shared with someone else before participants consented to take part. This involved the librarian for the northern study group and a Leading Teacher from a college attended by participants in the western region. When participants initiated questions related to educational goals or career pathways during the study sessions, a relevant curriculum was delivered until participants were confident in pursuing their own independent search for answers. What will be mentioned later in the 'Findings' chapters though is the occasional way in which participants would divert from educational topics when questions were posed to topics like relationships and important life choices. Again, as insider researcher, I was aware of the trust participants had shown in me in initiating such conversations, as they were topics not necessarily addressed or shared in their own homes.

The preference of conducting interviews face-to-face during study sessions provided opportunities to build rapport and evoke further responses from participants. It also aligned with the approach used with Pasifika people - '*Talanoa*.'

The interviews were characterised by open-ended questions with prompts. They were face-to-face interviews ... consistent with a Talanoa approach: "A Talanoa approach is a traditional Pacific reciprocating interaction, which is driven by common interest, regard for respectfulness and are conducted mainly face to face" (Morrison and Vaioliti, 2008, p.11). The information shared in these interviews were woven into Chapters... (Mila-Schaaf 2010, p. 29).

By interviewing students initially about their perspectives on learning, preferred teaching methods and experiences as Samoan young people living in Melbourne, I was able to identify ways to assist participants with their educational challenges and aspirations. The research took the form of interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and taking critical reflective notes while collecting data. I draw on a few statements quoted in Freebody (2003) to explain why this methodology was selected in seeking answers to the research questions.

Firstly, qualitative research involves the provision of descriptive details of the participant's point of view, reporting all perspectives. Interviews were conducted with participants enrolled in high schools in Melbourne (in the northern and western suburbs) to find out their experiences in the classroom as learners. Questions were posed in a way that enabled some flexibility for participants in describing and explaining examples of good learning experiences, as well as describing what they saw as good teaching methods in the subjects they studied. Participants were shown a list of questions I wanted to ask them which identified their preferred learning styles, preferred teaching methods, and preferred environment for effective learning, at home and at school. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. For my study, participants were given transcribed interviews to read over in order to confirm their responses. During this process, participants were given the option of deleting any part of their interview with which they did not feel comfortable. In the transcripts returned to participants no changes were made; participants were satisfied with the accuracy of the transcriptions.

Using a qualitative method for designing interviews, planning observations and arranging focus group discussions for collecting data also enabled a more humanistic approach to be undertaken as opposed to a depersonalized, one-dimensional or anti-subjective one being used. Measures were taken to ensure subjects were made comfortable in an environment that maximised positive learning experiences. For example, the change of location of the homework study sessions from the minister's garage to a public library, as the weather became colder, was one way in which a more humanistic approach was evident in this investigation.

During the data collection process, the elements of qualitative research applied to ensure that legitimate practices were used in different settings. Here, 'qualitative methodology is taken to refer most generally to research that produces descriptive data about people's words and their observable behaviour' (Freebody 2003, p. 6). Observations of participant behaviour and conversations during HSG sessions provided invaluable data about what influences effective learning for Samoan students in Melbourne. Not only did this data include strategies that worked to empower participants in their own learning, but it also included observations about the barriers and enablers to experiencing success in education.

A qualitative approach allows for change and progress occurring during the research process, despite these being unexpected. The initial focus on the impact of HSGs shifted

to a focus more generally on processes that enabled learning. This was partly because it was not possible to have access to students' academic results. Although school reports were collected at the initial stage of data collection to allow comparison of one semester's report with another at the end of the research period, some of the research participants simply forgot to bring along subsequent reports or were fearful of approaching schools for extra copies. In part, the shift was also because the research sought to address a gap in knowledge about the factors that facilitate the engagement of Samoan students in learning; hence, the focus moved to participants' experiences in the Homework Study Group and their responses each week in that learning environment. There were times during data collection when participants were not prepared for the tasks I had planned, such as working on essay drafts from the week before (according to the curriculum outline of the HSG), so other educative tasks were introduced to teach skills in comprehending themes and texts in general.

First, qualitative research approaches are interested in *unintended as well as intended consequences*. This does not amount to a neglect or a dismissal of cause-and effect based research in education, but rather to an insistence on the inevitability of the unintended consequences of interventions into a shifting environment, and, moreover, of the unforeseeable nature of some of those consequences (Freebody 2003, p. 11).

This insight led to the preparation of multiple tasks for participants during HSG sessions to ensure that each study session was productive for all. It was a response to 'unforeseeable' events occurring such as participants not bringing work to do during study sessions. As a researcher, I had to plan appropriate learning tasks which fostered the skills that participants needed to master, identified in initial interviews, so moments of idleness were minimised.

Recruitment of Participants

Twelve participants who regularly attended the homework study groups were recruited for this research. Amongst the participants, there were three mothers who, without fail, provided car-pooling services for participants who needed transport each week from the

northern suburbs. Strategies utilised in recruiting participants were influenced by the work of Mulitalo-Lauata (2000) and Macpherson and Macpherson (2011) which suggested approaching the religious leader of a Samoan church to seek permission to speak with his congregation. Samoan families see religious leaders (*faifeau*) as persons who provide spiritual and moral guidance. It is in accordance with cultural expectations that the minister (as the head of the organisation) is approached first, and any project then proposed in a church meeting to gauge support and seek permission to proceed. As the person with hierarchical importance and status in the Samoan community, Mr Fouina made an announcement to the congregation about a meeting to discuss the proposed research project. I asked to be present at this meeting to answer any queries that parents had regarding the research purpose, its process, and the nature of the commitment expected from potential participants (their children). Due to my previous experience in offering academic assistance and being available to their young people upon the request of parents, none of the proposals presented a problem for the group at the meeting. It was the desire of all parents in this community for their children to excel academically as students in Victorian schools, as much as possible, so any assistance was both welcomed and supported.

In deciding how research data would be collected, the importance of ensuring the Samoan participants were involved in the design of the research process was central in my planning, with discussions and interviews used to determine participant goals and preferences. This was crucial to the authenticity of the responses received by the researcher, while the recruitment of an interpreter proved key to the success of this study. Allowing participants to use their first language in response to questions ensured that they felt comfortable and at ease, as did the choice of environment that was safe and familiar to them: participants were approached at a church gathering where a majority of Samoan people congregated each week. A respectable leader in the community was

...an acceptable broker. He was held in very high esteem, had lived in Samoa for many years and spoke Samoan fluently. He agreed to act in the role, saying that the Samoan people were anxious for the children to do well educationally and would be interested in anything that would help them. At a formal meeting conducted entirely in Samoan, he raised the idea of my research with the community's leader and it was agreed

that at their next meeting I would speak to my proposal (Cahill 2006, p. 61).

This was one of the strengths of this research in gathering data. The researcher used productive approaches which enabled parents to respond to the statistics that indicated the low academic achievement of 'Pasifika' and non-Pasifika school leavers ...and how hearing the voices of Samoan parents through their participation in the research project might enable something to be done to improve achievement levels (Cahill 2006). In addition, rather than add her voice to the parents' responses to interview questions, Cahill presented the voices of parents using a narrative, 'deliberately leaving in the text evidence of participants' unfamiliarity with English, their second language, and their hesitancy in using it to convey their thoughts and experience adequately' (p. 62). From a researcher's point of view, I found this helpful because the voices were authentic and not mixed with the opinion of the interviewer.

The theme of my investigation required secondary student participants of Samoan background, so I approached a church minister to seek guidance and permission to approach families in his church community. At this stage it is important to declare that at the time of recruiting participants I was a member of this particular congregation (but no longer) and had known families for a number of years. Academic assistance for young people at this congregation had already begun, so a prior relationship with and knowledge of its young people and their families were already established. As a researcher of Samoan descent, I also knew protocols to follow in order to gain support for the work I was doing; seeking the support firstly from the church minister as leader of this Samoan community in the Northern suburbs was crucial. I had arranged to meet with the religious minister ("Mr Fouina" is a pseudonym) one afternoon to discuss the possibility of speaking to families, at a time that was suitable, about allowing young people (in secondary schools) to attend a Homework Study Group.

Knowledge of Culturally Appropriate Methods (Attire, Speech and Approach).

Before meeting the church minister, I knew that it was respectful Samoan etiquette to wear a sarong over my work pants, so I made sure that not only the way I looked was appropriate, but even removed my shoes before entering the minister's house. In most Polynesian homes one enters it is expected that shoes are removed as a common courtesy. As

researchers who enter into spaces where Pacific Islanders meet, it is important to be aware of these intricacies to avoid causing offence. If I were to wear a skirt or dress, I would ensure that it was not shorter than knee length. It was better to err on the side of caution and dress conservatively. In preparation for my meeting with Mr Fouina, I also consulted my mother regarding the correct Samoan words to use when seeking support for my research to be undertaken with members of the church congregation. As I was confident in using the Samoan language during our discussions, the meeting was conducted in Samoan. As the leader, Mr Fouina was very supportive and saw the importance of education for young people, and not only for those in his congregation, but for all Samoan students. An opportunity for me to speak in Samoan to the congregation was given, and at the next few church services I was given time to distribute expression of interest slips to the youth group. A box was left at the entrance of the church where, at the end of the service, young people keen to participate in the study placed the slips with their names on them. It was from this process that regular communication commenced with participants to inform them about the nature of the study.

The participants in this study are involved in two Homework Study Groups, both in outer suburbs of Melbourne. Both study groups met on a weekly basis at a local library where a meeting room was booked so that participants had a quiet and private space to study. Table 3.1 ‘Student Participants’ summarises their ages and background with respect to the year levels of participants and their country of birth. Ethics approval was given by The University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The college Principal was approached to seek permission to recruit more Samoan students for this study. From the four campuses in the college, fourteen students attended the weekly study sessions at first. This number declined over the weeks.

A local library was contacted to book meeting rooms for participants to meet each week. Though the second study group started much later than the first, the experiences from running the first group meant that lessons were learnt and things ran smoothly. There were six students who expressed interest in participating in the study sessions by signing consent forms, but only five students could be interviewed due to parental consent forms not being signed at that stage. As outlined in Table 3.1 (Student Participants), students were recruited from high schools in the northern and western suburbs of Melbourne. Each participant

approved the use of their real names in this study though they were given the option of using a pseudonym (included in Table 3.1 on page 99). The suggestion of using pseudonyms in place of their real names was discussed, but participants said they weren't bothered at all, either way. In total, nine students participated in interviews, group discussions and observations.

Recording Data (Observations, Interviews, Focus Group Interviews)

As shown in Table 3.2 (Homework Study Group Outline on page 108), each study session included writing observation notes intermittently to document the learning tasks that participants brought to each session. As participants worked on learning tasks, notes were recorded regarding the type of task undertaken as well as the support provided by me as researcher/teacher. The collection of data took place over a 5 month period in two libraries (one in the western suburbs and the other located in the northern suburbs of Melbourne). The homework study group in the western suburb started three months after the study group in the northern suburb. Though it was not initially planned that another location would be established, the second study group was formed to enable a comparison between two different groups. A roll was marked every session to record participant attendance. The participants brought tasks to each study group which were recorded in a table so that I could capture what participants were doing, as well as keep track of the type of assistance they required each week. Nine participants were interviewed to determine their learning experiences, their level of education, and the goals they wanted to achieve at the homework study groups. Responses, recorded using my iPhone, were then transcribed for analysis by both participants and me as researcher. Each interview was half an hour, with the focus group interview being the longest one due to the broad nature of the topic discussed (Samoanness).

Once participants were notified of my intention to take notes about the tasks they brought to each session, and to collect evidence of the study sessions' effectiveness for them from a learner's perspective, my asking questions of them became natural in my role as researcher, and responses from participants flowed freely. The method of recording data was aural recording of discussions and transcription of those recorded discussions and interviews.

Surveys distributed to participants were used as a source of information to triangulate responses received. The surveys were used initially as a tool to identify participant learning

experiences at school with participants being provided with the questions before being interviewed at the commencement of the study. Another survey was issued to participants to determine whether they were finding the HSG sessions helpful, giving some indication to the researcher regarding any changes sought by participants in the research period. Questions posed to participants during focus group sessions asked them to describe the place where they were completing homework when at home. This enabled a comparison of their learning environments at school, at home, and when attending the HSG in the library.

Analysis of Data

When data collection concluded, the task of analysing information then commenced by searching out commonalities in responses. Though it was a struggle at first to decipher whether there was anything worthy of writing about from the data collected, clearer themes started to develop from iterative elements in the responses.

Analyzing data can be one of the most complicated aspects of the research study. Numerous guides are available for assisting researchers in analysing qualitative (e.g. Bogdan & Bicklen 2007; Corbin & Strauss 2008) ...data using rigorous methods (Guiffreda, Douthit, Lynch & Mackie 2011, p. 285).

Based on the recurring themes identified, categories were written to reflect what participants expressed under each theme, such as the importance of time, or the value of having one's own space in which to study. To ensure participant responses were accurately represented, participants were debriefed, responses checked, and transcribed interviews returned to participants for final confirmation and approval. Participants were given the option of withdrawing comments or making changes to what was said so as to clarify their responses.

Category Construction

Finding commonalities in data collected began firstly with transcribing interviews, reading over survey responses, and placing similar comments in categories. Notations were made whilst reading through data collected to see what common themes were evident and if they stood out, compared to minor themes.

This process of making notations next to bits of data that strike you as potentially relevant for answering your research questions is also

called *coding*. ... Assigning codes to pieces of data is the way you begin to construct categories. After working through the entire transcript in this manner, you go back over your marginal notes and comments (codes) and try to group those comments and notes that seem to go together (Merriam 2009, pp. 178-179).

In terms of developing the themes in this thesis, all participant responses to questions from surveys distributed and interviews undertaken were tabled, then important points were coded – I kept in mind the importance of *open coding* (Merriam 2009). This included listing words that were key in responses which, after further analysis, led to the themes of ‘Time’ and ‘Space’ as the main focus areas. Many of the responses provided by participants highlighted the need for more time to be allocated to studies. In addition, questions asked regarding the availability of suitable space at home for studious tasks to be completed, evoked common responses which revealed the need for appropriate spaces to be made available. Participant responses highlighting the preferred types of spaces will be provided in Chapter 5 ‘Space and Time.’

Surveys asking questions about how participants worked at home and at school were used to investigate the use of space and time. The categories of space and time were determined through the analysis of the interviews. The surveys enabled me to ‘drill down’ to explain what this looked like. Observational data was also important in analyzing the use of space and time, as more homework tasks were completed during study sessions at libraries during this study.

Analytical Coding

Data analysis involved the continued grouping of open codes, also referred to as analytical coding. This process enabled me to reflect on the meanings that participants attributed to their experiences. As Merriam (2009) comments, this outcome of the analytical coding process enables the analysis to move beyond the simpler descriptive coding (that revealed the themes of space and time).

Analytical coding goes beyond descriptive coding; it is “coding that comes from interpretation and reflection on meaning” (Richards 2005, p. 94 quoted in Merriam 2009, p. 180).

Analysis of the participants’ responses to interviews and focus groups revealed a preference for an holistic approach to learning, elements of students’ preferred learning styles, and their strategies for managing the conflicting demands made of them. Seeking a framework that

would enable these meanings to be expressed in a culturally-appropriate way, I drew on the symbolic framework of tattoo symbols. These symbols provided a way of drawing out participants' understanding of their experiences, of what and how they were learning, and of their relationships with school and home. The Samoan traditional symbols came from the artistic work of Sablan and Sablan (2014). These symbols were given meaning from work undertaken by Krämer (1994) and Marquardt (1984) and in Wendt's interview with the late Suluape Paulo II (1999) which provided illustrations with definitions of symbols. Armed with this knowledge of the meanings of *tatau* symbols, I compared data collected from students with the *tatau* (tattoo) and decorative meanings. As responses were read, they were categorised according to the meanings of the decorative or *tatau* symbols. The value of utilising a visual and meaningful metaphor to reflect participant responses was reinforced by observations made during study sessions. It was the utilisation of analytical coding of participant responses, and finding deeper meaning in what and how they responded to questions posed, that enabled me to draw on the Samoan tattoo patterns and traditional decorations as metaphors.

All data collated (interviews, surveys, and other observational material) was utilised to form a suitable curriculum based on the individual learning needs of each participant in this study. Not only was the homework study space selected specifically to provide access to resources (books, computers, quiet spaces for study), it also offered a space where participants could share questions and concerns, and engage in significant discussions about the meaning of Samoanness (being Samoan). It also confirmed the importance of having a teacher/researcher present who understood the prior knowledge and experiences of participants.

Student Profiles

The following information outlines participant thoughts and experiences in the high schools they attended in Melbourne. The data collected outlined participants' preferred learning styles and identified subjects they enjoyed as well as subjects they felt were difficult at school. The data was collected during the initial stages of the Homework Study Group to ascertain learning experiences and the necessary improvements in those experiences from a participant perspective. Knowledge of participant perspectives on their academic experiences guided the structure of the HSG in terms of focusing on the teaching of learning strategies and skills in which participants were less confident. Eight students were interviewed at the beginning of the study to investigate their educational experiences

in Melbourne schools. The student profiles below are presented to provide a clearer indication to teachers regarding students' family and educational backgrounds.

Table 3.1 Student Participants

(N)-Students in the Northern Homework Study Group

(W)- Students in the Western Homework Study Group

Students	Male/Female	Age (yrs)	Birthplace	Year level in school.
S1	Female (N) Ane	17	Australia	Year 12
S2	Female (N) Eloise	17	Australia	Year 12
S3	Female (N) Penina	16	NZ	Year 11
S4	Female (N) Letofu	14	Australia	Year 9
S5	Female (N) Penelope	14	NZ	Year 9
S6	Female (N) Tamara	14	Australia	Year 9
S7	Male (W) Chas	17	Australia	Year 11
S8	Female (W) Christen	16	Australia	Year 10
S9	Mose (W)			Year 11

Participant 1: Ane

Ane currently studies year 12 at a secondary college in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. She is the eldest of five children and was born and raised in Australia. When asked in which particular areas of learning she needed help, Ane replied that she wanted to improve her 'time management ... like homework, like I slack off straight away.' Though she had

a schedule to remind her of times to do homework, she admitted to not following it due to getting 'lazy easily.' Ane wants to complete school work but finds that the expectations placed upon her as the eldest of five children in her family are demanding, as she has to complete domestic chores before commencing any school-related work. It is around 7pm or later in the evening before she can devote time to her studies.

The subjects Ane studies at VCE level are English, Psychology, Food Technology, Visual Communication & Design and Physical Education. In general, Ane stated that she could improve overall if she were able to complete homework set by teachers in each subject. For instance, Ane said the results of her English practice exam could have been better; she knows she didn't do as well as she could have.

Participant 2: Penina (Nina)

Penina (Nina) is currently in year 11 at a secondary college in the northern suburbs. She says that the subjects in which she needs assistance, more than others, include Maths and English as she could 'improve on my sentence structures and stuff.' Nina admitted she could be 'using more creative words....' Though she is organized with her school work, Nina stated she could be more organized by creating a timetable to 'fit in' her homework. Her report overall was good and Nina was happy with it, as was her mother, Vaitui. At the time of the study, Nina's subjects at school included Maths, English, Physical Education, Studio Arts, Music and Food Technology.

Nina enjoys English as a subject as she can see improvements made as she creates drafts of her written work. However, a subject she does struggle with is Maths because of the style of teaching employed by her teacher. Nina says,

I don't understand what he's teaching. ... Like he will explain it, but he doesn't like, get into depth. He just explains it then expects us to like just absorb what he said and we work it out.

The way in which Nina seeks clarification for tasks she doesn't understand in Maths is by asking her friends to explain it. She finds it hard to ask her teacher for help, which can explain her lack of understanding and progress with specific topics in this subject.

Participant 3: Letofu (Tofu)

One of the year 9 students who attended the study group with her older sibling was Letofu (Tofu). She enjoyed reading and writing and tasks related to English studies. She sometimes missed a few sessions in the library due to other commitments, but did bring work to complete, or attempt work I set for her during the hour. During the first interview at the beginning of the research period, when asked about areas of study with which she needed assistance, Tofu stated it was in the area of time management and resisting the temptation to be distracted. What stood out about Tofu was her confidence and ability to choose, at times, to sit by herself at school so she could complete work. When she experienced problems with tasks, Tofu would seek individual assistance, responding well to modelled writing methods during the study sessions.

Participant 4: Penelope

As a year 9 student who attends a college in the Northern suburbs, Penelope shared in her first interview the difficulties she encountered with learning tasks and methods of teaching – which she described as not helping her to learn. Though she did mention teaching styles as a contributor to her lack of understanding, she did confess that her questionable attitude to some subjects and to her learning during class time could be attributed, at times, to her not commencing work as she should. For instance, when asked what she could do to improve in English, Penelope said she could read more outside of school as well as complete more homework for Maths and Geography. More importantly, she admitted that listening in class would also assist with her academic improvement.

A later interview with her mother Vaitu'i indicated that Penelope was a student who tended to get into trouble for disruptive behaviour or showing disrespectful attitudes towards some of her teachers; it was the 'getting into trouble' that led to her not enjoying that particular subject. She was often compared to her older sibling who tended to do better in school and was reported by her mother as being the more academic of the two sisters.

Participant 5: Eloise

Eloise is a year 12 student at a high school in the Northern suburbs of Melbourne. She was born in Australia. One of the initial skills with which Eloise said she needed assistance was time management. As a year 12 student, Eloise recognised that she could spend her time more wisely and not get so easily distracted at school. The subjects she currently studies

are English, Legal Studies, Health, Food Technology and Sociology. The subjects she most enjoys include Legal Studies and Sociology because she is keen to ‘learn about society and different cultures’ and ‘with Legal, [she] liked learning about the constitution and legal system....’ Eloise enjoys the subjects she studies in year 12 because she selected the subjects she liked rather than ‘choosing subjects [she] thought would get a better ENTER.’

With academic tasks, Eloise felt she could not complete them all because of distractions around her. These included chatting with friends, so choosing sit away from them to complete work became a strategy to minimise distractions. When asked whether her friends understood her desire to do this, Eloise replied that some did and others didn’t. To overcome her friends’ disapproval of her desire to complete set academic tasks away from them, Eloise stated she had learnt to put her needs before others. Another strategy Eloise uses to complete work is to attend the school homework after-school program offered by teachers. She is able to seek help from these teachers with any difficult work she can’t complete.

Participant 6: Tamara (Mala)

Although Tamara’s name at school is Melanie, I will refer to her as Mala, the name by which she is known in her family and in the Samoan community. Mala is a year 9 student who attends a secondary school in the Northern suburbs. She was born in Australia. Mala is the youngest of three children in her family. Of the subjects she enjoyed most at school, English and Humanities were mentioned because of the fact that Mala liked learning about how historical events influenced the way things are today. The teaching methods Mala preferred the most involved the use of visual images, or the practice of a skill in order to master it and to recall facts. Though Maths was not a subject she identified as one of her strengths, Mala did say the positive feedback she received from her Maths teacher made her feel proud of her improvement.

Participant 7: Chas

As a student in year 11, Chas had set himself clear goals to achieve well academically. He was one of seven children, raised by his mother in the western suburbs. His mother wanted both Chas and his sister Christen (who also attended the Homework Study Group) to succeed in school as well as strive to develop successful career paths. At the time Chas was interviewed, he wanted to be a pilot and study at university. One of the ways in which

Chas learnt best was through the tasks being demonstrated by his teachers (whether it was for Physical Education or Maths). His strategies to ensure tasks were completed included asking his older brother for assistance when it came to challenging Maths tasks, or working it out himself.

Participant 8: Christen

Christen, in year 10, and attends a college in the western suburbs with her older brother Chas. As one of seven children in the family, she is quiet and reserved during study sessions. Her subjects at school include Maths, English, Creative Design, Art, Crime & Punishment and Booster Maths. Among a number of ways in which Christen thought she could improve her academic performance was by increasing her focus during lessons in her subjects. Christen acknowledged that she was doing reasonably well with the management of her subjects, but believed she could always improve on such things as requesting help when needed and being more organised.

Participant 9: Mose

During data collection Mose was a student in year 11, attending a college in the western suburbs. His focus, as stated in the first interview, was to be better organised and develop a consistent study routine so he could maximise educative outcomes. Mose acknowledged he was in need of guidance with organising his time as well as with learning how to improve his literacy and numeracy skills.

Parent Profiles

Attendance at weekly Homework Study Group sessions in the northern suburbs of Melbourne would not have been possible were it not for the commitment of parents who not only brought their own children to the study sessions but also made car-pooling arrangements so that others could attend. The mothers interviewed in this study agreed to share their educational experiences so that I could understand what schooling had been like for them. They compared education in Melbourne schools with the vastly different education they had received back home in Samoa. All the mothers who drove their children to the study groups were born in Samoa and were educated up to high school level before migrating to New Zealand, then Australia.

Parents of participants in the western suburbs group were not available for interviews during the data collection period as participants would meet at the library straight after

school. Their parents did not attend study sessions with participants due to work commitments. This will be explained in more detail in Chapter 4 ‘Samoanness.’

Fa’alelei:

Fa’alelei is one of the mothers who has been consistent in bringing not only her children to the HSG, but also any students who have needed a ride to the library where HSG sessions are held. She is not only committed to taking her children to church events so that they can learn the value of *fa’aSamoa*, but also to supporting her children to excel in life. Four of her five children attended the homework sessions on a weekly basis. Though all children were born in Australia, they are being raised with Samoan values and beliefs. Fa’alelei shared in her interview the joys of learning while at school, but she did admit they were hard times because she didn’t always have lunch at school. A big meal was consumed after school, but some days she recalled having just a piece of bread for breakfast to get her through the day, missing lunch. Fa’alelei considered her children to be more fortunate because they never went without lunch and also had better school supplies like a school bag, unlike her woven bag made from the fronds of a coconut tree.

Vaitu’i:

As one of the mothers who regularly brings her two daughters to the HSG sessions, Vaitu’i is a single mother who has instilled in her children the importance of education and getting a good, respectable job. In her interview, she mentioned the importance of her daughters heeding her advice and making the most of the opportunities provided in Australia, as opposed to what she experienced in Samoa and New Zealand.

Ato:

A single mother with two daughters in high school, Ato was very supportive of her daughters taking part in this research. Though she was not interviewed due to time constraints during the collection of data, regular conversations occurred with Ato to ascertain her opinion of the benefits that might accrue to her daughters by attending the HSG sessions.

It was mutually agreed that participants would meet at the public library; one in the northern suburbs and one outside the main college attended by participants in the western suburbs. A library was the ideal meeting place each week, with participants later stating that it

‘forced them to do work’ due to being in a study environment. Moreover, resources were available at their fingertips in the one location when participants required computers, books or printing facilities once homework tasks commenced.

The research undertaken for this thesis followed the ethical standards outlined by the Human Ethics Research Committee. All considerations have been taken into account in the recruitment, selection and protection of participants in a study (HREC No. 1033305.1). These expectations not only acted as a safeguard for the participants, but also for me as researcher in ensuring that no unethical practices featured in this investigation.

2.2.4 The process of communicating information to participants and seeking their consent should not be merely a matter of satisfying a formal requirement. The aim is mutual understanding between researchers and participants. This aim requires an opportunity for participants to ask questions and to discuss the information and their decision with others if they wish (<http://www.research.unimelb.edu.au/humanethics/aboutapproval/whenapproval>).

In recruiting participants for my research, information was given to participants prior to them making a voluntary decision whether to take part. That is, they were informed of the purpose of the study in a group setting where both young people and parents were briefed on the length of time allocated for research and their extent of participation in the study itself if they chose to take part. Furthermore, the assurance of confidentiality in this study was also included in a Plain Language Statement signed by both participants and parents. Participants were given the option of remaining anonymous when providing answers to surveys, participating in focus group discussions, or being subject to observation, if they chose to, with pseudonyms used in place of their real names to protect their identity; however, all participants granted permission to use their actual names in this study.

There was a very low risk of harm posed to participants in this research with every effort made to ensure that their discomfort was minimized as much as possible, if not avoided. I am aware of the importance of ensuring that discomfort to all participants is minimized to ensure they are at ease and do not feel threatened in any environment or by any practice that was part of the research process.

Less serious than harm is discomfort, which can involve body and/or mind. Discomforts include, for example, minor side-effects of medication, the discomforts related to measuring blood pressure, and anxiety induced by an interview. ... Less serious again is inconvenience. Examples of inconvenience may include filling in a form, participating in a street survey, or giving up time to participate in research
(http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/ethics/2007_humans/section2.1.htm#c).

More importantly, if during the research the participants no longer wanted to take part, they had the freedom to withdraw from their participation at any time.

Homework Study Group Curriculum

To provide guidance for participants on the content and process of each week's study group, a proposed curriculum outline was presented to the group (Table 3.2). This was a flexible document in terms of the ongoing modification of study sessions in response to individual learning needs of the participants. Hence, a collaborative approach was adopted to ensure that each week's program was not forced upon participants, but was reflective of their desire to learn strategies to successfully complete essays or assignments. For instance, during a few sessions the girls in year 10 and year 12 would require essay structure lessons in order to respond to specific topics they were assigned by teachers. The teaching strategies implemented during the homework study sessions catered to the participants' preferred learning styles. Discussions and interviews with participants indicated that they needed further demonstration and assistance with understanding texts, essay writing and language analysis. Similar to students in a previous study of Samoan student learning experiences in Samoa and New Zealand (Utumapu-McBride, Esera, Toia, Tone-Schuster & So'oaemalelagi 2008), participants from the Melbourne Homework Study Groups preferred practical activities and demonstrations of how to write for an audience. What was evident from the interviews undertaken with participants at the beginning of the research period was that they learnt best when expectations were modelled by the teacher.

During the 1.5 hour study sessions, I would model an essay plan and work collaboratively with the participants to think of examples of quotes, themes and vocabulary to write an

effective response to the essay topic. The participants would write the draft copy of the essay during the week, email it to me, and be provided with feedback before the next study session. This proved to be one of the more effective methods of improving essay writing for the participants because their texts were assessed and strategies modelled to improve their independent writing.

The curriculum to be presented to participants each term was determined on the basis of observations and responses gathered during study sessions. Participants provided topics studied at school based on the books listed on their book lists and teachers' comments regarding focus areas for each semester. These included essay writing, theme analyses and literature reviews, as well as grammar and punctuation.

Moreover, critical reflection notes were prepared each session which guided the decision-making and the content of curriculum outlines for the study group sessions.

11 July 2011 notes: The study group went ahead today despite a message received from one of the girls (Ane) the day before that they couldn't make it. The minister had announced during the church service that youth rehearsals for an upcoming concert in September would be held at 1pm (the same time as the study group). I don't think he would have been aware of the study group times as I was not at church to tell him the day before, but in the end, I received another message that five of the girls in the research group would be coming after all. I asked the girls after driving them to rehearsals, what made their mothers change their minds? Ane responded that they told them they had lots of homework to do and Eloise said her mother gave her a choice in the morning.

Eloise:

'My mum just asked me: What would you rather do? Go to *aogamea* (rehearsal) or Homework Club?'

'I said Homework Club!' (She laughed).

'We put our education first.'

This session was more productive without the distractions of primary school kids coming in and out of the room. Furthermore, the low numbers meant it was easier to conduct interviews and build rapport with the girls.

I noticed a couple of the year nine girls (Penelope and Tamara) were on their phones now and then –not sure what they were looking up

but that will need to be addressed during the study sessions as well. During the interviews, there was mention of distractions getting in the way of doing school work.

I will need to address the expectations during the study session times to ensure each student/participant starts to develop good learning habits to use during the Homework Study sessions.

Note-taking of such observations was required to record the circumstances of each Homework Study Group session. Analysis of this information informed changes made in the curriculum offered so that participants would be more likely to find sessions both useful and engaging.

Table 3.2 Homework Study Group Outline 2011

(Proposed data collection period: March-December; Actual start period after ethics approval was gained: 27 June-December)

Timeline: (1 session per week)	Secondary Students (1.5 hours)
Session 1 - 27 June	➤ Recruitment of Participants-those who opted to take part in the study joined the library as members so they could access resources (books/computers). ➤ Find out needs of students ➤ Explanation of the next few sessions to include: - Goal setting (education, career, sport, life goals) - Ask students to bring in samples of work completed so far. They were asked to bring reports/results/grades to gauge the VELS levels they were at.
Session 2 - 4 July	
Session 3 -11 July	➤ Interview students about their learning habits. ➤ Provide learning/study habits that may assist students.
Session 4 - 18 July	➤ Re-visit goals sheet and reflect on whether some educational goals are achieved. ➤ Continue to assist students with homework tasks. ➤ Observation of study session.
Session 5 - 8 August	➤ Texts studied in English (ask participants what text they're reading in each year level). ➤ Student reports collected and photocopied ➤ Observation of study session.
Session 6 - 15 August	➤ Open Day (University) discussions –places to visit; options to consider ➤ Essay tips for students specifically related to text responses.
Session 7 - 22 August	➤ Researching tertiary options. ➤ Parent interviews (commenced-Fa'alelei -mother).
Session 8 - 26 August	➤ VTAC Handbook clarification and course selection outline. ➤ Parent interviews continued (Vaitu'i-mother)

Session 9 - 5 September	➤ Assistance with filling in university application forms; scholarships. ➤ Sample planning and introductions of specific essay topics. ➤ Observation of study session.
Session 10 -19 September	➤ Focus group interview with participants regarding being a young Samoan female living in Melbourne. ➤ Homework/Study Log outline distributed to participants. ➤ Observation of study session.
Session 11 -17 October	➤ Macbeth CD Rom explained to Nina (resource for text study) ➤ Observation of study session.
Session 12 -24 October	➤ Homework Surveys distributed to students to complete for the first 15 minutes to gauge homework patterns/attitudes thus far. ➤ Discussion about life goals-where to go from year 12. ➤ Observation of study session.
Session 13 -7 November	➤ Study tips for exams; Language Analysis, Text Analysis.

*The dates vary in between Homework Study Group sessions due to school holiday breaks or not being available to run the group on some Mondays.

Building Rapport with Participants

As a Samoan researcher and teacher, I acknowledge the importance of having access to information that otherwise would not be made available to other researchers without an insider perspective. The participants from my study attended a church of which I was initially a member. My prior knowledge of and rapport established with young people in this church meant that stories were shared with me that would be less accessible to someone from a different cultural background.

There were times participants would ask me questions about my experiences of growing up in Australia, having migrated with my family from New Zealand in 1986 as a teenager, to consider how they might overcome certain social and cultural challenges experienced. There were other instances during the collection of data where participants would ask, for example, how a young Samoan woman might celebrate milestones such as graduating from university. My similarities to them and my willingness to share my stories with participants whom I already knew from the church community were important in developing their trust and in building rapport with them.

Conclusion

Selecting specific methods to collect data for this study could only be done by ensuring cultural protocols were adhered to, as well as acknowledging there were other processes to consider that were not necessarily reflective of Western ideology. Without appropriate

cultural procedures and etiquette in place, communication would not have been so open and willing with stakeholders (community leaders, parents, participants and schools). In order to build rapport with participants, it was helpful having prior knowledge of and an existing relationship with people in the Samoan community.

Chapter 4: Samoanness

In this chapter I explore the idea of Samoanness and what this means to participants in this study. I outline the concept of *fa'aSamoa* as the foundation for an individual's sense of Samoanness and how this is practised on a daily basis by Samoans who live not only in Samoa but in countries abroad, including Australia. I illustrate this in part through reference to the traditional symbols in Samoan carvings and traditional tattoos that provide metaphoric meanings that connect with participants' comments in this study - as a basis for providing a strengths-based analysis. This enables me to emphasize the strong connection young people in this study have to their cultural heritage, even though they do not reside in Samoa. In turn, the significance of *fa'aSamoa* underpins the importance of sharing this knowledge with educators. *Fa'asamoa* is a physical presence as well as a way of thinking that can be enhanced in the educational realm where Samoan students attend school. Where this happens it can enable schools to be more inclusive environments that can draw Samoan students into the educational space (classroom).

Fa'asamoa (The Samoan Way)

This section discusses the importance Samoan people place on knowing *fa'aSamoa* and the ways in which knowledge of particular values and beliefs are reflected in people's actions and thinking. I use the definition outlined in Fairbairn-Dunlop's (2010) study which defines *fa'aSamoa* as 'in the manner of the Samoans, according to customs and tradition, the Samoan way' (p.152). When young people are aware of *fa'aSamoa*, they can say that it forms a part of who they are, of how they identify themselves, whether through knowing how to speak Samoan, or knowing when to conform to cultural norms and expectations in particular settings or spaces, no matter the country in which they reside.

The shared values that underpin *fa'aSamoa* can be seen in the way in which importance is placed on the collective efficacy of people in a village, family or community organisation. Samoan values do not encourage individuality such that one strives to succeed only for their own sake; rather, what is important in the Samoan way is the value in promoting and acting on what is best for the collective or community (Macpherson, 2013). This is somewhat contradictory to Western values which generally encourages individuals to do all they can to acquire as much as possible for themselves, no matter what the cost.

Identity

Some of the crucial elements of *fa'a Samoa* are recorded in Fairbairn-Dunlop's study which gives insight into the high value placed on following these cultural norms for people who identify themselves as being Samoan.

As noted by Meleisea (1987) sacredness (mana and tapu) was an integral part of all aspects of life and gave dignity to secular actions. Land was the family's spiritual, social, political and economic resource base. Understanding one's place, as set in the gafa (genealogy) and the fa'alupega (chiefly listings), and the relationships these implied was (and is) the most prized knowledge in these communal systems. Right behaviours included tautua (service) to the family rather than seeking individual gain; respect to those of higher status and seniority; reciprocity, especially in times of need (fa'alavelave); and a priority to protect and observe the relationships – as in the concept of va fealoai. In Samoa's predominantly oral societies these values were embedded, observed, reinforced and learnt in every ceremonial and daily life event. The observance of these values ensured a good standard of life for all family members ... (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2010, p. 148).

The extent to which these values and aspects of knowing one's place in Samoan society are practised varies between Western countries. As with most migrant communities who start afresh in foreign countries, the extent of participation in and contribution of its members to extended family or church depends on the value members place on maintaining these practices. As mentioned in Meleisea's comment above, there was a guarantee in traditional Samoan society that all family members would have a good standard of life. This may now be questioned by Samoans living in Western countries as the 'reward' could now be measured against what has value from a Western perspective. That is, would Samoans abide by cultural expectations to fulfil family obligations or would they seek what is best for their own benefit now that they are no longer reliant on what the extended family can provide? Traditionally, a person's standing in society or extended family formed part of their identity, but in Western society, it would seem, this is less the case.

In an attempt to investigate Samoan student experiences and the sources of their self-identification as young people residing in Melbourne, a focus group interview was arranged

at the Northern Homework Study Group. Though only four participants were present during this session, the outcome of the discussions highlighted both the importance of having a safe space to share information, and the privilege of hearing such honesty in the words spoken. It echoed experiences I have had many times with other Pasifika young people as well as experienced myself as a teenager growing up in Melbourne. All four participants who were present during the group interview stated that they identified themselves as Samoan even though they were born in Australia or New Zealand. They saw the notion of identity as stemming from the language in which they were addressed at home, since parents spoke to them in the Samoan language even though they tended to respond in English. Furthermore, participants identified with being Samoan because they practised *fa'aSamoa* which they saw as attending community events on a weekly basis, events such as church or youth group activities and rehearsals.

The majority of Samoans who live overseas in Western countries belong to a church community; this is where families gain most support when new to the country. When Eloise was asked what *fa'aSamoa* meant to her or to describe what it looked like, she stated 'everything's *fa'aSamoa*, like everything is in Samoan 'cos our parents are Samoan and they can't really speak English so....' For Eloise, it encompassed the values and beliefs with which her parents raised her while living in Australia. She also stated that the actions of attending community and church events and knowing her place in the family were part of *fa'aSamoa*.

I thought being Samoan is like going to church, umm, knowing where you come from, it's all about family, yeah.

Hence, what the family did on various days is what she would be doing as well, which included attending family events (weddings, funerals, fundraising dance rehearsals, choir practice and *lotu* – church services).

Some of the participants identified the specific gender roles young people are expected to adopt as *fa'aSamoa*, regardless of the country in which they're living. The expression of one's identity is seen in one's actions, which include attending church or community events and respecting cultural practices and expectations wherever they go and wherever such events occur. An example of this is evident in preparing for special occasions such as a Samoan concert or the teaching of traditional practices, including rehearsals for performances of songs and dances in the Samoan language. When young people attend a

rehearsal, it is expected that they wear an *ie lavalava* or sarong over pants (for both males and females). Girls are not to wear clothes that are revealing but are expected rather to follow protocol that encourages them to be more conservative with clothing. This shows that a person is raised well and not respects not only themselves but others around them. On a weekly basis following the attendance at HSG sessions, the participants of the Northern HSG would proceed to concert rehearsals at the minister's house (his garage) in preparation for a fundraising concert. Girls would be expected to follow protocol by wearing traditional attire as mentioned above. The long hours dedicated to these rehearsals on week nights (usually two to three times per week), which often ended at 10pm or later, meant that they had very limited time for their homework. Given the centrality of these cultural practices to the Samoan community, it is important that teachers are aware that these students do not have the time required to complete homework.

Though their activities and practices help shape their identity as young Samoan people raised in Australia, it is difficult for them to maintain a balance between completion of educational tasks and the learning of *fa'aSamoa* upon which parents place such importance. The initial reason for teaching the traditional customs through dances, songs and language is to encourage young people to learn their heritage and develop a sense of identity in a multicultural society. That is, with parents of Samoan ancestry the absence of such teaching would mean that young people did not learn the intricacies of the traditional cultural practices. The responses gathered from the surveys indicate that the attraction for young people in learning Samoan traditional practices is that the associated activities keep them engaged. Young people do not mind what or where these rehearsals take place, and they enjoy the collaborative, positive experiences. More importantly, it helps them feel grounded by cementing a sense of who they are, by instilling a knowledge of their ancestral history, and by enabling them to develop an identity as young Samoans living in Melbourne.

Language becomes an integral part of this sense of identity as participants see knowledge of the Samoan language as part of self-identification as Samoans born in Western countries. Being able to respond in the Samoan language to adults (such as their parents) is not an important prerequisite for being Samoan, participants reported; rather, the fact that they can understand when adults speak to them in the Samoan language is sufficient. These responses, derived from the focus group interview, demonstrate what Samoanness looks

like to participants. When asked what or how *fa'a Samoa* was practised, participants replied with reference to their ability to speak and understand the Samoan language:

Ane: I don't know, basically like go to church, do chores, mainly chores
– umm, yeah, that's it. We can speak English to our parents but they
like us to speak in Samoan.

IP: Do they speak to you in Samoan?

Ane: Yep, but I always reply back in English or half in English, half in
Samoan.

IP: Is that for all of you?

Penelope: Nah, I speak in English [responds to mother in English when
she speaks in Samoan].

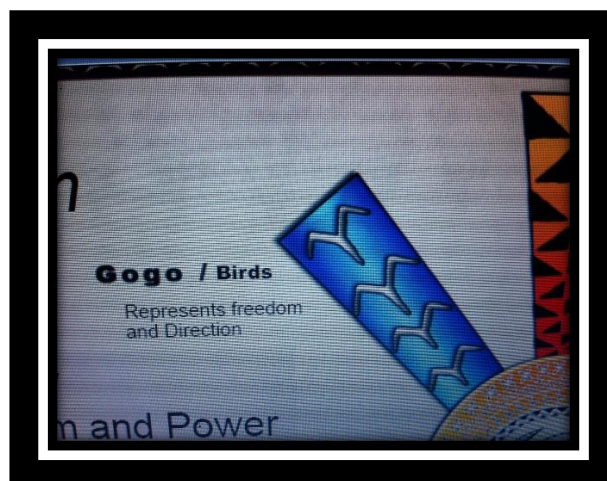
Participants also know that parents at times are not able to respond to them in English because their English fluency is not as great as it is for those Samoans who were born in either New Zealand or Australia. When an interview was conducted in the Samoan language with one of the mothers (Fa'alelei), she spoke of her daily discussions with her children in which she advised them to do well in school and queried her daughters (who were participants in this study) regarding any homework they may have brought home to complete. Though she discussed issues or concerns with her children in Samoan, her children did understand the essence of her advice to do well. It was not uncommon for Samoans born in Western countries to know and understand the Samoan language when spoken to, but to respond in English rather than in Samoan. Participants in this study felt more confident and comfortable responding in the English language to adults who spoke to them in Samoan.

As in studies undertaken in New Zealand, parents of participants in this Melbourne study had some involvement in the educational experiences of their children (Takeuchi & Hune 2008; Macpherson, Bedford and Spoonley 2000; Macpherson 2002). Responses from mothers of participants in the HSG revealed their regular contact with their children's schools during semester parent/teacher interviews and when called upon by teachers to attend meetings.

Samoan Symbolism and Meaning

In this section I explore the correlation between symbols used in traditional Samoan patterns (used in the art of tatau/tattooing, fabric designs, or art work) created by various artists and the ways in which the participants in my research responded to interview questions. In analysing the responses received from participants, I note the links that can be made with the desires of participants to learn educative strategies - to successfully complete learning tasks set by their teachers - and Samoan symbols and their meanings (Sablan & Sablan 2014). These desires include their desire to excel academically and to gain employment in a well-paid position, both of which are reflected in the career paths to which they aspire and their educative choices beyond high school. The same wishes were reiterated by their parents in interviews.

Image 4.1: Gogo



Freedom and Direction

Firstly, the symbol of *Gogo*, as seen in the image above, is one that represents the bird as one of the ‘Symbols of the Sky.’ The *Gogo* is free to spread its wings and soar high in the sky, moving freely from low to high spaces. This symbolises ‘Freedom and Direction’ and is a Samoan pattern that can correlate with participants’ responses in their interviews about the importance of having a voice. Furthermore, it is symbolic of the importance to participants of having a space in which to share their vulnerabilities and concerns. Observations and responses recorded during Homework Study Group sessions indicated

that weekly gatherings at the library enabled participants to be themselves, to experience a sense of freedom, and thus be empowered to express thoughts and ideas freely. As Penina mentioned:

I think the location was very helpful. It had everything we needed. Also
I liked that we had our own space to work in.

The participants of the Northern Homework Study Group used the study sessions not only for academic purposes, but also as a time to share hopes and fears of what lay ahead. The discussions also included sharing of perceptions about what it was like for participants to grow up in a Western country, raised with traditional Samoan values and beliefs. At times participants would ask questions related to how certain career paths would benefit them in terms of making the right choices for their future. Letofu was able to express the benefits to her of attending the Homework Study Group which ‘helped me a lot to complete homework, organise myself and keep my grades up.’ She took care in utilising time effectively by reading novels and ensuring writing tasks were completed according to the expectations of her teacher. She used the feedback I gave her to improve the vocabulary in her essays. The work Tofu brought to homework study sessions each week demonstrated her development in writing, with the achievement of the goal she set herself - to employ a more sophisticated vocabulary - being evident.

During the focus group discussions with participants, I asked about their intentions after they had completed high school. The two girls in Year 12 (final year of high school in Melbourne) responded that they were keen to learn about procedures and prerequisites for successfully achieving university entry. Both Eloise and Ane were enthusiastic in exploring specific courses like youth work as outlined in my observation notes below:

22 August, 2011:

Eloise and Ane researched university courses and police academy prerequisites.

22 August, 2011:

I was pleased with the first half of the study session as I had the chance to assist Ane with her university preferences. We had a look at the VTAC Handbook and discussed the youth work degrees and courses at

TAFE she was considering. Ane is keen to go to university and works hard in all her subjects. She does need assistance with her English language in writing of essays, which I've been helping her with since she started.

It became apparent to me that the HSG sessions were valuable in guiding participants in making lifelong choices about, for example, pursuing higher education to enter careers that would assist others. During parent interviews and discussions, I advised parents of their daughters' desire to attend university. Though the mothers were concerned about paying university fees, I mentioned the option of deferring the payment of fees through the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) or Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS). Parents of participants were not aware of these options for their children and had not considered university pathways because they thought it had to be fully paid for up front. Both relief and appreciation were expressed by parents who said they would like to support their daughters in applying for university entry and that I had their approval to do all that was possible to ensure their success. Such was the benefit of the establishment of the HSG: providing guidance to participants and informing parents of options in supporting their children's future choices.

The preference for youth-related university courses expressed by Ane and Eloise derived from the girls' experience of being given counselling at different times in their school years (whether for social welfare or career pathways advice). These girls saw the value of the services provided by their schools and appreciated them, so that they wanted to pursue appropriate degrees to enable them to empower others. The ease of sharing information openly in the safety of the HSG gave participants the space to make invaluable choices that would accrue benefits not only for themselves as individuals, but also for their families. Samoan families support and model collective efficacy, and participants felt that parents were supportive of their desire to excel merely from the fact of their permitting attendance at weekly Homework Study Group sessions.

Several HSG sessions were then dedicated to sourcing schedules for university open days so that Eloise and Ane could attend to gather course information. Applications were filled in for the Bachelor of Social Science degree for Eloise and the Youth Work degree for Ane, both at RMIT. Eloise wrote about her desire to study various courses as follows:

Bachelor of Social Science

One of the main reasons why I'd like to undertake the Bachelor of Social Science degree at RMIT is due to the subjects offered being related to the career path I am aiming for. That is, working with young people and assisting them with their educational or life skills, is something that is expected in various jobs such as the Victorian Police Force or in government organisations (Schools, Counselling Services). Studying at RMIT gives me the knowledge and skills required to work as a social worker or counsellor because the program includes valuable work experience in organisations.

Youth Work

I am aware that there is a growing need to assist youth in areas of unemployment, education and dealing with issues pertaining to mental health to name a few. During an Open Day visit, I was inspired by the lecturer Jennifer... whose enthusiasm was contagious and it influenced me to select this program. Not only are the subjects areas of study I am keen to learn more about, but again, these will prepare me for a career path I am passionate about. I currently participate in helping young people in a Samoan youth group, provide positive educative and sports sessions every weekend and during school holidays. This has been one of programs that have inspired me to assist others in all aspects of life as much as possible.

Criminal Justice

Attending the RMIT Open Day was beneficial because it made the study path I wanted to take a lot easier to plan. It made me realise the pathway this program had to offer was something I felt I could achieve over the 3 years. Learning about the legal system and how criminal profiling assists with understanding peoples' actions, definitely assists me in my pursuit of being a Social Worker.

What emerged in the group interview with four of the participants from the Northern HSG were opinions about what it is like to be a Samoan young person living in Melbourne.

There were interesting perspectives offered about being female raised in *fa'aSamoa* by parents born in Samoa and interesting comments about issues and concerns of young people; for example, why speaking up about being 'weak' brings shame upon one's family, and how bringing down such shame is considered worse than death. Discussion of such matters in the group setting was not undertaken lightly, as I knew from my position as a teacher/researcher; I was privileged to hear such honesty amongst the four girls present who openly shared their hopes and concerns as young Samoan people living in Melbourne, Australia. Responses from participants revealed the importance to them of being treated equally and having the freedom not only to choose one's course in life, also but to exercise one's freedom to move in the world without restrictions.

Image 4.2: La (The Sun)



Symbol of Power

I highlight here the symbol of *La* and its relation to power, or empowerment (see image 4.2) as important to the participants who named it as something they value. Having knowledge of academic choices and being able to openly discuss their strategies for exercising those choices enabled participants to feel empowered. As a Samoan researcher and co-participant, I was able to share strategies I used to overcome challenges so that participants were aware of the pathways that were feasible while still maintaining their sense of who they were as individuals with both Samoan and Western values. Reference was made during conversations to gaining knowledge so that one feels empowered to make

informed choices with the phrase ‘Knowledge is Power’ being a focus for discussion during one of the Homework Study Group sessions.

In addition, as will be discussed later, being informed of ways to ‘perform’ gendered roles in Samoan spaces was key to utilising knowledge as power. Participants were already performing these roles as they moved from one space to another as Samoan young people in the home, at school, at church, and in public places. The concept of performed identities derives from the work of Mila-Schaaf (2010) which describes how Pasifika young people use knowledge of both traditional and Western ideals to express their individuality. Mila-Schaaf coined the phrase ‘Polycultural capital.’ Her study looked at the advantage some second generation young people had in their capacity to use both cross-cultural and traditional knowledge and resources to maximise their opportunities.

Polycultural capital provides a way of conceptualising why some second-generation people might be positioned more strongly than others to identify and negotiate in ways that serve their interests. Polycultural capital is associated here with cross-cultural resources, knowledge, skills and agency to potentially realise cumulative advantage (Mila-Schaaf and Robinson 2010 in Mila-Schaaf 2010, p. 168).

Participants in my research were encouraged to take on board the strengths found in both *fa’aSamoa* and what they valued as young people residing in a Western country, and using those strengths (attributes and skills) to achieve their goals. This included accepting assistance from educational programs at school and accepting offers of individual academic assistance from teachers.

Strength in Knowing Who You Are ... to Know Where You’re Going

The poem written by the late Lemalu Tate Simi (Malifa, 2014) below, called ‘Identity’, illustrates the desire of parents to pass on *fa’aSamoa* to their children so they have a sense of identity and belonging, regardless of where they reside. Responses from parent interviews indicated the importance of young people being raised knowing how to speak Samoan and how to perform cultural practices in ceremonies so that when they were called on to do so it would not be foreign to them. For example, all mothers interviewed regarding their opinions about teaching their children *fa’aSamoa* agreed that it was their responsibility to impart Samoan cultural knowledge to their children, but it was teachers’

responsibility to ensure they provided a good education. Vaitu'i stated it was not necessary, and nor did she encourage, the blending of culture and education in schools, but respected the fact that she and her family now lived in Australia; she wouldn't interfere with the teachers' role, nor would she expect teachers to interfere in family matters.

Identity

Educate yourself enough So you may understand The ways of other people But not too much That you may lose Your understanding Of your own Try things Palagi Not so you may become Palagi But so you may see the value Of things Samoan	Learn to speak Samoan not so you may sound Samoan but so you may feel the essence of being Samoan Above all Be aware and proud Of what you are So you may spare yourself The agony of those who are asking "What am I?"
--	--

As the themes in this poem highlight, there is value placed on understanding and coming from a place of knowing one's identity, which is crucial from a parent's perspective, because, occasionally, Samoans born in New Zealand or Australia are made to feel like outsiders: unwelcome and mistreated. As Vaitu'i mentioned in her interview, she experienced '*faailoga lanu*' (racism) while residing in Australia. She experienced and saw others mistreated through racist actions (racist remarks or racist treatment in being refused employment, for instance). This did not define her life, or have an impact on the quality of life she provided for her three teenagers while living in Melbourne. It was the strength of families who congregated at the Samoan *lotu* (church) that enabled Vaitu'i and other parents like her to continue passing on knowledge of the Samoan language, customs and expectations to their children.

Research undertaken in a Queensland high school by Singh and Sinclair (2001) indicated that Samoan students felt their placement in classes for students of low academic ability stigmatised them, while their treatment by a teacher who said 'Polynesians should go back

to their island' made them feel unwelcome. The practice of *fa'aSamoa* thus represents a sense of security and of protection.

Image 4.3: Fa'a Aveao (The Starfish)



Symbol of Protection

Here, the symbol *Fa'a Aveao* represents Protection. Samoan parents choose to implement *fa'aSamoa* in the family because of the protection and security it brings for all who support its maintenance. Examples of protection include supporting extended family or community members when it comes to *fa'alavelave* (weddings, funerals, church fundraisers, or bestowal of a chiefly title, among other events) through the provision of financial or hands-on assistance. For families who believe in the importance of supporting those in need, it is like an investment: one day, they too will need a return of the kind of moral, social and financial support that they now give so willingly. It is a reciprocal relationship between the giver and receiver in relation to the tangible or intangible goods and services exchanged. More importantly, the reputation or goodwill of the family is remembered, cementing long lasting and enduring relationships through such exchanges.

Another way in which Samoanness offers protection can be seen in the way girls are 'over-protected' by their parents and male relatives. Though some of the female participants saw the lack of freedom to do things or to go places frequented by their brothers as unfair, the reasons for parents limiting their freedom was actually, ultimately, for their protection. Brothers or male relatives were usually given the role of protecting their sisters and female relatives' honour through preventing girls from forming any type of romantic relationships with boys, or engaging in romantic circles and tête-à-têtes. Moreover, any conversations male relatives may have relating to their romantic feelings for girls do not occur with female siblings or relatives (Krämer 1994):

...the parents pay early attention to teaching their children consideration towards one another. Not only is it for brothers and sisters strictly tabu among themselves or even in the presence of cousins to engage in ambiguous talk, this idea is indeed carried so far that a well-bred brother will never speak to his sister of his love for a girl, be it ever so pure. Strangers need therefore be on guard (p. 62).

Any attempt by girls to have romantic trysts is met with stern punishment and admonishment, firstly from brothers, then from parents and extended family who are promptly informed.

Kramer writes of an interesting experience on a boat trip between islands in which he was innocently singing a song to encourage the male rowers with whom he was travelling. In the boat were two young girls who did not join in the singing but were quite abrupt towards Kramer when they reached their destination. He finally understood from the young ladies that his song of choice was inappropriate, though his intention was to entertain the passengers on the boat ride to a nearby village:

Since in rowing back we encountered some head wind I lent a hand and in accordance with Samoan custom began to sing a song to encourage the rowers. But I was unable to persuade the others to join in, on the contrary, they sat expressionless, not saying a word. When I started anew I found myself rebuked by the girls who said for me to stop. Once ashore I asked why and was given the reply that such a song should not be sung in the presence of relatives. That song was in those days quite popular in the somewhat more liberal Apia, one of the modern Samoan farewell songs in which the word *kisi*, to kiss, occurs. And European kissing just happens to be indecent for Samoans (Kramer 1994, p. 62).

Though that type of sternness may not be practised so severely by male relatives in Melbourne (as expressed by participants in the Homework Study Group), the cultural expectation to protect girls has these origins. All in all, the intention behind such behaviour was sincere and good.

During the interviews of the mothers of four of the participants in this study (each mother had two daughters in the homework study group), concerns were raised about giving their

daughters too much freedom to do what their friends were free to do. Faalelei stated she didn't want her daughters to end up like 'girls who have not contributed to supporting their parents financially due to falling pregnant.' She had always advised her children to try their best at school because of the many benefits they experienced living in Australia in comparison with her hard life and that of other parents who had grown up in Samoa.

You know, I always think it is such a waste for young girls (not yet 21 years old) to fall pregnant before they've matured and understood the responsibilities of parenthood. I feel sorry for their parents who have worked hard all their lives to raise kids in Australia. The least the kids could do is get a job, earn money and give it back to their parents. The role of the daughter is to look after her parents, make sure they have all they need (financially and physically).

So parents were mindful of not allowing their daughters to go out with friends from school or friends they were not familiar with, especially at night. Unless parents were familiar with friends of their children outside of the church environment, those children would not necessarily attend social events without having a curfew or being chaperoned. It is not common practice in a Samoan family for girls to be given the freedom to 'roam' as their brothers and other male relatives do. This was reiterated by Eloise who expressed her disappointment that her older brother, when he turned eighteen, was allowed to go out with his friends and do anything because he was male. She, on the other hand, knew that type of freedom would not be afforded her even when she turned eighteen, as girls were over-protected compared to boys.

IP: Do you think girls have the same expectations as boys? Are they treated the same?

Eloise /Penelope: No! Boys have way more freedom.

IP: So what can they do that you can't do?

Eloise: Boys are able to do a lot more than girls like...

Penelope: And they get away with a lot of stuff.

Eloise: The girls have to ...

Mala: The girls are inside and the boys are like outside...I don't know how to explain that in English.

IP: Do you want to give an example? Sometimes it's easier to give an example.

Eloise: Um, we just turned 18 and it's different from when my brother turned 18. When my brother turned 18, he was already doing things that he would have started doing when he was 18. But for us girls it's different. I'm 18 now but I'm still not allowed to do, like, do certain things, as much as I want to.

IP: What sort of things do you want to do?

Eloise: Like clubbing every weekend (laughter).

IP: Anything else you want to do that boys are allowed to do?

Ane: Um, they mainly just get ...

Eloise: They just get it easy!

Penelope: They always like, get what they want. They're like mummy's little boy.

Mala: The expectations are always higher for the girls from the parents.

Both Vaitu'i and Faalelei wanted what was best for their daughters (which included allowing their children to be part of this study) because they saw the benefits of their children receiving educational support in a suitable space (library). The same sentiments were expressed by Ato (mother of two other participants in this study) who preferred to have her daughters spend time at the study sessions rather than attending some youth rehearsals.

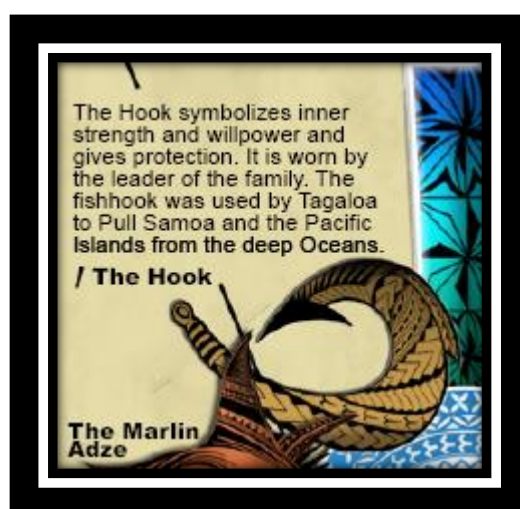
For those parents born overseas, maintenance of *fa'aSamoa* to form a sense of Samoanness is believed to protect young people from being influenced negatively by Western ideology. Being part of the family meant saving others from wrong choices or being there to support each other when things didn't go so well. In Samoa, each village had a council of *matai*

(chiefs) who would establish and maintain village law, including determining consequences for those who flouted the law. Families were represented by *matai* who would speak on their behalf in such councils; the councils would then make decisions in the interests of *all* families. In Western countries, with the absence of such formalised *matai* councils, the church became the meeting place for families to seek counsel as well as meet together to reminisce and maintain traditional practices. The role of the church leader (*faiifeau*) was paramount for families new to Melbourne and to those who had resided here for decades. The approval of the *faiifeau* was often sought during the months leading up to the establishment and commencement of the HSG.

Aspects of *fa'aSamoa* of which researchers should be aware are the power of church leaders and the influence entrenched practices and beliefs have on Samoans and their families, regardless of their country of residence. There are both advantages and disadvantages associated with the role the church plays in people's lives. If one wishes to seek support for a program, one should speak to church leaders who can then speak to families within the Samoan community to garner their support. This became evident to me in the course of my research. Despite having the opportunity to address and introduce my study to the church community (which was approved), one of the mothers who agreed to be part of the study encouraged me to seek approval for any changes in meeting times from the *faiifeau*. It occurred to me that the parent wanted reassurance that *everything* was approved during the operating weeks of the HSG, though it was not really an issue as the mothers' comfort in attending the sessions with participants was apparent. Such was the influential respect for leaders like *faiifeaus* demonstrated by parents in this particular study.

Though Western laws identified people turning eighteen as adults, Samoan expectations differed with respect to the type of status and freedom turning eighteen entailed. For some Australians, it means the ability to get a driver's licence, go out partying, be in a romantic relationship, or select a job that satisfies them - as opposed to doing only those things approved by parents. For Samoans, turning eighteen is not significant: parents still place strict boundaries on young people; they do not go out or have free reign to do as they please. There is a sense of parents knowing what is best, so young people can't question their expectations but conform with their parents' wishes. Parents guiding their children in a way that they know is best is meant to protect them from making wrong life choices (whether in the short or long term) so their intent is always good; there is no malice in it.

Image 4.4: Atau (The Hook)



Symbol of inner strength and willpower that gives protection

What stood out during the Homework Study Group sessions, throughout the data collection period, was the inner strength and willpower displayed by female participants. This is symbolized by Atau, the Hook (see Image 4.8). Though some aspects of *fa'aSamoa* were unbearable to participants at times, like the injustice seen in not being treated equally by their parents compared to the treatment of their brothers or male extended family members, they nevertheless displayed a sense of humour in response to their circumstances. At times the participants seemed to be simply enduring their role as Samoan females in the home and at community events, but in general they were accepting of it. They were raised with *fa'aSamoa*, so to engage in behaviours other than those within parental expectations felt peculiar to them. When participants were asked what type of activities they would consider doing, as opposed to those expected of them by their parents or society, most agreed that it would be strange not to do what has become routine for them.

IP: Do you find that you have enough time to – like if you weren't forced to go to church, what would you choose to do in that time?

Penelope: Go watch a friend's game (laughter).

Eloise: But I think it's like –it's up to the person themselves, like if you enjoy going to church then...me, myself, I'm so used to it my whole life. So if I were not to go to church on a Sunday, it...

Penelope: It feels weird.

Eloise: It doesn't feel right so ...

Ane: Yeah, not even going to one...

Eloise: Even going to an Open Day [for university] (laughter), it feels weird.

Penelope: Or not going to *Pese* (choir practice) on Friday.

Mala: When you don't go to church, it feels weird. It doesn't feel like Sunday.

Eloise: Yeah.

To reiterate, among the inequalities experienced by female participants was not being able to go out 'clubbing' once they turned eighteen, unlike their brothers who could do whatever they wanted. In addition, there were roles that had to be performed by girls (like domestic chores), making them less free to 'hang out' with friends whenever they wanted, even where this was permitted. Rather than causing distress, the enduring of these constraints generated patience and self-control in the young women as they were obliged at times to set aside their personal desires as individuals and do what was best for their family, demonstrating collective efficacy. As one observing and listening to participants sharing their experiences, I thought they demonstrated a great deal of willpower in staying positive, and, more importantly, continuing to pursue success despite some of these expectations presenting as obstacles if analysed from a Western perspective. Previous networks established through Samoan community events and years of attending church services enabled me to enjoy the privilege of hearing open and honest opinions shared by this group of girls regarding their experiences as Samoan young women residing in Melbourne. There were always mixed emotions - valuing, enjoying, and disliking cultural demands - depending on the particular circumstances of those demands.

On another note, Chas demonstrated both inner strength and willpower as a student who, despite his classroom setting not being ideal, had developed strategies at school, at home and at the Homework Study Group that enabled him to succeed in subjects with which he struggled. As a year 11 student from a college in the western suburbs, Chas provided a rather interesting account of the importance of teachers having control over students in the class. His inner

strength and willpower was shown in his development of strategies to practise skills that would improve his confidence in English and Maths. Chas specifically focussed on improving his literacy skills while attending the Homework Study Group as he identified that they were lacking. The assistance Chas required in understanding English tasks included identifying examples of figurative language in articles. Most study sessions each week addressed this need. Chas would attempt the tasks during each study session, then I would edit his work and encourage him to work independently when he was confident. One aspect of Chas' inner strength and willpower was evident when he shared what took place in his Maths class and how he overcame the challenges that arose.

VP: So how are you going in English?

Chas: English is good, but it's not my strongest cos it's my second language. When it comes to reading and analysing and that sort of stuff, I'm not really good at it.

VP: So what language do you speak at home?

Chas: I speak Samoan.

VP: All the time?

Chas: Not all the time.

VP: Ok, so who do you speak Samoan to?

Chas: My mum.

VP: And English to who?

Chas: My brothers and sisters. I try my best to speak Samoan to try to keep the language alive. Cos people, when they come out here, they naturally forget how to speak Samoan.

VP: Ok, so how many kids in your family?

Chas: There's seven of us.

VP: What style of teaching helps you learn?

Chas: I learn by watching and physical...by doing.

VP: Can you give me an example of that in one of your subjects?

Chas: In PE, the teacher normally explains how the skill works and then he will show us.

VP: What is your favourite subject?

Chas: Maths

VP: Now some students struggle with Maths, why do you like it so much?

Chas: I like it cos, to me Maths is like, I find a formula and follow the formula step by step and that's how you find the right answer. The other reason is cos my brother is good at Maths and it's easy for me to get help. When my brother's around I just call him for help, unlike English, my brother's like, it's my weakest subject. So it's weak for me cos he's not good at it.

VP: So your Maths teacher; what type of teaching did they do to help you learn the formula?

Chas: Oh, the Maths teacher didn't help.

VP: Really? Why?

Chas: Cos the Maths teacher I had, she wasn't that good cos with the way she teaches, she couldn't control the class. And it got to the point that no one really listened to her.

VP: Right.

Chas: The only thing I had to do was to go to my brother which was the easiest thing to do for me. He always told me to keep practising and practising and practising.

VP: So you put up with that the whole year in your Maths class?

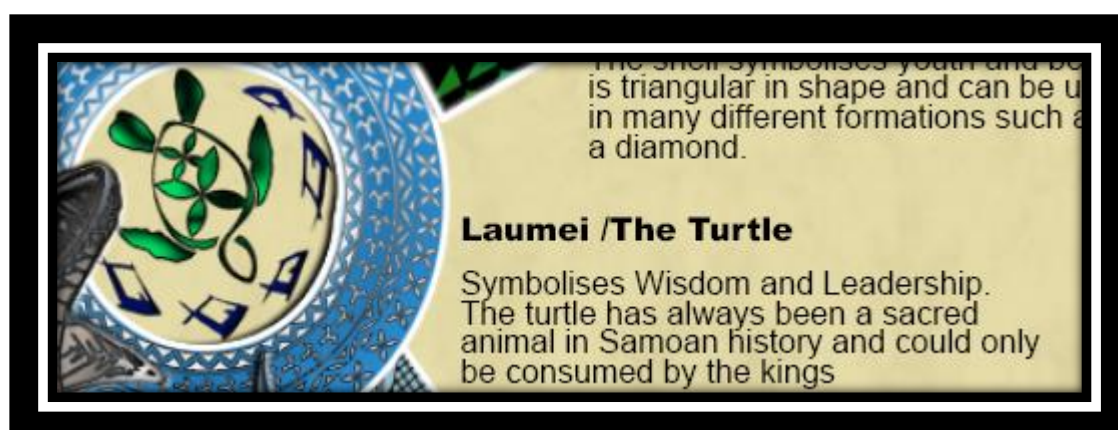
Chas: Yeah.

VP: So it's really important for the teacher to have control isn't it?

Chas: Yeah, of the class.

Of concern to me during this interview was the way students like Chas tolerated having a teacher the entire year who could not meet their learning needs. Not only was it tolerated, but nothing was done by the school administration to change the negative learning environment created by the teacher. As Chas explained, it led students to go beyond the classroom for assistance. He was fortunate to have an older brother at university who could assist him with his Maths homework. What is worth querying is how other young people cope if there are no siblings available to help in the way Chas' brother did.

Image 4.5: Laumei (The Turtle)



Symbolises Wisdom and Leadership

Often wisdom and leadership are seen as attributes of males within Samoan customs (as evident in the *Matai* system); however, what will be outlined here are the wisdom and leadership attributes displayed by some participants in the HSG. Participants in the HSG demonstrated a maturity beyond their years with respect to the wisdom they possessed in successfully making choices to not only behave in certain ways in various spaces, but to also in taking on board educative strategies that would help them progress in life. They made a wise choice to avoid fighting against parental expectations to stay home, instead using that constraint to their benefit.

Communication between participants revealed close relationships not only as relatives, but as members of the same congregation. Participants were satisfied with 'their lot in life' for the time being as none of them had the desire to override parental or cultural expectations while living as young Samoans in Melbourne.

Eloise: I think another pressure would be like, like you said, like being a Samoan in Australia. Like cos our parents aren't Australian/Samoan, they're just from Samoa, they have higher expectations cos they've brought us up in an environment where [we] have access to so many things so they expect so much more from us than what they are.

Knowing how to share their experiences with peers of similar cultural traditions (even if not Pasifika) demonstrated the potential leadership skills of participants in this study. It

highlighted the balance participants were able to achieve in taking the best of both Western influences and traditional Samoan upbringing while residing in Melbourne.

Furthermore, the fact that the two participants in year 12 applied to tertiary institutions and used HSG session times to ensure responses written in applications were suitable, confirmed great leadership attributes. They were to be the first to attend university in their respective families, and they understood that they were paving the way for those who would follow in aspiring to high academic achievement. Their leadership qualities highlighted great wisdom and direction.

The individual efforts of parents to ensure they were able to provide a better future for their families, evident in discussion with parents of participants regarding their migration experiences to Melbourne, were striking. Since it was the mothers who were available for discussion and interviews, it was their responses which revealed the magnitude of the sacrifices made so that their children could receive adequate care and have access to a good education. All discussions were carried out in the Samoan language, with parents offering their perspectives as employees, community members, parents and carers, among other roles. Their leadership in terms of being positive role models to the participants (daughters) in the HSG was something even their daughters may have not fully comprehended; that is, their daughters may never have heard explanations of the parents' decisions which had brought them to their current situations (schooling, upbringing in Australia). Vaitu'i (mother of Penina and Penelope) shared memories of her initial experience in Melbourne of undertaking training in adult courses provided in an initiative called 'Women's Return to Study.' She spoke of her success in almost completing a Certificate II in Administration and her desire to undertake a Diploma course after that, but was torn between that course of action and caring for her then primary-aged children.

Vaitu'i experienced firsthand the difficulties in balancing study, work and providing care for her three children. She made the decision to forgo the Diploma course and seek employment (which she did successfully) to make sure she could financially support her children through their education. It was difficult when her children were young to attend her diploma course without having planned childcare; not only was it costly, but Vaitu'i wanted to look after her children herself. Her advice to her children was always to do well in school and make the most of the opportunities offered in this country, the place that was now home. The main improvement she wanted to see for her family from migrating to Australia was related to better

utilisation of employment opportunities by her children; she wanted them to gain work in places like offices and not in a factory setting. Vaitu'i mentioned the importance of constantly reminding her children that her main goal in life was to work so they could have a better life. Even though she has been resident in Australia for some years now, Vaitu'i was not aware of the university requirements for her daughters. After I had offered some advice to her regarding options to consider, Vaitu'i wanted her daughters to apply for university courses.

Among the factors leading to young people succeeding in education, Vaitu'i saw the support teachers gave her daughters as important and positive, as she had no reason to believe that such support was lacking. If anything, she knew from her own educational experience that it came down to one's attitude and commitment to learning; she believed that that was what made a difference to the outcome. There were times when she was called in to see Penelope's teacher regarding a behaviour issue. She confessed then that her daughter reminded her of herself when she was in high school: quite talkative and lacking focus in class. From Penelope's point of view regarding her classroom experience though, lessons (in Maths) were sometimes hard because her teacher was not always helpful in clarifying what Penelope did not understand.

1. Do you find it difficult to complete set tasks? (Why/Why not?)

P: It's kind of hard.

I: Why do you think?

P: It's because when they explain it, they expect us to know it straight away, but like, they explain it so we don't understand it.

I: So do you let the teacher know that you don't?

P: Yeah, but my Maths teacher, he's so impatient. Like if we say 'Sir, we don't get it, he says: 'Too bad, you weren't listening.'

I: So he doesn't give you time.

P: Yeah, he doesn't give us time to re-think it-yeah.

2. Do you seek help from the teacher when you need it?

I: Have you gone to see your teacher separately, out of class time to get help?

P: Sometimes he keeps me in.

I: How often does that happen?

P: Not all the time, when he sees that I'm struggling, he'll say to me, 'Just stay behind'.

I: Do you find that helpful?

P: Yeah, when it's one on one, it's better.

Penelope's response, when asked to describe what her learning experiences were like, revealed a somewhat different perspective of school from that of her mother Vaitu'i who places responsibility for learning on her daughter Penelope, but, as Penelope recounts, it is not always her behaviour but the teacher's pedagogy that fails to keep her engaged.

Image 4.6: Fa'a anufe (Worm)



Symbolises Movement

I utilise the *Fa'a anufe* symbol here to represent the migration or movement of Samoan people to Western countries. As outlined in the Literature Review chapter, families migrated to Western countries from the Pacific Islands in order to experience a better life. Often, pioneering families would move to New Zealand or Australia and form churches or networks, which would then be the nexus for guiding others to make their move (Macpherson 2002). Opportunities appeared to be for the taking, as more and more relatives shared stories of gaining employment that was not as laborious or underpaid, but that was rewarding. This may not have been the general outcome for all who moved away from the island life, but the attraction of freedom and autonomy, far from cultural expectations and familial ties, was strong for many. If individuals chose to maintain cultural traditions, the life in new lands enabled such maintenance, along with like-minded people. Just as ancestors navigated their way through stormy weather and challenges in canoes to find and settle in new lands, so too did generations of Samoans navigate their

way to settle in countries like the United States, New Zealand and Australia in search of a better life.

The stories of these early journeys to Samoa shared by Samoan families with their second generation children (Mila-Schaaf 2010) helped them understand the hardships their parents had escaped. Female participants in the northern Homework Study Group said that the various freedoms they took for granted and what they thought was a strict life in Melbourne were nothing compared to the circumstances their relatives experienced in Samoa. As mentioned by Ane during the focus group session, the amount of time her female cousins had to complete household chores in Samoa seemed never-ending. She felt they were constantly at work, not only before school hours, but after school as well.

Ane: Honestly, I reckon we're lucky to be in here, not in Samoa cos I reckon if we were in Samoa, it would be even harder.

VP: Cos you went there recently for a holiday, what did you see? What comparisons can you make?

Ane: Yeah, pretty um different cos like the girls would always do *feau's* from the morning oh, chores from the morning like, til we sleep and it's hard.

VP: And were they going to school then, during the day?

Ane: Yeah, during the day but on the weekends, they'd do it [chores/*feau's*] like full on, but if you have a good job then its fine.

Interviews with mothers also resonated with what Ane said with regard to Samoa being a place where one's upbringing was quite hard compared to young people's experience in Melbourne.

In his interview responses, Chas spoke of his parent's advice for him to do his best in school, especially given the fact that they came from a country that had limited resources. He knew the importance of the sacrifices his parents had made in order to move to Australia, so he was determined do all that he could to repay their efforts.

Chas: My parents always told me they came from a place that had limited resources, their education was limited. So when I come here, I try to do as much.

This leads to the next reason for families migrating to Australia: new beginnings. This is reflected in the symbol *Fa'atumoa* (*Beginning of Life and Fullness of Life*).

Image 4.7: Fa'atumoa (Banana Pod)



Symbolises Beginning of Life and Fullness of Life

For some families, reasons for migrating to a new country included seeking work, moving closer to other family members who had migrated before them, and simply wanting a change of lifestyle. The move to Melbourne was a positive one for families of participants in the Homework Study Group due to parents being able to earn a good living, which not only catered to the needs of their immediate family, but also to the needs of extended family members in Samoa to whom remittances could be sent. Occasional family trips were made back to the homeland for special occasions over the years, including returning to reunite with families not seen for years to spend holiday times with them. Macpherson, Bedford and Spoonley (2000) write of Samoans migrating to New Zealand to secure improved futures for their families. Samoans valued formal education and wanted their children to have access to an education system that provided more opportunities than those on offer in Samoa. What was interesting in their research was the comparison made, between parents and the next generation, of the extent to which their education and employment opportunities improved as a result of migrating to New Zealand. Research data collected

in this study indicated slight improvements, with New Zealand-born Samoans achieving more in education as well as finding better jobs than Samoan-born migrants.

...it is clear that migrant parents' expectations were met in significant measure. Among 40-49-year-old Samoans, those born in New Zealand were almost twice as likely to have tertiary qualifications as their Samoan-born cousins. The proportions of people with tertiary qualifications were significantly higher for men than for women in the same age group in the New Zealand-born population, but only marginally higher in the Samoa-born population' (Macpherson, Bedford and Spoonley 2000, p. 66).

Comparable data is not available for Samoans living in Melbourne, but I suggest that, if it were, it would reveal similar reasons for migration to Australia and similar outcomes. Parents interviewed in my study reported their reasons for moving to Melbourne as seeking new beginnings and hoping for improved living conditions. It would be helpful if future research were to find out whether young people raised in Melbourne have fared better than their parents in relation to education and employment. Current Australian Bureau of Statistics data does not include this information.

Interviews conducted with parents regarding their educational experiences does confirm however that student participants enjoy better access to resources and education than had their parents. Vaitu'i, Faalelei and Ato all stated in interviews and discussions that their children definitely had access to resources that they had not always enjoyed as young people educated in Samoa. That is, there were days when they would have no lunch or only a slice of bread, or no breakfast in the morning, with a main meal after school. In addition, responses included how fortunate their children were in Melbourne as they went to school with school bags, books and lunches, and they didn't have to do without. This was a sample of the kind of new beginnings that migrating to Melbourne offered them. They also connected with other Samoans by attending *lotu* (church) on a weekly basis, helping them maintain religious beliefs and practices to which they were accustomed in Samoa. Moreover, continuing to attend *lotu* established support networks where families would assist others with finding employment and providing necessities like food, furniture or transportation, as well as, most importantly, moral support for new migrants.

Though a few parents of participants in the HSG expressed an ongoing longing for Samoa, the ability to engage in cultural events and practices (like attending church, participating in Samoan fundraisers, sending remittances to relatives in Samoa, and maintaining traditional values and beliefs with children) was something parents appreciated whilst living in Australia. It is also something the study group participants respected and enjoyed as young people living between two cultures.

Image 4.8: The Marlin Adze



Symbolises Skilfulness and Intelligence

The image of 'The Marlin Adze' represents 'Skilfulness and Intelligence' and is used in this instance to identify certain requirements for fruitful experiences in education for Samoan students. In order for young people to succeed in education in Australian schools, there are certain expectations that need to be met, ranging from having the right equipment for learning, attending school consistently, dedicating time to the completion of tasks (in school and after school), and communicating ideas in written or spoken forms, to name but a few. In addition, communication between schools and family's needs to be regular so that information is shared in relation to events and expectations.

There is a need for cultural capital which includes awareness of Western ideologies, knowledge of places mentioned in curriculum topics, as well as knowledge of texts (films and books) written by a myriad of authors. Oftentimes, as seen in the Homework Study Groups, participants were not aware of geographic locations, names of classical authors, or of particular styles of writing because their perspectives and knowledge were limited to

whatever they were exposed to at home and in their community. In comparison to students who were able to succeed in education by achieving high marks and entering higher education institutions, the participants in the Homework Study Groups were at times disadvantaged to a degree. They competed against students who had access to spaces and knowledge they did not. Assisting participants in the HSG enabled those in year 12 to learn the vocabulary and writing skills that would increase their chances of accessing higher education. As outlined in Table 4.1 below: Participant Responses to Preferred Homework Tasks, the structure of the study sessions provided each week was also influenced by responses participants gave regarding their choice of homework to complete.

The table outlines information that informed the selection of tasks to be completed during the Homework Study Group sessions. It was important for the learning that took place in the space provided (library) that tasks were both purposeful and meaningful for participants. A survey was distributed to most participants to complete which provided information about the times they chose to do homework, the location in the house where these tasks were completed, and the likelihood of completing the tasks without assistance.

Table 4.1: Participant Responses to Preferred Homework Tasks

Participants	Preferred Homework Tasks	Reflection on ability to complete tasks set indepently
Chas	Maths	Because I found it easy to understand and love how following a formula step by step will get you the correct answer.
Eloise	I enjoy doing homework straight after school and I enjoy doing homework that involves practical activities such as making folios and presentations.	No response recorded.
Letofu	The only h/w tasks I like doing is mainly English because I like English.	I enjoy all tasks that I understand.
Penina	I enjoy doing English homework.	I enjoy doing homework when it is quiet, no distractions; just me and peace.
Ane	I enjoy doing all my tasks for all my subjects, especially English and Food Tech.	I enjoy doing homework when I have no distractions and my mind zone is set to focus.
Tamara (Mala)	I enjoy doing my homeowrk when I'm not tired and I know that the work is work I can complete without needing assistance.	No response recorded.
Penelope	At times I enjoy doing homeowrk when I understand it like English/Maths.	No response recorded.

The responses offered by some of the participants showed tasks were enjoyable if they understood them and if they included preferred activities like creating folios or presenting information. Strategies utilised in the homework study sessions ensured that participants developed skills in which they lacked confidence. In this way, learning tasks could be completed and satisfaction achieved (by teachers and participants). Samoan students enrolled in Australian schools need to be skilful and knowledgeable in navigating what is expected from an educational perspective in order for successful outcomes to be a reality. One of the outcomes may be a strong grasp of literacy and numeracy skills at all year levels, as can be demonstrated in national assessments such as NAPLAN, Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT), On Demand, and so forth. Though these tests provide only a few indicators for assessing students academically, they are the tests schools rely on to use as evidence of student academic achievement against similar schools in the district or in the state.

Migration to Australia for parents is fraught with many uncertainties, especially when they have come from a different culture to an education system that is unfamiliar to them and clearly different from the one to which they were accustomed in Samoa or New Zealand. The arrangement of Homework Study Groups also specifically assisted parents to be better equipped to prepare students to succeed academically in Australian schools. Their being so equipped is imperative if they are to provide the kind of support their children need. This applies to parents of any background who are unfamiliar with educational expectations in Australian schools.

Mention has been made of the experiences of Samoan young people with respect to feeling torn between two cultures. Research undertaken in Hawaii, California, New Zealand, and to some extent in Australia, indicates that young people raised with *fa'aSamoa* while living in Western countries have struggled to blend their two cultures, with one often being contradictory to the other (Singh and Sinclair 2001; Cahill 2006; Macpherson 1999). Examples of participant experiences in relation to this struggle are provided in the following paragraphs. Here, I utilise the 'Symbols of The Land: Sustenance and Community' to reflect responses participants gave regarding learning and applying strategies to deal with social issues and cultural protocols in the home.

Image 4.9: Fa'a lau ulu (Breadfruit leaf)



Symbolises Sustenance and Health

There were times when participants in the Homework Study Group found it difficult to open up to adults about their concerns. One Homework Study Group session, for example, was dedicated to seeking participant views about cultural expectations and of today's Samoan young people. Some of the topics raised were very interesting but also cause for concern as attitudes to help-seeking were discussed. As these conversations developed - on the subject of young people seeking help or trusting others enough to share confidential issues - the importance of the space provided in the Homework Study Group proved to be more significant than I had anticipated. My role as teacher/researcher was not taken lightly; I was treated as someone the participants trusted, one they could open up to, unlike other adults in their immediate families or communities.

One participant of the Homework Study Group (Eloise) shared her thoughts about why most Samoan young people did not feel free or brave enough to discuss issues with parents or adults from the Samoan community. As disclosed in the group discussion, Eloise stated that 'parents don't really talk about it and it's like here; we have like psychologists, and stuff like that...' She described the difficulties for young people in Samoa and Samoan young people living in Australia in sharing their thoughts or concerns with those in their immediate circle. The reason why young people didn't feel comfortable sharing information with adults (parents included) was that they were always reminded (culturally speaking) that certain topics such as relationships, love, emotions, and anything related to how they felt, or what they thought as young people, was not to be heard. The term

‘children are to be seen and not heard’ is one that describes the situation of Samoan young people.

Consequently, in school, Samoan students generally did not speak up or voice their opinion because they were seldom encouraged to do so in their own cultural environment, whether the home or a Samoan community setting (Horsley 1999). Teachers and education support staff feel frustrated because of their inability to communicate with Samoan students or due to their lack of participation in class, unaware that the reason behind such behaviour is cultural constraint: a cultural expectation that they will sit there and be quiet. These student behaviours may be judged as laziness, arrogance or a lack of social etiquette in the classroom setting. The lack of student participation in class discussions or student unwillingness to raise a hand to offer a response to questions posed follows also from young people not feeling comfortable or confident enough to speak in front of adults or an audience; they do not want to disappoint and they must save face in front of their peers. As Eloise said in the group discussion, even if a Samoan student wanted to pose a question in the classroom, it would be too embarrassing for them to admit to not knowing; it would be construed as shameful.

Teachers need to understand these cultural expectations with which Samoan students are raised, so that they are not labelled as young people who are refusing to participate and ask questions; it is often the case that they just don’t know how to communicate in a way that will not bring shame on them. Because schools are not providing an environment that is working for Samoan students, the establishment of the Homework Study Group makes a difference. Not only is it a space in which participants can feel free to communicate their feelings, it is also an environment where an understanding of participants’ cultural norms is embraced. The Homework Study Group creates an environment where students can pose questions without feeling shame; it is a positive enquiry space for these young people. Knowing their background as a teacher, and understanding their cultural experiences, coupled with knowing participants’ preferred learning methods, led to the development of effective communication skills in the participants. This included learning how to approach teachers as people not to be feared, but as professionals there to assist them. Learning how to use terminology that was respectful as well as investigative with educators was something that participants were encouraged to do as they attended the Homework Study Group sessions.

Conclusion

Learning about Samoan student experiences of residing in Melbourne from a young Samoan perspective enables educators and stakeholders to be aware that there are a number of worldviews these young people are navigating and negotiating on a daily basis. At times, the worldviews (reflecting culture, church, youth groups, collective efficacy, connectedness and language, for example) are manageable and young people enjoy their lives, but these worldviews also result in demands on resources such as finances and time. Maintaining a balance between Samoan and Western worldviews as Samoan youth living in Melbourne is key to the success of the individual. Guidance for teachers is required though through the provision of programs from people who know how to communicate respectfully and take into account the cultural factors influencing Samoan young people in Melbourne.

There is strength to be gained from the traditions and practices of *fa'aSamoa*. For families of Samoan students in Melbourne, a great support network exists not only for parents, but also for the wider Samoan community. Whether Samoans share churches or an extended family, one thing that most Samoans have in common is the desire to help each other in times of need. That is evident in the way that parents car pool participants to the weekly Homework Study Groups, encourage young people to excel in education, and provide financial, emotional and social assistance to new migrants. A collective approach to all things in life is ingrained in the Pasifika (including Samoan) mentality: working and caring for others is everyone's responsibility and all have benefited from acts of kindness in one way or another in the past and will benefit in the future.

The themes of time and space will be explored to demonstrate the value of having a separate and well-resourced location in which to complete learning tasks, as well as the value of allocating time to ensure tasks are completed to the level expected by teachers.

Chapter 5: Space and Time

‘The vā constitutes a realm where personal and cultural stories of identity through space and time are imparted. Acclaimed Samoan writer Albert Wendt has stated that the vā represents a space in which identity can be mapped: “We each have preferred maps, learned maps—what we believe our cultures, our nations, ourselves were and are. Our maps may be our neighbour’s fictions, we read one another through what we believe, through the mirrors of who and what we are. Those maps and fictions are all in the spiral which composes the story of us in the ever-moving present, in the Va, the space between all things which defines and makes us a part of the unity that is all’ (Va’ai 1999 cited in Tamaira 2009, p. 27).

Importance of Space

The importance of space was a crucial factor in this study in which participants were able to meet on a regular basis to commence and complete educative tasks. It became evident that without a space to meet or a space to work, there would be limited opportunity to achieve the goals set by participants. Not only was space identified as a physical realm, it represented a metaphorical space, and safe place to share ideas and pose questions that participants would not necessarily raise with others. It represented the sacred relationship between researcher/teacher and participants because thoughts were shared that I knew would not necessarily be shared with non-Samoan researchers or teachers. The location in which the Homework Study Group participants met was the physical place in which the construction of ideas and understanding of knowledge of both the Western and the traditional merged as one. With the support of the teacher-researcher, questions raised by participants regarding how to learn and implement literacy and research skills were examined and dissected so that knowledge could be conveyed in different ways, particularly in relation to questions about how to fulfil the requirements of teachers with specific homework tasks. At the time of the study, participants noted their desire to further succeed academically so that they could gain employment and earn an income to support their parents and extended family. Parents of participants acknowledged the struggle to meet the needs of their children at times (such as purchasing computers, having internet credit, accessing books and resources), but did not want their teenagers to seek part-time employment as this would distract them from important studies. The parallels between the

time that might be dedicated to part-time employment and the time participants dedicated to rehearsal practices was not made however.

It is important that the crucial values of *va* (Ng Shiu 2011) and *va fealoai* (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2010) are known to researchers when they are working with people of Samoan descent. As outlined in Ng Shiu's study, *va* is referred to as the 'physical and relational space between people and things' (2011, p. 23). The term *va fealoai* refers to 'protecting, observing and nurturing the relationship' (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2010, p. 153). Both definitions suggest the important meaning for researchers: that respectful relationships between researchers and participants of Samoan ancestry a priority. Not only is it ethically sound, it shows an understanding of and reverence towards participants as providers of invaluable knowledge (in this case, new knowledge about Melbourne participant experiences in educational settings). The provision of knowledge is to be protected by confidentiality so that informants feel they can trust not only the space in which they meet but also the rapport with me as researcher – who must remain trustworthy and positive. The relational space between people can be interpreted from the Samoan perspective as also meaning the respectful relationship between adults and younger people. That is, *fa'a Samoa* expects that young people would respect their elders and be mindful of holding appropriate conversations, as opposed to discussions about topics that are considered taboo (of a sexual nature). Albert Wendt (1999) describes *va* as being a space that gives meaning to things and something where people relate to each other, rather than a space that separates:

Important to the Samoan view of reality is the concept of *Va* or *Wa* in Maori and Japanese. *Va* is the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates, but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things. The meanings change as the relationships and the contexts change. ... A well-known Samoan expressions is "Ia teu le va" –cherish, nurse, care for the *va*, the relationships. This is crucial in communal cultures that value group unity more than individualism, that perceive the individual person, or creature, or thing in terms of group, in terms of *va*, relationships (p. 402).

The homework club became a space that enabled rapport to be established between me as researcher/teacher and the participants from an unusual and critical perspective. That rapport was not only on an academic perspective, but from a knowing, an understanding of what these participants were talking about, having experienced similar circumstances as a young Samoan person raised in Western countries. The data collected in this space confirmed the importance of educators knowing their students, thereby enabling open communication about topics related to their education, including the nature of the barriers that prevent Samoan students from achieving academically, limited space in their homes for homework tasks being one of them.

The Homework Study Group was perceived as a valuable space by the participants who attended each week. All eight respondents who answered the question regarding the location in which homework was completed at home named either their bedroom or kitchen area as the space used. Participants felt very differently about learning tasks when they were completed at the library – compared to working on them at home. That is, the assistance of an on-site, qualified teacher (in this case the researcher), answering queries and modelling how essays or assignments could be completed, made homework easier to undertake. For example, Mala highlighted the importance of having a teacher present to assist her with academic tasks by stating she ‘found this study session very helpful indeed.’ What is crucial to acknowledge is that the space provided for participants at the library was an empowering space; it was a space in which these young people performed competently. Participants developed the skills and knowledge to reach their learning goals because their culture was recognised and incorporated into their learning. This strengthened their capacity to be confident, empowered individuals. There was real empowerment for participants in being encouraged to develop their abilities each week.

Homework sessions revealed a need for participants to have more time to absorb cultural capital (from a Western perspective) in order to understand some of the matter covered in the Victorian curriculum. Some participants appeared to lack knowledge and understanding of work tasks due to not relating to the units of work studied at school; hence the more participants were assisted in understanding themes, subjects or important assessment tasks, the more independently they could function - and feel more content as students. Schools need to acknowledge that not all students are exposed to the same cultural information or experience the same upbringing; that is, there are vast differences in the cultural capital or knowledge that students bring to their learning environment.

Because of their upbringing, not all students have been exposed to authors, museums, exhibitions, and various geographic locations. At times, students are expected to successfully complete educative tasks using extensive knowledge of contexts with which they are unfamiliar. Families also need to be aware of the need to ensure their children are exposed to cultural experiences (usually Western influenced) in order to succeed academically in Victorian schools. The homework study groups, as spaces where students could learn more about matters in which they were lacking confidence, ensured that the cultural capital gap was reduced.

During one of the study sessions, discussion highlighted the link between what Bourdieu called the 'habitus' and experiences, or lack thereof, of participant exposure to events, people or places outside their culture and family socialization. Students who are immersed in their cultural capital can relate more easily to topics or literature covered in the curriculum. Among Samoan students however there is a lack of exposure to a level of cultural capital that might provide them with a similar level of understanding and to confidence in relation to curriculum content, compared to those that have had that exposure. As mentioned in Naidoo's study (2009):

...habitus represents knowledge about one's place in the world and connects the social structure of a field with the actions of individuals within a field. An individual's habitus is influenced by external 'conditions of existence,' including social class and family, 'which in turn become the basis of perception and appreciation of all subsequent experience' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, p78). As such, one's habitus shapes one's expectations and orientations toward the future (p. 264).

Samoan students who attended the HSG sessions often struggled with the curriculum content that was offered by their respective schools because they could not relate to the themes in a particular novel, for example, or had not had the same experience learning about Shakespeare in lower year levels as current year 12 students had. It was not uncommon for Samoan young people to have less experience in attending theatre, plays, museums, or iconic places deemed to be culturally important in the West. It would often be the case that Samoan students lacked exposure to literature in which reference is made to locations or past events or significant figures in history; by contrast, what they do relate to is being emotionally connected to characters or experiences that are similar to their own. In addition, not relating to curriculum content could be attributed to girls not being

permitted to go out unchaperoned or to spend time with friends to do what young people usually do during weekends. The specific roles and expectations for boys and girls will be discussed later as this does have a bearing on how participants felt about not having the freedom to experience life as other young people from different cultural backgrounds do.

Responses to the importance of Time and Space

The following information describes participant thoughts and experiences in the high schools they attended in Melbourne. The data collected included participant-preferred learning styles and the subjects they enjoyed learning, as well as subject areas they felt were difficult at school. The data was collected during the initial stages of the Homework Study Group to identify both student learning experiences and the improvements to those experiences that were needed, in each participant's opinion. Knowing the participants' current perspectives on their academic experiences guided the structure of the HSG in terms of focussing on teaching learning strategies and skills in which participants were less confident. Nine of the eleven students were interviewed at the beginning of the study to find out about their educational experiences in Melbourne schools. Two of the participants did not attend the study groups during the interview times or on a regular basis after that, so their responses were not included in the discussion below. The students' profiles are provided in the hope that teachers would better understand the issues affecting Samoan students in their efforts to achieve satisfactory academic results in Melbourne schools. The three participants mentioned in this chapter demonstrate the importance of having a specific space to go to each week for studying and completing educational tasks.

Conducive Space for Studying

The change of location from a garage to a library will be explained here so a clearer picture is presented regarding the importance of space. Before university ethics approval was granted, I approached a religious minister to seek permission to ask parishioners whether they would be keen to take part in a research study. Using prior knowledge of this community and cultural protocols to discuss the study, I persuaded the families in the congregational church to grant permission to commence a study group with its members. The homework study group started in the garage of the religious minister's house where it was conducted for the first few months until mid-winter, when it became apparent that a more suitable space was needed.

The Homework Club's move to the library elicited positive feedback from both students and parents who were impressed with the facilities and appreciated the library tour conducted on Monday 20 June. This tour of the new space was undertaken so that parents and students could see the benefits of having a study space that was not a garage; it had all of the resources needed to support completion of study tasks. Parents directed me to continue to do what I thought was best for students, while participants expressed their appreciation of the change of scene.

The HSG as a Physical and Metaphorical Space

Recognition of the need for participants to meet regularly, in a space that allowed more concerted effort towards achieving the completion of learning tasks, was a priority for this study. Interviews with participants during the collection of data was an ongoing process of monitoring their thoughts regarding the suitability of the library as a location for HSG sessions. They confirmed that it had a positive effect, enabling the acquisition of strategies and skills that participants wanted to develop.

Letofu (Tofu):

During the first interview at the beginning of the research period, when asked about areas of study with which she needed assistance, Tofu stated it was in time management and in resisting the temptation to be distracted. When she experienced problems with tasks, Tofu would seek individual assistance, responding well to modelled writing methods during the study sessions. In response to a question regarding her thoughts about the location selected to run HSG sessions, Tofu replied:

I think the location was very helpful. It had everything we needed.

Also, I liked that we had our own space to work in.

Christen:

As a year 10 student, Christen mentioned she could do a lot better in terms of ensuring she was more focussed during class time. What was interesting about Christen's interview responses was her acknowledgment that she was not paying attention during lessons. This could be attributed to Christen not having enough time to rest, as she reported how 'really tired and lazy' she's been 'these days.' Being organized was also a strategy Christen wanted to develop as a participant in the HSG. She noticed that her focus had taken a

downward spiral since the beginning of the year (as it was now semester 2); where once she was more organised and on task, having more focus on school, she was now less so. Christen displayed a level of maturity as she was able to reflect on both her feelings of not being bothered to make an effort in school and her desire to achieve a 'great career to look after my family and support my mum'. She realised that this goal wouldn't be achieved if she were to act on her current feelings of 'couldn't be stuffed any more with life and school work.' In regular attendance at the HSG sessions, Christen felt she could use the time more effectively to complete tasks, and use the quiet space to concentrate.

Tamara (Mala):

As a year 9 student, Mala was no different to her peers who, she said, would be easily distracted during class time when it came to doing school work or listening to her teacher. When asked about her thoughts regarding the selection of a library to hold weekly study group sessions, Mala commented that:

The location for study group has been awesome and suitable. It's nice and quiet, cool, easy access to everything such as computers, books, etc.

While attending study sessions on a regular basis, Mala would use the space to read books she wouldn't necessarily read for leisure at home. She also became more disciplined with ensuring tasks were completed and always sought assistance when required, working independently once I modelled how structured responses could be written to suit particular subjects.

Feedback from participants in general indicated that the regular homework study sessions did improve learning strategies for participants. The issue of the importance of space was a crucial factor in this study as participants were able to meet on a consistent basis to work on homework tasks. From the research it became clear that without an appropriate space to meet or to do work there would be limited opportunity to achieve the goals set by participants. This was evidenced by the reactions to the change in venue of the HSG from the Minister's garage to the library.

Not only was space identified as a physical realm, it metaphorically represented a safe space and place to share ideas and pose questions participants wouldn't necessarily ask

elsewhere. For example, Letofu highlighted the importance of the physical space in the following quote: 'I think the location was very helpful. It had everything we needed. Also, I liked that we had our own space to work in.' Eloise on the other hand shared sensitive information during the group interview which highlighted the safety of the space in a metaphorical sense. The type of information Eloise felt free to discuss, such as what to keep from adults in the Samoan community and some of the injustices of the *fa'aSamoa*, was evidence of the comfort participants experienced in sharing personal accounts.

As Eloise's response exemplifies, the space also represented the sacred relationship between the researcher/teacher and participants; thoughts were shared that I knew would not necessarily be shared with non-Samoan researchers or teachers. This will be further discussed in the following chapter on Time and Space.

The impact of the HSG Space on Study Habits

The library space was important as it meant there were minimal distractions that might impede the completion of academic tasks. Often school-related work was completed at home after specific duties were completed; these included looking after siblings, ensuring chores were finished, like preparing dinner, cleaning the house or doing church-related tasks like memorising biblical scripts and plays for special events. Finding the space to actually complete homework proved to be an issue at home as there were other duties that needed to be attended to. By attending a space where there were no distractions - such as home duties to undertake before commencing homework - participants reported they were able to continue set tasks. That is, participants were able to concentrate on the task at hand by having a quiet room to work in, which included ample table space and room to lay out books, and having access to the equipment required to pursue studies (computers, specific books in the library, whiteboard to model sample work, and so on).

The library also proved to be a more conducive working environment in compared to the home as Eloise stated: 'it definitely helped, being in a working environment, you don't have a choice but to work. It's motivating.' For Tamara, attending the Homework Study Group meant being in a space that helped her feel she was achieving something. That is, it helped with prioritising work because 'when I come, I finish off tasks here, making my load lighter and helping me to see what I have done and also what I have to do.' Participants knew the expectation of regular attendance at the HSG sessions, of arriving with work to

commence, and of being prepared to practise skills learnt during the week at school. Letofu echoed Eloise's opinions, stating: 'homework study group has helped me a lot to complete homework, organise myself and keep my grades up.'

During most of the study sessions, participants would attend with tasks they had been given by subject teachers. If work was not provided, work was set for participants based on skills they needed to practise which included essay writing, organising graphs, analysing statistics or language analysis. They would be held accountable regarding how they were progressing with tasks, with regular checks made and feedback provided along the way.

Letofu stated in her response that the study sessions had helped her achieve goals:

I've improved in time management because I'm now always up to date with my homework and definitely well-organised. I've improved a lot in English because I can focus on my work and put a lot of detail in it as well.

What became important to participants was not only the process of commencing tasks, but learning how to persevere through a task when it became difficult until progress and success was evident. For instance, working together to write paragraphs, search for quotes, and re-checking work participants had completed, was routine during the study group sessions. Penina stated that the study sessions were helpful 'when I need a teacher's point of view of my work. With this help, my marks have improved.' Another participant, Letofu, said, 'I've definitely found study sessions helpful because I get a lot of homework done. I have access to books/computers so it's easy for me and I can focus on assignments, etc. properly.'

Survey responses highlighting factors contributing to participants' inability to complete homework tasks showed that it was in large part due to lack of understanding of the task requirements. Eight participants completed the survey outlining 'Study Habits at Home'. There were 7 out of 8 participants who stated they had difficulty completing work due to not understanding what they were required to do. If they did not understand it, they did not spend time on it, so in attending the HSG participants could seek explanations of puzzling tasks and move forward with their work independently once they understood what to do. There was also an acknowledgment from participants that improvement in time management was needed in order to complete particular academic tasks. That is, there was

acknowledgment that not enough time was being allocated to tasks of more importance such that assistance to complete assignments for instance was often being sought close to the date on which the assignments were due, rather than assistance being sought ahead of time (weeks in advance).

It was clear during the initial stages of establishing the HSG that the study sessions were not only for participants to ask questions regarding set work given by their teachers, but also for participants to familiarise themselves with study habits or strategies that would enable the completion of work to a level that was expected by their teachers. Hence, when participants felt they needed more practice with essay writing, this was modelled during specific study sessions until the participants felt confident in their ability to respond to set essay questions, and therefore to begin working independently. From these demonstrations of structuring and writing essay responses, it became apparent that a smaller group, and, at times, individual assistance for participants, was the best way of empowering these students and equipping them with the necessary academic skills. Eloise said: ‘Yes, it definitely helps, especially with studying it helps.’ Participants in the HSG began to see the difference the change in environment made to their ability to continue and complete homework tasks, but it was more than that. There was a teacher/researcher they could trust in seeking help or voicing concerns regarding academic outcomes.

As the students turned up to the Homework Study Group each week, their preparedness to share more personal stories about what it means to be a young Samoan student living in Melbourne developed. For example, both Ane and Eloise expressed a desire to pursue tertiary studies, but were unaware of the processes needed to pursue such endeavours. Their parents had not attended university, nor did they have enough knowledge of the Victorian education system to advise their daughters, so the two girls relied on information that the school provided or that was shared in discussions in the HSG. As Samoan girls, they would have been the first in both families to attend university. Parents valued education and its benefits, but were not always sure how to maximise access to scholarships or understood the level of commitment it took to meet the entry requirements. It was during interviews with parents that I was made aware of the lack of knowledge parents had of such university entry requirements for their Australian-born children, and started therefore to investigate the opportunities in Australian tertiary institutions for children with New Zealand citizenship.

The HSG space became not only a place to study, but also a safe place that enabled participants to share the highs and lows of their lives as young people experiencing change from a cultural and social perspective. They operated successfully in what became their Samoan space; hence, for me the notion of trust was important, enabling the participants to feel safe to speak their minds. From my experience, I knew that they would not necessarily share information that was offered during some of the study sessions with someone of non-Samoan background, or with someone who did not have a history of connection with each family. My connectedness to the students, their families, and their communities, and my demonstration of genuine care for the carers of these participants and the participants themselves, were important to creating this place or space of trust.

In Western culture, the teacher is encouraged to keep at a distance, to be professional by staying ‘at arm’s length’ from the families of students, even from students themselves. But in Samoan culture (as in other Pacific Island cultures), expressing genuine care and connectedness with parents or guardians of students allows for these adults to have more open communication with teachers and other stakeholders. It is this that seems to be lacking in Australian schools in general. There are calls for creating more community connectedness and interconnections with others from a local, national and global perspective; however, as much as one tries to create a sense of community in schools that impose Western values and beliefs through its policies, the connection is not made with families from minority backgrounds, Samoans included. This is important in terms of what was revealed in parent interviews and why young people attending the HSG were able to attend the study sessions in the first place: because their parents saw the importance of this HSG initiative in supporting their children to cope with the demands of education in a different cultural milieu.

Samoan participants in the HSG still had a feeling of disconnectedness from their schools (staff included at times). They could not relate to the Western curriculum taught in some of the subjects because it was not their lived experience. Participants who attended the HSG lacked the cultural capital needed to respond to some of the academic tasks set by teachers because texts selected, for English for example, did not connect with their experience of the world. This left them with so much to catch up on in relation to the explanation of terms and the explanation of contexts in novels, for example, leaving them at a disadvantage even before they started. These were my observations and experience as a researcher/teacher of the HSG sessions; hence, teaching methods used in the HSG had to

focus on suggesting suitable vocabulary and interpreting themes for participants during some of the sessions.

Space (At Home)

One of the interesting commonalities of all participants was the way in which their space at home could not be used effectively for studying. Some responses to questions regarding the space selected for completing homework at home included the bedroom (usually on their beds or, if they were fortunate enough, on a desk in their room). Another space that was used for studying at home was the kitchen, using the kitchen bench top as a desk, or the dining table. This proved to be challenging at times due to the fact that some of these spaces would be invaded by other members of the family. Where most teachers would expect a well laid-out study space for students away from the school setting, that is not always the reality for most – and nor for the participants of the HSG sessions. Though their space at home is a comfortable space to relax in and to perform their cultural roles, it is not a learning space in the educational sense. The space at home is one where young people are taught *fa'aSamoa* and how to 'carry themselves' respectfully in public, the space where cultural knowledge is shared, where Samoan values and beliefs are passed on by parents or older relatives in the extended family to their young.

Oftentimes, being the older sibling in the family meant taking on a carer's role, ensuring younger siblings were looked after and kept out of mischief. This was part of *fa'aSamoa* in which specific roles would be allocated to children in a Samoan family according to age and gender.

Cultural Space: Gender Roles

One can compare the roles allocated to males and females in a Samoan family with those in other conservative societies. Females are allocated roles that are linked to the home or inside spaces, whereas males are allocated roles that are more external/outside of the home. The role of girls, for instance, would be to be domesticated, to keep a clean house and to be passive in the presence of elders and society in general. Girls are expected to excel in education and pursue a successful career in a job that is 'indoors' or in a clean space like an office, or to pursue any other career that is considered to be respectable. In terms of the type of employment parents prefer for their children after completing formal education, it was the opposite of the kind of employment in which parents started their working lives. For instance, if parents were working as labourers, labouring jobs were definitely not

something they wanted for their children given the long hours and laborious nature of the work. As one of the mother's interviewed stated, she wanted her daughters to have good office jobs like working in a bank, or teaching, or nursing. The last of these jobs was not an option for her youngest daughter, as the mother later revealed in her interview that her daughter hated the sight of blood, so she couldn't possibly meet her mother's expectations.

Fairbairn-Dunlop's 2010 study, outlining the differences in achievement between Pacific females and males in schools, highlights a matter of concern: the expectation that males will focus on non-academic ventures (namely sports), and conform to male stereotypes. This study explores, through the lens of Samoan gender, how cultural expectations influence school experiences for students. Girls usually achieve better results than boys academically due to the emphasis given to boys using sport as a means of achieving prestige, and girls being expected to pursue success through education. What is interesting to note, in Fairbairn-Dunlop's study, is the continuing expectations for girls to be restricted in their freedoms (having curfews or being expected home after school) compared to boys), and how this has affected their achievement levels. Parent and teacher responses revealed an awareness of this difference that is confirmed in responses given by participants and their parents in my research.

Pacific parents let boys out ... while girls stay home and do their study.
(female teacher)

I think about this with my daughter. With my daughter I make sure she is home at the right time every day. And she sits and does her school work. I don't worry so much about my sons ... they can come and go. But my daughter I watch. (Minister of Education, Samoa, 2008)

We say [to our sons] go for rugby ... sports ... do your school work. But go for rugby. Look at Tana. (parent, male) (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2010, p. 147)

Moreover, in Samoan culture it is expected girls will not bring shame on the family by doing anything disgraceful like falling pregnant before marriage, as one parent interview stated. Traditional Samoan upbringing meant girls were to be in approved relationships which would not be permitted until parents were satisfied that the boy met their expectations. More often than not relationships are hidden by girls due to their strict

upbringing which applied different rules to their brothers and male relatives. As highlighted in the group interview by four participants, one of the things that most irritated Samoan girls was the freedom their brothers had in comparison to the restrictions they faced.

Girls were also to ensure that they dressed appropriately when attending community events, wearing the traditional attire of a *puletasi* (matching top and sarong), and or ensuring that unrevealing clothes are worn. If they wore pants to the minister's house, or when attending choir practice, for example, they had to wear an *ie lava lava* (sarong) over their pants as a sign of respect.

Space (At School)

Some of the most exciting social experiences for participants in this study have occurred at school. Participants have shared their joy in befriending students from different cultural backgrounds and exchanging stories about their similarities and differences as young people. School provided a space in which participants could be 'themselves', as opposed to being under the constraint of parental supervision. An example of this was evident during a parental interview in which one of the mothers reported having to visit the school on a couple of occasions due to her youngest daughter misbehaving. She knew her daughter wouldn't misbehave at home due to the strict rules she has in place, but confessed that her daughter was just like her at the same age at school.

School was also a place where resources such as counsellors could be accessed if participants had concerns. When asked about the difference between resources available in Melbourne schools and those available to students living in Samoa and attending school there, a couple of participants stated that they could be more open in speaking with counsellors about their problems here in preference to speaking with parents or elders in the Samoan community, in the absence of counsellors in Samoan schools. Access to counselling support that could be both helpful and confidential to young people was one advantage of Melbourne education that was missing for young people in Samoa, participants thought.

Eloise: Um, with like, what Mala was saying about depression and stuff like, parents don't really talk about it and it's like here, we have like

psychologists, and stuff like that-we know where to go for help. But in Samoa, everyone is Samoan so...

Mala: I think because Samoans think they have this image that like, they're these big tough people and just cos they're like huge, you know like, they have to be strong. You know like if they have problems, don't talk about it cos you're supposed to be strong, like, it's like that image is so big and important to them, that it's hard for them to actually open up and tell you what's wrong and it's hard for them to talk about what's wrong because they're not used to talking about what's wrong.

Eloise: They have so much pride.

Mala: Yeah, it's so hard for them to let that down and be straight up and open.

IP: Are you saying that's for everyone? Males and females or just ...

Mala/Eloise: Everyone. Mala: Majority of the people.

Eloise: But that's another thing with Samoans, like they have so much pride they're so like, shame is so much worse than death. Like, you know, if you bring shame on your family, it's like, you might as well just die.

[Other girls agreeing in the background]

This discussion brought to the fore the importance of building a trust relationship between participants and researcher to ensure that such stories were not taken lightly. If anything, the space provided in the HSG confirmed the value of a place where participants could feel relaxed enough to share their opinions.

Shame

A crucial issue to mention here is the explanation given by some participants for not being active in class discussions. Because they did not want to appear incorrect when providing an answer to the teacher, Samoan students would rather not be selected to give a response. In the focus group interview conducted, the girls from the Northern HSG unanimously commented that it was embarrassing to lack the confidence to offer a response to their

teachers. They were afraid they would be ridiculed because such ridicule is something they experience at times in Samoan settings (whether in the home or at community events). Sometimes it is heard in conversations amongst participants when someone makes a mistake and there is a giggle followed by the comment ‘*Ma la*’ or ‘Shame! How embarrassing.’ What the HSG sessions offered was explicit teaching of participants in the use of correct words or phrases to express ideas, coupled with encouragement for participants to work harder at knowing the content of topics studied in class. This in turn helped them to build their confidence in speaking up amongst their peers in various classes.

Samoan young people are only expected to say something in a formal public setting when asked by an elder, but this seldom happens unless, for example, they are delivering a speech or performing a rehearsed play or dance in a church setting. When attending Samoan community events, Samoan young people are ‘seen and not heard.’ Usually, roles are quite defined. As young people, their role in public settings would be one of serving elders rather than joining in on conversations. To participate in adult conversations or meetings when not specifically invited to do so is to show disrespect, lack of character, and lack of knowing *fa’aSamoa*.

Importance of Time

The importance of time will be explored as one of the themes evident in this study. The data has revealed the importance of allocating dedicated space for Samoan students to complete study tasks. What followed next as another important factor in the academic success of Samoan students in school was being allocated sufficient time to complete study-related tasks. The demands placed on participants in the homework study group on a weekly basis could be said to be quite different from the demands placed on students from other backgrounds, whether of Anglo-Australian or European. The significance of time was evident as it was limited for participants, despite the importance parents placed on educational success for each individual. This thesis study sought to investigate whether other students struggled with finding the time to complete work that was both satisfying to them and met the requirements of teachers. I know that as a younger person studying at high school, and later at undergraduate level, I often found it difficult to juggle both home and school expectations as the two would often be in conflict. The Western practice of speaking one’s mind is not received well in the Samoan context. It would be contrary to

a good Samoan upbringing to speak one's mind at home; especially if what was said did not accord with parental values and beliefs.

Time to complete study-related tasks can thus be linked to what it means to be raised as a Samoan student living in Melbourne. Most of the participants were either born in New Zealand (New Zealand-born Samoans) or born in Australia. Regardless of their country of birth, all participants in the homework study group shared a common upbringing in that they were being raised by a parent or family that mirrored traditional Samoan beliefs (*fa'aSamoa* - otherwise known as the Samoan way of life). This term will be used as one pertaining to a child being raised to show respect towards adults and one's community by being 'seen and not heard', especially when it came to important events such as church ceremonies, cultural events, and the like. The *fa'aSamoa* encompasses what is uniquely Samoan, with the expectations of gender roles for boys and girls being established at a very early age. This includes girls undertaking traditional female roles involving work inside the house, as opposed to work that is outside of one's house, which is the boy's domain.

Further to what can be described as *fa'aSamoa* is the expectation that individuals see themselves as a part of the extended family and recognise their social and financial obligations towards important events. These may include contributing financially to weddings, funerals, chief-bestowing ceremonies, church events, and other cultural practices. Whatever fund one is called to support by the head of the family (usually a chief or elder), full compliance is expected. As mentioned earlier, such expectations have caused rifts between family members, or sometimes the refusal of people to contribute to extended family events because they did not have the resources to give when asked. It is a strength in Samoan culture, and something to hold in high esteem, something one values as being different from other cultures. The advantage is that, when family members need help, they can count on the extended family to be there, no matter what. This also encompasses the value of doing things together and sharing each other's burdens so that one does not feel alone in life's struggles. This is the beauty of *fa'aSamoa*.

Thus, when a young student growing up in Melbourne experiences a traditional Samoan upbringing, though they may greatly value being Samoan, they might still find that time spent performing gendered duties has adverse effects on their learning. There is an expectation from schools that when students are given home work to complete adequate time will be allocated to completing whatever research tasks, writing tasks, or hands-on

projects have been set. The following stories provide participant perspectives on the definition of good teaching methods and good learning behaviours.

Learning Experiences of Samoan Students in Melbourne.

Checking in regularly with participants before and during the research enabled further understanding of Samoan student experiences in Melbourne schools. Interviews conducted involved asking individuals about specific examples of good teaching and ineffective teaching, from their perspectives. The stories suggested that teachers and participants shared the responsibility of doing what was necessary to improve learning and understanding.

Penelope:

As a student in year 9, Penelope shared her learning challenges which, taken together, underscored her need to have time for individual tuition with her teachers. Listening to Penelope's interview responses regarding teaching methods was interesting as it highlighted the importance of teachers understanding the preferred learning styles of students they teach. For instance, Penelope's general feedback about Maths was that she was not doing so well in this subject because she could not understand the work set by her teacher. She also felt the expectations were unrealistic because her teacher expected her 'to know it straight away, but like, they explain it so we don't understand it.' Penelope felt her teacher was impatient, with comments pointing to lack of clarity, such as 'Sir, we don't get it', being met with responses from her teacher like 'Too bad, you weren't listening.' Her teacher has however kept her in after class to clarify information that Penelope finds confusing. This highlights the value of individual communication in building a deeper understanding of a topic. Participants like Penelope required this to feel confident in the subject area.

Tamara (Mala)

As part of the initial interview to assess HSG participants' current study skills, Mala stated that this was area skill with which she definitely needed help. She confessed that the completion of homework wasn't a priority to her as it should be, and she needed to structure her time better so that work was completed on time and was not rushed.

When asked what type of teaching methods improved her learning in various subjects, Mala responded that she didn't like teachers talking all the time in class. This teaching method was boring for her and she found that repetitive talk made her feel 'like they're talking *at* me, not *to* me anymore.' She learnt more when teachers demonstrated a task as well as explained the task: 'I learn more when people talk to me and show me pictures like visual communication. I'm better at that, yeah, more like doing it, like practising it.'

The subjects Mala has enjoyed so far include English, Humanities and Maths. Though Maths has been a subject she struggled with in school, Mala received feedback from her teacher that she is 'doing pretty good', so she's quite proud of that. English is one of her favourite subjects because she finds it easy and enjoys learning in this subject. Mala also enjoys Humanities as a subject because she likes 'talking about history and ... learning new things.' It made sense to her when she learnt through studying history 'why things are the way it is.' It is only when subjects were difficult for her that Mala found she didn't really enjoy them. Moreover, when lessons became boring for her, Mala confessed to not paying attention: 'I kind of like just go off.' When asked what would help her pay attention, she said looking at tangible objects like photos would help, as would watching films. Much of the time her teacher was doing all of the talking and not engaging students.

For Mala, having the HSG space to come to gave her the chance to prioritise her time so that she was more organised with completing study tasks.

Organisation would have to be one of my goals, and study sessions have definitely helped with that too. When I come, I finish off tasks here making my load lighter and helping me to see what I have done and also what I need to do.

She became more responsible as a participant as she worked with guidance on tasks related to English and Humanities subjects.

The provision of the HSG in libraries was important. Responses of participants reiterated the importance of having their own space to continue working on and completing academic tasks, as well as the importance of having time to ensure tasks were completed to the required standard. The libraries were places where resources were easily accessed, while having the expertise of a teacher, coupled with that teacher's understanding of cultural expectations, was crucial in building trust and rapport (*va fealoai*) between researcher and participants.

Conclusion

The provision of space for youth to perform their various roles in life is important no matter what role is evident, whether cultural, educational, relational or social - just meeting and relaxing, or simply exercising freedom of expression (whatever form that may take). The establishment of the HSG sessions in public libraries made those libraries places of importance because of the interactions with participants. The respect exchanged in sessions was a continuation extension of the respect in which participants were raised: *fa'aSamoa*, where one communicates expressions and ideas to others, especially adults, in a respectful way. Spaces are usually deemed to be of the physical realm, what one can see, and something that is often confined. It can be something unseen as well, such that entering into it may be seen by some individuals as an invasion of personal space. What is important is knowing that spaces need to be created for specific purposes; in this instance, setting up a space for Samoan students (participants) to learn how to navigate the educational expectations set by schools so that academic learning could be mastered. It was the thoughts, ideas and understandings exchanged in group discussions and individual interviews which will make a contribution to educators' knowledge of the perspectives of Samoan students in Melbourne.

Chapter 6: Research Reflections and Recommendations

Though there is a set curriculum delivered by teachers who have good intentions with regard to educating students to be well equipped and skilled for future employment, unless those teachers consider and understand the cultural background of their Samoan students, those intentions will be of little use – Samoan students will continue to struggle to navigate successfully through school. The Homework Study Groups worked to minimise the confusion associated with learning tasks and educative processes for Samoan student participants, confusion that was reported in HSG sessions.

There is a need for specific student characteristics to be recognized and policies and strategies to be implemented for this cohort to maximise their educational opportunities. As mentioned earlier, policies should specify the inclusion of cultural knowledge within curricula so that students feel a sense of belonging and inclusion in Melbourne schools. Participants have reiterated the importance of relating well to their teachers so that positive rapport is established and subjects can be enjoyed. This would be assisted through teachers receiving professional training in the cultural backgrounds of students they teach, a strategy supported by the literature that has found empathy for Samoan students among teachers who have communicated with families or when they have been exposed to living in communities (Samoa) from which the students come. Schools can learn much about the students they teach when efforts are made in the classroom, and also beyond the school gates if events are staged that invite wider community engagement. The implementation of performance groups such as the Poly groups has been one instance mentioned in the literature where parents are directly involved in sharing expert cultural knowledge and understandings with teachers. This study has shown the value parents place on the education of Samoan students. The fact is that at times it is cultural factors (respect for authority/teachers) that prevent parents from questioning educators, though it may well be misconstrued by schools as a lack of interest. This is something of which educators need to be aware as it has implications for students who model what their parents do as a sincere demonstration of respect; it is not necessarily disinterest they are showing. There are language barriers and time constraints that need to be considered by schools as well so as not to misinterpret the lack of Samoan parent attendance at school events as disinterest in the learning of their children. Many parents are involved in cultural or religious community

events and also work long hours in shift work which means limitations on their involvement in school activities.

This study makes a contribution to the field through a detailed study of Samoan student experiences in Melbourne. It provides new perspectives on what motivates these students to learn, what concerns them, and the support networks (such as social welfare or church community supports) they have utilised to help them succeed during the academic year. Reference is made to the need for schools to equip students with skills to complete assessment tasks, recognizing that schools also need to take into account the resources students have at their disposal. The HSG location (in public libraries) enabled participants to access resources they did not have at home so that they could complete homework tasks. That is, there were tasks set by teachers which required internet access not available to all participants at home:

- 1) Computers
- 2) Internet Access
- 3) Knowledge of how and where to search for information.

Assistance was therefore required during the HSG sessions to guide participants in their learning, using the preferred learning methods they nominated in earlier interviews. Initial responses from participants described their ideal learning environments and listed the teaching methods that worked to engage them during lessons. These ideals were not unique to Samoan students, but are possibly shared by many learners. Teachers need to follow expectations as outlined in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and incorporate student prior knowledge into lesson planning so that engagement is maintained.

Implications for Organisations:

From an organisational perspective, knowledge of the backgrounds and cultures of families who have migrated from Pacific Island nations will assist schools to understand how best to build rapport and develop open communication with migrant community stakeholders. Current school enrolment procedures require parents to write down their place of birth as well as that of their child. Using the school database to find parents who are of Pasifika background or ancestry enables schools to implement strategies with the support of those parents, perhaps inviting them to share their cultural knowledge in educative units (study of Polynesia as a Humanities subject, for instance) or to contribute to teaching students traditional forms of

weaving or teaching them to perform various cultural dances as a starting point. Furthermore, where organisations work with young people or families of Samoan descent, it would be useful to use the policies developed by the New Zealand Ministry of Education as a starting point for opening lines of communication. It is imperative that a dialogue commences from a place of understanding so that educational organisations and Samoan families or young people can work together towards navigating the education curriculum for academic success.

Implications for Teaching Practice:

With regard to the implications for teaching practice, improved rapport is expected when student needs are acknowledged and met by staff who know their students. As reiterated in Chapter 2 Literature Review, not all school tasks such as homework can be completed due to family roles taken on board by young people. These include looking after younger siblings or relatives, undertaking chores, attending church, and participating in cultural rehearsals or events. Teachers need to be aware that specific tasks can be undertaken by Samoan students out of school hours if teachers have realistic expectations of what is possible given other student commitments. The findings of this research show how the designation of a study space enabled students to complete work where a teacher was present to provide assistance. The provision of a space where students could relate to an educator/researcher was made in public libraries in the form of a Homework Study Group. What this space provided was an opportunity for understanding, development of rapport, and an exchange of ideas. Learning that occurred in this space could be transferred to the school environment. Furthermore, as highlighted in the studies carried out in schools in Queensland, New Zealand and the United States, the difficulties that Samoan students have in relating to the Australian curriculum (AUSVELS in Victorian schools) derives from lacking the necessary cultural capital - they have limited experience or prior knowledge of topics taught as units of work in schools. The teaching methods and curriculum should incorporate aspects of students' lives so that they can share perspectives that are not necessarily presented by peers in the classroom.

Implications for Policies:

This thesis highlights the need for the Department of Education & Training to acknowledge that policies need to be in place, such as those implemented in New Zealand as outlined in the Pasifika Education Plan and Power Up Programme. Tracking of educational experiences of Pasifika (including Samoan) students in Australian schools requires further longitudinal studies to identify the enablers and barriers in their educational experiences. There needs to be explicit

efforts made to bridge the gap between community groups outlined in this study (or similar cultural groups) and educators; at the moment, few or no measures are taken to provide programs to connect families of Pasifika students with schools. The Pasifika Education Plan (2013-2017) works to inform education institutions, with the assistance of Education Partner Agencies, about strategies to implement when working with students of Pasifika background. It is a starting point for schools in the Australian context in the absence of existing programs or policies.

Limitations

The number of participants involved in this study has been a limitation as it would have been more ideal for a larger group of both students and parents to be involved, as opposed to the smaller group currently involved in the research. This is not to say that their contribution has not been valued; knowledge of participant experiences as people residing in Melbourne would not have been possible without their contribution. It was a challenge during the initial stages of the research to learn and implement correct cultural protocols so as to minimise offence but maximise understanding and involvement of Samoan people and the wider community in this research. Without access to the earlier research undertaken by scholars in New Zealand, United States and Queensland as a basis for understanding research methods, this study would not have been as fruitful as expected. It was difficult to research an issue that had not been examined before in this state, given the absence of detailed Victorian statistics (let alone Australian) of Samoan places of residence, their educational achievements, and employment status. Examining research completed overseas with Samoan participants in the past was beneficial to the completion of this thesis.

Furthermore, though it was my primary intention to involve teachers of participants in this study to gauge improvement levels of students and find out about their teaching practices, lack of access to those teachers was disappointing and limited the study. A more accurate and wider perspective would have been possible with data collected from teachers, parents, school leaders and participants. A bigger picture of student experiences in Melbourne schools would have been visible.

*Families of Samoan young people (or of any Pasifika community), must know what it takes to successfully navigate the Australian education system if the priority is for their children to achieve optimal results.

*Yes, parents value education! So they need to know about the amount of time and quality of space required for their student children to meet educational expectations in Australia.

*This thesis is ultimately saying it is vital, as educators, to know the student and, in turn, for families to know the education system.

Ultimately, this knowledge can be utilised by students and all other stakeholders so that everybody wins. Samoan students need to know how to create a balance between their worlds - traditional and Western - because engagement and understanding in learning is fruitful. I believe the establishment of the Homework Study Groups in public libraries was successful in answering the questions posed in this research.

Much of what has been explored in this thesis reflects the ways in which I have experienced the education system in Victoria, more so now that I am a Leading Teacher in a college in the western suburbs. Now, more than ever, is there a need for teachers to hear the perspectives of Pasifika young people and families, as revealed in the experiences of the Samoans who were participants in this research. As there are growing enrolments of Pasifika and Maori students in Melbourne schools in the outer suburbs, knowledge of their migration, cultural and educational experiences is important to consider when planning curriculum and writing school policies. Not only will it contribute to improved educational experiences for students, it will help in establishing links to a community that is not well known in Melbourne. There is much for schools to learn from the values and beliefs of Samoan communities, especially to do with collective efficacy. The Homework Study Group sessions have highlighted how, together, families have worked to ensure consistent attendance for participants so they could better understand and navigate through knowledge and reconstruct it in a way that demonstrates their understanding.

It is with gratitude that I acknowledge those who participated in this research and made it a journey of significance. Knowing you has enriched me.

Glossary

Samoan

English

aiga

family

a'oa'o

lay preacher, to teach

fa'alavelave

times when family support is given

fa'aSamoa

in the manner of the Samoans, according to customs and tradition, the Samoan way (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010, p. 152).

fealofani

fellowship, to get along

feagaiga

the sacred covenant whereby brothers protect their sisters

fono

councils of chiefs, often used today to refer to meetings generally

palagi

foreigners

pe'a

A men's tattoo. Literally, a flying fox or fruit bat (Meleisea et.al., 2012, p. 153).

lotu

church

suega

exam, assessment

ie toga

finely woven mat, the measina (treasured goods) of Samoa

gafa

genealogy

malu

women's tattoo (Meleisea et.al., 2012, p. 153).
(from the top of the thighs to just below the knees)

matai

chief, representative of the family, charged with ensuring family wellbeing.

Talanoa

to talk, conversation.

Tala means talking or telling stories. ... Talanoa has been employed as a research methodology and conflict mediation tool. Morrison and Vaioleti write: “A Talanoa approach is a traditional Pacific reciprocating interaction which is driven by common interest, regard for respectfulness and are conducted mainly face to face” (Morrison and Vaioleti, cited in Mila-Schaaf, 2010, p.342).

<i>tamaiti</i>	children
<i>tatau</i>	tattoo (see pe’a and malu in Meleisea et.al. 2012, p. 153).
<i>tautua</i>	service – to the family, community and nation for example (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010, p.153).
<i>tufuga</i>	A specialist in a traditional male skill (such as tattooing, building houses or building canoes).
<i>tufuga ta tatau</i>	A specialist in traditional Samoan tattooing. (Meleisea et.al., 2012, p. 153).
<i>va fealoa’i</i>	protecting, observing and nurturing the relationship, respect (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010, p.153).
<i>va</i>	space between, betweenness, space that relates (Wendt, 1999, p.402).

References

- Airini A M, Mila-Schaaf K, 2010, '*Teu Le Va-Relationships across research and policy in Pasifika education: A collective approach to knowledge generation & policy development for action towards Pasifika education success*', Ministry of Education, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Allen, P., Taleni, L.T., & Robertson, J 2008, 'In order to teach you, I must know you': The Pasifika Initiative: A professional development project for teachers. UC Education Plus. University of Canterbury, New Zealand. *Pasifika Initiative article 30/1/08*
- Atatoa R, in Strachan J 2006, 'Editorial: Pacific Education: Research and Practice' in *Waikato Journal of Education* 12.
- Anderson HB 2007, 'Bridging to the Future: What works?' Paper presented at the 2nd National Conference of Enabling Educators, Manukau Institute of Technology, The University of Auckland at Manukau Programme, 'Enabling Education: What Works?' Newcastle NSW, July 2007.
- Australian Professional Standards for Teachers 2011, p. 8
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011.
- Baker S, Bennett A and Homan S 2009, 'Cultural Precincts, Creative Spaces: Giving the Local a Musical Spin' in *Space and Culture* 12: 148 originally published online July22, 2008, pp. 148-165.
- Barrett, CA 2014, *School Social Work in the State of Victoria, Australia: 65 Years Of Student Wellbeing And Learning Support*, n.p.: UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE's Catalogue, ESCOhost, viewed 15 August 2015
- Becker, H.S, 1952. Social Class Variations in the Teacher-Pupil Relationship. *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 25, No. 8 (Apr., 1952), pp. 451-465).
- Bennet A 2008, 'Towards a cultural sociology of popular music' in *Journal of Sociology*, The Australian Sociological Association, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 419-432.
- Borrero, N. E., Yeh, C. J., Tito, P. and Luavasa, M. (2010) 'Alone and In Between Cultural and Academic Worlds: Voices of Samoan Students', *Journal of Education*, 190(3), 47-55.
- Bourdieu P 1974, 'The school as a conservative force: scholastic and cultural inequalities' in *Contemporary Research in the Sociology of Education* (London).
- Cahill F 2006, 'Crossing the road from home to secondary school: A conversation with Samoan Parents', in *Waikato Journal of Education*, vol.12, pp. 57-72.

- Cooper HM 1989, *Homework. [Electronic Resource]*, n.p.: New York: Longman, c1989.
University of Melbourne Catalogue, EBSCOhost, viewed 10 May 2015.
- Cosden M, Morrison G, Albanese AL, & Macias S 2001, When Homework is not Home Work: After-School Programs for Homework Assistance. *Educational Psychologist*, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 211-221.
- Cuthill, M & Scull, S., Going to university: Pacific Island migrant perspectives, vol. 53, no. 1, 2011
- Daniels, S., Little, P., Reynolds, L. M., & Sullivan, A. (2006). Where visual literacy and identity meet: Adolescents define themselves through participation in a university video and art enrichment program. *Wisdom in Education*, 2(1), 4.
- Dooley K, Exley B & Singh P 1999, 'Social justice and curriculum renewal for Samoan students: an Australian case study' in *International Journal of Inclusive Education* ISSN 1360-3116 print/ISSN 1464-5173 online, © 2000 Taylor & Francis Ltd
<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/tf/13603116.html>.
- Dumais SA and Ward A 2010, 'Cultural capital and first-generation college success', *Poetics*, vol. 38, pp. 245-265, Science Direct, EBSCOhost, viewed 15 August 2015
- Ellis J 2006, 'Tatau and Malu: Vital signs in contemporary Samoan literature', *PMLA-Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 121, no. 3, pp. 687
- Evans, B. F. (2011). *Teaching practices that support high achievement in the education of Pacific boys* (Doctoral dissertation, Unitec Institute of Technology).
- Fairbairn-Dunlop, P 2014, 'The interface of Pacific and other knowledges in a supplementary education site', *Compare: A Journal Of Comparative & International Education*, 44, 6, pp. 874-894, Education Research Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 15 August 2015.
- Fairbairn-Dunlop TP 2010, "'HE'S WON, BUT HE'S LOST IT.'", *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 143-154.
- Filipo SL 2002, 'An Observational Study of Catholic Education within a Pacific Islander Communities School in Auckland', *Action in Teacher Education*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 75-84.
- Fomison T and Wedde I 1994a, *Fomison: what shall we tell them?* Edited by Ian Wedde, Wellington, New Zealand, Wellington City Council.
- Forsyth M 2012, 'Lifting the Lid on "The Community": Who Has the Right to Control Access to Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture?' *International Journal of Cultural Property*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 1-31.
- Freebody P 2003, *Qualitative research in education [electronic resource]: interaction and practice, introducing qualitative methods*, London, Sage.

- Freeman D 1983, *Margaret Mead and Samoa: the making and unmaking of an anthropological myth*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.
- Guiffrida DA, Douthit KZ, Lynch MF, & Mackie L 2011, 'Publishing Action Research in Counselling Journals', *Journal of Counselling & Development*, vol. 89, Summer 2011.
- Hawk K and Hill J 1996, *Towards Making Achieving Cool: Achievement in Multi-Cultural High Schools* (AIMHI).
http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling/towards_making_achieving
- Horsley M 1999, *Paradise or Problem: Educating students from the Pacific Islands* from <http://alex.edfac.usyd.edu.au/AcrossCurric/Paradise/M.H's%20%20ParaProb.html>
- Kearney J, Fletcher MA & Dobrenov-Major M 2008, *Improving Literacy Outcomes for Samoan–Australian Students in Logan City*, Griffith Institute of Educational Research, Griffith UK.
- Krämer A 1994, *The Samoa Islands: an outline of a monograph with particular consideration of German Samoa*, translated by Theodore Verhaaren, Polynesian Press, Auckland New Zealand.
- Lai, McMaughton, Amituanai-Toloa, Turner and Hsiao (2009), 'Sustained Acceleration of Achievement in Reading Comprehension: The New Zealand Experience', *Reading Research Quarterly* • 44(1) • pp. 30–56 • [dx.doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.41.1.2](https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.41.1.2) • © 2009 International Reading Association
- Lareau, A 1987, 'Social-class differences in Family-School Relationships: The Importance of Cultural Capital', *Sociology of Education*, 60, 2, pp.73-85, Education Research Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 15 August 2015.
- Macpherson, C. (1999). Will the 'real' Samoans please stand up? Issues in diasporic Samoan identity. *New Zealand Geographer*, 55(2), 50-59.
- Macpherson, C. (2002). From moral community to moral communities: The foundations of migrant social solidarity among Samoans in urban Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Pacific studies*, 25(1), 71-93.
- Macpherson C 2013, 'No Family is an Island. Cultural Expertise among Samoans in Ithaca', *New Zealand Sociology*, vol. 28, 2, p. 205, Informit Humanities & Social Sciences Collection, EBSCOhost, viewed 15 August 2015.
- Macpherson C, Bedford R and Spoonley P 2000, 'Fact or Fable? The Consequences of Migration for Educational Achievement and Labor Market Participation', *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 57-82.

- Macpherson C and Macpherson L 2005, 'The ifoga: The exchange value of social honour in Samoa', *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. 2, p. 109.
- Macpherson C and Macpherson L 2011 'Churches and the Economy of Samoa: Cluny Macpherson and La'avasa Macpherson', *Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 303-338.
- Macready T 2009, 'Learning Social Responsibility in Schools: A Restorative Practice', *Educational Psychology in Practice*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 211-220.
- Mallon, S., Thomas, N., Adams, M. 2010. *Tatau: Samoan Tattooing*. 1st ed. Wellington: Te Papa Press.
- Marquardt C 1984b, *The tattooing of both sexes in Samoa*, McMillan, Papakura New Zealand.
- McGavin K 2014, 'Being "Nesian": Pacific Islander Identity in Australia', *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 126-154. University of Hawai'i Press. Retrieved March 28, 2014, from Project MUSE database.
- McNaughton, Stuart and Lai, Mei Kuin (2009) 'A model of school change for culturally and linguistically diverse students in New Zealand: a summary and evidence from systematic replication', *Teaching Education*, 20:1, 55 — 75
To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/10476210802681733URL:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10476210802681733>
- Meaola A, Stuart M & Mei Kuin L 2009, 'Examining Samoan Language Development in Samoan Bilingual Students' Understanding of Texts in English', *US-China Education Review*, 美中教育評論, no. 6, p. 23.
- Meleisea M 1997, 'The Samoa islands: An outline of a monograph with particular consideration of German Samoa', vol. 2, Material culture - Kramer, A', *Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 282-284.
- Meleisea M, Schoeffel-Meleisea P, and Meleisea E 2012, *Samoa's Journey 1962-2012: Aspects of History*, Victoria University Press, Wellington New Zealand.
- Merriam, S, & Merriam, S 2009, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, n.p.: San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, c2009. UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE's Catalogue, EBSCOHOST, viewed 15 August 2015.
- Mila-Schaaf K and Robinson E 2010, '"Polycultural" capital and educational achievement among NZ-born Pacific peoples', *MAI Review*, vol. 1, pp. 1-18.
- Mila-Schaaf, KI, 2010, 'Polycultural Capital and the Pasifika Second Generation: Negotiating Identities in Diasporic Spaces'
- Mila-Schaaf K 2011, *Polycultural capital and the Pasifika second generation: negotiating identities*, [Albany], ECONIS, EBSCOhost, viewed 15 August 2015

- Ministry of Education New Zealand 2012, *Pasifika Education Research Priorities: Using research to realise our vision for Pasifika learners*, Ministry of Education, New Zealand.
- Ministry of Education New Zealand 2012, *Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017*, Ministry of Education, New Zealand.
- Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2013, *Pasifika Power Up Programme 2013/2014*, Ministry of Education, New Zealand.
- Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs; 2014, *About Pacific peoples in New Zealand*, viewed 2014; <http://www.mpia.govt.nz>
- Mulitalo-Lauata PT 2000, *Fa'asamoa and social work within the New Zealand context*, Dunmore Press, Palmerston North New Zealand..
- Nakhid C 2003, 'Intercultural Perceptions, Academic Achievement, and the Identifying Process of Pacific Islands Students in New Zealand Schools' in *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 72, no. 3, pp. 297-317.
- Naidoo L 2009, 'Developing social inclusion through after-school homework tutoring: a study of African refugee students in Greater Western Sydney', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 261-273.
- Ng Shiu R 2011, "It's like Going to the Moon": The Experiences of Samoan Tertiary Health Students at the University of Auckland (Doctoral dissertation, ResearchSpace@Auckland), accessed 10 February, 2014.
- O'Brien A & Donelan K (eds) 2008, *The Arts and Youth at Risk: Global and Local Challenges*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.
- Ofahengaue Vakalahi HF and Godinet MT 2008, 'Family and Culture, and the Samoan Youth' in *Journal of Family Social Work*, vol.11, no. 3, pp. 229-253.
- Park J and Morris C 2004, 'Reproducing Samoans in Auckland 'in different times': Can habitus help?' *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. 3.
- Penn, R 2010, 'Manumalo: A study of factors which facilitate success for New Zealand-born Samoan students at university'
- Podmore V, Tapusoa E & Taouma J 2006, 'Samoan language and cultural continuity at an Early Childhood Centre of Innovation', *Waikato Journal of Education*, vol. 12, pp. 73–86.
- Professional Learning in Effective Schools* 2005. [The Department of Education & Training], [Victoria], viewed 10 January, 2015
<<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/profdev/proflearningeffective/ch.pdf>[URL]>.

- Rolleston A and Anderson H 2004, *'Attrition and retention. The voice of missing students'*, viewed April 2010.
http://www.avetra.org.au/Conference_Archives/2004/documents/PA027Rolleston.PDF
- Christopher and Lisah Sablan, (2014), *Samoa Symbolism and Meaning* [ONLINE]. Available at: <http://blog.janetssamoa.com/samoan-and-pacific-symbols-samoan-tattoo-carvings-and-artwork/> [Accessed 12 May 14]. Available from: <https://www.janetssamoa.com>
- Shuaib F, Shaw J and Eversole R 2007, 'Leveraging Remittances with Microfinance', Foundation for Development Cooperation.
<http://www.fdc.org.au/Publications/ARC/FDC%20-%20ARC%20Project%20-%20Final%20County%20Report%20Samoa.pdf>
- Simi, L.T., in Savea Sano Malifa. 2014. *Tribute to Lemalu Tate Simi Goodbye friend, raconteur, music man*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://samoaoobserver.ws/editorial/10054-tribute-to-lemalu-tate-simi-goodbye-friend-raconteur-music-man>. [Accessed 15 August 15].
- Singh P 2001, 'Speaking about Cultural Difference and School Disadvantage: An Interview study of 'Samoa' Paraprofessionals in Designated Disadvantaged Secondary Schools in Australia' in *British Journal of Education*, vol.22, no. 3, pp. 317-337.
- Singh S & Sinclair M 2001, 'Diversity, Disadvantage and Differential Outcomes: an analysis of Samoan students' narratives of schooling' pp. 73-92. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 29, Number 1, 2001.
- Siope A 2011, 'The schooling experiences of Pasifika students'
- Smyth J, Angus L, Down B and McInerney P 2008, *Critically engaged learning: Connecting to young lives*, Peter Lang Publishing, New York.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Zed books.
- So'o F 2013, 'Teaching Notes, Samoa: The Journey – Folauga a Samoa. 1962-2012'
- Takeuchi, D. and S. Hune. (2008). *Growing Presence, Emerging Voices: Pacific Islanders and Academic Achievement in Washington*. A report submitted to The Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs. Seattle, WA: University of Washington.
- Tamaira, A. M. (2009). *The Space Between: Negotiating Culture, Place, and Identity in the Pacific*.

- Teese R 1994, 'Reproduction Theory' in *International Encyclopedia of Education, Research and Studies*, 2nd ed., T Husen and TN Postlewaite (eds), vol. 9, pp.5016-5021 Pergamon
- Teese R 2000, *Academic Success and Social Power: Examinations and Inequality*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton Victoria.
- Treagus M 2008, 'Representing Pacific tattoos: Issues in postcolonial critical practice', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 183-192.
- Utumapu-McBride T, Esera E, Toia SF, Tone-Schuster L and So'oaemalelagi FL 2008, 'Saili Mo Le Lumana'i: Research on Samoan Students' Learning Perspectives and the impact on their Achievement' in *Alternative: An International Journal of Indigenous Scholarship*, 4,1, pp. 149-172, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 15 August 2015.
- Va'a U L F 2010, 'Cluny Macpherson and La'avasa Macpherson, The Warm Winds of Change: Globalisation in Contemporary Samoa', *Pacific Studies*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 116-119.
- Van Voorhis, Frances L., 2003, 'Interactive Homework in Middle School: Effects on Family Involvement and Science Achievement', *Journal of Educational Research*; Jul/Aug 2003, Vol.96 Issue 6, p323-228, 16p, 6 Charts, 2 Graphs.
- Van Voorhis FL 2011, 'Costs and benefits of family involvement in homework', *Journal of Advanced Academics*, vol. 2, p.220, Academic OneFile, EBSCO, viewed 10 May 2015.
- Vaiioleti TM 2006, 'Talanoa Research Methodology: A Developing Position on Pacific Research' in *Waikato Journal of Education*, vol. 12, 21-34.
- Wendt A 1999, 'Afterword: Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body' in Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson (eds), *Inside out: literature, cultural politics, and identity in the new Pacific*, Rowman & Littlefield, Maryland US.
- Wendt-Samu T 2006, 'The 'Pasifika Umbrella' and Quality Teaching: Understanding and Responding to the Diverse Realities Within' in *Waikato Journal of Education*, vol.12, pp. 35-49.
- White R and Wyn J 2008, 'Youth Identities and Culture' in *Youth & Society*, 2nd Edition, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Woodman, D., and Leccardi, C. 2015. *Time and Space in Youth Studies*, in J. Wyn and H. Cahill (Eds), *Handbook of Childhood and Youth*, Singapore: Springer.
- Wyn J 2009, 'Health, Markets and Identities' in *Youth Health & Welfare*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Appendices

Appendix A: Plain Language Statements

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT: Parents

Project: “An investigation of Samoan student experiences in a Homework Study Group in Melbourne”.

We are seeking your participation in a research project about Samoan young people studying in high school in Melbourne. Professor Johanna Wyn from the University of Melbourne is supervising the project undertaken by Ms. Vaoiva Ponton. This project is educational research that will provide new knowledge about Samoan students’ improvements in learning and has been approved by the University ethics committee. The education of children is very important to Samoan students and their parents.

Young people in high school (Year 7 to Year 12), and who are participants in the Homework Study Group associated with the () are invited to participate in the research. They will be asked to take part in interviews (one per semester); their homework strategies and progress will be documented by Ms Vaoiva Ponton. If you choose to take part in the group can be confident that all information provided is treated with confidentiality and have the freedom to leave the group at any time. If at any stage, you would like to withdraw any information collected during your time in the Homework Study Group, all information will be destroyed.

[Where can I get further information?](#)

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either of the researchers on the numbers given below. Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: xx, or fax: xx.

If you are willing to take part in the research about students in a Homework Study group, please fill in your name on the form attached and return it as soon as possible. A member of the research team will contact you to arrange the discussion group time. If you wish to ask any questions about this project please contact Mrs. Vaoiva Ponton. My telephone number is xx or email xx.

We hope you will participate in this important study about the experiences of Samoan students in education.

Professor Johanna Wyn and Mrs. Vaoiva Ponton

The University of Melbourne.

I would like to take part in a small group discussion about the Homework Study Group.

Name: _____

My child's name: _____

Year Level: _____

My telephone number is: _____

The best day for me is: _____

The best time for me is: _____

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT: Students

Project: **“An investigation of Samoan student experiences in a Homework Study Group in Melbourne”.**

We are seeking your participation in a research project about Samoan young people studying in high school in Melbourne. Professor Johanna Wyn from the University of Melbourne is supervising the project undertaken by Ms. Vaoiva Ponton. This project is educational research that will provide new knowledge about Samoan students' improvements in learning and has been approved by the University ethics committee. The education of children is very important to Samoan students and their parents.

Young people in high school (Year 7 to Year 12), and who are participants in the Homework Study Group associated with the (_____) are invited to participate in the research. They will be asked to take part in interviews (one per semester); their homework strategies and progress will be documented by Ms Vaoiva Ponton. If you choose to take part in the group can be confident that all information provided is treated with confidentiality and have the freedom to leave the group at any time. If at any stage, you would like to withdraw any information collected during your time in the Homework Study Group, all information will be destroyed.

Where can I get further information?

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either of the researchers on the numbers given below. Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: xx, or fax: xx.

If you are willing to take part in the research about students in a Homework Study group, please fill in your name on the form attached and return it as soon as possible. A member of the research team will contact you to arrange the discussion group time. If you wish to ask any questions about this project please contact Mrs. Vaoiva Ponton. My telephone number is xx or email xx.

We hope you will participate in this important study about the experiences of Samoan students in education.

Professor Johanna Wyn and Mrs. Vaoiva Ponton

The University of Melbourne.

I would like to take part in a small group discussion about the Homework Study Group.

Name:

My child's name:

Year Level:

My telephone number is:

The best day for me is:

The best time for me is:

Appendix B: Consent Forms

CONSENT FORM: Parents

Project: **"An investigation of Samoan student experiences in a Homework Study Group in Melbourne"**.

Name of parent: _____

Name of investigator(s): _____

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.
2. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form it will be retained by the researcher.
3. I understand that my participation will involve an **interview and question sheet** and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.
4. I acknowledge that:
 - (a) the possible effects of participating in the **interview and question sheet** have been explained to my satisfaction;
 - (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
 - (c) the project is for the purpose of research;
 - (d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
 - (e) I have been informed that with my consent the **interview will be audio-taped and I understand that audio-tapes** will be stored at University of Melbourne and will be destroyed after five years;
 - (f) my name will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research;
 - (g) I have been informed that a copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I agree to this.

I consent to this **interview** being audio-taped

no

☐ yes ☐

(please tick)

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings

no

☐ yes ☐

(please tick)

Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

CONSENT FORM: Students

Project: **"An investigation of Samoan student experiences in a Homework Study Group in Melbourne".**

Name of participant: _____

Name of investigator(s): _____

1. I give my permission to take part in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.
2. I understand that after I sign and return this permission form it will be kept by the researcher.
3. I understand that my participation will involve an **interview and observation** and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.
4. I acknowledge that:
 - (a) the possible effects of participating in the **interview and observation** have been explained to my satisfaction;
 - (b) I have been told that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
 - (c) the project is for the purpose of research;
 - (d) I have been told that all information that I give will be confidential and it will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
 - (e) I have been informed that with my consent the **interview will be audio-taped and I understand that audio-tapes** will be stored at University of Melbourne and will be destroyed after five years;
 - (f) my name will be referred to by a false name in any publications arising from the research;
 - (g) I have been informed that a copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I agree to this.

I consent to this **interview** being audio-taped
no

☐ yes ☐

(please tick)

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings
no

☐ yes ☐

(please tick)

Participant signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Letter sent to Principals

21 April 2011

Principal

XX Secondary College

Project: “An investigation of Samoan student experiences in a Homework Study Group in Melbourne”.

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to seek your permission to collect data from selected teachers and students at your school. I am a full-time student at The University of Melbourne currently undertaking the research stage of my Doctor of Education (Research) degree. I am requesting whether you could make data confidential to the school, available to me for the purpose of research analysis.

Your school has been selected because a few of the participants in my research group currently attend your school. I would like to ask their subject teachers how these students are progressing academically over a six month period. Discussions will not take place unless you agree and are satisfied with the proceedings. Furthermore, all teachers will be asked to participate on a voluntary basis. Students currently in the Homework Study Group have been recruited on a voluntary basis.

The purpose of this study aims to make a contribution to developing learning strategies that improve Samoan young people’s academic outcomes. The key questions are:

1. Does participation in a Homework Study Group improve academic outcomes for Samoan students living in the North of Melbourne?
2. What learning strategies are associated with positive academic outcomes?
3. What factors influence effective learning for Samoan young people?
- 4.

Teachers will be asked the following questions:

- a. How has this student (name of student) progressed academically since commencing your subject?
- b. Does this student complete set tasks on time?
- c. What is her/his preferred learning styles/activities from your observations?
- d. Does she/he participate in class discussions and/or group activities?
- e. Have you noticed any improvements academically since this student commenced your subject?
- f. Are there any skills that need improving to ensure work is completed at an acceptable level? (Please attach additional pages if required).

If you have any queries about the nature of this investigation or would like clarification at any stage, I would be happy to meet with you at a time that is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Vaoiva (Iva) Ponton

Doctorate Candidate

The University of Melbourne.

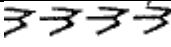
Appendix D: Tatau Designs and Meanings

Table of definitions from Marquardt (1984, pp.24-31) and Wendt (Hereniko, V. and Wilson, 1999, p.405 and p.408)

Design	Meaning (Marquardt) (Refer to designs in Image 2.4 and 2.5)	Meaning (Suluape Paulo II) (Refer to designs in Image 2.4 and 2.5)
'alu'alu	A kind of marine jellyfish.	Not mentioned* <i>*Where this response is recorded next to the name of the design, it indicates the meaning is not provided in the text referenced.</i>
anufe	-means worm or caterpillar. In our case the meaning follows the expression of the Samoan natives "mother of the butterfly", therefore caterpillar.	 Out of the <i>anufe</i> (caterpillar) came the <i>faaanufe</i>
'aso	This is the term for the narrow stripes between the pula-pattern and the top tafani-stripe, between the bottom tafani and the top saimutu-stripe and between the 'asotalitu. Varying numbers of these stripes extend across the back, the sides and the buttocks. The stripes received their name because they resemble the narrow rafters of the Samoan houses: 'aso. In the booklet of Mr. von Luschan the 'aso-stripes are confused with the tafani-stripes.	 The single line is called <i>aso</i> , that is, the name of the ribs of the roof of a fale. <i>Ivi asoaso</i> are also your ribs.
aso laiti	Not mentioned* <i>*Where this response is recorded next to the name of the design, it indicates the meaning is not provided in the text referenced.</i>	Small lines or ribs. The first row are your genealogical lines on your paternal side, which conclude the <i>tafani tapulu</i> . The second row of aso laity are the genealogical lines on your maternal side, concluding at the tafani tau. Mothers and sisters are your <i>feagaiga</i> ; they must always be respected and given first preference. Some aso laity rows are those of adventure and accomplishment.
'asofa'aifo	The term for the serrated stripes running from the pula-pattern down to the punialo-pattern. 'Aso, as we have seen are the roof rafters of the Samoan houses, ifo means "to come	Curved lines, signifying rank and your commitment to your mother's and father's <i>aiga</i> (family).

	down” or “to go down”. The rafters of the roof of the Samoan house run down from its top in the same curve as the ‘asofa’aifo-stripes.	
‘aso o le fusi	This is the pattern forming the ending of the fusi-band in the hollow of the knee. The short stripes of the pattern in their combination resemble the rafters of the roof – ‘aso – of the Samoan houses, hence their name.	Not mentioned.
‘asotalitu	According to the Samoans this word means that the overall name of the tattoo changes in the place where this pattern is found. The section of the tattoo from the ‘aso-stripes to and including the ‘asotalitu-pattern is called tagafai’aso, from here downwards it is called tagatapulu.	aso taliitu Lines propping up your sides and represent your relationships and accomplishments as a child.
aso moelua	No mention.	 Two single lines are <i>aso moelua</i> , two lines sleeping together.
atigivae	I was told the meaning of this stripe pattern was “nail on the toe” or “claw on the foot”. Atigi alone, however, already means “nail” or “claw” on the foot or only claw or hoof. Vae means foot or leg. I am not able to find an association of ideas.	Not mentioned.
aveau	*the name for various kinds of starfish.	Not mentioned.
fa’aatualoa	the millipede – atualoa (Myriopoda). This frequently used pattern is a picture of this animal, which in Samoa reaches the respectable size of 20cm. It is feared because of the unpleasant consequences of its bite.	 Out of the <i>atualoa</i> (centipede), the long god, came the fa’aatualoa.
fa’aila	The translation of this word is birth mark or generally mark on the skin. The pattern, according to the Samoans, is used a lot and is very popular “because it looks good.” It is chiefly found on the monotonous black areas of the tattoo, tapulu, and it is to be considered their decoration.	Fa’aila tatau are symbols of your readiness to serve your extended family, should any one need food, mats, etc. (Wedde 1994, 77-78).

fa'amuli'ali'ao	-the pointed triangles running from the atigivae-pattern and reaching into the darkness of the tapulu. This pattern was named after the pointed end-muli- of a shellfish –ali'ao. Mr. von Luschan calls the pattern fa'avaevaetuli and refers to Pratt who gives this name to “a part of the tattooing”. However, none of the Samoan authorities I have consulted knew of this name.	Not mentioned.
fa'atalalaupaogo	This name is a combination of the words tala-thorn or spine, lau –leaf and paogo – name of the tree Pandanus odoratissimus, the leaves of which are frequently used for making a sort of house mat. The total word means spiny leaf of the paogo-tree and the similarity of the pattern to such a leaf is usually unmistakable.	 Out of the pandanus leaf came the <i>fa'atalalaupaogo</i>.
faasigano	Not mentioned.	 Out of the male pandanus flower (<i>sigano</i>) came the faasigano.
fa'aulutao	-fishing spear (ulutao). This pattern, the runners of the tua-band (which form the top bordering of the total tattoo towards the front part of the body) is picturing the Samoan fishing spear with its several points on a long shaft.	Not mentioned.
fa'a'upega	-is the net-like drawing on the punialo-pattern (see there). Upega is the name of the Samoan net for catching fish and birds.	 Out of the <i>upega</i> (fishing net) came the <i>fa'a'upega</i>.
fa'avala	-is the term for the beautifully designed pattern which is usually found three times on each thigh front between the selu and the fusi-pattern. ... According to one fa'avala means “between flesh parts that were left open”. According to the version the word is a chiefs' term for the lavalava (loincloth made of European fabric). Both explanations	Not mentioned.

	are difficult to bring into context with the shape of the pattern.	
fetu	-means star.	Not mentioned.
fusi	-is the name for the band which begins at the top of the inner thighs, runs across the whole thigh and is decorated with various special patterns. Fusi means band or belt. This is also the term for the belt of the Samoan natives, which they wear round the hips as decoration or for a better hold for the siapo or lavalava.	Not mentioned.
gogo	-a kind of seagull. The resemblance between this pattern and a flying bird, which, however, you have to imagine sketched in a child-like simple way, is unmistakable. The gogo-pattern is one of the most popular patterns and is frequently used in the tattooing of men as well as women.	 Out of the <i>gogo</i> (tern), an aiga atua, came the <i>faagogo</i> . The <i>faagogo</i> motif may face any direction.
ivimutu	-Is the name for that part of the tapulu-tattoo which extends from the top tafani-band across the spine down to its lowest end. Ivi means bone, mutu means to be incomplete or also mutilated. The whole word can be translated as end bone. The ivimutu-tattoo is on the lower part of the spine, the “end bone” – end of the bone.	Not mentioned.
lausae	-according to Pratt, “a portion of the tattooing”. The lausae-tattoo extends across the whole front thigh, bordering at the top the ‘asolaitu-band, at the bottom the fusi-belt. It is part of the tapulu-tattoo. The meaning of the word is unknown.	Not mentioned.
malu	-The tattoo in the hollow of the knee of Samoan women is without exception called malu. The word has several different meanings, none of which, however, can be linked to the tattooing custom. ... In Samoa, the word is pronounced with a sharp emphasis on the second syllable. The word would translate as “protection”, “shadow” or “to be protected”. In	-The women’s tattoo is called a malu. 1. malu: to be shaded, to be protected. (The malu is also the motif which is unique to the malu). 2. malu: coolness 3. malu: soft, to soften.

	this case one could try to explain the pattern-which frequently is the only tattoo on the female body – that it is a protection, and in a way a shadow is also a form of protection, against some wicked influence which is no longer known.	
pula	-is the name covering the tattoo from the tua-band down to the first aso-stripe. It includes therefore the pulatama-pattern which is the actual pula-pattern and the fa'aatualoa-pattern. An explanation of the meaning of this pattern can no longer be given. Pula is the general word for the yellow taro root in Samoa. However, a connection along these lines seems impossible.	Not mentioned.
pula laiti	Not mentioned	Also known as <i>tama'i pe'a</i> , the young of the flying fox, which she carries under her wings. The wearer of the tatau must protect and nourish his immediate family.
pulatama	-is the name of the lengthened black triangle in the centre back under the tua-band. Tama means, amongst other things, child or offspring. As the pulatama-pattern is the smaller part of the pula-pattern the explanation that the pulatama-pattern was considered an "offspring" of the pula-pattern and was named accordingly should maybe not be rejected. The Samoans no longer know the meaning of this pattern.	Not mentioned.
pula tele	Not mentioned	The same principle of caring but for the whole extended family. The proverb is " <i>la pupula ou mata, ia malama ou ala, aua nei e soli aiga, ina nei vaipaina oe!</i> " (Be aware, may your paths be clear, don't commit incest, or you'll have no heirs.)
punialo	-is the term for the very interesting pattern found on men and women between the navel and the pubic area and sometimes it seems to grow out of the latter. Pratt translates the	Not mentioned.

	word as “the part of the tattooing under the navel”. Puni means a place enclosed for the purpose of fishing. A net-like part of the punialo-tattoo of men is, however, actually called fishing net (fa’a’upegā). Thus you may come to the conclusion that there has been a connection originally which is now no longer detectable. According to my information the pattern would be sufficiently named with the word “puni”. But ‘alo means to hide. Punialo could therefore be the tattoo which has to be hidden under all circumstances. The place of the body where the pattern is found would justify such an explanation and indeed the punialo-pattern is completely covered with garments by both sexes.	
pute	-is the term for the pattern covering the navel and its immediate surroundings. It takes its name from the navel itself which is also called pute. As Mr. von Luschan points out in his booklet the painful tattooing of the navel is carried out last. Small deviations occur at times in the design as well as in the size of the pattern. Occasionally I also found the runners of this pattern to the right decorated with the gogo-pattern. Apart from this I found the gogo-pattern along about 2cm under the pute-pattern, but tattooed upside down.	Not mentioned.
saimutu	-is the name of the monotonously dark wide stripes running round the buttocks and situated underneath the tafani-stripes. They are separated from one another by the ‘aso-stripes. The sense of this word is unknown although these stripes are of great importance insofar that they are a sort of identification of the ancestry of the bearer, as was said before.	Not mentioned.
selu	-means comb. The pattern is found at the top of the front of the thigh and	Not mentioned.

	its resemblance to the hair comb of the Samoans is obvious.	
tafani	-In Rev. George Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language tafani is explained as "the name of a portion of tattooing".	Not mentioned.
tapulu	-is the overall name for the monotonously dark areas of the tattooing. Particular parts of the tapulu-tattoo have their own names like ivimutu, lausae, tasele. It can be assumed that the first two syllables of the word are connected to the word tapu (place under restriction) as the places reserved for the tapulu-tattoo had to be free of 'aso-tattooing.	Not mentioned.
tasele	-is also a tattoo belonging to the tapulu and is placed on that inner part of the thigh which is limited downwards by the fusi-belt and outwards by the patterns fa'avala and selu. ... According to the Samoans tasele means "fast beating" – in this case with the tattooing implement.	Not mentioned.
togitogi	According to pratt "to mark a part of the tattoo". It is the name for the simple dot-like dashes which are chiefly used in the tattooing of women. Togi is the dot on the l and also the dash in the t.	Not mentioned.
toluse	-means cross. The word is not listed in Pratt's Dictionary and therefore it could be assumed that it is a new creation. Whether the pattern itself is new, too, cannot be detected. Personally I would not think so, firstly because this particular pattern was explicitly pointed out to me as an old one but also because considering the aversion of the missionaries against tattooing the cross would surely not introduced since their coming. The model for this pattern probably was the cross-like design on a jelly-fish which is commonly found in the Southern Seas.	Not mentioned.

tua	-is the name for the broad band which is the upper limitation of the total tattoo of men on their backs and which merges on both sides into the fa'aulutao pattern. Tua means back and so the pattern obtained its name.	Not mentioned.
ulumanu	-is the term for the part of the inner thigh which is tattooed dark and often decorated with fa'aila-patterns. It is limited towards the front by the fusi-belt, towards the back by the atigivae-pattern. Ulumanu means bird head (in more recent usage also animal head in general) and the pattern seen as a whole has indeed a surprising resemblance to a long beaked bird head.	Not mentioned.
va'a	Not mentioned.	The <i>va'a</i> (canoe), which is the black strip about 20cm wide across the back, with faaulutao at both ends going towards the front under the armpits, represents the aiga, which the wearer of the tatau must protect (with spears).
vae'ali	-vae means foot, 'ali is the head rest made of bamboo cane and used by the Samoans in a lying position. The pattern was named after the feet of this head rest whose shape it resembles exactly.	Not mentioned.