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**Tongan Metaphors of Social Work Practice:  
Hangē ha Pā kuo Fa'u'**

*A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

*in  
Social Work*

*at Massey University  
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Tracie Ailong Mafile'o

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## Abstract

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This study explores Tongan social work practice and examines how social and community work is constructed from a Tongan worldview. Tongan social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand participated in individual interviews and focus group meetings which explored the Tongan values, knowledge, skills and processes foundational to their practice. The participants' narratives contribute to an understanding of Tongan conceptions of wellbeing, personal and social change and to an identification of key components of a Tongan theoretical framework for social and community work practice. This exploratory study contributes to the growing literature articulating indigenous and non-western frameworks for social and community work practice.

Seeking to draw on a Tongan interpretive framework, the thesis employs metaphors, in particular two fishing practices (*pola* and *uku*), to draw the findings together. *Pola*, a community fishing practice, illustrates a Tongan social welfare system comprised of core values, namely: *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness), *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships), *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *'ofa* (love). Maintaining this Tongan system in the diaspora is central to the purpose of Tongan social and community work and the values themselves are a basis for practice. Other key concepts are shown to define a Tongan practice framework and these are identified as: *fakafekau'aki* (connecting), *a'u tonu* (going in person), *lotu* (spirituality/prayer/religion), *fakatōkilalo* (humility), *fie'aonga* (wanting to be useful), *matakāinga* (behaving like family) and *'osikiavelenga* (doing utmost). The *uku* metaphor draws parallels to specialised practices of fishing or diving under the reef, around *pupu'a puhi* (blowholes). Similarly, Tongan social and community work involves specific processes which draw on a constellation of skills and values. *Fakatoukatea* (skills in opposite directions) is important for bridging Tongan and *pālangi* contexts, for working across various fields of practice and for adopting family-like roles as a social worker. *Lea fakatonga* (Tongan language), *hua* (humour)

and *feongo'i'aki* (intuitive use of feelings) are important aspects of a Tongan social work approach.

Tongan social and community work is located primarily within *kāinga* (extended family) and community. This location of social work reconstructs conventional conceptions of professionalism and relationships become a key force for change within a Tongan framework. A balance between a directive and empowerment approach needs to be achieved and an advocacy emphasis is required given the position of Tongans in the diaspora.

This thesis demonstrates that a framework for social and community work derived from a Tongan worldview: provides new discourses and thinking within the critical postmodern tradition; is negotiated alongside other discourses thus creating spaces of possibility; is characterised by layers of ethnic specific, indigenous and humanity level differences and commonalities; emphasises the moral-artistic nature of social and community work; and challenges social work to be more diverse in terms of practice competencies, supervision, cross-cultural practice, education and community development. The thesis argues that if social and community work is to be transformative, it must itself be transformed and its very foundations reshaped by Tongan and other indigenous, non-western voices.

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## Glossary of Non-English Terms

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This glossary is arranged according to the English alphabet and includes Tongan as well as other indigenous language terms used throughout the thesis. Only brief translations are given, but it should be noted that fuller and multiple meanings can be attributed to words depending on the context.

aiga	family
akonaki	to teach, give instruction or counsel – especially moral/ religious
anga-fakatonga	Tongan way or custom
‘api	home
aū	fishing device
a’u tonu	going in person
‘eiki	superior, of high status
fa’ahinga	group, class
fahu	female head of family
faifekau	minister of religion
faifatongia	fulfilling obligations
faka’aki’akimui	to speak in a self-derogatory manner
faka’apa’apa	respect
fakafekau’aki	connecting
fakamā	causing shame, shameful, disgraceful
fakapotopoto	wise, mature, sensible
fakatōkilalo	humility
fakatoukatea	skills in opposite directions
fāмили	family
feongo’i’aki	feeling for one another
fetokoni’aki	mutual helpfulness

feveitokai'aki	respect, to be considerate
fe'ofa'aki	love for each other
fono	meeting or conference
fonua	land; afterbirth; grave
ha'a	tribe
heliaki	to speak ironically; to say one thing and mean another; metaphors
hou'eiki	chiefs
hua	humour
ifo	fantastic
kava	a plant (piper methysticum) or the beverage made from its roots
kāinga	extended family
kavenga	burden, load, responsibility
koloa	riches, wealth
koka'anga	tapa making process
lea fakatonga	Tongan language; speaking Tongan
lotu	spirituality, prayer, religion, faith
mana	supernatural, miraculous
matakāinga	behaving like family
mo'ui fakatonga	Tongan culture
ngāue	work
ngatu	tapa/bark cloth
'ofa	love; compassion
'osikiavelenga	doing utmost
pakeha	European descent
pālangi	European descent; white, Western cultures
palagi	European descent, white, Western cultures
pasifika	Pacific
pasifiki	Pacific
pō	night
pola	communal fishing practice, feast table
pukepuke fonua	holding onto the culture of the land
pupu'a puhi	blowholes
talanoa fakatātā	parables
talanoa	stories

tangata whenua	people of the land, indigenous peoples
ta'ovala	mat worn around the waist as a sign of respect
tauhi vā	looking after relationships
tauīwi	other, non-Māori peoples
tau koka	part of tapa making process
tau vau	part of tapa making process
tapu	forbidden, prohibited, sacred
tokoni	help
tuofefine	sister/female cousins of a male
tuonga'ane	brother/male cousins of a female
tu'a	inferior, of low status
tu'i	king, monarchy
uku	to dive
'ulumotu'a	male head of family
'umu'umu	depressions in the sand
vai	water, medicine
vālai	vine
whakapapa	genealogy
whanau	family



# Chapter One

## Introduction

---

Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still, Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places, and from which we have recently liberated ourselves. (Hau'ofa, 1994, p.160)

How is social work constructed from an 'Oceania', Tongan worldview perspective? This thesis explores Tongan social work practice. Recognising that social work is a socially constructed phenomenon (Payne, 1997, 2005), the research comprised a qualitative exploration of the perceptions and practice of Tongan social workers. Tongan concepts informing Tongan social workers' practice, particularly with Tongan families and communities, were the focus of the research. Specifically, the Tongan concepts represented values, skills, knowledge and processes which were derived from a Tongan worldview to inform contemporary social and community work practice.

### Journey into the Research Topic

Many factors have led me to this study of Tongan social work, but the most significant has been my own biography, making the undertaking of this research an incredibly personal journey. I am New Zealand-born of Tongan and *Pakeha*<sup>1</sup>/*pālangi*<sup>2</sup> heritage.

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<sup>1</sup> The term Pakeha originated in *te reo* (Māori language) and has been defined by Spoonley (1993) as "New Zealanders of European descent whose cultural values and behaviour have been primarily formed by their experiences as members of the dominant group in New Zealand" (p.57).

<sup>2</sup> The term *pālangi* is a Tongan word with similar meaning to Pakeha.

My father came to Aotearoa New Zealand in 1965, having stowed away from Tonga. He had dreams of a better life in Aotearoa New Zealand. He soon met my mother, a Pakeha New Zealander, and they started their life together. Growing up, I had an awareness of and interest in the dynamics of cultural difference. I recall, for example, two projects that I undertook in primary school. One was an assignment on Tonga and I was fascinated learning from my father that there were 17 letters in the Tongan alphabet. The other assignment was on Martin Luther King Junior and the civil rights movement in the USA. I was moved by this history and I felt a remote connection with the issues that were central to the Afro-American civil rights struggle. These research projects were part of my journey of learning, of valuing education and research, and of realising the inherent value of learning in matters which had some meaning for my family and community's existence and aspirations.

When I was 14 years old I lived for one year in Tonga with extended family, my first visit to the 'friendly islands'<sup>3</sup>. My year in Tonga allowed me to experience *mo'ui fakatonga* (Tongan culture), fuelling a passion for learning about Tonga, what it means to be Tongan, and about the connections and interaction between Tongan and *pālangi* worlds.

The process of completing a social work qualification in the early 1990s and subsequent practice engaged me to think about a Tongan perspective for social work. I developed a critical awareness of the marginalisation of Tongans within Aotearoa New Zealand and became clearer about the ways in which cultural worldviews informed social work theory and practice. I recall as a beginning practitioner working with a Pacific young person. The mother had advised that there were no other family members who could offer support. A senior Māori social worker in our team was aware that there were family members in the area and encouraged me to contact them. The decision to do so was based on the view that this young person was part of a wider extended family – from a *pālangi* perspective it could be seen as usurping the self-determination of the mother or the young person and yet it made sense from a Tongan or Pacific worldview perspective. The idea of undertaking research to explore in-depth a Tongan approach to social work became increasingly attractive, not only for my own development but for

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<sup>3</sup> Captain Cook called Tonga the 'friendly islands' and this name is still used to refer to Tonga.

the development of Pacific social work more generally. My current role as a Lecturer teaching in Pacific social work will enable the findings of the research to be a resource for learning.

### **Scope of the Research Question**

This research set out to ascertain Tongan social workers' conceptualisations of their practice in order to produce a grounded understanding of Tongan approaches to social work. As Gray and Fook (2004) state:

Given the need to recognise the importance of context in the different forms and expressions social work might take, it seems important to emphasise a *grounded approach*... this includes placing value on the ways in which workers who are indigenous to the situation conceptualise their work... This does not mean that overarching or imported discourses might not be used, but that they be used, not so much as defining discourses, but as tools for developing grounded perspectives. (p.638)

This study sought to attain and develop an emic perspective of Tongan social work, via a grounded approach. The research was not intended to be comparative, although a degree of comparison between Tongan and mainstream social work practices is unavoidable in seeking to understand what is actually Tongan about Tongan social workers' practices. There is a vast gap between the reality of social work practice for Tongan social workers and the extant social work literature and this project was designed in part to explore Tongan social work practice in a manner that might bridge that gap.

The question of Tongan social work practices raises related questions about Tongan identities within a predominantly *pālangi* context and the contradictions and struggles which result for diasporic Tongan. The study was necessarily broad to encompass these broader questions as part of an exploration of Tongan social work.

The key research questions, therefore, were:

1. Given that social work is socially constructed, what are the Tongan philosophical and value bases that inform conceptions of personal, family and community well-being?
2. What are the distinctive Tongan ways of bringing about personal and social change?

3. What are the key components of a Tongan theoretical framework for social and community work practice?

In this research 28 Tongan social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand (Auckland and Wellington) participated in individual in-depth interviews and focus groups. The research was primarily inductive in the sense that it did not set out to test any particular hypothesis. Rather, the data from the research and the social work literature have merged to inform each other and to contribute to the construction of a framework for Tongan social work practice. It should be noted that I initially set out to explore Tongan models of social work. However, in response to the data that emerged within the study it was appropriate to employ language which reflected the holistic nature of Tongan social work and so I employ theoretical frameworks, perspective and metaphors as terms referring to Tongan practice approaches (see Chapter Five).

Several terms and concepts pertinent to this research are defined and discussed in the following pages, a measure that further clarifies the scope of the topic explored in this research.

## **Key Terms and Concepts**

### **Social Work and Community Work**

Epstein (1999) surmised that:

Social work is a riddle to some, anathema to others. One of its chief problems is that there are so many different ways to define it, and there is disagreement within its ranks and in the public about what it basically consists of, what the gist of it is. (p.6)

Social work is contested on a number of fronts, some of the most prominent of which are its theoretical basis (Camilleri, 1999; Howe, 2002; Payne, 1997), its distinction relative to other human service roles (Thompson, 2000) and its orientation or purpose (Chambon, Irving, & Epstein, 1999; Ife, 1997; Lovelock, Lyons, & Powell, 2004; Margolin, 1997). In 2000, the International Federation of Social Workers adopted the following definition of social work:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the

points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.

While this is an intentionally broad definition, intended to be inclusive of the variety of forms of social work that have developed around the world, the universal applicability of social work is disputed, particularly in relation to global qualifying standards for social work (Gray, 2005; Gray & Fook, 2004; Yip, 2004).

Some of the most incisive critiques within social work are levelled against the Western, Eurocentric and imperialist basis on which social work developed and the way in which this characteristic persists to undermine wellbeing and social change for indigenous and marginalised cultural groups (see, for example: Graham, 1999; John-Baptiste, 2001; Midgley, 1981; Walsh-Tapiata, 2004). From this analysis, assertions are made about the need for social work theory and practice to be inclusive of a diversity of cultural perspectives, worldviews and paradigms (see Chapter Two).

Community work<sup>4</sup> and social development have come to the fore, characterising a broader, more inclusive and culturally diverse social work. Moving beyond a clinical and social casework emphasis, there are compelling arguments for the efficacy of community development (Baskin, 2003; Mafile'o, 2005; Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2000; Tiimalu-Faleseuga, 1993; Williams, 2004; Williams, Labonte, & O'Brien, 2003) and social development (Kaseke, 2001; Midgley, 1991) as forms of social work most suited to practice with indigenous and marginalised cultural groups. Most important, community development and social development are conducive to practice from cultural worldview paradigms which have a communal emphasis. Tan and Dodds (2002), in their commentary on global social work, postulate that “social work needs to move beyond its traditional professional boundaries to embrace a broader framework of development and social change” (p.5).

Social work then is a socially constructed phenomenon (Applegate, 2000; Parton, 2000; Payne, 1997, 1999, 2005), situated within historical and cultural contexts. Social work developed within Euro-Western contexts and so the knowledge base of social work,

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<sup>4</sup> The terms community work and community development are used interchangeably (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2000).

what constitutes social concern, and conceptions of 'social worker' and 'client' have been constructed accordingly. There are competing discourses operating within social work (Healy, 2005; Ife, 1997) making social work a dynamic and negotiated activity.

The term 'social work' is therefore used in this thesis to infer the full spectrum of practice, including traditional casework and community development approaches. This approach recognises a continuum, rather than a sharp distinction, between the micro and macro (Ife, 1997). Social work is understood broadly as being "concerned with enhancing the well-being of people within their social contexts" (Barnes & Hugman, 2002, p.277), while also recognising the high degree of contest referred to above. The broad definition of social work means that the use of the term 'client' throughout this thesis should be understood as referring not only to individuals and families, but to groups and communities as well.

### **Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work Context: Tongan – Indigenous Interface**

Social work in Aotearoa New Zealand in some ways mirrors international trends and developments; for instance, the political and policy context is shaped by neo-liberal economic agendas similar to other Western nations. In other key ways, however, social work in Aotearoa New Zealand can be perceived as forging new ground in terms of the imperatives of bicultural practice arising from the Treaty of Waitangi. Indications of this are the adoption of a Bicultural Code of Practice by the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (since 1993) and the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 which legislated for a more prominent role for families/*whanau* (extended family) in child welfare practice.

Within a Treaty of Waitangi framework, Tongans are *tauiwi* in relation to Māori, the *tangata whenua* or indigenous peoples and, as stated by Munford and Walsh-Tapiata (2005), "multiculturalism and the world-views of all populations living in Aotearoa New Zealand are built on an understanding of the relationship of the indigenous population with all others living in this land" (p.98). Under the provocative title, *We Didn't Come to Hongi Māori*, a Tongan journalist, Hao'uli (1996), points out that Tongan migrants, however, did not migrate to Aotearoa New Zealand in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century with a view to developing a relationship with *tangata whenua*. They saw their journey as one which brought them to a *pālangi* context, for the purposes of

the social and economic advancement of their own families. There can be complex relations between diasporic migrant and indigenous groups:

Diasporic communities can experience racist hostility, disdain and contempt from a majority society. But in the history of settler-colonies diasporic communities... are migrants in a more general sense just like the migrants of the majority society; that is, they are colonisers in relation to the colonised and they can be perceived by the colonised as another set of invaders, not brothers and sisters on the margins, not the fellow oppressed and dispossessed. Yet they can also be perceived by the colonised and indigenous as fellow subjects of racism, creating commonalities, the attraction of outsiders to fellow outsiders, the stranger (the indigenous made a stranger in her or his own land) to the stranger from elsewhere. The poetics of diaspora are indeed intricate and tortured. (Docker & Fischer, 2000, p.3)

While diasporic Tongan and the indigenous Māori peoples share common experiences of racism and marginalisation, this is not a sound enough basis for a Tongan – *tangata whenua* relationship. Ironically, the circumstances of poverty, the shared experiences of racism and the common uses of labels such as ‘Polynesian’ force Māori and *Pasifiki* peoples into a similar position within Aotearoa New Zealand society. At the same time, *Pasifiki* people have not necessarily perceived themselves as being similar to Māori. McIntosh (2001) explores the interface between Māori and *Pasifiki* peoples and makes the observation that:

Where, for many migrants, the situation of Māori was a consequence of Māori failings, it is seen by many of their children as a consequence of colonialism... This new awareness may lead to a rethinking and reconstruction of the relationship between them. (p.152)

While in one respect, Tongans have a relationship to *tangata whenua* in terms of the Treaty of Waitangi, in another respect, Tongans have a cultural, historical and arguably *whakapapa* (genealogical) relationship with Māori which exists apart from the Treaty. The impact of colonisation, however, has been that these links have been overshadowed. McIntosh (2001) points out that there is increasing visibility in Aotearoa New Zealand art, dance and music of an interface and interchange between Māori and *Pasifiki* – for example Aotearoa New Zealand hip hop. This study of Tongan social work in Aotearoa New Zealand acknowledges the bicultural imperative and is cognisant of the political and cultural mutual benefits of a Tongan – *tangata whenua* relationship based on the Treaty of Waitangi and *whakapapa* in the postcolonial context.

Throughout this thesis, Tongans are often referred to as indigenous peoples. It must be clear, however, that Tongans are not indigenous to Aotearoa New Zealand. An often cited definition of indigenous is that which was given in a study by United Nations Special Rapporteur J. Martínez Cobo (United Nations Department of Public Information, 2003):

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.

Others (Durie, 2005; Royal, 2002) have established that colonisation or socio-economic disadvantage alone do not define indigeneity; rather it is unity with the natural environment which is the primary defining characteristic. Durie (2005) identifies secondary characteristics of indigeneity which derive from the relationship with the natural environment: the relationship endures over time; it is celebrated in custom and group interaction; it gives rise to a system of knowledge; it facilitates sustainable economic growth; and it contributes to a unique language. When 'indigenous' is used in reference to Tongans, it is done from the perspective of Tongans being 'indigenous' in a broader sense to the Pacific, based on an understanding of Tongans' interconnection with the natural environment (Mahina, 1992). It is important to remember, however, that while Tongans are indigenous, the issues particular to the indigenous status of Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand should not be overshadowed. It should also be mentioned that the term 'indigenisation' (Gray, 2005; Nimmagadda & Balgopal, 2001) is used in this thesis (Chapter Two) to refer to the process of adapting foreign, usually Western, models to a non-Western local context.

### **The Idea of 'Tongan Social Work'**

Considering that there is no recognisable social work profession in the nation of Tonga, a study of Tongan social work is somewhat of a conundrum. Social work has historically been recognised as having established itself within a national context when the development of both social work education and professional association is evident. At the present time, neither of these exist within Tonga itself. During a visit to



Tongatapu (the main island of Tonga) in 2002, my networking indicated that there were three people working in Tonga with social work qualifications, and all three of them were qualified in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Nonetheless, there are at least three considerations which pave the way for a justifiable study of Tongan social work. First, Tongan families and communities are transnational (Morton, 1998; Morton Lee, 2003; Spoonley, 2001) and cannot be understood in relation to the Tongan national context alone. The substantial Tongan community within Aotearoa New Zealand for instance, means that Tongan families and communities here (like those in Australia and the USA) encounter social work services and, more importantly, Tongans themselves are gaining social work qualifications and are practising social work. In the 2001 Aotearoa New Zealand census 117 people of Tongan ethnicity identified social work as their occupation – this compares to 828 of Pacific peoples and 10,401 of the total population who stated their occupation as social work. At the time of writing, there were 21 social workers of Tongan ethnicity employed by the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, out of 115 Pacific social workers in the service (M. Connelly, personal communication, December 1, 2005). It should be noted that a broad definition of social work - including community and voluntary work and those who professionally identify as social workers but who are employed under a different job title (for example, counsellor) - would yield a higher rate of Tongan social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The second consideration is that communities over time and in various contexts have provided for the needs of their peoples, and have processes for facilitating personal and social change. In the case of Tonga, while the methods and modes for defining and ensuring wellbeing have not included a formalised social work profession similar to that which has developed in Western industrialised welfare states, there are processes and practices distinctive to Tongan society and culture which have fulfilled this role.

Third, a broad definition of social work, particularly one that is inclusive of community work, broadens the net in terms of the inclusion of Tongan community development which has occurred amongst Tongans transnationally. This study then, proceeds with an exploration of Tongan social work on the basis that Tongans are transnational, that

there have been Tongan ways of fulfilling the role of social work over time and that a definition of social work is inclusive of community work.

### **Culture and Worldview**

There is a need to clarify the use of the terms ‘culture’ and ‘worldview’ within this discussion. The terms are often used interchangeably, but they may take on slightly different meanings in different contexts. There is the associated question of multiple Tongan cultures and how this affects an attempt to delineate a Tongan approach to social work.

Culture is dynamic. Linnekin (1990) poignantly states that “culture is not like a rock, which ostensibly can pass through many hands and remain unchanged, but is rather like a story that is tailored and embellished in the process of transmission” (p.161). The concept of culture is contested. Hannerz (1996) identifies shifting emphases in debates around cultural difference and human nature and presents a table as a device to map ways of thinking about culture, based on an adaptation of the work of Redfield (1962, p.444) (see Table 1.1). According to Hannerz (1996), human characteristics are either biologically inherent or are developed and acquired after birth. These inherent and developed human characteristics may be possessed by individuals, by particular collectives or by all humans. The intersections of these conceptions form Hannerz’s six categories of human characteristics. Contained within each of these categories of human characteristics are various understandings of culture.

**Table 1.1 Human Characteristics**

	Inherent	Developed
Individual (idiosyncratic)	1	2
Enduring collectivities	3	4
Universal (panhuman)	5	6

Source: Hannerz (1996, p.33)

Hannerz points out that it is box 4 which has been the focus of ethnography. That is, the focus has been on understanding culture as the developed, distinctive way of life of particular groups or collectives. Hannerz (1996) states that “cultural difference is human nature” (p.34) but also notes that “that which is cultural is not always difference”

(p.35). Box 6 then highlights an understanding of culture as including “the qualities people acquire everywhere, anytime, as they go through lives in which universally they have similar experiences” (Hannerz, 1996, p.34). Overall, the table offers a useful way in which to understand culture and the interaction of diverse cultures. In the context of contemporary globalisation, there is increased interaction between diverse cultures (developed ways of life of enduring collectives) and the augmentation of universally shared human characteristics.

Hannerz’s categorisations of human characteristics shed light on the location of this study. It is argued that Tongan cultural foundations of social work may be understood as developed, distinctive characteristics of an enduring collectivity (box 4). It is noteworthy, however, that Tongan social work will also be inclusive of universal human characteristics (box 6) and individual Tongan social workers will also develop idiosyncratic practice (box 2). That is to say, that Tongan ethnic specific social work will embody aspects which are shared with non-Tongan social work approaches and Tongan social work includes those characteristics which are peculiar to individuals born and/or trained in different contexts as part of the reality of transnationalism. This thesis sets out to define Tongan social work via a magnification of the developed characteristics of social work by Tongans, as an enduring transnational collective. Tongan social work is then understood as dynamic yet distinctive.

It is timely to acknowledge that it is problematic to assume clear lines between pre-contact, historical or traditional Tongan culture on the one hand and that which is post-contact and contemporary. To impose such distinctions between ‘what was’ and ‘what is’ would be to assume that culture and history are respectively static and objectified. Yet historical accounts are in themselves cultural constructs. The approach taken here, therefore, is to refer to both historical and contemporary aspects of Tongan culture on the understanding that culture is dynamically constructed.

Reference to the term ‘worldview’ (i.e. Tongan worldview) is favoured here principally because it captures the notion of a distinctive and describable paradigm. Given the challenges of globalisation, with the intensification of global and worldwide interconnectedness, the term ‘worldview’ has a paradoxical quality. While culture and identity are changeable and fluid, the notion of worldview asserts that there can be an

identifiable Tongan conceptualisation which flows out of the multiple, and shifting notions of Tongan identities. Royal (2002 - citing Marsden and Henare, 1992) uses the term 'worldview' in the following way:

The worldview is the central systemisation of conceptions of reality to which members of its culture assent and from which stems their value system. The worldview lies at the very heart of the culture, touching, interacting with and strongly influencing every aspect of the culture. (p.19)

Indigenous worldviews are increasingly asserted as relevant for the contemporary development of indigenous and ethnic minority groups in the globalised context (for example: Bruyere, 2001; Graham, 1999; Hurdle, 2002; Royal, 2002). I agree with Royal (2002) in his assertion that there needs to be a new creative energy where we do not treat indigenous knowledge just as an historical phenomena. Although Royal (2002) is referring to Māori knowledge, the same can be argued in regard to Tongan and Pacific knowledge generally:

In order for it to be a vital and alive knowledge tradition animated with meaning and relevance, we must also create new Māori knowledge from within the 'natural design' of pre-existent Māori knowledge. We must be ready to innovate, to venture forth, to create. (p.17)

In a similar vein, Ruwhiu (1994) makes the following statement in relation to his practice framework as *tangata whenua* in Aotearoa New Zealand:

Tangata whenua contributions in the social service delivery arena, be it theoretical or practical, are continually developing. Consequently, I do not fear knowledge and learning, but welcome it. At the same time, I do not seek to conquer knowledge, but to use those [aspects] relevant to my reality as a Māori practitioner in Aotearoa. (p.138)

Tongan culture and worldview in this study is construed as that which is vibrant and organic. It is alive. Tongan culture does not function as an 'add-on' to the surface of social work, rather it is a deep spring which is a source of meaning, theory, practice and social action. Tongan culture is integral within Tongan social work, and both culture and social work are constructed via multiple interactions between actors. As Tongan social workers and Tongan clients interact amongst themselves, and within agencies, social policy, research, social work education, the institutions of faith and religion, cultural festivals, family reunions, family websites and so on, Tongan culture is being constructed and developed and Tongan social work knowledge and practice is

developing. With every social interaction, Tongan culture is partly transformed and partly reproduced (see Chapter Four), and yet there is a definable and distinctive Tongan worldview.

It is important, when considering the socially constructed nature of knowledge, that we undertake a critique of Tongan worldview, knowledge and values. Linnekin (1992) has noted that “anticolonial writers readily analyse Western representations as mystification... but are less likely to apply the same analytic treatment to indigenous discourse” (p.255). In this thesis, I endeavour to be analytical in regard to Tongan worldview. That is to say, I undertake a conscientised and critical (Freire, 1972) exploration of Tongan worldview and Tongan concepts of wellbeing, from which Tongan social work approaches develop.

Throughout this thesis then, reference to the phrase ‘Tongan social work’ is essentially referring to the theory and practice of social work from a Tongan worldview perspective, keeping in mind the broader definition outlined earlier. Furthermore, I use the Tongan term *mo’ui fakatonga* to refer to both Tongan culture and Tongan worldview. This term is used because it refers to Tongan culture in its fullness, including explicit customs, behaviours and the value and philosophical basis. The terms *angafakatonga* or *‘ulungāanga fakatonga* could be understood as referring more narrowly to Tongan customs or behaviours (E. Tu’inukuafe, personal communication, September 16, 2005).

### **Tongan Focus**

There was quite a deliberate decision at the outset of this project to adopt a Tongan, as opposed to a pan-Pacific, focus of study. In locating her thesis on Tongan pedagogy, Manu’atu (2000, p.2) argues that the very use of the term ‘Pacific Islands’ or its transliteration of *Pasifiki* actually undermines Tongan wellbeing by erasing differences between Tongans and other Pacific groups in Aotearoa New Zealand. In reference to ‘Pacific islands education’ she states: “Indeed, it is my aim to ‘explode’ this phrase, to indicate its real inadequacy – if not danger – to the task of addressing the key educational questions for migrants from Tonga and their descendents” (Manu'atu, 2000, p.2). Similarly, in order to gain meaningful insight into effective social work practice

approaches to effect social change for diasporic Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand, I have adopted a Tongan focus in this research.

Nevertheless throughout this thesis, at times reference is made to Pacific peoples and cultures more generally, with the use of the term *Pasifiki*. I use this term acknowledging it as a Tongan translation of 'Pacific' or 'Pacific peoples', an umbrella term "used to encompass a variety of Pacific Island nations and communities who are linguistically, culturally, and geographically distinctive from each other" (Health Research Council of New Zealand, 2003, p.4). In an Aotearoa New Zealand policy and practice context, *Pasifiki* usually implies reference to those from seven particular Pacific island nations: Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Fiji, Tokelau and Tuvalu. This is understandable because of the numbers of people from those Pacific nation groups in Aotearoa New Zealand and those nations' historical and constitutional links with Aotearoa New Zealand (Ministry of Justice & Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2000). However, *Pasifiki* is not confined to this usage and is inclusive of the depth and breadth of Oceania and its cultures and peoples (Hau'ofa, 1994). *Pasifiki*, for example, could also include those from the Pacific nations of Hawaii, Vanuatu or Kiribati.

The term *pālangi* is also used throughout this thesis. *Pālangi* is a Tongan word that is variously used to refer to Pakeha, European, 'white' or Western peoples and cultures. From a Tongan language and cultural perspective, the term encompasses the understanding that there are definable physical, cultural and power differences between what is understood as Tongan and that which is *pālangi*. Similar terms exist within other *Pasifiki* languages, for example *palagi* in Samoan and *papa'a* in the Cook Islands Rarotongan language.

To summarise, this thesis explores Tongan constructions of social work through an exploration of practice by Tongan social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand. Social work is understood broadly and is inclusive of community work. Given that this research took place in Aotearoa New Zealand, there is an underlying recognition of the bicultural nature of social work practice and a recognition of Māori as *tangata whenua* (i.e. indigenous to Aotearoa New Zealand) while also recognising meaningful links between Tongans and Māori. While there is no established social work profession in Tonga as a nation, this study takes into account the transnational nature of Tongan

communities, Tongans' interface with social work in the diaspora and the notion that Tongan culture has historically incorporated processes and practices that fulfil a role akin to that of social work in Western societies. The thesis is based on an understanding that culture is dynamic, yet draws on the notion of cultural worldview to refer to a definable and distinctive perspective which can be distilled from the changeability of culture. Finally, this thesis adopts a Tongan focus, as opposed to a pan-Pacific focus.

### **Structure of the Thesis**

A literature review is offered in **Chapter Two**. The review centres on culture and social work and analyses the interface of ethnic-centred approaches with the wider social work literature. A critical postmodern and social constructionist approach is taken; knowledge is likened to waves which ebb and flow according to particular historical, cultural, political and social currents. Ethnic sensitive, culturally competent, anti-racist/anti-oppressive and ethnic centred approaches are highlighted as primary discourses within social work which respond to the increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of populations with which social work intervenes in the context of globalisation and the establishment of diasporic, transnational communities. Indigenous and non-Western cultural groups are asserting approaches to practice emanating from within their respective worldview paradigms. Ethnic-centred approaches are distinguished as: sceptical of a totally hybrid view of culture; being primarily about ethnic-centrism rather than indigenisation; within-culture rather than cross-cultural; and focussing on the solutions within cultures. This chapter articulates the space that Tongan social work, as an ethnic-centred approach, occupies within the discipline and discourses of social work.

The methodology and research process employed to explore Tongan social work is described in **Chapter Three**. There are challenges that the topic of study created and these are discussed in this chapter – namely the interface of Tongan and Western epistemologies and shifting insider-outsider status. The constructionist framework for the approach, as well as critical and Tongan methodological influences are outlined, before discussing participant selection and recruitment, the nature and process of data collection, analysis and ethical issues.

practice, and transnational community development. I conclude by offering some reflections on the research and recommendations for future development and research.

### **Thesis Related Presentations and Publications (2001-2005)**

This research was carried out over a period of six years and I was encouraged by my supervisors to attend conferences and to publish en route. This was helpful in terms of the need to set interim milestones as a full-time staff member at Massey University and, more importantly, allowed me to draw upon a wider group of peers for their input. The conference presentations and publications are listed below:

- (a) An article entitled *Pasifikan Social Work Theory* (2001) was published in *Tu Mau*, a Pacific edition of *Social Work Review*, the journal of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers. In this article I outlined Pacific ethnic-centred theory as a particular wave of social work knowledge. I was also a co-editor of this edition.
- (b) In 2001 I presented at the *New Initiatives Conference* run by the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Massey University. I presented a paper which gave an overview of several Tongan social work concepts emerging from the first round of individual interviews.
- (c) I presented a paper at the *Association for Qualitative Research Conference* in Sydney in 2003. The paper, *Shifting Sands: Understanding Tongan Social Work Journeys*, was a reflection on the research process. I also presented a similar paper at the Health Research Council of New Zealand *Pacific Health Research Fono* in 2004.
- (d) *Exploring Tongan Social Work: Fakafekau'aki* (connecting) and *Fakatōkilalo* (humility) (Mafile'o, 2004) was published in the *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice* journal. In this article I presented two Tongan social work concepts and discussed implications for notions of professionalism and relationship in social work practice.



- (e) In 2004 I co-presented a paper on cultural supervision at the *Weaving Together the Strands of Supervision Conference*. Two publications arose from this: first, Su'a-Hawkins and Mafile'o (2004) appeared in *Social Work Now*, the practice journal of the Department Child, Youth and Family Services where my colleague is employed; and second, Mafile'o and Su'a-Hawkins (2004) was the publication in the peer reviewed conference proceedings.
- (f) I presented at the *Global Social Work Conference* in Adelaide in 2004 a paper entitled *A Tongan Model of Social Work: Weaving Diversity in the Context of Globalisation*. This paper was also presented at the University of South Australia *Reclaiming Civil Society@Magil International Day*.
- (g) In Mafile'o (2005) I contributed a chapter in the text *Social Work Theories in Action*. The chapter was entitled *Community Development: A Tongan Perspective* and drew on Tongan concepts and examples of community practice arising from the research.
- (h) In September 2005 I presented on *Tongan Metaphors of Social Work* at the *Pasifika Child and Family Mental Health Symposium* run by the Werry Centre in Auckland.
- (i) At the time of writing, together with a team of Pacific social work practitioners and academics, I had started work on a second edition of *Tu Mau*, a Pacific edition of *Social Work Review*.

The publications en route have been an important part of the development of this research and are a means by which this research contributes to diasporic Tongan development and the development of social work.



## Chapter Two

### Culture and Social Work: A Literature Review

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**Island Fire** (*Konai Helu-Thaman*)

Embers  
Of a once blazing Fire  
Sleep through an endless night  
Fraught with the din of Billiard balls  
Hollywood violence  
Rock 'n roll music  
And the slow turning of  
Foreign text book pages  
The embers wait  
Perhaps never to be  
Rekindled by  
Dry coconut leaves  
... kerosene is easier!

Although there is little dispute that culture and ethnicity are important for social work (Chau, 1991), this chapter provides an overview of major threads within the literature dealing with culture and social work and examines the realm of ethnic specific theory and practice. In effect, the chapter provides the backdrop for theorising Tongan social work, and identifies the elements of social work primarily concerning practice with ethnic minority groups.

The chapter has four main sections. I begin the review by presenting a broad framework for understanding social work theory and knowledge as socially constructed, within which the remainder of the discussion sits. The 'wave' framework draws on critical postmodern theory, bodies of thought which contribute to an understanding of culture and social work and go some way in informing my approach to the study of

Tongan social work. In the second section, I present an overview of ethnic sensitive practice, culturally competent practice, anti-racist/anti-oppressive practice and ethnic specific practice. *Pasifiki* ethnic specific social work literature is explored in section three. My reference to *Pasifiki* practice is not about a singular approach. Rather, I am referring to specific ethnic approaches which fall under *Pasifiki*, as an umbrella term of political convenience and alliance. Finally, with reference to critical postmodern ideas, I offer an analysis and synthesis of the debates around culture and social work and draw some distinctions, locating the realm of ethnic-centred frameworks for practice.

Specifically, in this analysis I make four key points. First, ethnic specific theory tends to accept, at least in part, that culture exists as an *essential* phenomenon as opposed to being wholly hybrid in nature. Second, ethnic specific theory and practice begins from a place of *ethnic-centrism* rather than being concerned foremost with indigenisation or adaptation of Western ideas. Third, ethnic specific theory is primarily about exploration *within culture*, rather than how to work cross-culturally with ‘other’ cultures. Fourth, *solutions* entrenched within cultural worldviews are given attention, in addition to the issues that arise out of ethnicity and culture. Tongan social work as explored in this thesis is understood as representing an ethnic-centred framework for social work practice.

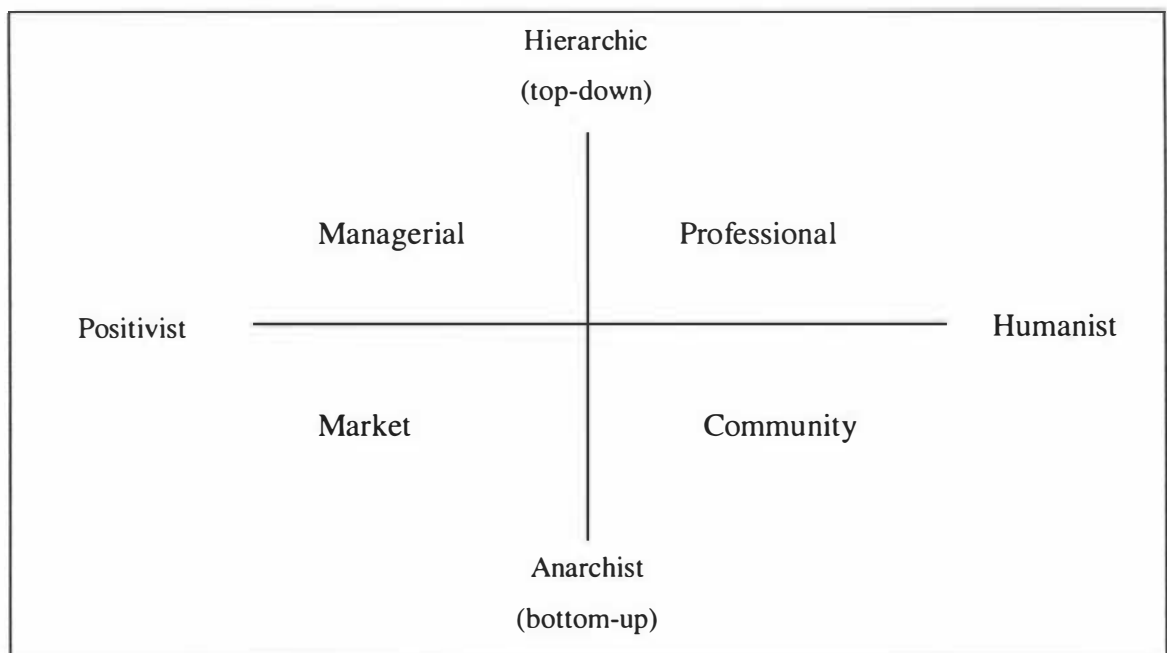
### **Social Work Theory and Knowledge: A Wave Framework**

Using the analogy of Pacific ocean waves as a framework (Mafile'o, 2001), aspects of the socially constructed nature of social work theory and knowledge (Healy, 2005; Payne, 1997, 1999, 2005) can be further elaborated and understood. Theories are “systems of thought and action which guide workers” (Payne, 1997, p.29) and are inseparable from, and powerful for, practice (Parton, 2000). The metaphor of the ocean carries some congruence with *Pasifiki* ways of knowing and understanding but also provides a framework for conceptualising the broader social work literature.

Social work theory and knowledge is socially constructed, and susceptible to movement and changeability given the tides and currents in the social, economic and cultural environment. Payne (1999; 2005) demonstrates that social work is constructed in various arenas or cycles where “interactions from different parties to events influence

each other, continuously promoting readjustments which in turn re-influence the parties” (p.38). Payne identifies: political-social-ideological cycles; agency-profession cycles; and client-worker-agency cycles at play. He suggests that the client-worker-agency arena is central to the construction of practice theory (Payne, 2005). There are dominant biomedical, neo-liberal and legal discourses interacting within contemporary social work (Healy, 2005) which construct social work. Ife (1997) presents an analytical model of competing discourses within the human services (Figure 2.1) with the use of axes of power and knowledge. The power axes differentiates between a bottom up (anarchist) and top-down (hierarchic) approach and the knowledge axes differentiates between a positivist or humanist paradigm. Put together, the axes identify managerial, market, professional and community discourses that compete within the human services.

**Figure 2.1 Competing Discourses of Human Services**



Source: Ife (1997, p.47)

In the managerial discourse welfare is constructed as a product and the worker is a case manager accountable to management; while the market discourse positions welfare as a commodity and the practitioner as a broker or entrepreneur accountable to the customer. Social work is conventionally constructed in the professional domain where welfare is a service and workers are accountable to the client and the profession. Ife proposes that a

community discourse for social work, whereby welfare is about participation by the citizen, and the worker is a community enabler accountable through democratic decision making is the way forward for social work. For our purposes here, Ife's framework is particularly helpful for showing the way in which social work is not a static or ontological given, rather it is constructed through the outplaying of discourses which ultimately shape what we understand social work to be.

Waves are in a constant state of movement and changeability and likewise, theory and knowledge for social work is in a constant state of shift. There is a tension between certainty and uncertainty in the midst of changeability. Adams (2002) comments that “knowledge expands continually” and that “the practitioner works in a rapidly expanding universe of research, reflection and critical commentary” (p.86). Indeed, Applegate (2000) suggests that theory can come full circle and “what goes around comes around” (p.149). And yet, the development of social work theory is not necessarily sequential, but may occur simultaneously and independent of each other (Turner, 1996). These practice trends and movements within social work add to the core knowledge of social work (Reid, 2002).

Waves can bring healing and wellbeing, but can also be powerfully destructive. Turner (1996) mentions that theory can be harmful when: its “ability to predict, explain or control is the goal, rather than optimising human potential” (p.13); it is self-fulfilling; it is politicised and seen as the “official truth”; and it diminishes the uniqueness of individuals and their situations. Social work theory and knowledge may also be potentially destructive if it is culturally inappropriate for the families and communities to whom it is being applied. The analysis presented in *Puao te ata tu*<sup>5</sup> (Department of Social Welfare, 1988) of the practice of child welfare social work with Māori *whanau* (families), for example, highlights the potential cultural inappropriateness of social work theory and knowledge. Social work developed as a profession within the modern, and predominantly Western, welfare state and was imbued with assumptions of cultural neutrality. Indeed, indigenous and non-Western authors argue that cultural hegemony

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<sup>5</sup> *Puao te ata tu* (Day Break) was a Ministerial Advisory Committee report within the Department of Social Welfare giving a Māori perspective on the Department.

remains a feature of mainstream social work (Autagavaia, 2000; Graham, 1999; John-Baptiste, 2001). John-Baptiste (2001), for example, asserts:

... there seems to be a misconception in social work that the process of helping remains free from cultural bias, in terms of theoretical givens and their translation into service delivery; in terms of how social work theory and practice inform the 'nature' of a social worker; and how both can influence practice perceptions of the service receiver... No culture has a monopoly on truth, yet existing paradigmatic social work models in themselves represent a subtle form of cultural oppression in that their universalistic projection serves to maintain the legitimacy of Eurocentric hegemonic social work theory and practice, to the exclusion or even the thought that other theories could exist. (p.257, 272)

As waves are part of a wider ocean, so too is social work theory part of a wider sea of knowledge. There is beginning to be a level of comfort with the expansion of diversity in social work knowledge and a realisation that there will never be a single theoretical framework for social work (Turner, 1996). Social constructionist and postmodern theorising has exposed the tendency towards monoculturalism in early and mainstream social work thereby revealing the possibilities for multiplicity, diversity and inclusion. Parton and O'Byrne (2000) state that:

Particular forms of knowledge are not only the products of their history and culture and are therefore artefacts of it but there are thus numerous forms of knowledge available. We cannot assume that *our* ways of understanding are necessarily the same as others' and are any nearer the truth. (p.25)

Payne (1997) has argued that because social work theories have predominantly developed within a particular cultural frame, there should be apprehension about applying them too widely. He argues that this is because: the value and cultural bases of differing societies may be incompatible, societies face differing problems, and there are concerns about cultural imperialism and a history of oppressive colonialism.

Social work theory and knowledge then is contested (Howe, 2002), changeable, socially constructed, has potential to be healing or damaging, and is not the end of knowledge. That is to say, social work knowledge is always evolving and overlaps other evolving knowledge systems (Turner, 1996). For example, Dominelli (2002) notes that radical theory had prominence in the 1970s, while anti-racist perspectives and anti-oppressive practice built on radical perspectives particularly in the 1980s and 1990s respectively. Critical postmodern perspectives central to this thesis are drawn on because they

provide a sound basis for not only analysing Tongan wellbeing but for facilitating sustained and positive social change.

### **Critical Postmodern Theory**

The wave framework above draws on the recent and burgeoning body of social work literature which could be described as a critical postmodern approach (for example: Allan, Pease, & Briskman, 2003; Davies & Leonard, 2004; Fook, 2002; Healy, 2000, 2005; Howe, 1994; Ife, 1997; Leonard, 1997, 2001; Parton & O'Byrne, 2000; Pease & Fook, 1999). Critical postmodern theory is taken here to incorporate key elements of social constructionism. A distinction may be drawn between social constructionism and constructivism. Both terms are based on the understanding that reality and knowledge are “relative to social interaction and the social context” (Lee & Greene, 1999, p.25), and it has been pointed out that the similarities between the two are much greater than the differences (Lee & Greene, 1999) and that the differences are “largely academic in nature, and are often irrelevant at the level of practice” (Furman, Jackson, Downey, & Shears, 2003, p.265). A key point of difference, however, is that constructivists primarily focus on individuals’ internal constructions of meaning (see, for example: Granvold, 2001) while social constructionists focus more on social processes. Miller and O'Connor (1999) state:

Constructionists emphasize language, narrative, socio-historical, and cultural processes as primary factors in meaning making and in understanding our own constructions, our own knowledge-base. Constructivists, on the other hand, emphasize cognitive structures, or schemas, such as organizing principles, deep structures, and interactive feedback from the environment. (p.245)

Social constructionism is a complex of ideas (Payne, 1999). Burr (2003) defines social constructionism as incorporating the following: having a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge; understandings are historically and culturally specific; knowledge is sustained by social processes; and knowledge and meanings invite particular kinds of social action. Payne (1999) argues, however, that social constructionism “fails as a theory of action and purpose” (p.54). For this reason, a critical postmodern approach is appealing as it incorporates purpose and action inherent within critical theory.



Agar (1998) asserts that while social constructionism is an interpretive theory, not quite in the critical social theory stream, there are merits in a critical interpretive approach whereby people's activities in the everyday are linked to large-scale social structures and social change is viewed as occurring at the subjective and inter-subjective level. Fook (2002, p.161) advocates a combination of critical theory and postmodernism in social work, explaining that postmodernism is an epistemology, a way of knowing, while critical theory offers underlying explanations about structure and implies a moral element.

Allan (2003b, p.42) states that postmodern approaches to critical social work:

...are concerned with social transformation, with multiple and diverse realities which are reconstructed by factors both internal and external to the individual, with the importance of local contexts of practice and with the role of discourse in maintaining power.

Critical postmodern perspectives encompass a perception of culture with implications for Tongan social work, both in terms of an understanding of the client world and in terms of legitimising the space that a framework for Tongan social work occupies. Critical postmodernist theorising exposes the subjugation of diverse, localised and 'other' knowledges and argues that "no culture has a monopoly on truth" (Saleeby, 1994, p.352). There is a critique of modernist pursuits of objective knowledge, and knowledge is instead understood as being socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As explained by Lee and Greene (1999):

The so-called objective reality is in fact the product of social construction processes under the influence of cultural, historical, political and economic conditions. Because such knowledge is socially constructed, it can vary historically over time and differ across cultural groups that hold diverse beliefs about human development and nature. Given that values, norms, beliefs, attitudes, traditions, and practices vary from one cultural group to another, so does the social construction of knowledge. (p.25)

Agger (1998) notes that postmodern assumptions have:

...critically displaced Eurocentric and androcentric discourses about race and ethnicity by arguing not only that people of color experience and narrate the world differently from dominant-group members but that these narratives have enormous utility for social science. (p.178)

In relation to this study then, I seek to go beyond a recognition of Tongan client meaning making as different and legitimate. This study is seeking to expose the utility of Tongan narratives for social science and social and community work practice itself. Writing about social work, Saleeby (1994) notes the implications of postmodern perspectives:

... the truths that practitioners, researchers, and educators traffic in often ultimately turn out to be the implements – discourses, styles, language, and tropes – that make up the culture's stories. (p.352)

Moreover, critical postmodernism seeks to avoid the privileging of expert social work knowledge. In this way, social work is less about the expert social worker refining and imposing a set of objective, technical skills in a rational and systematic way and is more about an artistic, creative and emotional (Davies & Collings, 2004) endeavour, the substance of which is a co-creation between the participants (Blundo & Greene, 1999). As Parton and O'Byrne (2000) put it, "a focus on social work as text, narrative and artistry, as opposed to social work as science, moves centre-stage" (p.182). The notion of calling into question a focus on technical rigor is explicated by Schon (1991):

This dilemma of 'rigor or relevance' arises more acutely in some areas of practice than in others. In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing 'messes' incapable of technical solution. The difficulty is that the problems of the high ground, however great their technical interest, are often relatively unimportant to clients or to the larger society, while in the swamp are the problems of greatest human concern. Shall the practitioner stay on the high, hard ground where he can practice rigorously, as he understands rigor, but where he is constrained to deal with problems of relatively little social importance? Or shall he descend to the swamp where he can engage the most important and challenging problems if he is willing to forsake technical rigor? (p.42)

Critics of postmodernism as a stance for social work are sceptical of the relativism on which postmodernism hinges and the emptiness which subsequently pervades the perspective. Atherton and Bolland (2002) state that "the problem is that by its very nature, postmodernism endorses nothing, leaving no end worth striving for" (p.482). Others (Fook & Pease, 1999; Leonard, 1997; Parton & O'Byrne, 2000; Saleeby, 1994) advance the view that postmodern theories involve a morality. Leonard (1997), for

example, introduces a concept of the subject as a resistant moral agent as a means to reconstructing welfare in the context of postmodernism. He elaborates that:

... the reflection of universality does not require us to abandon moral judgements... the concept of basic human needs is an invaluable moral premise upon which to build solidarity amongst culturally different populations; justices and equality in meeting basic human need are the moral norms which should surely guide such solidarity. (Leonard, 1997, p.75)

Saleeby (1994) promotes a contextual constructionism so that social constructionism is not apart from circumstance and material context, and in so doing constructionism is politicised.

It is the tension held between modernist critical theory and the postmodernist social analysis which enables critical postmodernism to contribute analysis significant to this thesis (Allan, 2003b; Morley, 2004). Allan (2003b, p.47) identifies principles common to modern and postmodern critical social work as: a commitment to transformation of processes and structures that dominate and exploit; a commitment to working alongside oppressed and marginalised populations; an orientation towards emancipatory personal and social change, social justice and social equality; and dialogical social work relationships.

I now turn to explore some waves of social work theory which are concerned with the implications of culture for social work and which have relevance for an understanding of Tongan social work.

## **Culture and Social Work**

### **Ethnic Sensitive Practice**

Ethnic sensitive practice models (Devore & Schlesinger, 1981, 1999) developed in response to the increasing ethnic diversity of social work clients and the persistent influence of ethnicity (Devore, 2001). Developing principally within the USA context, ethnic-sensitive practice informs practice with migrant groups such as diasporic Tongans. The term 'ethnic sensitive social work practice' generally refers "to practice that is mindful of the effects of ethnic and minority group membership in social functioning and seeks to incorporate this understanding into practice" (Schlesinger & Devore, 1995, p33). Ethnic sensitive practice emphasises the need for social workers to

have awareness and sensitivity to diverse ethnic specifics; that is, to be aware of their own ethnicity, and to have knowledge and sensitivity regarding the ethnic characteristics and realities of clients. Devore and Schlesinger (1981), as the key proponents of ethnic sensitive practice, established that the prevailing social work practice approaches (i.e. psychosocial, problem solving and social provision and structural approaches) did not adequately take account of the 'ethnic reality', which is defined as the identifiable dispositions and behaviours which converge as the result of the intersection of ethnicity and social class (Devore & Schlesinger, 1981). Their ethnic sensitive practice model has the following assumptions and principles:

Assumptions:

- individual and collective history have a bearing on problem generation and solution;
- the present is most important;
- non-conscious phenomena affect individual functioning;
- ethnicity is a source of cohesion, identity, and strength as well as a source of strain, discordance, and strife.

Principles:

- simultaneous attention must be given to individual and systemic concerns as they emerge out of client need and professional assessment;
- practice skills must be adapted to respond to the particular needs and dispositions of various ethnic and class groups;
- the 'Route to the Social Worker' affects problem definition and intervention.

(Devore & Schlesinger, 1981, p.156)

A study by Jenkins (1981) investigated how ethnicity was incorporated into USA social service agencies, and the perception of workers and of clients in regard to the importance of ethnicity in the delivery of social services. Cross-cultural testing then took place in England and Israel. The study concluded that ethnicity was becoming a more recognised part of service delivery. Further, it led to the conceptualisation of ethnicity as a variable that is unfixed, unlike age or sex. Jenkins (1981) states that:

ethnic group may be fixed – but ethnicity is a variable with accordion like properties which can expand or contract, depending on a series of other factors. The factors that determine the extension of the instrument make up the typology... (p.194)

The study ultimately resulted in a typology consisting of three levels, providing the conditions for ethnicity to be activated. At the micro, or case level, the situation and the alternatives are the influencing factors concerning the role of ethnicity. At the meso or group level, recency of migration, geographical locale, class and caste and homogeneity of ethnic group combine to determine the extent to which ethnicity is involved. Finally, at the macro level, where ethnicity cuts across national boundaries, the national purpose and national politics impact on the role of ethnicity. A possible limitation of Jenkin's study relates to the methods utilised. That is, although data were gathered by asking workers and clients about the role of ethnicity in social work, it may have a role even if it is not explicit or conscious.

Longres (1991) offers a critique of ethnic sensitive practice, stating that it may be more appropriate with recent refugees and immigrants, but less appropriate when working with the second - or third - generation members of ethnic groups. In the case of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand, there has been rapid cultural change over the space of a few decades amongst Pacific communities (Macpherson, 2001). Taking Longres' point, a challenge for ethnic sensitive practice is to account for diversity within ethnicity, for example between island-born and New Zealand-born Tongans, and to counter the tendency towards assimilation.

### **Culturally Competent Practice**

Cultural competence literature has built on and extended ethnic sensitive practice. In relation to this study of Tongan social work, cultural competency is another discourse which has relevance for practice with *Pasifiki* groups. Cultural competence is a movement which began with civil rights activity in the USA in the 1960s and, according to one of its key proponents, has yet to reach maturity (Lum, 2003). Culturally competent practice has been defined as “a set of attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills that a social worker must possess in order to work effectively with clients who are from a different culture than the worker” (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002, p.124). Lynch and Hanson (2004) define cross-cultural competence as “the ability to think, feel, and act in ways that acknowledge, respect, and build on ethnic, [socio-]cultural, and linguistic diversity” (p.43). They explain that this definition: assumes diversity, with no one group being normative; understands cultural competence as a process; and

acknowledges socio-cultural factors as being as influential as ethnicity, language or culture.

Cultural competence is presented in the literature both as a continuum and as a framework. Lecca, Quervalu, Nunes and Gonzales (1998) produced a volume advising ways to improve cultural competency in the delivery of health, social and human services to ethnic minority groups. They extend the work of Cross, Bazron, Dennis and Isaacs (1989; cited in Lecca et al., 1998) concerning cultural competence and delineate a Cultural Competence Continuum Scale for both individual and agency competency, with the following points along the scale:

- cultural destructiveness - overtly destructive attitudes, policies and practices;
- cultural incapacity - not intentional destruction but believes in its own racial superiority;
- cultural blindness - the belief that colour or culture makes no difference and all are the same;
- cultural pre-competence - realises its weakness but does not go far enough (tokenism);
- cultural competence - acceptance and respect for difference;
- cultural proficiency - hold culture in high esteem. (p.53)

Culturally proficient practice is that which is:

enhanced by research, by therapeutic approaches based on culture, and by publishing and disseminating the results of demonstration projects... [it also] builds cultural knowledge... policies are flexible and culturally impartial and board members as well as administrators and line workers are part of the process. (Lecca et al., 1998, p.53)

Cultural competency then, can be viewed on the levels of the practitioner, agency or community, and likewise at the micro, meso and macro levels (Lum, 2003). Lum (2003) presents a framework of social work cultural competencies, at generalist and advanced levels, which include cultural awareness, knowledge acquisition, skill development and inductive learning.

Fong (2001; 2004) contributes to the discussion on cultural competency by arguing for the multiculturalisation of practice, which means that values, norms and practices of various ethnic groups are incorporated into assessment, interventions and evaluations.

The notion that one can become competent in another culture, however, is questionable (Dean, 2001). Instead, an awareness of one's lack of competence and a striving to understand the always evolving and changing culture of clients, practitioners and contexts may be more appropriate. Dean (2001) concludes:

The paradoxical combination of these two ideas – being 'informed' and 'not knowing' simultaneously – captures the orientation to one's 'lack of competence' that I am suggesting is needed in cross-cultural work... Our knowledge is always partial and we are always operating from a position of incompleteness or lack of competence. Our goal is not so much to achieve competence but to participate in the ongoing processes of seeking understanding and building relationships. (p.268)

Dean's questioning of cultural competency stands in contrast to Lum's (2003) belief that "cultural competencies are outcome characteristics that can be measured" (p.15), and the ethnic-sensitive inventory (ESI) developed by Ho (1991) to enhance skills with ethnic minorities. The contrast is between seeing culture and cultural expertise as capable of measurement, categorisation and confinement, or seeing culture as subjective and unconfined.

It is also questionable whether it is appropriate for the responsibility for teaching social workers the specifics of a culture to lie with ethnic minority clients or co-workers. There is some acknowledgement that cultural competence is largely developed out of experience in dealing with diverse clients. Weaver (1999) states, for instance, that "beyond the general guidelines, the client is the practitioner's best source of assistance in developing cultural competence" (p.223). This raises the need to consider factors of power, responsibility and reciprocity within the helping relationship. As Bradley (1995) points out, referring to bicultural partnerships with Māori, "asking the lesser dominant partner [Māori] for ideas as to how the service might improve can be likened to an abuser seeking ideas from the victim for breaking the cycle" (p.40). Similarly, Culbertson (1997) raises the following questions:

Whose responsibility is it to understand? Is the minority culture always obliged to explain itself to the majority culture? When does the majority culture take upon itself the task of understanding to the degree that it no longer needs to ask for help? (p.3)

It might be concluded then, that it is counter-productive for valuable cultural resources to be colonised by social workers attempting to improve their cultural competency.

### **Anti-Racist/Anti-Oppressive Practice**

Arising out of a structural critique of social work, anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice is another terrain of social work which has informed practice with marginalised cultural groups and hence has relevance for practice with Tongans in a Western context. Anti-racist social work can be located within the broad category of emancipatory approaches to social work, explicitly committed to social justice, and engaging in challenging racist attitudes, assumptions and practices within the welfare state (Dominelli, 2002). Anti-racist perspectives “focus on transforming the unequal social relations shaping social interaction between black and white people into egalitarian ones” (Dominelli, 1988, p.3). Although written primarily from within a British context, anti-racist perspectives have relevance for social work with Tongans in an Aotearoa New Zealand context as they have also experienced processes of colonisation within their homeland and constitute a migrant group within a Western nation context.

In addition to literature addressing anti-racist social work, there is a host of material which surveys anti-racism as a new social movement within the welfare state from social policy and sociological perspectives (for example: Bonnett, 2000; Bowser, 1995; Williams, 1989). Anti-racism takes the position that social work institutions, agencies, training and so on are often inherently racist as ‘white’ cultures have dominance. Anti-racism calls for practitioners to be more than non-racist; it is not just the omission of racist actions, but explicit and intentional anti-racist action that is needed. Butler, Elliot and Stopard (2003a) explain that in developing anti-racist standards for social work it is important that cultural competency and anti-racism are not confused. They state (Butler et al., 2003a):

Searching for a Black client in order to demonstrate competence in anti-racism implies that racism only exists, or only needs to be challenged, in the presence of a Black individual or group... avoids focus on White internalised attitudes and socially constructed superiority, and fails to address the racist dynamics which can be prevalent in White dominated social and/or professional discourse.... [It] fails to investigate why the agency is not engaging Black or minority group members of the local community or addressing such marginalisation issues. (p.275)



Applying anti-racist practice to social work with Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand, one would be concerned, for instance, about the under - or over - representation of Tongan clientele and the proportion of Tongan social workers in relation to Tongan clients.

A study by Davison (1985) involving social workers who were Māori, Samoan, Tongan and Cook Island confirmed the need for social work in Aotearoa New Zealand to appropriately recognise the culture factor and to erode institutional racism. She stated that:

Consultation with Māori and Pacific Polynesian peoples is required to ensure that 'words' are carried into 'actions', enabling social workers to 'remove their hats' and 'hear the screams' (Davison, 1985, p.3).

She asserted that it is unacceptable for social workers to be simply non-racist, rather they need to move to a position of anti-racism, where the social worker:

... endeavours to listen, to learn, to perceive and understand the alternative view of the bicultural client while analysing the racist aspects of institutional policy and philosophy. (Davison, 1985, p.3)

In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, anti-racist type social work has primarily been couched within discourses of biculturalism with the Treaty of Waitangi as key the reference point (see, for example: Culpitt, 1994; Desmond, 1995; Durie, 1995a). *Puao te ata tu* (Department of Social Welfare, 1988), for example, critiqued institutional racism within the Department of Social Welfare. It analysed the disproportionate number of Māori children in state care, pointing to the Pakeha policies and practices of the Department as the primary cause for this disproportion. It advocated biculturalism and called for more explicit involvement of Māori *whanau* in decision making around care and protection of their children, and was a forerunner to legislative change in this direction. While the discourse of biculturalism is chiefly in respect of the relationship between Māori and Pakeha in Aotearoa New Zealand, *Pasifiki* peoples have certainly benefited from the headway made by *tangata whenua* colleagues within the bureaucracies (Gershon, 2001). In terms of supervision, for example, Pacific social workers can access cultural supervision in a similar way that Māori social workers can.

Critiques of anti-racism have included the need to understand the intersections between racism and other forms of social exclusion and oppression. Anti-oppressive practice is

an overarching concept, therefore, that contains anti-racism and practices which overtly challenge other forms of inequality (Ford, 2000). The following definition of anti-oppressive practice has been offered:

An explicit evaluative position that constructs social divisions (especially 'race', class, gender, disability, sexual orientation and age) as matters of broad social structure, at the same time as being personal and organisational issues. It looks at the use and abuse of power not only in relation to individual or organisational behaviour, which may be overtly, covertly or indirectly racist, classist, sexist and so on, but also in relation to broader social structures... and their routine provision of services and rewards for powerful groups. (Clifford, 1995, p.65, cited in Burke & Harrison, 2002, p.228)

Anti-racism, contained within a broader perspective of anti-oppressive practice, has therefore added to the waves of ethnic sensitive and cultural competence practice knowledge a step further, and calls for an analysis of power and a focus on structures, including social work structures and institutions, leading to overt action to address inequality.

### **Ethnic Specific Practice**

Somewhat distinct, and yet overlapping with the generalist approaches of ethnic sensitive, cultural competence and anti-racist practices, others have focused their attention on culturally specific approaches in social work. The work of these writers is in agreement with Fong's (2001) call to make cultural values a foundation for assessments, interventions and evaluations. I use the phrase 'ethnic-centred' here, as opposed to ethnocentric, as the latter has the connotation of cultural imposition, while the former infers an acknowledgement that all practices are, even if unwittingly, ethnic specific and influenced by culture. The available English language social work literature explicitly seeking to draw social work theory and practice intrinsically within non-western cultural worldviews includes: African-centred (Daniels, 2001; Graham, 1999, 2002; John-Baptiste, 2001; Stewart, 2004); Asian (Chan, Ho, & Chow, 2001; Cheung & Liu, 2004; Yip, 2003); Indian (Kulkarni, 1993; Nimmagadda & Balgopal, 2001; Nimmagadda & Cowger, 1999); Australian Aboriginal (Baskin, 2003; Bennett & Zubrzycki, 2003; Lynn, 2001; Lynn et al., 1998); Canadian First Nations (Bruyere,

2001); and Aotearoa New Zealand Māori<sup>6</sup> (Pohatu, 2003; Ruwhiu, 1994; Tait-Rolleston & Pehi-Barlow, 2001; Walsh-Tapiata, 2004) social work.

Nimmagadda and Cowger (1999), for example, undertook research with Indian social work practitioners in an alcohol treatment centre. They concluded that the social workers self-consciously used culture (for example, concepts of *dharma* and *karma*) as a directive for practice and developed their own niche in practice. These social workers were shown to have “distinctive ideas about advice-giving, family intervention, confrontation and reassurance that were at variance with Western models of practice and practice behaviours” (Nimmagadda & Cowger, 1999, p.274). Chan, Ho and Chow (2001) have also shown how the Chinese approach, using a body-mind-spirit model, is used as a successful social work intervention. Graham (1999) goes further to argue the need for African-centred perspectives in social work which challenge existing dominant paradigms for theory and practice. An African-centred worldview was stated to include: the interconnectedness of all things; the spiritual nature of humans; collective/individual identity and the collective/individual nature of family structure; oneness of mind, body and spirit; and the value of interdependent relationships.

A potential pitfall for advocates of ethnic specific approaches is a lack of recognition of diversity within cultures. Butler, Elliott and Stopard (2003a) identified that in teaching anti-racist standards to students, requiring them for example to refer to material written from a Black perspective, they “failed to acknowledge diversity of experience, tending to assume a uniformity of Black experience and opinion which denied uniqueness and self-definition” (p.276). So while I advocate here for ethnic specific approaches, I recognise that such approaches will always need to account for diversity within ethnic groups (for example, between the situations and experiences of Tonga-born and New Zealand-born Tongans). This study, therefore, seeks to take account of variation amongst Tongans.

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<sup>6</sup> To date there have also been eight editions of *Te Komako*, Māori-focussed editions of *Social Work Review* (Journal of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers). *Te Komako* provides a space for Māori social work practitioners, students, researchers and educators to present, develop and debate indigenous practice.

### **Emerging *Pasifiki* Theories and Practices**

*Pasifiki* (or Pacific) social work as a phenomenon started appearing in the social work literature around the late 1980s. Generally speaking, in the USA context Tongans are subsumed within the broader categorisation of ‘Asian and Pacific Island Americans’, although this tendency to group Pacific peoples together with Asian populations has been challenged for its marginalisation of Pacific ethnic groups (Mayeda & Okamoto, 2002). In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, the large scale migration of *Pasifiki* peoples occurred some 15 to 20 years before *Pasifiki* social work appeared in the literature. There was also a changing demographic with a growing proportion of New Zealand-born *Pasifiki* peoples (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2002). In the 1980s the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs had its beginnings with the purpose of monitoring and advising government policies and services in regard to their impact for *Pasifiki* communities in Aotearoa New Zealand (McCarthy, 2001).

It is worth noting that *Pasifiki* specific approaches, in the context of this thesis, do not necessarily include *tangata whenua* social work. However, as discussed in Chapter One, an historical and *Pasifiki* analysis of ‘Oceania’ leads one to understand *tangata whenua* and *tangata Pasifiki* as closely linked by way of genealogy (*whakapapa*) and there is a recognition of a “deep sharing of values and heritage” (McIntosh, 2001, p.152). The status of Māori as indigenous within Aotearoa New Zealand, however, politically positions Māori as quite distinct from *Pasifiki* and the Aotearoa New Zealand literature to some extent reflects this.

The Pacific focussed social work literature to date has been largely pre-occupied with providing *Pasifiki* perspectives on mainstream society and social work practice, reflective of the issues *Pasifiki* communities face as migrant minority groups within the Aotearoa New Zealand context. It is the reality of being marginalised cultural groups which has received a great deal of attention rather than detailing and developing the various *Pasifiki* ethnic specific concepts which provide a foundation for and inform ways of practicing social work.

In 1986, a group of Pacific social workers contributed an article to *Social Work Review* entitled *Good Social Work Practice: A Pacific Island Perspective* (Pacific Island Community and Social Workers Auckland, 1986). The authors, while not individually

identified, set a platform and demonstrated great foresight in regard to *Pasifiki* practice, highlighting culture, community, extended family, oral traditions and processes of sharing as key Pacific values for social work. They were clear that there were fundamental differences between their practice as *Pasifiki* social workers and the practice of *pālangi* social workers, differences that were related to social work being a way of life, rather than a job, for example. They recognised that as yet there were no clear Pacific social work models and there was a need to clarify and document Pacific social work knowledge and practice within Pacific communities. Although some notable advances have been made in the last twenty years (see, for example: Autagavaia, 2001; Crummer, Samuel, Papai-Vao, & George, 1998; Foliaki, 1994; Masoe Tulele, 1994; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Tiumalu-Faleseuga, 1993) there is still much that remains to be done.

Two chapters addressing Pacific social work appeared in the Aotearoa New Zealand social work text, *Social Work in Action* (Munford & Nash, 1994). Masoe Tulele's (1994) chapter addressed social work from a Samoan perspective, exploring issues that present themselves for Pacific peoples at the interface with social work as a *pālangi*/western social construct. She identified that clients' expectations of social work are often not congruent with reality; for example, they may expect that certain resources will be provided when the social worker has little power to influence the rules for resource allocation. She also identified a tension between the Samoan tendency towards community and the individualistic leanings of the "legal and practical basis for social work" (Masoe Tulele, 1994, p.173). Essential qualities of a Samoan social worker were listed as:

- maturity;
- being grounded (in *aiga* and culture);
- being bilingual (written and spoken);
- knowledge of Samoan parenting practices;
- knowledge of the *Palagi* culture and institutional systems;
- flexibility and practical experience of life at the community level;
- self-nurturing and survival skills, including personal support system;
- acceptance that nobody is perfect. (Masoe Tulele, 1994, p.175)

This work assists our perception and understanding of the integration of Samoan social workers and clients within mainstream social work agencies, but does not extend to a deeper understanding of how social work may be rooted within a Samoan worldview. That is, this work left room for an exploration and elaboration of *fa'asamoa* as a basis for social work.

The second chapter, by Foliaki (1994), offered a critical reflection on Pacific peoples' encounters with social work, using an example of her practice with a Tongan father who had used excessive physical discipline with his daughter. She demonstrated that connection via common experience in the islands can help facilitate discussion where both the practitioner and the client could analyse and critique culture as a means to facilitate personal and social change.

In 1993, Tiumalu-Faleseuga (1993) advocated for community economic development (CED) as a model of practice with Pacific communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. He argued that a CED approach draws on the communal strengths of *Pasifiki* communities and would allow them to develop sustainable social development from an economic base not dependant on government. Tiumalu-Faleseuga's argument gives voice to a theme which runs through *Pasifiki* approaches to social work, namely an emphasis on the collectivities of family and community.

More recently, there has been a notable development of *Pasifiki* ethnic specific literature. In 1998 a group of Cook Island social workers from within the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service developed *E Kaveinga*, a Cook Island model of social work practice, primarily for work within the field of child welfare (Crummer et al., 1998). *E Kaveinga* delineates a number of principles, protocols, social work practice and skills that are involved in effective work with Cook Island clients. The principles, it is stated, are given in addition to those outlined in the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act (1989). They include:

- social workers must have insight as to their own personal philosophy;
- collective philosophy requires working to strengthen children within their families and communities;
- Cook Island links are the basis of identity;

- dual role of social workers from Cook Island perspectives (that is, power/authority and care roles);
- use of Cook Islands language is a prerequisite for building relationships;
- Cook Islands knowledge is central;
- an holistic approach to assessment is required (including physical, spiritual, emotional and family);
- understanding of Cook Island family relationships;
- innate Cook Island family decision-making should be ‘harnessed’;
- realistic and meaningful solutions to be sought.

In addition to an explanation of relevant principles, protocols for home visits and family meetings are explained, along with preparation and consultation processes. A significant feature of the model is the requirement that if the social worker is not competent in Cook Islands language and culture, then a suitably competent and respected consultant (from the same island) should be utilised. The skills required in working with this model are identified as: Cook Islands language, Cook Islands culture, negotiation, mediation and conflict resolution, facilitation, analytical, conceptual, communication, interpersonal, cross-cultural and networking skills.

*E Kaveinga* makes a valuable contribution, particularly as it was one of the first of its kind. It should be noted, however, that the model was developed specifically for work within “the legislative framework of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989” (Crummer et al., 1998, p.1). As such, there is no discussion in the presentation of this model as to its applicability to other social work settings, nor does it include a critical analysis of wider systems. The model is descriptive and prescriptive, which contrasts to previous documents such as *Puao-te-ata-tu* (Department of Social Welfare, 1988) which were more explicitly anti-racist.

With one of the aims being to build on the spiritual element of *vaerua* (spirituality) within *E Kaveinga*, Newport’s (2004) thesis investigated Cook Islands women’s spirituality and their social service practice. She found that sensory sources of spiritual knowledge were:

...a special yet normal occurrence in their lives without distinction between the personal and the professional. It occurs through generations within families and extended to others they work with as village and community members. (Newport, 2004, p.85)

The women in her study expressed their spirituality from within a Christian orientation and institutional church order, but as life moved on, they more explicitly accepted aspects of ancestral beliefs from a shamanistic perspective, for example ‘inner feelings, ‘healing gifts’ and ‘land and breaches of tapu’. Newport’s study showed that spirituality adds to the skills and knowledge for social service work whereby, through triangulation, assessment and intervention is strengthened.

Another significant study was that undertaken by Mulitalo-Lauta (2000) who explored Samoan social work in Aotearoa New Zealand. Mulitalo-Lauta’s (2000) book, based on research for a Masters thesis, was the first to address social work in the Aotearoa New Zealand context from an ethnic specific Samoan perspective. He interviewed Samoan social workers both in Samoa and Aotearoa New Zealand. Five key components of *fa’asamoa* (Samoan culture/way) are identified: Samoan heart, Samoan way, protocols and values, social structures and institutions, ceremonies and rituals. The work culminates in the *lalaga* Samoan model of social work practice. The term *lalaga* refers to weaving a fine mat, whereby (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000):

The transformation of the pandanus leaves from their natural state to a modified form after being boiled symbolises the transformation of the two cultures when they are blended (woven and plaited) to produce an integrated service which satisfies the needs and aspirations of Samoan clients and agencies. (p.6)

According to the *lalaga* model, social workers, when working with Samoan clients, seek a point of equilibrium between *fa’asamoa* (Samoan culture) and contemporary aspects of social work. Others, however, have shown that *fa’asamoa* itself may be contemporary; Anae (2001) states that “New Zealand-born Samoans are demanding their own space in the cultural order of New Zealand in order to perpetuate the Samoan identity system” (p.118). By giving examples of Samoan social workers’ and clients’ interactions, Mulitalo-Lauta is able to highlight ethnic specific skills that are core qualities required of a Samoan social worker in a Samoan context.



In 2001, *Tu Mau*<sup>7</sup>, a special Pacific edition of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers' journal, *Social Work Review*, was published. This publication encouraged Pacific social workers to write about their practice. This collection of nine articles and three editorial contributions includes contributions about: Pacific epistemology and spiritual knowing in practice (Newport, 2001); embracing collectivity in work with Pacific young people (Afeaki, 2001); the identity question and its impact on New Zealand-born Pacific social workers (Mila, 2001); and a self-report strategy developed in Samoa in work with village women to reduce verbal and physical abuse of children and young people (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2001).

An interview with Taima Fagaloa (Fagaloa, Nowland, & Truell, 2002), appearing in an edited collection on current social work practice in New Zealand, reflects on practice in the Pacific social service agency of Taeaomanino Family Services Trust. In the course of the interview Fagaloa explains the application of Pacific and Samoan approaches in a New Zealand context, touching on the role of the church, working across cultural worlds, and Pacific ethnic differences.

Contributing to an edited book on social work in Aotearoa New Zealand, Autagavaia (2001) eloquently explores Samoan principles, values and ideology as a theoretical basis for a Samoan specific approach to social work. She advances the values of *aiga o le fa'asinomaga* (family and identity), multiple worlds and multiple beings, *va fealoloa'i* (to mutually respect and maintain the sacred space within relationships), *ava* and *fa'aaloalo* (respect), *tautua* (stewardship), *fa'autauta* (wisdom) and *gagana* (language). Autagavaia explains that she does not attempt to undertake a comparison of Samoan discourse with Western discourse, instead the focus is “to generate a theoretical frame of reference that places Samoa at the functional locus of the framework rather than on its periphery” (Autagavaia, 2001, p.81). In this sense, Autagavaia was successful in providing the basis for a Samoan centred social work paradigm.

Pacific fieldworkers in the Community Employment Group (Department of Labour) created a resource for community development workers, policy makers and organisations entitled, *Seeing with Pacific Eyes: Metaphors for Pacific Community*

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<sup>7</sup> Tu Mau – is a Tokelauan phrase and translates as ‘Stand Strong’

*Development* (The Community Employment Group, 2004). The resource employs four metaphors to inform community development practice with Pacific communities. *Te moana* (the ocean) depicts the environment for development, it represents sustenance for everyone, Pacific diversity, respect for the environment, upholding Pacific values and nurturing identity for future generations. The development process is encapsulated within *te vaka* (the boat), where aspects of planning, implementation and follow up are depicted within the metaphor. The *taro* (a root vegetable) metaphor, portrays the cultivation of Pacific community development, emphasising culture (values) as a foundation and the incorporation of old and new ideas and technologies. Finally, the basket of prosperity metaphor represents the outcomes of collective/community successes, Pacific strengths and goals, improved employment and enterprise and improved socio-economic status for Pacific peoples.

Literature from outside of Aotearoa New Zealand appears to have dealt with *Pasifiki* social work approaches to an even lesser extent. From the international domain it is the USA literature which has probably begun to scratch the surface of *Pasifiki* approaches, although the work often has an Asian and Pacific Islander focus in combination (for example: Ishisaka & Takagi, 1981; McLaughlin & Braun, 1998). A review of social work literature on Asian and Pacific Islander practice undertaken in the early 1990s (Fong & Mokuau, 1994) revealed that there was still a need to distinguish between Asian and Pacific Islanders. It concluded that practice needs to have a family, group and community focus given the collectivist orientation of Pacific and Asian cultures.

### **Characteristics Distinguishing *Pasifiki* Approaches**

The sphere of development within social work literature which seeks to draw on ethnic specific *Pasifiki* paradigms as a theory and knowledge base for practice has some notable qualities. *Pasifiki* ethnic specific approaches derive from cultures which are primarily oral and have an emphasis on the spiritual; so their richness may not necessarily be reflected in written forms, but in practice and in the development of relationships. It would appear then, from an academic viewpoint, that knowledge is less developed than is necessarily the case. Secondly, *Pasifiki* approaches to practice essentially develop from within a *Pasifiki* worldview paradigm. That is, rather than starting with a non-*Pasifiki* model and adapting it into a *Pasifiki* approach, the theory and knowledge for practice begins within the specific *Pasifiki* framework, which then

inevitably incorporates aspects from the non-*Pasifiki* context. This is akin to the explanation of the Tree of Opportunity which was developed as a way of explaining Pacific education and values (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2001). In this analogy, the tree is rooted firmly within Pacific values and language. When the roots and identity are secure then external influences can be grafted onto the tree without changing the roots. Thirdly, *Pasifiki* approaches notably use *Pasifiki* languages to identify concepts for practice. Finally, the focus is on *Pasifiki* ethnic groups working with their own, rather than on how social workers might work cross-culturally with a particular *Pasifiki* ethnic group.

### ***Pasifiki* Theories and Practices in Fields Other than Social Work**

Beyond the social work literature, ethnic specific theory and practice has been advocated in the field of education and health. Fusitu'a and Coxon (1998), Helu-Thaman (1998; 2003b), Manu'atu (2000; Manu'atu & Kepa, 2004) and Taufe'ulungaki (2003) explore indigenous Tongan concepts for education. Helu-Thaman (2003a) demonstrates how *ako* (learning), *'ilo* (knowledge) and *poto* (wisdom), as traditional Tongan concepts of education, provide a frame of reference for Tongan education today. She argues that “we need to continue the process of reclaiming indigenous discourses by placing greater emphasis on our cultures and their languages in teaching and curriculum planning, as well as in the management and administration of education” (Helu-Thaman, 2003a, p.77). Manu'atu's (2000) doctoral research examined Tongan pedagogy for Tongan high school students in Aotearoa New Zealand. She found that the Tongan worldview concepts of *mālie* (enjoyment) and *māfana* (warmth) are essential relational aspects between teachers and students for Tongan student's learning and success. Likewise, Fusitu'a and Coxon's (1998) study of a homework programme based in Aotearoa New Zealand identified Tongan cultural motivations for learning, such as *fie'aonga* (wanting to be useful to family and community).

Within the health field in Aotearoa New Zealand, there is growing attention given to developing *Pasifiki* models of practice. Tamasese, Peteru and Waldegrave (1997) undertook a qualitative study on Samoan mental health services, and demonstrate the need for ethnic specific services and approaches:

They [the research participants] stated that the diagnosis, treatment and the structuring of Mental health services were all monoculturally based, and as such of very limited value to Samoan people .... When describing their conceptions of a successful mental health service for Samoan people, all the groups referred to hospital and community based services designed and largely staffed by Samoan people... where the Samoan conception of self or persona would be the bases of any mental health service provision. (pp.86-87)

A recent study sought to identify Pacific models of service delivery in the Aotearoa New Zealand mental health sector (Agnew et al., 2004). Participants referred to the following models: the wellness model, illness model, *fonofale* model, *te vaka* model, *Faafaletui* model, Pandanus Mat model, strengths-based model and traditional health treatment model. The *fonofale* model, developed by Pulotu-Endemann and is based on the Samoan *fale* (traditional house), was the most frequently mentioned by participants. The *fale* has four pillars of well-being: spiritual, physical, psychological and other (includes gender, employment, sexuality, age etc). The roof represents *Pasifiki* peoples' cultures, while the foundation is the extended family which forms the basis of social organisation and provides the base for the four pillars. The *fale* is enclosed within dimensions of the environment, time and context (Pulotu-Endemann, 2002). Agnew et al. (2004) concluded, however, that these models mostly consist of models of health belief, rather than models of service delivery. On this point, it is interesting to note Durie's (1995b) *whare tapa wha* model, a Māori practice framework which refers to four walls of a house representing the balance and contribution of *hinengaro* (mental), *wairua* (spiritual), *whanau* (extended family) and *tinana* (physical) aspects of health and wellbeing. The *whare tapa wha* model is very similar in form and content to the *fonofale* model and yet it has become a widely used model in social work practice and service delivery in Aotearoa New Zealand (Joyce, 1994; Nash, Munford, & Hay, 2001). This suggests that models of health belief are translated by practitioners into models of service delivery. *Pasifiki* ethnic-centred frameworks for practice then, may not be prescriptive models for service delivery, but they nonetheless provide a solid grounding for service delivery practice.

## **Analysis of Culture Debates in Social Work:**

### **Anchoring Ethnic-Centred Frameworks for Practice**

In this section, I present an analysis of the debates within social work related to culture as a means to locate Tongan ethnic specific social work theory and practice. In so

doing, I draw on critical postmodern perspectives as part of the wave framework outlined at the beginning of this chapter. So far, I have presented an overview of developments in social work with regard to ethnic sensitivity, cultural competence, anti-racism and anti-oppression, and ethnic specific paradigms. Culture has always been either implicitly or explicitly central to social work. Questions arise, however, around what is distinctive about the space that ethnic specific approaches (such as Tongan theoretical frameworks for practice) occupy. How do such approaches relate to existing social work concerned with meeting the needs of and advancing the aspirations of marginalised ethnic groups? A critical postmodern analysis of the debates and positions reveals themes, tensions and distinguishing characteristics of ethnic specific practice frameworks. I move now to elaborate on four such characteristics: essentialism, ethnic-centrism, within-culture, and solutions.

### **Hybridity - Essentialism**

This theme relates to how culture is viewed. While not always explicitly articulated, various perspectives and practices of social work carry assumptions about the nature of culture. It is suggested here that ethnic-centred paradigms for social work adopt a ‘both/and’ position in relation to hybridity and essentialism as theories of culture. To adopt one or the other view exclusively is problematic (conceptually and practically) if our goal is the wellbeing of diverse groups of peoples. Essentialism is the view that culture is largely determined by essences which are more or less unchanging, such as biological factors; while a hybrid view of culture asserts that culture develops through social interaction and is changeable over time.

Essentialists have been criticised for presenting a static view of culture, for reinforcing aspects of culture which are viewed as oppressive in regards to gender or parenting practices for instance and for not recognising diversity. The tendency to promote cultural competence with diverse cultures with the delineation of a ‘do and don’t’ list for practice based on a traditional view of culture can be questioned in terms of its essentialism. Mokuau and Tauili’ili (2004) for instance, write on working with Hawaiian and Samoan families of children with disabilities. They outline geographical, historical, religious and language origins, and then move on to outline: values of family, religion and education; and beliefs about children, disability, health and death. They state in relation to Samoan beliefs about children:

Samoans believe that the firstborn belongs to the father's family, the next child belongs to the mother's family, and other children born afterward belong to the village consisting of both paternal and maternal families. (Mokuau & Tauili'ili, 2004, p.359)

There would be many non-Samoan-born families who do not adopt these beliefs and therefore they are discounted or marginalised in this description of culture, which is also counter to a critical and emancipatory approach. Therefore, social work must take account of the fluid and hybrid characteristics of culture.

John-Baptiste (2001), however, provides a sound discussion of the dangers of wholeheartedly accepting the hybridity discourse in relation to social work practice with African peoples. She suggests that there are “differing deep structures of cultural thought and practice, and aspects of culture that are transgenerational in nature” (John-Baptiste, 2001, p.269). John-Baptiste (2001) illustrates that a hybrid discourse downplays the history and process of struggle and transformation. Likewise, Graham (2002) argues that the survival and resistance common to African groups has been an important point of cultural connection and identity. As John-Baptiste (2001) states:

In the struggle over culture as a means of interpreting identity, hybridity adds a certain degree of romanticism and actualisation to the idea of people being ‘fluid’ in nature. However, the continued human and social positioning (or rather dispositioning) of people of African origin belies this utopian view of the world... But as long as we continue to reduce issues of wealth and power to discourses on representation, those defined as the ‘cultural other’ will continue to see hybridity positions as an attempt to remove aspects of the power base from groups so defined. (p.269)

Similar concerns have been expressed by Smith and White (1997), who write:

In collapsing all ideology and subjectivity into discourse, the often grim, lived realities of oppressed groups may be reduced to ‘difference’ and, in the process, pressing (emancipatory) social imperatives may become obscured. (p.293)

John-Baptiste (2001) goes on to argue that a hybrid position on culture masks cultural dominance:

It is simply not acceptable to negotiate towards a position of cultural diversity based on the hybrid position of ‘all different – all equal’ as this would assume little more than the acceptance of a cultural diversity charged with reflecting the hybrid nature of a unitary (dominant) culture. (p.275)

Further, ethnic-sensitive and anti-discriminatory social work practices are argued to be reactive, based on Eurocentric philosophical assumptions.

From the point of view of ethnic minority group members in post-colonial contexts, the realities of their experiences and the survival of culturally specific values points to some continuity of meaning. For Tongan communities, for example, the values of love, respect and mutual sharing as practiced within the *kāinga* define Tongan culture (see Chapter Six), demonstrate the meaning of culture across space, time, and generations.

In the wider literature, there has been some suggestion that neither hybridity or essentialist notions of culture provide a way out of colonial relations (Bell, 2004). The dismissal of essentialism and constructionism as binary opposites is central to the argument of feminist writer, Fuss (1989), that “social constructionists do not definitively escape the pull of essentialism, [and] that indeed essentialism subtends the very idea of constructionism” (p.5). She suggests “deploying” or “activating” essentialism for its “strategic and interventionary value” (Fuss, 1989, p.20). In this way, descent, genealogy or *whakapapa* has strategic significance within ethnic-centred approaches to social work.

Ethnic specific theory and practice, therefore, in some ways departs from the sort of social constructionist understandings that would reduce notions of culture to the language of diversity, difference and discourse. Ethnic specific approaches employ strategic essentialism, based on an acceptance of the experiences and perspectives of groups who define themselves as having a trans-generational and historical culture that has meaning for their lives (John-Baptiste, 2001). Cultural boundaries are at risk within a purely hybrid view of culture, increasing the likelihood of assimilation and the diminution of ethnic specificity. So while there is an acceptance, embracing and tolerance of pluralism promoted by the postmodern perception of culture, there is a need to balance this against the reality whereby dominant cultural systems resist challenge and change to their power and privilege.

### **Indigenisation – Ethnic-Centrism**

Referring to the adaptation of social work theories and methods to local cultures, conditions and needs, indigenisation is defined by Nimmagadda and Cowger (1999) as:

The process whereby a Western social work framework and/or Western practice technology is transplanted into another environment and applied in a different context by making modifications. (p.263)

Payne (1997) proposes that there can be “useful mutual exchange” (p.12) between various cultural contexts in terms of social work theory development and indigenisation. He points out that there is an international structure of organisations which allow communication and facilitation of social work development beyond Euro-American models. Likewise, Gray (2004) views indigenisation as bringing our:

multiple voice and ways of knowing *situated in particular socio-historical and cultural locations* so as to establish a solid foundation for meaningful cross-cultural communication in international encounters. (p.1)

Clearly, there is a need for processes of indigenisation and mutual exchange, but there is also a clear need for space for non-Western ethnic groups to consolidate, articulate and develop their ethnic specific theories and models for their own benefit. Hence, there is a distinction between processes of indigenisation, where imported or non-indigenous ideas are altered to fit to local conditions, and ethnic-centric development of indigenous and local practice from within the cultural worldview paradigm of the relevant ethnic group. It is the strengthening and development of ideas and practices intrinsically within these worldviews that then places ethnic groups in a better position to negotiate the incorporation and indigenisation of mainstream social work.

The development of social work as a profession internationally, occurred as part of the project of colonialism and modernisation (Midgley, 1981) and so raises questions about the purpose of social work within developing, Third World and non-Western countries. Kaseke (2001) states, in relation to Zimbabwe, for example, that social work was introduced “to enable the white settler community to enjoy the same services enjoyed by their kith and kin in Britain” and that “it was felt necessary to extend social work services to the indigenous population only at a later stage” (p.109). The indigenisation of social work, in this case, effected a marginalisation of the indigenous population. Further, Kaseke argues that the casework form of social work that was extended was inappropriate and argues for social development as an appropriate form given the indigenous worldview and the economic and political context. Ethnic-centrism then, allows development of social work from the core of an indigenous ethnic worldview.



Commenting on social work in China, Tsang and Yan (2001) observe that rather than directly and indiscriminately borrowing from the West, the Chinese “took a complementary stance whereby universal norms and standards were used as useful guidelines and references to complement indigenous understanding and practices” (p.382). As a result, they note a pattern of social work education in China that is characterised by commitment to community development and social integration, partnership with government in educational and service development, and commitment to the indigenisation of social work.

These examples from Africa and Asia, when examined in detail, illustrate the issues that arise when a (usually Western) cultural mode of social work is transplanted from one context to another, particularly when there is an uncritical approach to making adaptations and modifications. Ethnic specific theory development is therefore favoured here as a means to achieve the critical and discriminate adoption of Western approaches in Tongan social work. I am not suggesting that ethnic-centric development processes are clean cut, context free and capable of developing solely within a contained singular culture. I am suggesting, however, that there is an important, yet subtle, difference in emphasis and focus between indigenisation and indigenous ethnic-centrism. Indigenisation is at risk of taking what John-Baptiste (2001) calls a reactive stance, which takes Eurocentric models, values and measurements of social wellbeing as the core starting point. In contrast to indigenisation, an ethnic-centric Tongan approach is examined within the data sections of this thesis.

### **Cross-Cultural - Within-Culture**

Distinctions can be made between theory and research which is focused on social work occurring cross-culturally, and that which focuses on practitioners working with their own ethnic communities. It has been argued elsewhere (Mafile'o, 2001; McShane & Hastings, 2004) that an emic approach (which focuses on culture-specifics) rather than an etic approach (which looks at categories across different cultural groups) is what is required for research and practice with indigenous peoples. Ethnic sensitive practice, cultural competency and anti-racist/anti-oppressive practice arose in Western or *pālangi* cultural contexts; so majority cultures defined social work and controlled social work resources. Ethnic diversification within Western societies, combined with the marginalised position experienced by indigenous and particular ethnic groups, gives rise

to the need for social work theory and practice to address ethnicity and culture in social work. Hence, theories addressing cross-cultural social work have developed, particularly since the 1980s. While these theories are variously micro-macro and therapeutic-emancipatory, they have in common a cross-cultural emphasis; they seek to enable diverse cultures to work together and to deal with the adverse affects of Western capitalism on ethnic minority groups. It can be observed from these theories and practices that they first and foremost emanate and develop from a mainstream or *pālangi* framework and context.

Outside of such frameworks and contexts, however, communities and cultures have developed means to address their social needs and aspirations both in traditional settings and in the diasporic reality. Social work practitioners and academics from and working with their own marginalised ethnic communities are developing theory and practice which emanates primarily from within non-mainstream and non-*pālangi* cultural contexts (for example: Autagavaia, 2001; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Ruwhiu, 1994; Stewart, 2004). The premise of these theory and practice developments centres within diverse cultural worldviews and not principally sourced from mainstream social work institutions and agencies in the welfare state.

Pawar (2003; 2004) offers insightful discussion on the value of traditional elements in the postmodern context and argues that “it is possible to resurrect some elements of traditional communities in postmodern societies” (Pawar, 2003, p.264). It is from this ‘traditional’ position, where within-culture welfare is embraced, that cross-cultural approaches can then be developed. Pawar and Cox (2004) explain that formal welfare systems differ somewhat from communities’ informal care and welfare systems, and that these systems need to co-exist in balance. They provide the Table 2.1 to highlight the differences:

Overall, Pawar and Cox (2004) demonstrate that there are informal systems of care and welfare that require acknowledgement and warrant acceptance with positive support. In a similar way, ethnic-centred frameworks are about the development of thinking and practices based on such systems. It is from a place of recognition and development of such, that efforts to integrate formal and cross-cultural systems can then proceed.

**Table 2.1 Features of formal and informal systems of care and welfare**

Formal systems	Informal systems
Usually centrally organised and administered	Organised at individual, family, neighbourhood and community levels
Rigidly follow rules and procedures	Person-based in terms of both relationship and response to the presenting need
Bureaucratic	Often provided on mutual obligation basis
Entitlements based on strict criteria	The nature of services related to not only needs but more closely to prevailing beliefs and other cultural systems
Impersonal services	Tend to be a response to persons and their situations
Specific need related	Some receive legal sanction and some may not
Services are based on professional assessment of needs	Difficult to monitor, evaluate and review
Tend to be a response to specifically identified needs to which a specific response is regarded as necessary and possible	Maximum outreach
Monitoring, evaluation and review are possible	Generally effective and efficient
Limited outreach	Prompt and timely
Operation costs can be more than benefit	Culturally appropriate
May involve procedural delays	
May conflict with cultural practices	

Source: (Pawar & Cox, 2004, p.5)

The development of within-culture paradigms and the integration of informal systems of welfare is supported by critical postmodern theoretical critiques of progress and knowledge which enable subjugated voices to rise to the fore. As Leonard (2001) puts it:

The emancipatory narrative of western modernity has been shown to be based on claims to universal, objective knowledge, supported by a linear view of history whereby the West assumed the role in bringing development to the rest of the world – the steady march of Civilisation. The ethnocentric arrogance of these claims leads to a profound inability to respond creatively to difference, and results in the suppression of the voices of the Other. (p.1)

However, countering suppression of other voices does not negate the need for these voices to be articulated, critiqued and developed within themselves. In a globalised context, this would usually occur dialogically, with Western voices being a part of that conversation. Post theories (Healy, 2005), including postmodernism, postcolonialism and poststructuralism, go so far as opening the door for Tongan constructions of social work theory and practice to be legitimated; post theories level the playing field amongst

competing, diverse and, at times, incongruent ways of knowing within social work. Yet post theories may also be viewed as ‘hollow’ in the sense that they do not provide the substance of knowing from Tongan perspectives. By ‘hollow’ I mean that other voices do not arise from within the discourses of post theories, rather they arise from within the indigenous cultural worldviews. Importantly, there is a synergy with the intersection and interaction of ethnic-centred frameworks with critical postmodern social work approaches. That is, ethnic specific theoretical frameworks rise to provide another voice, offering challenges and alternatives to accepted understandings, while post theories attend to the contexts in which ethnic-centric theorising is given voice.

Any ethnic group has a degree of diversity and this is even more so in the context of diaspora; as argued above, however, from the point of view of minority ethnic groups themselves there are essential aspects of their culture(s) which provide meaning for their lives. Ethnic specific theory and practice is concerned with the consistencies and diversities within a particular ethnic group, and therefore has an emic, or within-culture, focus.

### **Issues - Solutions**

Finally, ethnic specific theory and practice has a primary focus on the solutions associated with ethnicity and culture. Ethnic sensitive, cultural competence and anti-racist/anti-oppressive practice is concerned with managing cultural diversity and dealing with cultural issues. Ethnic specific theory and practice, on the other hand, is interested in the solutions that ethnicity and culture brings. Rather than finding the problems social work has in relation to ethnicity and culture, the strengths, resources, and theory for understanding, guiding assessment, intervention and evaluation are given primacy.

To summarise, the pursuit of understanding Tongan approaches to social work, is then the pursuit of the development of an ethnic-centred practice framework. This involves an understanding that Tongan culture has meaning across generations (time) and geography (space) and is not wholly fluid or hybrid. It is an attempt to go beyond a type of indigenisation which is about the adaptation of non-Tongan approaches to Tongan social work, and instead is centred within a Tongan worldview. Tongan social work approaches are primarily concerned with what happens within Tongan culture and what occurs cross-culturally is both secondary and subsequent to this. Finally, ethnic

specific theorising is deliberately concerned with the solutions found within a particular culture as a starting point.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined and analysed the social work literature in regard to cultural diversity, providing a backdrop for a Tongan ethnic-centred framework for practice. In this analysis, I conceptualised social work knowledge as akin to ocean waves which emerge, develop, and sometimes subside according to political, cultural and historical contexts. Critical postmodern ideas provide a theoretical understanding of the social construction of knowledge and expose the subjugation of particular voices within social work. The social work literature which directly addresses culture was presented under four headings. Ethnic sensitive practice asserts that ethnicity has a significant role in client help-seeking and therefore practitioners need to have an awareness of both their own and client ethnicity. Cultural competence discourse suggests that social workers need to develop proficiency within the cultures of clients they work with. Anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice is a critique of the racist and oppressive nature of social systems which serve to marginalise people on the basis of race, gender, age and so on. Finally, ethnic-centric theory and practice was explored, including practice paradigms developed by indigenous and non-Western peoples. *Pasifiki* social work, as ethnic specific approaches, has received more attention in the Aotearoa New Zealand social work literature in recent years.

A review of the themes presented in the literature addressing culture and ethnicity in social work reveals considerable overlap amongst ethnic sensitive practice, culturally competent practice, and anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice approaches. Ethnic specific approaches such as those advanced by African-centric (e.g. Graham, 1999; John-Baptiste, 2001) and some *Pasifiki* writers (e.g. Autagavaia, 2001) represent a more fundamental shift in perspective. While some overlap between ethnic specific approaches and other waves of literature exist, particularly in terms of agreement about the salience of culture and ‘race’ or a concern with social justice for oppressed ethnic groups, ethnic specific approaches make their departure at a paradigm level, stipulating specific cultural values for ethnic specific practice.

Tongan social work can broadly be identified within the literature concerning social work with ethnic minority groups. The literature pertaining to social work with ethnic minority groups originates from the perspective of working with ethnic minority groups within a cross-cultural Euro-Western dominated context (Devore & Schlesinger, 1981; Lecca et al., 1998; Williams, Soydan, & Johnson, 1998). Essentially, such works can be described as providing an etic perspective on social work with Tongan people. That is from the perspective of one ethnic group working with another, an outside perspective. There are few works which attempt to provide an emic perspective, a perspective or theory of social work from within the specific cultural world. This chapter has explored the extant literature from both these perspectives.

Social work involving Tongans can benefit from social work theory and knowledge that has developed around ethnic sensitive, cultural competent and anti-racist/anti-oppressive practice. These perspectives and practice approaches, however, do not contain the depth or completeness that will be required to really address the wellbeing and aspirations of Tongan *kāinga* and communities. What is required in the process of social work is that the very essence of *mo'ui fakatonga* (Tongan culture/way) is enhanced as a value and ideological system. By exploring *mo'ui fakatonga* and its role in providing a framework for Tongan social work, ethnic specific theory and practice can ensue.

I have argued for a legitimate space for ethnic-centred frameworks in social work. It is also crucial, however, to realise the contribution made by ethnic sensitive, cultural competent and anti-racist practice. It is not so much that one needs to choose between alternative approaches to culture and social work, but that we should understand the particular contributions made by each body of thought, perceive the limitations they each carry and learn how to advocate for the integration of perspectives to bring about fundamental social change and lead towards social justice.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology and Research Process

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*Potopoto 'a niu mui* (the emergent cleverness of a young coconut)

This chapter discusses the methodological approach adopted and the research process undertaken for this study. Qualitative research, using the tools of in-depth individual and focus group interviews, was employed as a means to facilitate the exploration of Tongan practice frameworks. The first section of the chapter identifies some challenges that researching Tongan social work gave rise to, namely: the voice of Tongan epistemology and researcher location. Second, the chapter outlines central themes of qualitative research, and gives a rationale for the constructionist, critical and Tongan methodologies that informed this research. The process I undertook to select and recruit participants, and to collect and analyse the data is outlined in the third section. Finally, the chapter outlines ethical issues and how they were dealt with.

#### **Challenges of Researching “Tongan”**

Two significant challenges arise for me in my endeavours to study a “Tongan” topic.

##### **Voice of Tongan Epistemology**

First, I am conscious of the dilemma presented by my attempt to articulate and explore indigenous Tongan knowledge within the Western context of an Aotearoa New Zealand university. Issues of power are present. Research has been a tool of the imperialist West to marginalise and dominate indigenous peoples (Mutua & Swadener, 2004; Smith, 1999). Qalo (2004) asserts that:

Our island education system is inundated with the glitter of global culture. We cease to appreciate astrology that guided the canoes across the greatest of oceans, the science or knowledge put together to manage long distance travel, build houses, canoes, *marae*, *koro*, plait mats, make tapa, etc. We can go on, but our history is also inundated with people from another culture who imposed theirs on ours. (p.2)

Tongan cultural ways of knowing and being are not the predominant mode of operation within the Aotearoa New Zealand academic environment and so researching Tongan matters is filtered through a non-Tongan, non-Pacific system of knowledge legitimisation. This raises the issue of the extent to which Tongan knowledge can be known from the viewpoint of quite a different culture, and whether in the process the potency of Tongan knowledge will be subverted. Tamasese et al. (1997), for instance, demonstrate that the use of English impacts on analysis within Pacific research.

While I perceive this as problematic, the potential advantages of cultural triangulation are also noted. That is, there may be gains from interpreting data both from a Western knowledge point of view and from a Tongan cultural point of view. Interestingly, Bartunek and Louis (1996) note that “an approach to inquiry that embraces only one perspective is potentially ethnocentric” (p.14). Within this research, I acknowledge that as a consequence of my two viewpoints I experience the demands of dual accountability, to the Tongan world and to the *pālangi* world, as to the outcomes of the research. Qalo (2004) argues that there needs to be a careful interface between indigenous/local Pacific knowledge and global knowledge within *Pasifiki* academies. Similarly, Durie (2005) highlights the crucial role indigenous researchers have in “straddling the divide between science and indigenous knowledge” (p.144), but also notes the potential for criticism from two fronts. He states:

The challenge has been to afford each belief system its own integrity, while developing approaches that can incorporate aspects of both and lead to innovation, greater relevance and additional opportunities for the creation of new knowledge. (Durie, 2005, p.145)

So, perhaps what may occur as a “crisis of vocality” is also an opportunity for new voices to offer solutions to various problems associated with qualitative research (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003). Whether Tongan knowledge will be misconstrued via Western processes of knowledge acquisition or whether there are cultural triangulation



advantages to be realised, this is nonetheless a significant challenge that needs to be acknowledged.

### **Insider/outsider Researcher Location**

I have also faced the reality and challenge of being an insider-outsider in relation to this research project. The idea that a demarcation between insider and outsider is not always static has been suggested by Sixsmith, Boneham and Goldring (2003). They discuss their access to a socially deprived community and state that “the research team was at varying times both outsider and insider to the particular community under research, making access to the community a complex process of managing social relationships and personal impression” (Sixsmith et al., 2003, p.579). Smith (1999) also writes from the perspective of being an insider researcher within a marginalised group, and refers to the precarious disconnections that an insider researcher can experience:

Many indigenous researchers have struggled individually to engage with the disconnections that are apparent between the demands of research, on one side, and the realities they encounter amongst their own and other indigenous communities, with whom they share lifelong relationship, on the other side. There are a number of ethical, cultural, political and personal issues that can present special difficulties for indigenous researchers who, in their own communities, work partially as insiders, and are often employed for this purpose, and partially as outsiders, because of their Western education... (p.5)

The fluid nature of insider-outsider status is also noted by Narayan (1993; cited in Bartunek and Louise, 1996, p.67) in his statement concerning ‘native’ researchers. Interestingly, it is pointed out that the acknowledgment of such fluidity serves to strengthen the research (1993, p.680; cited in Bartunek and Louise, 1996):

Given the multiplex nature of identity there will be certain facets of self that join us up with the people we study, others that emphasize our distance... To acknowledge such shifts in relationships, rather than present them as purely distant or purely close, is to enrich the textures of our texts so they more closely approximate the complexity of lived interaction. (p.67)

While, I am, for the most part, an insider in relation to this research project, this is not a constant. For example, I noted variation amongst the participants in their reference to Tongans and the Tongan culture in that some articulated in a way which reflected an assumption of shared understanding of things Tongan. On the other hand, some participants referred to things Tongan in a more objectified way, implying little shared

identity and knowledge between us. My insider position is therefore differently defined depending on the particular other insider I may be referencing to, particularly whether they are Tongan-born or New Zealand-born. In this project, therefore, I was unavoidably both an insider and an outsider which entailed certain obligations and responsibilities which will be elaborated later in this chapter.

Taking cognisance of the challenges and opportunities presented by Tongan epistemology and insider-outsider location, I now move on to outline the basis on which I proceeded with this study of Tongan social work.

### **Constructionist, Critical and Tongan Research Methodologies**

Qualitative investigations are not explorations of concrete, intact frontiers; rather, they are movements through social spaces that are designed and redesigned as we move through them. The research process is fuelled by the raw materials of the physical and social settings and the unique set of personalities, perspectives, and aspirations of those investigating and inhabiting the fluid landscape being explored. (Tewksbury & Gagne, 1997, p.127)

Exploring Tongan social work practices involved movement through social and cultural spaces, the process of which brought about a construction of knowledge. Since Tongan social work has not been addressed in the literature, I took an exploratory and largely inductive approach to the study of Tongan models of social work practice. Patton (2002) explains that:

In new fields of study where little work has been done, few definitive hypotheses exist and little is known about the nature of the phenomenon, qualitative inquiry is a reasonable beginning point for research. (p.193)

Qualitative research, while clearly not a unified field or approach (Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2001), is characterised by a number of key themes, principles and tensions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994b). In terms of research design, Patton (2002) identifies the themes of qualitative research as: naturalistic inquiry, studying real-world situations as they unfold naturally; emergent flexible design; and purposeful sampling. Data collection and fieldwork involves: qualitative, thick description; insight gained from the personal experience and engagement of the researcher; an empathic and open stance; and recognition of dynamic systems. Themes of qualitative analysis include: assuming each case is unique; inductive analysis and creative synthesis; holistic perspective;

placing findings in social, historical and temporal context; and explicit recognition of voice, perspective and hence reflexivity as part of the analysis. My approach to researching Tongan social work was to varying degrees reflective of these themes, as will become apparent throughout the chapter.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest that we are entering a “seventh moment” in the history and development of qualitative inquiry. This moment is defined by:

...breaks from the past, a focus on previously silenced voices, a turn to performance texts, and a concern with moral discourse, with critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation, freedom, and community. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.1048)

In tune with such a moment, this research project brings the Tongan voice to the fore of research and social work discourses in its critical exploration of the wellbeing practices of diasporic Tongans. Tongan realities and worldviews then occupy a centre position:

There is an illusive center to this contradictory, tension-riddled enterprise that seems to be moving further and further away from grand narratives and single, overarching ontological, epistemological, and methodological paradigms. This center lies in the humanistic commitment of the qualitative researcher to study the world always from the perspective of interacting individuals. From this simple commitment flow the liberal and radical politics of qualitative research... This commitment defines an ever-present but always shifting center in the discourses of qualitative research. The center shifts and moves as new, previously oppressed or silenced voices enter the discourse. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a, p.575)

A qualitative approach was appropriate for an exploration of Tongan social work. However, it is not a matter of whether methods are qualitative or quantitative that is important, as “questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.105). This study was primarily constructionist, but importantly was also informed by critical and Tongan methodological paradigms. I now turn to outline the rationale for these approaches and the way in which they flowed together to provide a comprehensive methodological framework.

### **Constructionist Approach**

Constructionism is understood here as:

...the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (Crotty, 1998, p.42)

Constructionism then holds that there are “multiple, apprehendable and sometimes conflicting social realities” and that “knowledge is created in interaction” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.111). That is, there are multiple perspectives across time and place whereby “our culture brings things into view for us and endows them with meaning and, by the same token, leads us to ignore other things” (Crotty, 1998, p.54). Constructionism therefore provided an epistemology where social work was understood as being socially constructed.

Further, in order to explore Tongan social work practice, Tongan social workers’ meanings and conceptions of practice were the particular focus of exploration. Schwandt (1994) adds that constructionism has the goal of “understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it,” there is a concern “for the emic point of view, for understanding meaning, for grasping the actor’s definition of a situation” (p.118). Tongan social workers were interviewed (individually and in focus group meetings) about their practice, to gain an understanding of how their practice was constructed. The process and interactions of inquiry contributed to a co-construction of knowledge in which my own background, experience and interpretation also shaped the research. Schwandt (1994) further states in his discussion of the epistemological claims of constructionist approaches to inquiry, that “no sharp distinction can be drawn between knower and known, between accounts of the world and those doing the accounting” (p.131).

The argument of Crotty (1998), however, is adopted here that social constructionism is at once realist and relativist - this is similar to Patton’s (2002) explanation of dualist constructionism. That is, something may be socially constructed but this does not preclude it from being real. Further, the social construction or the adequacy of a representation can be raised as an issue and be a point of inquiry.

Reference to ‘constructionism’, as opposed to ‘constructivism’, is used here as it indicates the emphasis on the social origin and character of meaning and knowledge, but also fosters the critical spirit (Crotty, 1998) whereby received and inherited understandings may be brought into question. Put another way, power is at play within social constructions whereby dominant views or constructions serve the interests of those in power (Patton, 2002). Schwandt (2003) states that “a general assumption of

social constructionism is that knowledge is not disinterested, apolitical, and exclusive of affective and embodied aspects of human experience, but is in some sense ideological, political, and permeated with values” (p.307).

### **Critical Perspective**

While the methodology stemmed primarily from a social constructionist paradigm, critical theory ideas, elements of which are commensurate with constructionism (Lincoln & Guba, 2003), have also been influential in the research approach. The rationale of Ladson-Billings (2003) in her adoption of critical race theory in her research resembles my own reasoning in relation to this study of Tongan social work. She states:

*My decision to deploy a critical race theoretical framework in my scholarship is intimately linked to my understanding of the political and personal stake I have in the education of Black children. All of my “selves” are invested in this work – the self that is a researcher, the self that is a parent, the self that is a community member, the self that is a Black woman. No technical-rational approach to this work would yield the deeply textured, multifaceted work I attempt to do. Nor would a technical-rational approach... challenge the inequitable social, economic, and political positions that exist between the mainstream and the margins. (Ladson-Billings, 2003, p.432)*

I approached this research with the particular and explicit orientation (Patton, 2002) towards positive social change for diasporic Tongans. Shaw and Gould (2001) remind us that “our vision of the relationship between social work and research must never be utopian - but it must always be radical” (p.200).

Social work itself was viewed as “discursively situated and implicated in relations of power” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994) and so a study of Tongan social work was impinged upon by context. While this research set out to explore, study and understand Tongan approaches to social work, I was conscious of the imperatives of transformative social work (Pease & Fook, 1999) and endeavoured to conduct the research in a way that would result in benefits for Tongan peoples. That is, that the stories of the people would come alive and the research would be “emancipatory for the people who are being researched as well as for those doing the research” (Walsh-Tapiata, 2003, p.72).

### Tongan Methodological Approach

Tongan methodologies were also foundational to the research approach. While a Tongan methodological approach is relatively undeveloped within the research literature, there is a groundswell of writing on *Pasifiki* methodologies and epistemologies<sup>8</sup> (see, Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Nabobo-Baba, 2004; Tamasese et al., 1997), coinciding with the promotion of ethnic and indigenous epistemologies for research internationally (see, Absolon & Willett, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Mutua & Swadener, 2004; Smith, 1999).

Some studies on Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand (for example: Guttenbeil-Po'uhila, Hand, Htay, & Tu'itahi, 2004; Manu'atu, 2000) have explicitly drawn on Tongan methods, particularly the notion of *pō talanoa*. Lita Foliaki, the Tongan cultural supervisor for this research, had shared her understandings of *pō talanoa* as a research method whereby a questioning approach, which can be taken as impolite, gives way to a method of conversing which was not confined by time limits and which develops its own rhythm. *Pō talanoa* is “a construction, reconstruction, and a deconstruction of Tongan social ‘realities’” (Manu'atu, 2000, p.56).

Helu-Thaman (2002; 2003b) has outlined the *kakala* model of research based on the process of fragrant garland making. There are three phases of garland making that are used as metaphors and guidance for research. *Toli kakala*, the selection and picking of the most appropriate flora and fauna, is associated with the recruitment and data collection phases of research. The process of *kau tui kakala*, weaving and putting the garland together, represents the skill, knowledge and insight necessary for data input, analysis and reporting. Finally, the process of *luva e kakala* is the presentation or gifting of the garland. In research this is an important part of returning the research to the participants or community so that it can be useful. Helu-Thaman (2003b) states that *kakala* provides a philosophy and a methodology which requires the use of “knowledge that is sourced both locally and globally so that I may weave a garland that is both meaningful and appropriate and worthy of being passed on” (p.10).

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<sup>8</sup> Since 2003, the Health Research Council of New Zealand has held Pacific Health Research Fono (meetings/conferences) in New Zealand where Pacific methodologies have been a particular point of focus and development.

In relation to epistemology, Sanga (2004) suggests that *Pasifiki* research assumes that knowledge is relativist and contextual. He states that “consequently, the way to explain, know and understand is by using constructs, frames and metaphors that are intelligible to the knowledge” (Sanga, 2004, p.45). Western based methods and approaches may have the effect of silencing Pacific voices (Nabobo-Baba, 2004), but Sanga (2004) suggests that the tendency to “fight politically for academic legitimisation” (p.42) for Pacific research is not effective and instead efforts by Pacific researchers should be “spent on developing Pacific research within its own philosophical orientation, since it is from such attention that confidence and credibility are more likely to be achieved” (p.42).

My approach in this research was mindful of Tongan indigenous ways of knowing and the imperative that research with Tongans should have benefits for diasporic Tongans and not be a pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Further, Tongan methodological considerations were central given that this study was exploring Tongan social work.

In summary, the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of this research drew from constructionist, critical and Tongan paradigms; it is the fusion of these paradigms which characterised the approach taken to researching Tongan social work practice. This fused methodological approach is suited for interpreting the range of diasporic Tongan experience and addressing the key research questions, namely: the Tongan philosophical and value bases that inform wellbeing; distinctive Tongan ways of bringing about personal and social change; and the key components of a Tongan theoretical framework of social and community work practice.

## **Participants**

### **Participant Selection**

A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was utilised for selecting Tongan social workers to participate in this study. The type of purposive sampling used is what Patton (2002) has referred to as maximum variation sampling in which there is a purposeful “wide range of cases to get variation on dimensions of interest” (p.243). A broad and inclusive definition of what constituted a Tongan ‘social worker’ was utilised to include those that might be seen by the Tongan community as being ‘social workers’.

As such, this included participants who identified with helping professions other than social work – for example pastoring, nursing and counselling. In such cases, these participants had worked beyond their professional roles to take leadership and development roles amongst the Tongan community. I also set out to include Tongan social workers who had experience in a range of fields of practice, who worked in either statutory or non-government organisations, who were either New Zealand-born or Tongan-born, those with formal tertiary social work qualifications and those without a professional social work qualification, and finally, a gender balance and range of ages.

### **Participant Recruitment**

The first step was to devise a list of Tongan social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand using existing personal and professional networks and snowballing. The list included name, contact details, place of employment, job title and type of qualification where known. I placed an advertisement in the newsletter of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, but there were minimal responses from this, which was not unexpected considering the relatively small numbers of Tongan social workers who were members of the association.

By far, the most fruitful method for locating Tongan social workers was through talking with Tongan social workers and other key Tongan community leaders. Lita Foliaki, the cultural supervisor for this project, assisted by calling an informal information session with five Auckland-based Tongan social workers. Lesieli Tongati'o, who works for the Ministry of Education in Wellington, helped facilitate a meeting with several Wellington-based Tongan social workers. My aunt, Luseane Koloï, had a background in community work with Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand and she attended the information sessions, which was helpful for potential participants to make connections with myself and with the project.

From these meetings, further names were added to the list. Some participants were recruited and interviewed before the list was complete, because I was certain I wanted their participation given my existing knowledge of their contribution to social work and the Tongan community. I invited participation mostly by way of face-to-face contact and being introduced by someone I already knew. Where the potential participant was already known to me, my initial contact was via telephone. There was only one person



who declined to participate; interestingly, this was the only person I contacted by telephone whom I had not previously met. Potential participants were provided with English and Tongan translations of the Information Sheet (Appendix 1) and Consent form (Appendix 2)<sup>9</sup>. A factor that had a part to play in my decision making around choice of participants was the fact that once a face-to-face connection was made to enquire about interest in participating in the study, it was difficult to retreat and not have that person participate. It was difficult not to include them because I felt that a verbal agreement to participate was akin to a gift that the participant was giving me – a factor which I believe was part in parcel of a Tongan research perspective. A possible implication for the study is that I may have achieved even greater variance in participants had this not been a factor. Nonetheless, there was still a satisfactory degree of variance amongst the Tongan social workers that met the requirements of an exploratory study such as this.

In the end, around 100 Tongan ‘social workers’ were listed, 29 potential participants were invited to participate and 28 consented. For reasons of logistics and the population base of Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand, participants were drawn from two cities. The majority (20) resided in Auckland, the country’s largest and fastest growing city, where 78% of the Tongan population in Aotearoa New Zealand reside (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). The remaining participants (8) resided in Wellington, the capital, where 5% of the Aotearoa New Zealand Tongan population reside (Statistics New Zealand, 2002).

Table 3.1 provides a general profile of the participants in this study. The majority of the participants were Tongan/Island-born (75%) and female (57%). Around 43% had a formal social work qualification and around the same number had some other tertiary qualification. The majority of the participants had practice experience in health or child/youth/family related fields, although a range of other fields of practice were also represented.

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<sup>9</sup> The translation work for the information sheet and consent form was done by my cousin, Frank Koloi, who had been operating a Tongan/English newspaper for several years and hence had considerable experience in translation.

**Table 3.1 Profile of Participants (N=28)**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
<u>Where born/raised</u>		
New Zealand	6	22.2
Tonga/Pacific Islands	21	77.8
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	12	44.5
Female	15	55.5
<u>Qualification</u>		
Social work degree	5	17.9
Social work diploma/ certificate	7	25
Other tertiary qualification	12	42.9
No tertiary qualification	4	14.2
<u>Field of practice*</u>		
Mental health	5	17.9
Health	3	10.7
Youth	3	10.7
Child protection	3	10.7
Youth justice	3	10.7
Church/religion	3	10.7
Family	2	7.1
Community development	2	7.1
Domestic violence	2	7.1
Policy/admin	2	7.1
Other (disability, employment support, A&D, justice)	4	14.3

- (participants counted more than once where they have experience in more than one field of practice)

### **Access and Reciprocity**

The nature of ‘who’ I am in relation to the research question had a significant bearing on this research project, particularly in the setting up stages. The lines between my identity and role as a researcher were often blurred by my Tongan and social work identity in a way that facilitated the research. This is reflected in the fact that gaining access was enabled not only by my professional networks, but by family and cultural identities.

Participants remarked that they were pleased to “help” me as they were proud that I was a Tongan doing research at this level. One participant commented:

I'm so encouraged by what you're doing - knowing that there is a Tongan person that is reaching, trying to get the PhD. It's really encouraging for me... I'm so proud to know and see that there is something like this... trying to bring us up in our profession.

As part of this desire to help, there was an expectation that the project would be part of an ongoing journey or process, with benefits to the wider Tongan community. This is illustrated in the following statement:

I hope that you complete your thesis and get what you are searching for.... I hope when you are completed, that you can help some other Tongans to develop. We are here. We are here to stay. Now we have to develop more people in every field to do with our community.

This sentiment is reflective of the principle of reciprocity which has been identified as important in *Pasifiki* research; that is, rather than “conceive of reciprocity as a quick quid-pro-quo formula” (Health Research Council of New Zealand, 2003, p.23), there must be real benefits to the participants and their communities which may include capacity building within communities. There have been glimpses of the way in which such capacity building might occur in the process of this study. For example, two of the participants who were not formally qualified in social work have now enrolled in a social work programme, only to find that one of the publications (Mafile'o, 2004) arising from this study was already part of the reading material for the course. It is affirming for them, that the reading material was, in some part, the result of their own practice. This is a small but, in my mind, significant indicator by which the value of the research may be realised.

Another participant drew attention to the similarities in our journeys. In doing so, he highlighted that our personal and family backgrounds play a significant role in our professional positioning as practitioner and researcher in this setting:

I'm really interested in where all this is going to take you... If we look closely at the reasons why me and you are in this room, and how we got here and the roads that our parents took... and their lives and upbringing of us as kids and where this has led us to... I'm sure there's a lot of shared values and thinking between us.

Moreover, it was perceived that as Tongan social workers we had a shared commitment and obligation to ensure the development of competent social work practice generally with Tongan families and communities. These factors illuminate the facilitative impact

of my Tongan identity in participants' perceptions and expectations of the research project.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Three phases of data collection were undertaken, comprising an individual interview, followed by focus groups and then a final individual interview. I originally set out to undertake a fourth phase of data collection in the form of another set of focus groups. However, the quality and volume of the data collected in the first three phases meant that a fourth phase was not warranted, a feature of emergent and flexible design within qualitative approaches (Patton, 2002).

The interviews were semi-structured, using open-ended questions and a general interview guide (Appendix 3), which enabled me to follow up leads, encourage further elucidation and “to establish a conversational style” (Patton, 2002, p.343) with the focus on a predetermined subject. This was also more consistent with a Tongan methodological approach. The interviews therefore provided rich data on Tongan social work practices. Interview methods were appropriate given that the nature of social work practice and the requirements for confidentiality in client work would “preclude the presence of an observer” (Patton, 2002, p.341).

It is recognised that interviews are “negotiated text” where meaning is “accomplished at the intersection of the interaction of interviewer and respondent” (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p.92). Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews facilitated a degree of depth and connection to occur between myself as the researcher and the participants, as noted in my journal reflections in relation to one particular individual interview:

As she spoke of the symbols, the stories, the sorrow, the connection... the story she told connected with something in my experiences and we both found ourselves shedding a couple of tears as we resonated with the experience of a Pacific man whose dream had been lost.

Another participant said that the interview processes gave her the space to reflect on her practice, and gave her new realisation of the extent to which her practice was influenced by *angafakatonga* (Tongan ways).

Analysis was integrally associated with data collection, with some preliminary analysis occurring at the completion of the first and second data collection phases, respectively. This procedure provided understanding, concepts, and questions for elaboration and clarification in the second and third data collection phases (analysis will be discussed further on in the chapter).

### **Phase One: Individual Interviews**

The first phase involved the 28 participants in semi-structured, individual interviews. There was one instance of two people being interviewed together at their request. The two participants spoke in Tongan and a third person (also a participant) was present to translate the information. While there was one participant who declined to be tape-recorded, the remainder of the interviews were tape-recorded (26 in total, including the joint interview). The interviews took between 45 minutes and two hours. The first interview in each case was intended to be primarily introductory and relationship-building in nature. The focus was on a description of each participant's past and current practice as a social worker (see Appendix 3). As it turned out, however, the data from the phase one interviews was significantly rich and provided a substantial platform from which guidance for the subsequent stages emerged.

The first two phase one interviews served as pilot interviews, following which I made some adjustments to the interview guide. First, I added a question to elicit the story of who the participants were and how they became a 'social worker'. Second, instead of asking about a participant's experience and practice of social work, I asked about their engagement in social and community work. This allowed a broader capture of their experiences and views, and countered the tendency to undermine community work as an aspect of social work practice.

In most cases (17) the first interview took place in the participant's place of employment. When this occurred, it was useful in that it gave me a greater appreciation of the agency context of their practice. For example, I could observe snippets of staff interaction, agency resourcing and location. This indirectly impacted on my understanding and interpretation and gave me a slightly more rounded appreciation of the participant's practice. Other interviews were held either at the home of the participant (7) or at a neutral venue (2).

The interviews were transcribed by myself and copies of the transcripts were returned to participants for checking and amendment if required. Only one participant responded to the opportunity presented by the transcript and made comments regarding editing of grammar and punctuation.

I then reviewed each transcript, underlining relevant text (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Simultaneously, I summarised and noted key points from each transcript in a separate transcript summary document, with cross-referencing back to transcript page numbers. I then systematically reviewed the summaries, sorting the material under headings of skills, values, knowledge, goals and issues for Tongan social work. Further, I wrote a list of questions that had arisen, which was used to some extent to guide phase two. The questions that I identified at this stage were:

- What are the Tongan proverbs/myths/stories that tell us about ‘social work’?
- Given that there are no social workers in Tonga, how are people and their issues taken care of?
- How could our collectivity be strengthened?
- In what ways does a social worker’s age/gender/acclimatisation shape their social work practice with Tongans?
- What in Tongan culture should remain in an Aotearoa New Zealand context, and what should change?

Finally, I noted my reflections which centred largely on feeling honoured by the willingness and cooperation of participants and being inspired by their heartfelt commitment and expression of social work practice during interviews. I also reflected that Tongan language skills would greatly assist me with this project and that I perceived more strongly the need to look at indigenous Tongan knowledge as a starting place. These reflections led to my decision to spend two months in Tonga over the summer of 2001-2002, and before the commencement of the focus group meetings.

### **Time in Tonga**

I spent two months based in my father’s village of Te’ekiu, Tongatapu, with extended family for the purposes of language acquisition and cultural grounding. While I am still not completely fluent in the Tongan language, the experience was invaluable in that I can now converse at a basic level in Tongan. Importantly, in the process of my

immersion in a Tongan village, I also experienced Tongan values and concepts at a new level. I was in Tongatapu at the time that cyclone Waka devastated parts of the Vava'u island group. This provided an opportunity to observe and be a part of responses to assist those who had been affected by this event. The time spent in Tonga was meaningful, not only in terms of my research, but in the development of my cultural identity as a New Zealand-born Tongan. My journal reflections, two weeks after my return, were that:

Although hard to quantify, the value of spending time in Tonga cannot be equated to the degree of language learnt alone. The value of just “being there” I see as pivotal to the research process. It gave an anchoring to my activities back here. And yet, at the same time, I am anchored by my identity, background, experiences, work, existence of being a New Zealand-born Pacific islander. My two selves are enmeshed.

I have always realised to some extent the “in-between-ness” I live. To *pālangi* and New Zealanders I am Tongan, to Tongans I am definitely a *Pālangi*. This experience hasn't made me anymore Tongan. If anything, I feel the misfit of the two worlds is even more accentuated! The difference is, I am comfortable with this reality more and more.

The time spent in Tonga is unlikely to have occurred had I not been undertaking this research and it was qualitatively different from my two previous visits because of my involvement in this project. It is difficult to decipher which aspects of the experience were about research and which were about personal development as they were intermingled. This is an aspect which serves to strengthen the research, particularly from a Tongan cultural point of view, as my discussions with participants and the subsequent analysis and interpretation of data collected were influenced by this grounding experience. The decision to spend time in Tonga reflects the manner in which the research project has its own journey, which was not linear but shifted and emerged as part of the ‘dance’ of qualitative research design (Janesick, 1994).

### **Phase Two: Focus Groups**

For the second phase, four focus group meetings were conducted in Auckland and one in Wellington. There were between four to six members in each group, with 23 in total participating. The participants who did not participate in the focus group (two in Wellington and three in Auckland), were unavailable because of other commitments at the time of the focus group meetings. The benefits of group interviews are that “they are relatively inexpensive to conduct and often produce rich data that are cumulative and elaborative; they can be stimulating for respondents, aiding recall; and the format is

flexible” (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p73). A single-category design (Krueger & Casey, 2000) was utilised where participants opted to attend on the night which was most convenient for them. This created the dynamic of mixed groups in terms of gender, age and birthplace (i.e. New Zealand-born and Tongan-born participants). An implication of this arrangement was younger members choosing not to voice disagreement with older member’s points of view - a concern subsequently raised by one focus group member. The strength of this approach, however, was that at times there was a diversity of views expressed which stimulated insightful discussion.

After a brief welcome and explanation of the process, members were asked to introduce themselves and share a childhood memory. This procedure served as an icebreaker and helped to set a broad parameter for the discussion of social work practice. A questioning route (Krueger & Casey, 2000) followed and guided discussion (Appendix 3). The four questions were written onto large sheets of paper and put up on the walls. Key themes and concepts arising out of the previous individual interviews were discussed. As such, the focus groups were used as a means to obtain participants’ interpretations of results from the previous stage (Morgan, 1988). A meal was provided at the end of the evening as a small measure of appreciation. Anecdotal feedback from participants indicated that they enjoyed the evening.

### **Language and Translation**

The focus groups were bi-lingual, and participants were invited to use either the Tongan or English language in their discussions. This was based on the understanding that in articulating Tongan social work practice, the use of Tongan language deepens and enhances the possibilities for accurate understanding and analysis. Setting up the focus groups in this way meant that, as the moderator, I had less control of the process as I was not always cognisant of the content of the discussion. This was a compromise I was willing to take because of the benefits of allowing participants to discuss questions, issues or topics freely in either Tongan or English. I was also prepared for this to occur because of the notion of *pō talanoa*, mentioned earlier in the chapter, which I had become aware of as a possible Tongan method of research (see Guttenbeil-Po’uhila et al., 2004; Manu’atu, 2000). Apart from the issue of meaning, language also implicated issues of process. One of the things I noticed was that when I had to leave the room to attend to refreshments, the Tongan language use increased. This indicated to me that



my limited language ability constrained Tongan language use in the focus group, most likely because the participants did not want to exclude me from the conversation. Other possible explanations could include the fact that there was a shared background and professional experience among the participants who were also well known to each other and my leaving the room changed the group dynamics.

I transcribed the English language segments of the focus group recordings and employed the assistance of a Tongan social work graduate to do the transcription and subsequent translation of the Tongan components (Appendix 4). The participants were aware that a translator would be employed but the person was not confirmed until after the focus groups had taken place. The particular person who did the translator/transcriber role was approached because she was located in the same city as myself and this made it possible for us to work closely on the transcripts. In addition, I wanted a translator who had some affinity with the topic being explored so that the meanings of what was said would be more likely to be appropriately translated. Temple (2002) argues that with research involving more than one language, the intellectual auto/biographies and hence perspectives of the researcher and the translator ought to be recognised alongside language ability in methodological discussion. This is because “people’s lives and experiences inform their translations” and “translators, as much as researchers, produce texts from their own perspectives” (Temple, 2002, p.846). I note that this is the case, even though the translation in this project occurred at the level of transcript and not the actual meeting. Verification of translations occurred at the stage of report writing in that Tongan language quotes utilised in the study were checked by a participant who volunteered to undertake this role, and are reported alongside the English translation.

An unanticipated issue was the amount of time the translation would take. This meant that timeframes had to be adjusted. As expected, there was also the difficulty of trying to capture in the fullest possible way, the Tongan meaning of concepts and phrases within the English language. As pointed out by Temple (2002), “possible differences in the meaning of words or concepts across languages vanish into the space between spoken otherness and written sameness” (p.844). These interrelated issues were starkly clear when at times during the process of translating, I would sense a change in the nature of content and meaning when the language switched between English and

Tongan. It made me appreciate that the study may well have had somewhat different outcomes if it had been undertaken fully in Tongan or English or with a different relative mix of language. Once again, this illustrates the constructed nature of knowledge and the art of qualitative inquiry. The intertwining of Tongan and English in this project contributed to a particular construction of Tongan social work.

Once the translations had been completed, full transcripts from the focus groups were read, relevant text was highlighted, and the repeating ideas were noted on separate transcript summary sheets, which included page number referencing back to the transcript. The summary sheets from both the first and second phases of data collection were then reviewed and sorted under headings or themes. A total of 86 concept or theme headings were developed as part of this process. The concepts were themes which could be described as values, skills, knowledge or issues which Tongan social workers had raised.

### **Phase Three: Individual Interviews**

Phase three interviews served as a follow-up to further explore participants' social work practice. A letter was sent to participants beforehand, outlining the focus of the interview and the interview guide (Appendix 5). There were 27 participants who were interviewed in this phase. There were 25 tape recorded interviews in total, each of which took between 45 and 90 minutes; once again, one interview included two participants and one interview was not tape recorded. Given that there had been a time lapse of about one year from the initial individual interview, the phase three interview provided a perspective on how thinking and practice had developed or changed over the period of one year.

Following the pattern of previous analysis, the transcripts for stage three were read, relevant text highlighted and noted on a separate transcript summary sheet. The summary sheets were then reviewed, integrated and added to the themes which had emerged from the previous phases.

This phase of data collection largely provided clarification and elaboration of themes. Interestingly, the participants seemed to offer a critique of some practice concepts that were previously raised. The likely reasons for this are that the content of the previous

two phases provided a point of reference for this interview, there was a greater sense of familiarity between myself and the participants and the participants had experienced a degree of maturation on the topic having had the chance to reflect on their earlier perspectives. It also reflects the degree of data saturation which had been accomplished throughout the process.

All in all, 28 participants were involved in the first phase, 23 participated in the focus group and 27 participated in the final individual interview. While not all participants were involved in all the phases, the level of participation in the three phases was perceived as sufficient to provide a basis for qualitative analysis.

### **Analysis and the Process of Writing the Thesis**

As already outlined above, thematic analysis was undertaken of the transcripts subsequent to each phase of data collection. My interpretation in this process did not happen in a vacuum. I was conscious throughout that my experiences, observations and intuition had a part to play in my interpretation and understanding of the transcripts. The inductive process was essential because there is a dearth of literature on Tongan social work. This meant that I considered specific literature prior to, in tandem with and subsequent to the review and analysis of data. For example, some participants spoke about humour in their practice. It was subsequent to reviewing this as a theme that I then did a literature search on humour in social work. The inductive process is a strength in this exploratory process as the data itself is a driver of the research.

I completed writing the first draft of the data chapters before the identification of metaphors to represent a culmination and integration of the research findings. The journey of identifying metaphors for use in this study was congruent with the philosophical and cultural foundations of this research. The idea for the metaphors around fishing arose in discussion with my father, who was a keen fisherman during his youth in Tonga. As a result of my analysis of the data, including discussion with my father, I employed two metaphors which represented key values, skills, processes and knowledge of Tongan social work (Chapter Five). Finally, I came back and met with some participants as part of this process of identifying metaphors as an interpretive framework in which to integrate the findings. I had a meeting in Auckland and one in Wellington towards the end of the project where I presented my interpretations to those

attending and sought their feedback. The participants overwhelmingly affirmed the interpretation via metaphors. I also sent them copies of publications (Mafile'o, 2004; Su'a-Hawkins & Mafile'o, 2004) arising out of this research.

### **Ethics**

This project was approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) (Appendix 6). In addition, the Research Access Committee (RAC) of the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services gave approval for participants within their service to participate (Appendix 7).

Ethical issues around anonymity and confidentiality arose in this project from the fact that Tongan social workers are relatively few in number in Aotearoa New Zealand. Hence, any individual profiling of participants - including age, gender, field of practice and geographical location - would likely make the participants identifiable. I avoided this possibility by instead profiling the participants collectively. However, this came at the cost of not being able to fully acknowledge participants for their knowledge, expertise and particular insights. The decision was made, primarily in the interests of preventing harm to clients and agencies, to avoid naming participants in this study.

There was also the potential for ethical issues pertaining to participants recounting practice examples in focus groups that could be identified by others. This was addressed by giving clarification and reminders at the start of the interview of the purpose of the study and the requirements of confidentiality. The transcriber/translator of the Tongan components of the focus group meeting was also required to sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix 4).

Another ethical dilemma I faced in this research was associated with the reporting of both positive and negative stories. Once again, ensuring the participants were anonymous as far as possible was a key way in which this was addressed. I also attempted to give adequate discussion of participants' narratives to allow a full analysis of the context and to enhance understanding.

To conclude, this project has qualitatively explored Tongan social work within a constructionist and critical paradigm. At the same time, I have been cognisant of the existence of Tongan epistemological understandings and methodologies, and have attempted to be sufficiently flexible to incorporate the particular roles and responsibilities I have as a New Zealand-born Tongan researcher. The following chapter gives further background to this study by elaborating on the nature and significance of the Tongan diaspora as a context for the exploration of Tongan social work practice.



## Chapter Four

### Tongan Diaspora

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We must fashion our cognitive cultural crafts to ride the wave of globalization surfing the tunnel, the crest or suffer the mauling of the waves on corals that could end our existence. In doing so we must interface our indigenous and the expanding global knowledge... to get the best ride. (Qalo, 2004, p.8)

The Tongan diaspora constitutes the context for this study of the nature, development and practice of Tongan social work. This chapter explains the way in which colonialism, post-war migration and globalisation have fuelled the Tongan diaspora and shaped Tongan social and cultural change. The need for a Tongan social and community work approach is highlighted when consideration is given to the wellbeing of Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand and transnationalism where wellbeing is linked multi-dimensionally to Tongans elsewhere. There is increasing diversity of Tongan identities. The chapter concludes with comments about the on-going process of simultaneous reproduction and transformation of *mo'ui fakatonga* (Tongan culture) in the Tongan diaspora.

#### Colonialism

Historical and contemporary colonialisms in the Pacific have a significant bearing on the construction of Tongan social work. 'Colonialism' is used here to refer to both the era and ongoing processes of European imperialism in Tonga and the Pacific. Imperialism may be understood as reflecting a view from the imperial centre of Europe of economic expansion, the subjugation of 'others' and as an idea or spirit with many forms of realisation (Smith, 1999, p.21). Smith (1999) points out that from the

perspective of local contexts, imperialism is seen as a discursive field of knowledge. So while Tonga was not formally colonised, and neither did social work develop as part of colonial processes within Tonga as it did in other parts of the world (see Midgley, 1981), colonialism and imperialism nonetheless shape Tongan social work in terms of the issues Tongan clients and families face and the way in which Tongan approaches to social work intersect with mainstream social work discourses.

Social change, as a ubiquitous aspect of human existence, has not been evaded by Tongan society. It is believed that the islands of Tonga were first settled some 3,000 years ago (Howe, 2003). Arguably, social change for Tongans of a more fundamental and accelerated nature has occurred in the last 200 years as a result of contact with *pālangi*, and Tongan interaction with non-Pacific cultures and systems. It is important to note, however, Macpherson's (1992) reminder that:

the decision to start accounts of change [in Pacific cultures] at the point of European contact may have more to do with the availability of the records... than it has to do with the reality of the process itself. (p.433)

Tonga first encountered European explorers and traders in 1616 when Willen Cornelis Schouten and Jacob LeMaire landed on Tafahi and Niua Toputapu, two of the northern islands of Tonga. In 1643, Abel Tasman visited Ata, Tongatapu and 'Eua. James Cook's venture to Tonga in 1773 marked the beginning of more substantial interaction between Tongans and the non-Pacific world. That said, it is important to recognise, as Latukefu (1974) argues, that following a relatively peaceful and prosperous period during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Tonga, "growing contact with Fiji stimulated dramatic change in the socio-economic and political arena" (p.218). The colonialism which ensued with European (especially British) contact, most notably from the early 1800s (Gailey, 1987), therefore influenced and accelerated fundamental change in Tongan society, notably in regard to such areas as religion, education, economics, government structure and systems of justice.

While Tonga signed treaties with several European powers and the USA, British interests dominated after 1900 when "Tonga had unwillingly signed the exclusive Treaty of Friendship with Great Britain" (Wood-Ellem, 1999, p.2). Hence, although



Tonga was a protectorate of Britain until the 1950s, the extent of colonialism in Tonga was less extreme in comparison to other parts of the Pacific, as Tonga remained a kingdom and was never formally annexed to Britain. Latukefu (1997) notes that:

British colonial policy favoured minimum intervention in the case of small countries such as Tonga with little prospect of economic returns, and it encouraged indigenous governments, supported and guided by missionaries and responsible settlers, as long as no other world power exerted undue influence over these governments. (p.181)

While formal colonisation was not fully fledged constitutionally in Tonga, the extent of social, economic and cultural change was nonetheless substantial. For example, following European contact in the 1700s the population declined from around 50,000 to around 20,000 by 1900 at least in part as a result of civil wars and introduced diseases (Wood-Ellem, 1999).

The introduction of Christianity, as part of colonialism, was a key force in shaping subsequent change in Tonga. Following unsuccessful attempts to evangelise Tonga in the early 1800s, the Wesleyan Methodist mission was successfully established in 1826 (Wood-Ellem, 1999). Notably, the conversion of Taufa'ahau Tupou I (King George) by the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries in 1831 was a preamble to the promulgation of written codes of law and, eventually, the adoption of Tonga's Constitution in 1875. Latukefu (1997) writes:

King George foresaw the tidal wave of European impact and... opted to ride the wave rather than go against it... When the missionaries came, he quickly accepted their teachings and their world-view. After his conversion, he became the champion of their work, and they supported and encouraged his desire to unite Tonga into a kingdom. (p.182)

Christianity then “was crucial in deciding the direction which political changes took” (Latukefu, 1974, p.218). Korn (1978) demonstrates a proliferation of denominations in Tonga and highlights that “the domain of the churches affects most spheres and all levels of Tongan society” (p.420). The integration of Christianity and Tongan culture in Tongan society can be illustrated with reference to social relations and *kava* drinking practices. Rogers (1975) shows how *faikava fakasiasi* (church *kava*) has become a part of Tongan *kava* ritual, where *kava* ceremonies are held before Sunday church services. He states that the Tongan chiefly hierarchy, while respected in ‘church *kava*’, is

“sometimes superseded by church rank” (Rogers, 1975, p.380); he speculates that this may be why some nobles become church leaders or stay away from church altogether. Leadership within the church then has become a way by which commoners increase their status, illustrative of the powerful place that churches retain in Tonga and in Tongan peoples’ lives (Morton Lee, 2003).

Latukefu (1997) has demonstrated that traditional Tongan concepts of justice and law based on *mana* and *tapu* have been significantly modified by British influence. He states:

The mana of the chiefs and the strict tapu system surrounding them has significantly declined... and there is increasing demand for society to abide by the introduced concepts of liberty, equality, social justice and accountability. (Latukefu, 1997, p.186)

Economically, contact with non-Pacific cultures and colonialism brought the introduction of non-gift exchange, cash and eventually a movement from primarily kin-based economic structures towards class formation. Gailey (1987) argues that class and state formation in Tonga brought about a decline in women’s authority and status, but notes also the impact of a range of other factors:

Tongan women have lost important sources of structural authority and autonomy through a complex interaction of missionary zeal and influence; the institution of production for exchange; changes in industrial production in Europe and the introduction of European commodities; the interests of missionaries, Tongan chiefs, and colonial administrators in revising and codifying customary inheritance and land-use arrangements; and the creation of a civil sphere especially associated with chiefly men. (p.297)

Such change was clearly advocated by some Tongans, while others were more reticent. In the post-war period, Queen Salote and Crown Prince Tupouto’a were described as “two people working side by side with very different ideals of society and government” (Wood-Ellem, 1999, p.222). The Queen advocated keeping alive traditions and ideals of the *kāinga* (extended family) and respect, while Tupouto’a, as Minister for Education and Health, aimed to accelerate Westernisation by deciding Tonga should be a bilingual country, bringing in *pālangi* teachers and sending Tongans overseas for education (Wood-Ellem, 1999). While both Tongan and English are the official languages, research by Taufe’ulungaki (1993) reported the need for language planning in order to preserve and promote Tongan language. In terms of education, Aotearoa New Zealand,

which from the early 1900s had a significant role in Tonga's education system, expanded the school system "according to what was perceived as being in the political and economic interests of the New Zealand authorities" (Coxon & Mara, 2000, p.159). Many of the Tongans who went overseas for education did not return, but were the first wave of settlers facilitating further family migration (Morton Lee, 2003). Altogether, these factors indicate the tension between attempts to maintain Tongan culture and the acceleration of Westernisation.

This tension continues to the present day. Not all the changes in Tonga as a result of migration, and the "internationalizing" policies of Tupou IV since the 1970s, are viewed entirely positively:

Many Tongans have commented to me that development in Tonga is physically evidenced by improved interisland communication and transport, electricity throughout most of the islands, more multistory buildings and more expensive houses, numerous restaurants and nightclubs, and so on. On the other hand, they also observe that there have been more negative developments, such as roads crowded with cars; increasing pollution; a higher cost of living; increasing crime, landlessness, and even homelessness; poor families squatting on land reclaimed from rubbish dumps; and the other common problems of so-called 'Third world' countries. (Morton Lee, 2003, p.27)

Tonga's interconnection with Western nations was cemented in her involvement in World War II. Tonga joined in war efforts with, and was a base for troops from Aotearoa New Zealand and the USA (Wood-Ellem, 1999). Wood-Ellem (1999) states that:

Doubtless Tonga would have changed even if there had been no war, but during the war Tongans had seen the material advantages of the Western lifestyle, and this knowledge could not be taken from them. Older Tongans would look back to what they believed was a kindlier time, when young people were obedient and everyone knew their obligations to each other; but the die was cast and the rate of change accelerated. (p.221)

In the post-colonial era, Tongan diaspora has taken its course with an increase in migration to Western countries, the focus of the next section.

### **Post-War Migration**

The interface of Tongan and Western cultures intensified in the post-war period when Tongan migration to Western countries, predominantly Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and the USA, significantly increased. It is difficult to find accurate statistics

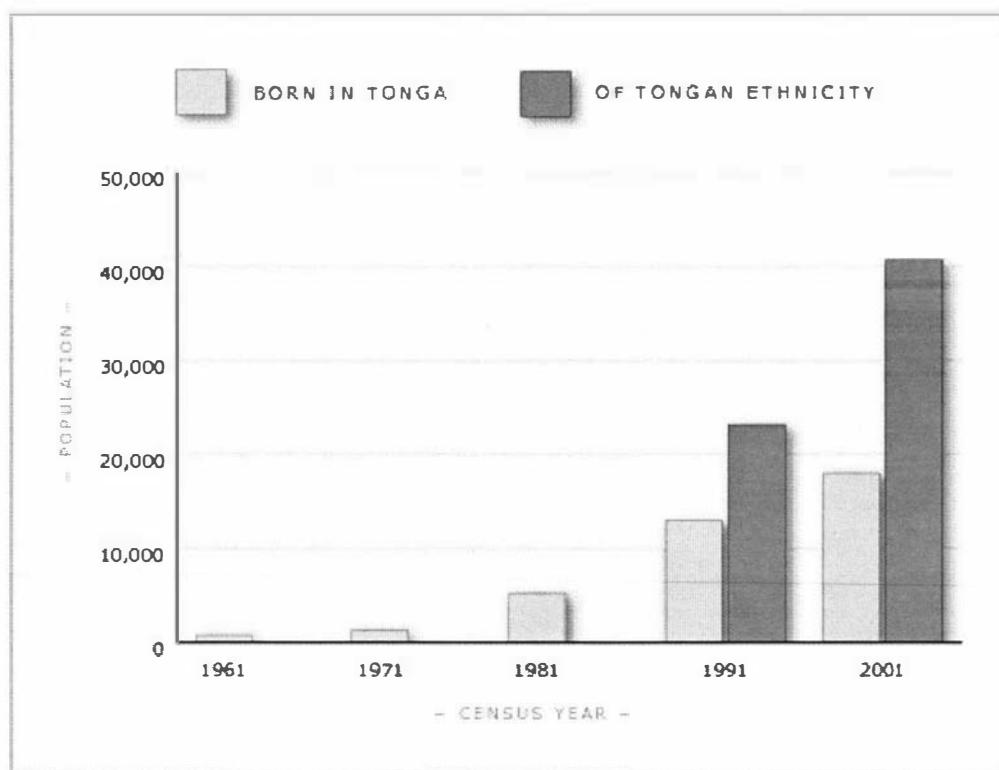
on migration and populations in the diaspora as data is not collected consistently from country to country, and those who settle illegally may not be counted at all (Morton Lee, 2003). Notwithstanding these difficulties, the 2000 USA census found about 37,000 who identified as having Tongan ethnicity (U.S. Census Bureau 2001, p.9; cited in Morton Lee, 2003, p.24), while Morton Lee (2003) estimates that in 1999 the Tongan population in Australia was around 15,000, with a Tongan population of 40,700 in Aotearoa New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2002), and around 100,000 Tongans living in Tonga. According to Morton Lee (2003), the USA is the preferred destination, followed by Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Although the total Tongan population in USA and Aotearoa New Zealand is similar, Tongans obviously constitute a much more significant number in relation to the total population in Aotearoa New Zealand. Notably, Tongans are also recent arrivals (13 median years since arrival) in Aotearoa New Zealand, in comparison to other Pacific groups such as Niueans and Cook Islanders (around 25 median years since arrival) (Ministry of Education, 2004).

In the post-war period Aotearoa New Zealand was experiencing labour shortages, and traditionally tight immigration restrictions were relaxed to facilitate labour migration from Pacific nations. In the 1960s and early 1970s many Tongans come to Aotearoa New Zealand on three month working visas and in the 1970s contract labour schemes for 11 months facilitated further Tongan migration. Many Tongans overstayed their visas, a situation which benefited Aotearoa New Zealand business and was initially tolerated by the Aotearoa New Zealand government while unemployment levels in the labour force were low. Tongans were keen to raise income to support their families and to take up educational opportunities for their children. These combined 'push' and 'pull' factors led to significant chain and labour migration of Tongans, along with people from other South Pacific nations (Ongley, 1991) and facilitated the Tongan diaspora (Morton, 1998; Morton Lee, 2003).

From 1974, the government took a tougher stance on migration from Pacific nations following a downturn in the economy. Migrant labour from Tonga and other Pacific nations became surplus to Aotearoa New Zealand's needs and a process of racialisation ensued (Loomis, 1991). Pacific peoples were scapegoated for rising unemployment levels and other social problems when manufacturing industries, where Pacific migrants were predominantly employed, were hardest hit. The infamous dawn raids carried out

by the Aotearoa New Zealand immigration service and police to apprehend ‘overstayers’ (illegal residents) worked to undermine Pacific people’s sense of belonging or identity as New Zealanders (Southwick, 2001) and in turn their wellbeing. Tongans, along with Samoans and Fijians, were the target of these dawn raids<sup>10</sup> although, as Liava’a (1998) demonstrates, the application of random checks and dawn raids were both racist and illegal. Her research found that people were suspected if they “had a brown face” and that the majority of overstayers in Aotearoa New Zealand at the time (migrants from the United Kingdom and Australia) were unlikely to be questioned. Amnesty was offered in 1976, allowing many overstaying Tongans to apply for permanent residence. In 1986-1987, there was a temporary visa waiver for Samoans, Tongans and Fijians and many Tongans took advantage of this to migrate to Aotearoa New Zealand. Currently, the Pacific Access Category allows 250 Tongans to gain permanent residence in Aotearoa New Zealand every year.

**Figure 4.1 Tongan Population in Aotearoa New Zealand, 1961-2001**



Source: Statistics New Zealand, cited by Te Ara: The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand.

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/NewZealanders/NewZealandPeoples/Tongans/1/ENZ-Resources/Standard/6/en#breadcrumbtop> retrieved 22 September, 2005

<sup>10</sup> Cook Islanders, Niueans and Tokelauans are New Zealand citizens.

The increase in the Aotearoa New Zealand Tongan population over the post-war period is shown in Figure 4.1. This graph shows the increases in both birthplace (Tongan-born) and ethnicity (i.e. Tongan-born plus New Zealand-born). While there was population growth due to migration in the 1970s and 1980s, it is the New Zealand-born Tongan population which has contributed most significantly to population growth since the 1990s (it should be noted that ethnicity data was only collected in the Census from 1991 onwards). This reflects the relatively high Tongan birth rate in Aotearoa New Zealand at 4.5 births per woman, compared to the Aotearoa New Zealand total population rate of 2 per woman (Cook, Didham, & Khawaja, 2001).

### **Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand**

The Tongan population in Aotearoa New Zealand is relatively youthful, predominantly New Zealand-born, fast growing and urban (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). According to the 2001 Census, 43 percent of the Tongan population is under 15 years, compared to 23 percent of the Aotearoa New Zealand population. Similarly, 3 percent of Tongans were aged 65 years and over, compared with 12 percent of the Aotearoa New Zealand population. Within the Tongan population, over half are now New Zealand-born (53 percent), an increase from 42 percent in 1991. Tongans are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand, increasing by 30 percent between 1996 and 2001, compared to a 15 percent increase in the Pacific population overall in Aotearoa New Zealand. Tongans are also more likely to reside in urban locations, with 78 percent living in Auckland and 5 percent in Wellington.

### **Health, Education and Socio-Economic Status**

It is ironic that while Tongans migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand principally for the purposes of advancing family wellbeing, they face significant health, education and socio-economic issues relative to the general population. The majority of the studies exploring indicators of Pacific peoples' wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand adopt a pan-Pacific focus thereby disguising the differences between the experiences of various Pacific ethnic groups. However, some indication of Tongan wellbeing can be deduced from such studies and in combination with Tongan specific studies there is sufficient evidence to signal some issues of concern regarding Tongan wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand have a poorer health status compared to the total Aotearoa New Zealand population, are more exposed to risk factors for poor health, and experience barriers to accessing health services (Foliaki, Jeffreys, Wright, Blakey, & Pearce, 2004; Mavoa, 1999; Ministry of Health, 2004). Using whole of life indicators (health across the life span, covering all age groups) Pacific males and females have about a 50 percent excess risk of avoidable mortality in comparison to the all Aotearoa New Zealand benchmark (Ministry of Health, 2005).

Pacific peoples' access to health services, including culturally appropriate services, is an issue in Aotearoa New Zealand (Huakau & Bray, 2000; Moata'ane, Muimui-Heata, & Guthrie, 1996; Tahaafe, 2003; Young, 1997) and, according to Young (1997), may contribute to higher incidences of disease and hospitalisation. Communication issues were identified as a barrier to Pacific peoples' access to disability services in a study by Huakau and Bray (2000); they also suggest the need for Pacific practitioners from the same ethnic background who speak the language of the family requiring services. There was an identified need for education on alternative explanations of disability and assistance facilitating access to services. Tahaafe's (2003) research similarly identified low Tongan participation in disability support services, identifying policy frameworks, organisational structure, delivery processes and the level of understanding of the Tongan community as the key factors. Other research by Mavoa, Park and Pryce (1997) established differences between Tongan and European families in Aotearoa New Zealand in terms of social interaction, illustrating that professionals need to take account of this when they work with Tongan families on health related issues. This is echoed by diabetes and diet management research which argued that language was a barrier to nutritional management for Tongans and that approaches needed to be based within a Tongan belief framework, focusing for instance more on the amounts of food eaten rather than abolishing certain foods from the diet (Moata'ane et al., 1996). A study by Toafa, Moata'ane and Guthrie (1999) on traditional healing and Tongan patients in Aotearoa New Zealand demonstrated that belief and trust were two fundamental factors associated with use of traditional Tongan healers, arguing that Western trained health care providers should take cognisance of this for Tongan health and healing.

Various strategies have been employed by government and community alike to address Pacific health issues via research, policy and service development (see, Health Research Council of New Zealand, 2005; Ministry of Health, 1997, 2004). In Auckland, the development of Langimālie, a Tongan primary health organisation, has been seen as leading the way in ethnic specific service development (Ministry of Health, 2004). The success of the 'Ola Fa' autauta project, a church-based health promotion programme in a Samoan church setting, is an example of government agencies and Pacific churches working well together to improve the wellbeing of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand (Swinburn, Amosa, & Bell, 1997).

The question could be raised as to whether the health of Tongans, while being poor in comparison to the Aotearoa New Zealand population, still constitutes an improvement when comparisons are made with those remaining in Tonga. Foliaki (1999), however, has demonstrated otherwise, stating that there is “a significant worsening in mental health status when the migrant population is compared with the Tongans in the Kingdom of Tonga” (p.293), and this is likely due to the greater levels of stress and uncertainty of life in Aotearoa New Zealand. He suggests that “a simple traditional bound life can have a protective role against mental illness” (Foliaki, 1999, p.293). He goes on to advocate the maintenance of cultural identity and improvement in economic status in order for improved mental health of Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand to be realised.

Turning to education, it is again clear that Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand are disadvantaged. Pacific students leave school with lower levels of qualifications than non-Pacific students, which impacts on their entry into higher-level tertiary education where they also have the lowest rate of degree completion of any ethnicity (Ministry of Education, 2004). Fusitu'a (1992) demonstrated that Tongan peoples' aspirations for education are largely not met within Aotearoa New Zealand schools. She argues that there is a need to have a critical understanding of both Western and Tongan cultures and to use this knowledge to recognise and resolve social contradictions; this, she argues, will enable the development of empowering and appropriate education. Further research by Manu'atu (2000) has indicated that Tongan pedagogies and an analysis of the social, political and economic position of Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand are central to the achievement of Tongan high school students in Aotearoa New Zealand. Initiatives such



as *pō ako* (Tongan homework centres) and *Katoanga Faiva* (cultural performances) employ Tongan concepts of *mālie* (fun) and *māfana* (warmth) in the teacher-student relationship and demonstrate the strength of Tongan pedagogy for Tongan student achievement. The development of Pacific early childhood education and care centres since the mid 1980s have been significant initiatives supporting education and wellbeing via cultural and language maintenance. In fact, second to Samoan, Tongan groups have one of the highest levels of Pacific language immersion centres (operating at 81-100% language immersion) (Ministry of Education, 2004).

Tongans on the whole are economically disadvantaged when compared with both the Pacific and general Aotearoa New Zealand populations. The median annual income for adult Tongans was \$11,800 for the year ending March 2001, compared to \$14,800 and \$18,500 for the Pacific and Aotearoa New Zealand populations respectively (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). The real median annual income of Tongans increased by only 4 percent between 1991 and 2001, while the increase for the Aotearoa New Zealand population was 11 percent.

Housing provides another indicator of Tongan wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand. Poulsen, Johnston and Forrest (2000) argue that Pacific ethnic groups “are part of the development of a multicultural hybrid society” (p.344) but that there is an identifiable spatial segregation between Polynesian groups and Pakeha within Aotearoa New Zealand. They suggest that this spatial segregation is due to the economic disadvantage of Polynesian populations. Results from the Pacific Islands Families: First Two Years of Life (PIF) Study interviews with Pacific mothers showed that damp and cold housing were significantly associated with large household size, state rental housing, financial difficulty with housing costs and also significantly related to maternal depression and the incidence of asthma (Butler, Williams, Tukuitonga, & Paterson, 2003b). Census data in regard to Tongan peoples’ housing indicates that there has been an increase in rental housing and a trend away from home ownership, mirroring national changes. Tongans in rental accommodation, however, are more likely to live in Housing New Zealand accommodation (58%) and are in lower cost rentals in comparison to Aotearoa New Zealand renters overall (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). Housing issues for Tongans are well captured by the comments of Milne and Kearns (1999) in their statement that “the distinctive characteristics of Pacific peoples, such as larger family

size, do make this group especially vulnerable to receipt of poorer housing and associated health problems” (p.85). In 2001, the average household size with at least one Tongan member was 4.6 compared to 2.7 for the Aotearoa New Zealand population. Furthermore, 33 percent of Tongan people lived in extended family situations, compared to 8 percent of the Aotearoa New Zealand population (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). Given their lower income levels, there is a need, as Milne and Kearns (1999) highlight, to combat subtly racist perceptions that overcrowding in Pacific households is a matter of choice. ‘Alatini (2004) undertook a study on housing of the Tongan community in Otago and found that rising house prices and neo-liberal based policies coupled with cultural obligation contributed to housing issues for Tongans (he found that a common practice was the conversion of garages into sleeping quarters or living spaces). He goes on to make a number of recommendations, including that housing design should meet ethnic specific needs and the development of community-based housing maintenance programmes.

There are some social issues which have arisen for Tongans as a direct result of their degree of access to, for example, alcohol and gambling facilities in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. A research report into alcohol use by Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand explained how access to alcohol in Tonga was limited according to established social lines, whereas in Aotearoa New Zealand there was more open access to alcohol (Ministry of Health Sector Analysis, 1997). A recent ethnic specific study identified gambling as a key issue for Tongan people in Auckland, but one that is under-recognised as an issue by Tongan communities, government and social services alike (Guttenbeil-Po'uhila et al., 2004). The study shows that gambling was often pursued to combat poverty, to fulfil obligations to void *fakamā*, and to increase family status. The participants pointed to a number of health and social impacts of gambling on the Tongan community, including: financial difficulties leading to repossession of homes and vehicles, marriage breakdowns, increasing numbers of people in debt, neglect of children, lack of supervision of young people and leaving old people at home or at the Casino alone. Among the study's recommendations is a call for greater coordination between government and community groups for holistic care and raising awareness, and the development of alternative recreational programmes.

### Wellbeing and Cultural Maintenance

What the above outline of some aspects of Tongan wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand does not reveal, however, are the abundant narratives of Tongan *kāinga* and communities (for example: Finau, 1995; Hopoate Pau'u, 1994; Koloto, 2003; Makisi, 2003) which portray positive features of survival, transformation and wellbeing, despite the devastating statistics. There are many Tongans who could be identified as living in poverty or with poor health, education or housing, who nonetheless maintain a sense of wellbeing that can be attributed to their faith, family and other aspects of cultural maintenance (see Taufa, 1993). Not to be ignored are the contributions that Tongans make to Aotearoa New Zealand society more generally – including economic contributions and success in sports and artistic endeavours. In a similar way, Tongan social workers are contributing to the development of the discipline and profession of social work in Aotearoa New Zealand (see Chapter Nine). Barron-Afeaki (2005) criticises the Aotearoa New Zealand media for its coverage of events in Tonga and for unfounded claims of Tongans being corrupt, oppressed and impoverished. He refers to factors in Tonga including land ownership, family friendly workplace practices, extensive travel, overseas remittances, freedom of religion and lavish celebrations amongst commoner Tongans, as examples portraying Tonga as a “vibrant and stable nation where its system works” (p.9). He further states:

I believe change will take place and a more carefully tailored and Tonganised ‘democratic’ process can be implemented that does not threaten the very essence of being Tongan – the family. (Barron-Afeaki, 2005, p.9)

For many Tongans the church, faith and extended family have helped them cope with migration, providing the necessary social, economic and cultural support (Morton Lee, 2003; Taufa, 1993). Taufa’s (1993) research explored cultural maintenance with Tongan families and concluded that “the Tongan family system serves as a mechanism for meeting Tongan peoples’ needs in the ever-changing New Zealand society” (p.102). Churches have a key role in the maintenance of cultural values and traditions and ‘new theologies’ reflect the changing identities of *Pasifiki* peoples (Taule'ale'ausumai, 2001). Tongan church groups, like many other Pacific Island church groups, have demonstrated an amazing capacity to develop and build churches – in terms of physical structures, membership and programming. Lau Young (1999) presents a challenge to churches to “rise and shine” (p.10) and perceives that churches are becoming more

innovative and moving into new areas of operation such as service provision. Importantly, the church is a social support mainstay for a great proportion of Tongan peoples and there are many for whom *faifekau* (clergy) and other church leaders are the first port of call in times of need.

Yet some have highlighted the way in which churches can operate in oppressive ways in the lives of Tongans (Perrott, 2003; Tiatia, 1998), particularly in regard to the financial resources drained from families to support church work and the alienation of New Zealand-born young people within traditional churches. Halapua (1997) argues, however, that the communal aspects of Tongan culture can be embraced within pastoral care to enable Tongan churches in Aotearoa New Zealand to counter the “impact of urban life and rapid social change” (p.249). That is, what is important is that members participate financially and otherwise to the best of their ability, not beyond, and that it is the communal dimension which then “transforms what is ordinary into something special” (Halapua, 1997, p.251).

Language is another reference point with regard to Tongan cultural maintenance and wellbeing in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. In an essay on Tongan language, Ka’ili and Ka’ili (1998) argue that “although at the present, English appears to be instrumental to our economic wellbeing, our ancestral language is still vital to our cultural and psychological survival.” Tongans, in comparison to other Pacific groups in Aotearoa New Zealand, have higher levels of language retention (Bell, Starks, Davis, & Taumoeofolau, 2001; Davis, Bell, & Starks, 2001). Hunkin-Tuiletufuga (2001) notes, however, that “all of the Pacific languages which are vital for the retention and maintenance of the various cultural identities are being lost in New Zealand, albeit at different rates” (p.211). Bell et al. (2001) warn that “unless vigorous efforts are made” (p.103) within two generations the Tongan language could be at risk in New Zealand. Tongan language retention to date, in comparison to some other Pacific language groups, is perhaps reflective of the relatively later migration of Tongans and their high levels of religious affiliation (Statistics New Zealand, 2002) and hence language learning within churches. On-going initiatives by both the Tongan community and the state will be required (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, 2001) in order to maintain Tongan language for the wellbeing of Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand.

All in all, this overview of Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand reveals that migration to Aotearoa New Zealand has brought a mix of benefits and disadvantages in terms of Tongan people's wellbeing. What is consistent across the literature on social issues for Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand, is the argument that in order for positive change in the negative statistics to be realised, practice and policy approaches must be based within culturally appropriate (Tongan based) frameworks (Finau, 1999; Guttenbeil-Po'uhila et al., 2004; Manu'atu, 2000; Moata'ane et al., 1996; Tahaafe, 2003). The question is then raised about the likelihood of Tongan worldview frameworks surviving within the diasporic context. An analysis of Tongan engagement with globalisation reveals that a Tongan worldview has continued salience for the negotiation of diasporic Tongan wellbeing.

### **Globalisation and Tongan Transnationalism**

It is argued here that colonialism, migration and globalisation impact on diasporic Tongan communities but that Tongan participation and interaction with these forces is also largely influenced from a Tongan worldview framework. It is the negotiation between a Tongan worldview and the globalised context which secures Tongan wellbeing.

There is much debate about the concept of globalisation (Hoogvelt, 2001; Pieterse, 2004; Ritzer, 2004; Woodward, 2003). While globalisation cannot be fully unpacked and resolved in this thesis, a number of key debates are raised here, revealing the complexity inherent in discussions of Tongan worldview, wellbeing and, more specifically, Tongan approaches to social work practice.

This thesis adopts the view espoused by Pieterse (2004) that globalisation is multidimensional, rather than essentially economic, and that it is a long-term historical process, rather than being a recent phenomenon. It is in line with the definition of Giddens (1990; cited in Hoogvelt, 2001) that globalisation is “the intensification of world wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (p.125). In this regard, contemporary globalisation for Pacific peoples may be understood as an extension of Western imperialism evident in the colonial era, which included economic benefits for core capitalist nations and the import of Western culture into the Pacific.

Globalisation then is understood as a phenomenon which has characterised, and interacted with, colonialism and migration to bring about the contemporary conditions of diaspora and transnationalism. What has occurred since around the 1970s can be seen as “contemporary accelerated globalisation” (Pieterse, 2004, p.16). One notable outcome of colonialism, post-war migration and globalisation has been the advent of a Tongan diaspora whereby Tongan *kāinga* (extended family) and communities live out transnational realities. Chappell (1999) refers to transnationalism as:

... interactions between an ethnic field and more than one state arena, an extended spectrum of political articulation along which migrants are partly autonomous, partly subaltern and, in some ways, potentially hegemonic. (p.298)

Ritzer (2004) proposes that “globalisation involves a profound struggle between” (p.xiii) what he calls the “grobal” and the “glocal”. Grobal refers to “growth imperatives which push organisations and nations to expand globally and to impose themselves on the local... [while] the interaction of the global and the local produces something new – the glocal” (Ritzer, 2004p.xiii).

Table 4.1 presents a summary of optimistic and pessimistic views of globalisation, which provides a useful point of discussion of the nature of Tongan diaspora and globalisation.

**Table 4.1 Globalisation: Optimistic and Pessimistic Views**

<i>Optimistic views</i>	<i>Pessimistic views</i>
Opportunities of internet and greater democracy through online participation	Internet dominated by wealthy areas of world. Ignore difference of gender, race and material inequalities
Fast transmission of information	Speed of more importance to affluent nations
Easy access for individual and community activists	Terrorist organisations benefit more than local communities
New opportunities for development of ideas and markets	Developing world not permitted to benefit
	Environmental risk and degradation harsher in developing world
Access to cultural products for all across globe	Media dominated by US and western corporations
More choice	Choice only between western products
Easier movement of people across globe	Migration blocked for many refugees and migrants. Different experiences of exploitation by women
No state control of virtual space	

Source: Woodward (2003, p.153)

Globalisation can be seen as presenting opportunities via information and travel technologies and more choice. A more cautionary view of globalisation highlights the structural inequalities that persist within globalisation and the negative impacts on certain groups across the globe. To add to this assessment of globalisation, Ritzer (2004) points out the loss of distinction and the local amidst monumental abundance. I turn now to discuss the nature of transnational, diasporic Tongans' participation in globalisation as means to understand Tongan wellbeing and development.

### **Economies**

Hoogvelt (2001) argues that globalisation has brought about a reconfiguration of capitalism in postcolonialism, stating that:

The virtuous cycle of capitalist production and consumption for the time being continues its present growth path as a relatively stable regime of accumulation .... while the hegemonic neo-liberal mode of regulation provides an adequate governance framework for the regime of accumulation. However, and it is a *big* however, it is a growth regime that embraces only a globalized social minority and has no economic need for the excluded majority. (p.261)

Accordingly, Hoogvelt (2001) suggests that globalisation has superseded the expansive phase of capitalism which was about the extension of economic activity into more areas of the globe; it is a phase of “deepening, but not widening, capitalist integration” (p.121). Globalisation then, is arguably a new form of world capitalism, which has to some extent socially excluded diasporic Tongans. In relation to Tonga, although globalisation has been described as *McDonaldisation* (Ritzer, 2000), to date there is no McDonalds in Tonga! However, Tonga's participation in a global economy is evidenced by the import of *mutton flaps* - the low quality, fatty meat that does not sell well in Aotearoa New Zealand – which probably contributes to a high incidence of diabetes and heart disease amongst Tongans. From this perspective, it could be argued that where Tongans do participate in the global economy, the trickle down effect has involved health and social issues which negatively impact on Tongan wellbeing.

Yet Tongans have been somewhat deliberate in seeking benefits from participation in global economies. A study by Evans (2001), on social and economic interrelationships in a Tongan village and their engagement with the “modern World System”, highlighted that:

... in Tonga, in spite of superficial appearances to the contrary, non-capitalist forms of social organisation continue to function effectively (and via their own rationales) in articulation with the capitalist world market. (p.2)

He states that “the Tongan Diaspora has been purposeful, the result of many individual decisions taken within a cultural frame rooted and reproduced in particularly Tongan sensibilities” (Evans, 2001, p.2).

Remittances are a significant aspect of diasporic Tongan wellbeing (Bertram, 1986; Finau, 1993; Halapua, 1997; James, 1991, 1993) and further demonstrate the way Tongans negotiate their participation in globalisation. The implications of globalisation for Tonga’s economy is readily explained by reference to the MIRAB model promoted by Bertram (1986; 1999), referring to Pacific Island economies based on migration, remittances, aid and bureaucracy (non-tradable production). Bertram and others put forward this model in order to challenge the development model asserted by the World Bank, which advocated export-led, tradable production and private sector investment. Countries such as Tonga have levels of expenditure (or living standards) which “run consistently and apparently sustainably ahead of gross domestic product” (Bertram, 1999, p.106). Hau’ofa’s (1994) arguments that Pacific peoples’ current migration is a continuation of historical Pacific navigation and that Oceania is a region of strength (and not merely poor, dependant, small islands) has some salience in light of the MIRAB model. Bertram (1999) states:

Pacific Islander populations became globalized long before most of the rest of the non-OECD world... In a MIRAB economy the indigenous population maximise their material well being by management of the globalization process... it is the release of family members and family savings from village agriculture and fishing, and their outward movement to other sectors, other islands, and other countries, that opens the way to securing higher incomes. (p.160)

While Bertram is referring to the period from about the 1950s or 1960s, Hau’ofa’s argument would suggest that Tongans’ participation in a MIRAB economy is a continuation of Tongan systems of wellbeing that existed before this period. This is also a point made by van der Grijp (2004) who states that “in Tongan terms, remittances are motivated by a combination of *fatongia* (obligation), *fetokoni’aki* (*helping*) and *fe’ofa’aki* (kindness)” (p.188). Vaden (1998) suggests that the transnational *kāinga* (extended family) is in fact the key to Tongan economic and social development.



Likewise, Ramsey (1997) argues that the Tongan kinship system is adjusting to contemporary economic contexts and provides a sustainable means for Tongan economic enhancement. Globalisation then, has not had an entirely positive impact on diasporic Tongans, and material inequalities largely persist, but Tongans have also gained and participated in a way that strengthens and draws on *mo'ui fakatonga* (Tongan culture).

### **Technologies**

Technological change has facilitated globalisation and brought about a raft of opportunities with greater ease of movement across the globe and fast transmission of information (Woodward, 2003). In terms of migration and ease of movement across the globe, Tongans and other Pacific peoples have always been navigators of the sea, and contemporary migration can be seen as an extension of this tradition (Hau'ofa, 1994). In other words, migration is not new. On the other hand, as explained earlier in this chapter, migration has been of a more substantial nature in the post-war period, contributing to the Tongan diaspora. But while movement across the globe is easier for those from Western nations, Tongans who have not acquired citizenship in Western nations such as Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia or the USA, experience considerable immigration restrictions and barriers which impact on their ability to participate in family and cultural events. This highlights the unevenness of globalisation and the way in which Western nation-states continue to assert their power to protect their interests against those from less powerful, developing nations.

Telecommunications have been shown to facilitate Tongan transnationalism (Anae, 2001; Morton, 1999). The former internet site called the “Kavabowl”, for instance, was used by diasporic Tongans “to explore their identities, question the status quo and establish themselves more firmly within the international Tongan community” (Morton, 1999, p.249). Transnational families may now communicate electronically with little expense and effort, allowing *kāinga* to set up web pages and email discussion groups that include family members all over the world.

### **Cultures**

Despite the challenges presented by colonialism and migration, there is considerable resourcefulness, strength and opportunity embraced by diasporic transnational Tongan

communities. Substantial Tongan out-migration is part of a considerable multi-directional movement of people, resources and culture across national boundaries wherein Tongan families and communities function transnationally and interconnectedness continues to be a dominant feature of Tongan realities. As James (1993) states, there are “complexly interrelated two-way flows of people and of material goods and help, involving both the home and migrant populations in sets of complementary activities” (p.372). These two-way flows are not only material, but also cultural in nature. The transnational existence means that Tongan social structures interface with alternative forms and modes of existing. One participant in a focus group meeting for the present study described how he experienced more “freedom” associated with his migration:

We come from a very heierarchical background... we come here and we have the freedom to think for yourself. But in Tonga, always someone is telling you what to do... from the cultural side, to the village and the church. But in here! I remember I went to [village] back in the 60s... And when I left from [village] to go to Tupou High School, the freedom that I had was just amazing. I would be able to go with my uniform to buy cigarettes and started smoking, you know. And then after Tupou High School and come here, the freedom is, you know, you can go and buy your beer! And that is why I say then, we can be lost. We tend to lose our identity.

Interestingly, the freedom resulting from life in the Aotearoa New Zealand context was understood by this participant to come at the cost of a loss of identity. Making a similar point about freedom, but from a New Zealand-born perspective, another participant also noted the loss of freedom associated with her choice to identify and operate within the Tongan community in Aotearoa New Zealand:

And then you just want to be yourself, but you can't... Probably what I'm saying is, being accepted and respected in the Tongan community comes at a price. And it's a price that involves a freedom, a freedom that, if you were choosing to operate in a Western world, would be a given.

Transnationalism gives rise to a complex of cultural interactions which have real implications for Tongans around negotiating cultural change. The challenges around social and cultural interchange and change are evidenced with the rise of the pro-democracy movement in Tonga (James, 2002). Chappell (1999) makes the following statement:

Yet today Pacific states find their “consent” challenged by movements for change from below, because capitalism alters not only economics but also those “shared norms and

values”, with political consequences. In Oceania, chiefly hierarchies may survive colonialism, but indigenous middle and wage-labouring classes arise to contest traditionalist monopolies of authority. (p.279)

The project of globalisation has meant that diverse cultural paradigms are forced, to some extent, to enmesh; this requires a renegotiation of needs, priorities and aspirations that may give rise to conflict.

Another view of the impact of globalisation is that interconnectedness has meant that non-Western Pacific cultures are being incorporated into Western cultures (Lockwood, 2004). This is an optimistic view given that interconnection occurs unevenly. Nonetheless, globalisation offers unique opportunities for indigenous Pacific voices to move from a position of marginalisation (in academia, as a particular example) to a position where the Pacific is “the ‘cutting global edge’ in issues of representation” (Borofsky, 2004, p.56). The contribution Pacific voices can make to non-Pacific contexts was recognised by one participant in this study who saw her role as follows:

I weave the two worlds. I’m not simply hoping across relaying messages. Yeah, I actually now bridge and weave. Because I think the climate is right for mainstream to accept some of our threads included in their system. It is just a matter of time.

This participant’s comment highlights an opportunity which is presented by globalisation for Tongans and non-Tongans in the Pacific and beyond to benefit from cultural interconnectedness.

In summary, the impact of globalisation has not been entirely favourable for diasporic Tongans, and yet Tongans have not been mere victims of wider, homogenising, oppressive forces. Drawing on Tongan sensibilities, diasporic Tongan communities are negotiating global economies, migration, technology and culture to construct wellbeing and development. Transnational Tongans initiate and negotiate interrelated economic, social and cultural exchanges as a part of their existence in a globalised context, which contributes to a diversity of Tongan identities.

### **Tongan Diversity**

A notable effect of globalisation is increased cultural diversification amongst Tongans. To identify as a Tongan can mean different things to people in different locations and at

different times. There is an inherent diversity within Tongan social stratification, with differences between *kau tu'a* (commoners), *hou'eiki* (nobility) and *ha'a tu'i* (royalty) in terms of customs and day-to-day living. There may also be diversity amongst Tongans according to the island group with which one identifies, namely, 'Eua, Tongatapu, Ha'apai, Vava'u, Niua Fo'ou or Niua Toputapu. In addition, accelerated change in the contemporary context has resulted in an increase in those identifying as New Zealand-born Tongans and those with mixed cultural identities – a process of diversification that has intensified debates around what it means to be Tongan. This diversity manifests itself in Tongan social work among practitioners and their approaches, as well as the identities, values and challenges faced by the families and communities that social workers serve.

Amongst participants in this study there was general agreement that within an Aotearoa New Zealand context there are aspects of *mo'ui fakatonga* (Tongan culture) which ought to be put aside as they are deemed unsuitable for the context. What was generally less well detailed is where the boundaries should lie to determine what is maintained and what is changed in the diaspora. It is clear, however, that there are multiple Tongan identities and expressions of culture.

Diversity amongst Tongans is evident in the expressed cultural gap that sometimes emerges between New Zealand-born and Tongan-born Tongans (Afeaki, 2004; Morton Lee, 2003; Tau'akipulu, 2000; Tiatia, 1998). Macpherson (2001) explains the process of cultural change amongst Pacific communities such as Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand as follows:

It would be too easy to describe this as a shift from certainty to uncertainty, or from unity to disunity, or from authenticity to inauthenticity. But this shift is no more than the acceleration of a process of change which has always occurred and continues within the Pacific Islands. It is more useful to see the migrant enclave as a site in which people are free to draw ideas and icons from various cultures and recombine them in new cultures and identities which reflect new experiences of new realities. (p.79)

Hence, the New Zealand-born Tongans, the children and grandchildren of Tongan migrants, are reconstructing *mo'ui fakatonga* and adapting it to the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

Research by Tupuola (1998; 2004) amongst Pacific youth in Aotearoa New Zealand and the USA sheds light on the discussions of diversification and fluidity of Tongan identity as a transnational reality. She has argued that there needs to be an opening up of the parameters for understanding Pacific identities in the transnational context, to account for the multiple and shifting identity formation of Pacific youth. She argues that Pacific youth were:

... able to weave within and between multiple cultures with relative ease, debunking Pacific/Oceanic identity theories (ethnic and personal) that often confined youth of Pacific descent in New Zealand within three distinct categories – those born in the islands, those born in New Zealand and those with dual (New Zealand and Pacific) identities. Furthermore, they were adopting global identifications that did not reflect their genealogy and ancestry, in particular their emulation of predominantly ‘black’ or ‘coloured’ American youth. (Tupuola, 2004, p.88)

She shows how those with achieved identity adopt aspects of hip-hop and rap culture as a means to “raise the political and cultural profile of their own local communities” (Tupuola, 2004, p.96) so that identity is holistic and integrative. Similarly, Zemke-White (2001) demonstrates that rap is used in Aotearoa to “explore, construct and maintain specifically local cultural and ethnic alignments as identity” (p.241).

Such insights regarding the New Zealand-born and island-born diversities were noted by participants in this study. One social worker reflected on the differences between his own experience of being raised in Tonga and those of his children who were raised in Aotearoa New Zealand. He observed that his children’s exposure to Tongan values is limited to home and church settings:

My children here don’t have the same values that I was exposed to in Tonga... They are exposed to other cultures as well - and most of the time they are taught [that how]... we do things [is wrong]... The network and the support that I grew up in Tonga, I can’t provide that for my [children].

The role of the environment in the construction of identity was also discussed by a New Zealand-born participant:

My mum’s like, “You should buy the home next door,” and I’m like, “No, that’s so not far enough!”... We’re the only culture, which is a good thing, which has family our whole entire lives. But it’s really foreign for us, you know, because our whole environment is individual.

Another New Zealand-born participant also identified diverse Tongan cultures in her experience:

I grew up here; my husband grew up in Tonga, so although we're Tongan, you know, we have individual cultures. We often clash. And a lot of it is about tradition versus what ever you want to call it.

It was suggested that some Tongans are dissatisfied with aspects of Tongan society and this was seen as a motivating factor to migrate to Aotearoa New Zealand where one can, to some extent, escape from the “highly protocol based” expression of Tongan culture played out in contemporary Tonga. For example, one participant explained that:

The Tongan way... is highly, highly protocol based. Everything is protocol. Tongans... think highly creatively and independently, but when they do they will leave the country, they will leave Tonga. Because it won't blossom there because it is still highly traditional and, I believe, functions under a monarchy that's bordering on fantasy really. Its like a Gilbert and Sullivan play. That's how I observe them operating. Yeah, sort of eccentric - eccentricity or grandiosity. Not based on reality and not based on the wellbeing of the people either. It's very unfortunate.

This comment suggests that migration to countries such as Aotearoa New Zealand is sought for the purpose of seeking cultural (if not social and political) change on an individual and family basis. It would follow then that the diversification represented by New Zealand-born expressions of *mo'ui fakatonga* is actively welcomed and pursued by some island-born Tongans.

On the other hand, concern is expressed about the possibility of Tongan culture being “lost” in the diaspora, as if it was being engulfed by the homogenising forces of Westernisation. One participant commented that Tongan values are changing or, at worst, fading:

[What] we have been brought up [with in Tonga] is *fetokoni'aki* [helping each other]... The idea is I *tokoni* [help]. If I've got enough for my family, I *tokoni*. And then maybe not [that] you will *tokoni* back, but your children will grow up and *tokoni*. These days, they expect you to *tokoni*, and you *tokoni* me straight, you know? See how the value[s] of the Tongans... start to fade? ...The spirit of *fetokoni'aki* is not there anymore.

Misunderstandings between New Zealand-born and Tongan-born groups were alluded to by a New Zealand-born participant who said that:

There is a lot of pressure for the New Zealand-born kids... to keep up with our parent's principles... I believe in the principles of being reciprocal and being respectful and humble... But the finances, ...its not them that pay it. They go to their children and ask their children for the money, because they are only on the benefit. Or, they ask their children to go and get the loan for the *kavenga* because they don't have enough income to get the loan. And they put their own children in cycles of debt.

As another example, with some relevance to the Tongan experience, Anae (2001) established that rather than *fa'asamoa* (the Samoan culture) diminishing amongst New Zealand-born Samoans, *fa'asamoa* was being reconstructed and differently expressed by New Zealand-born Samoans. Likewise, Spoonley (2001) states that diasporic Pacific communities are:

...developing new cultural forms and identities which are challenging both the origin communities (or 'homelands') and cultural traditions, and the institutions and beliefs of the society of residence. They are renegotiating the rules of entitlement and belonging, coming as they do from a position of multiple loyalties and identities, and being in a community that maintains strong transnational networks. (p.96)

The research of Tau'akipulu (2000) warrants consideration in a discussion of diversifying Tongan identities. Tau'akipulu undertook a study of the conflict between individualism and community amongst Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand. She argues that "the only way to maintain a sense of continuity with tradition without being constrained by it, is to allow open and critical revisions of traditional norms" (p.96). She qualifies this statement by stating that "being critical of one's own culture does not necessarily mean a complete acceptance of the dominant culture" (Tau'akipulu, 2000, p.96).

Tongan diversity is added to with increasing intermarriage and an increasing proportion of Tongans with a mixed ethnic background. Four of the 28 participants in this study identified with other ethnic groups in addition to a Tongan identity. Hybridity, in anthropological terms, occurs when merging cultures create new cultural forms; mixed ethnic background amongst Tongans adds to hybridity, which is evident amongst Tongans in general.

While little research has been done on Tongan intermarriage, Morton Lee (2003) has shown in her study of diasporic Tongans in Australia that there is a cultural continuum between Australian and Tongan orientations to which mixed culture couples align.

Further, in such relationships one partner has often “effectively surrendered his or her culture within the marriage” (Morton Lee, 2003, p.201). More pessimistically, Vaden (1998) refers to intercultural marriage as “corrosive to Tongan culture” as “Tongans that have married New Zealanders, Australians, and Americans find it difficult to maintain their financial and social activity in the *kāinga*” (p.159). It is interesting to note, however, that Anae (2001) found among Aotearoa New Zealand Samoans who were English speaking, that despite the ethnicity of their spouses, they maintained Samoan identities and expressed a desire to immerse their children in Samoan language, leading to the enrolment of their children in *aoga amata* (Samoan language pre-schools). Therefore, although diversity amongst Tongans is likely to proliferate as a result of mixed ethnicity, this does not necessarily mean that Tongan identity is, or will be, subsumed beyond redemption by other ethnic identities. Indeed, it is possible that mixed ethnic identity brings about heightened consciousness around culture and hence more deliberate action to pursue, nurture and uphold particular cultural values and practices.

The combination of mixed ethnicities as discussed above and the benefits of alliances based on commonalities amongst various Pacific groups raises the question about the extent to which Pacific, rather than Tongan, identity will become significant and what this means for *mo’ui fakatonga*. It could also be noted that the practice and life experience of all participants, to varying degrees, includes association with other Pacific ethnic groups (for example, working with Cook Islanders or Samoans) as well as working with Māori and *pālangi*. Indeed, Tongan social workers are likely, both personally and professionally, to operate in cross-cultural and multicultural situations. This is especially the case when ethnic specific community social services find that they cannot survive financially unless they offer pan-Pacific services in line with funding and contracting requirements, which was a view offered by some participants in this study.

Identity as Tongan, or otherwise, is also not a static phenomenon. The expression of Tongan cultural identity is changeable from one situation to another and over the course of a person’s lifetime. One participant, for example, reflected on his observations of his son who was sent to Tonga at an early age to learn the language and culture but on his return was mistreated at school because of his lack of English. This led, in the participant’s view, to the son losing the Tongan language and becoming a *pālangi*.



Now in his mid 20s, the son is “coming back and being a Tongan and wanting to learn about it and enjoying it.” This participant also noted that:

When you see him with his co-workers... the guys that he runs around with, he’s a different person altogether. When he walks into the Tongan [setting], you can see altogether he’s a little Tongan, [a] Tongan who can’t speak Tongan, hhh!

Cultural diversity, therefore, is not bound to individuals in a static way. Rather there is evidence that individuals themselves, whether New Zealand-born or Tongan-born, will exhibit diverse cultural attributes across different situations and across time.

In summary, globalisation, leading to Tongan diaspora and transnationalism, has ushered in an inevitable complexity, diversification and shifting of Tongan identities. The nature of Tongan identity is important for the construction of Tongan social work, if Tongan social work is to be about social change. Tongan social work needs to be intentional and explicit in regard to the reproduction and transformation of culture amongst transnational diasporic Tongans.

### **Conclusion: Tongan Diaspora and the Reproduction and Transformation of *Mo’ui Fakatonga***

Van der Grijp’s (2004) statement in relation to Tongan participation in globalisation that “there is tremendous cultural continuity in the middle of change” (p.190) is a key theme woven through this chapter. Exploration of Tongan social work in this thesis incorporates an acknowledgement that conceptions of Tongan social wellbeing and social change are constructed within the context of globalisation. Globalisation is adopted here as a multidimensional, historical phenomenon which has built upon Pacific colonialism and post-war migration, bringing increased and intensified interrelationships between Tongans and the rest of the world.

Tongan wellbeing is forged in the space where at once globalisation is compressing and Tongan *kāinga* and communities are dispersing geographically. There are two contradictory phenomena occurring. As to whether this works to enhance or to undermine Tongan wellbeing, whether Tongan wellbeing is realised because of or in spite of globalisation, is a thorny question. It is more likely that it is a bit of both. This

is a sentiment shared by Morton Lee (2003) as a result of her research on Tongans overseas:

There is no neat conclusion to be made, either optimistic or pessimistic. Some face a lifetime of struggle; unemployed or in poorly paid jobs, dealing with racism and feeling alienated in the land that they believed offered so much hope. Some of the young people will leave school early, become involved with drugs, gangs, and crime, and move further and further away from their families and their sense of being Tongan. Others will find what their parents had hoped for them and more and will watch their own children succeed in education and, later, employment, while cherishing their Tongan 'roots' and asserting their identities with pride. Most, of course, lie somewhere in between. For now, at least, most are also 'in-between' in another sense, living in Australia, the United States, New Zealand, or elsewhere, yet maintaining ties to the islands of Tonga through remittances, visits and phone calls, Internet forums and chat rooms, or simply in their hearts. (p.253)

The broad stroke outline of Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand presented in this chapter indicates that Tongan *kāinga* and communities occupy positions at the social and economic margins of Aotearoa New Zealand society, while also arguably maintaining a sense of spiritual and cultural wellbeing, connectedness and identity.

Transnationalism impacts on understandings of what is Tongan. A search for the traditional, authentic, essential notions of Tonganness can be problematic given the nature of the context in which Tongan realities exist. Conceptions of Tongan social wellbeing are at once multiple, dynamic, holistic, circular and fluid. As Leonard (1997) writes:

Cultures are not... bounded by hard, impervious shells, inside of which 'traditional culture' thrives until such times as the shell is broken and the culture destroyed by another invading culture, because all cultures are surrounded by porous, receptive membranes, continuously reinventing themselves as they adapt to changing circumstances. (p.64)

Devoid of an acceptance of such ambiguities, our understandings are limited to sheer romanticised versions of reality. Notions of what constitutes wellbeing have changed as a result of the interface and subsequent weaving together of various Tongan and *pālangi* values and philosophies. For example, values of equality and freedom are now finding expression in contemporary Tongan experience and have particular relevance for the roles of social work in Tongan communities and families. In the Tongan diaspora, Tongan culture is simultaneously reproduced and transformed.

The development of Pacific youth identities, including the use of hip-hop and rap, is a means by which culture is reinterpreted, asserted and transformed. From the perspective of future generations it is important the cultural options are open for negotiation; that they are made visible and available as life choices. This can only be done if they are integrated within the social fabric, not only in terms of family, but in terms of the systems, institutions and organisations that constitute the wider society. For Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand, and throughout the diaspora, the challenge is to reproduce and transform Tongan culture to make it viable and accessible for future Tongans regardless of the transient and shifting nature of their identity status. Globalisation and its concomitant impacts are not new to Tongans; Tongans have experienced tremendous social change as a result of their interaction with global forces since the colonial era. This situation clearly calls for the development of social and community work approaches based within a Tongan worldview framework.

A theme emerging from the content of this chapter, and which feeds into the thesis as a whole, is that there is a complex interaction amongst Tongans and between Tongan and non-Tongan peoples, systems and institutions which is about both reproducing Tongan culture and transforming aspects of Tongan cultures in the diasporic context. Taking cognisance of the reality of Tongan diaspora, and the reproduction and transformation of culture, the next chapter seeks to draw on a Tongan worldview for the conceptualisation of social and community work with the use of metaphors.



## Chapter Five

# Metaphors of Tongan Social Work

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Poetical terms are like a faulty photograph where we take two (or more) shots on the same portion of the film and we see two pictures at once. It is in this sense that we can say that through metaphor we can mean more than what we say. (Helu, 1999, p.60)

Seeking to embrace *mo'ui fakatonga* (Tongan culture), this thesis utilises Tongan worldview as a basis for analysis and presentation of the data. This is achieved with the use of multiple metaphors associated with the sea to elaborate Tongan ways of conceptualising and practicing social work. This chapter sets the premise upon which metaphors are used as a framework to present Tongan conceptualisations and practices of social work, before introducing the metaphors themselves. The *pola* provides a metaphor for a broad value system of welfare that is promoted by Tongan social work, while the *uku* metaphor reflects practice processes which sit partially within and contribute to this system. The Tongan *kāinga* (kinship relationships) and community are the centring points for the *pola* and *uku* metaphors, particularly when the relevance of *fonua* (land-people) is considered. The metaphors are the framework through which the foundational values, knowledge and skills of social work are explored.

### **Tongan Worldview and Tongan Social Work**

*Mo'ui fakatonga*, Tongan worldview, constitutes the foundation for Tongan social work. Human existence cannot be understood apart from culture and so culture is intrinsic and implicit, if not explicit, in all social work theory and practice. As I have already established in Chapter Three, when I discussed the research process, culture also invokes particular ways of knowing and being. I endeavour, therefore, as far as possible

given the nature of this study, to ground the analysis and presentation of Tongan social work within a Tongan worldview paradigm.

The Tongan phrase *pukepuke fonua*, referring to the importance of maintaining culture, is a premise for grounding the analysis within Tongan worldviews and via metaphors. Literally, *pukepuke fonua* means to hold the land. It is used in relation to the Tongan wearing of the *ta'ovala* (mats worn around the waist) and in *kava* ceremonies. As reported in a focus group:

*'Ai honau ta'ovala ko e 'uhinga ko 'enau pukepuke fonua... [Do up their ta'ovala, which means that they pukepuke fonua...]. An old man when he spoke, he said, "The first thing [I do when] I wake up in the morning, after I do my prayer, I have to put [on] the land." So he put[s] the ta'ovala over him and that's the land. It's like pukepuke fonua. But they use it in the kava ceremony.*

Hence *pukepuke fonua* is both literal and symbolic of holding onto *fonua* and onto culture. *Fonua* refers to both people and the physical environment, the land. The fibre of the *ta'ovala* is derived from the land and via processes of production and exchange within the *kāinga* the *ta'ovala* is given material existence and cultural meaning. As a continued homage of respect and humility, the *ta'ovala* is worn, again reinforcing and upholding the value of interrelationships, not only between peoples but more fundamentally within a holistic, cyclical relationship between *kāinga* and *fonua* (Mahina, 1993). Given the Tongan diaspora, the concept of *pukepuke fonua* is all the more vital. Globalisation has brought about a blurring of boundaries between cultural systems and cultural distinctiveness is therefore increasingly pressured (Chapter Four). The use of metaphors to discuss social work in this study is a means to *pukepuke fonua*. It is a means by which to ground this study of social work within a Tongan worldview.

### **Models, Metaphors and Meaning**

The approach taken here is to present a Tongan social work framework via multiple metaphors, as opposed to describing a prescriptive model of social work. This is akin to Durie's (1995b) development of *whare tapa wha*, the metaphor of four walls of a house, which has become a significant model of practice for social work in Aotearoa New Zealand (Adamson, 2005; Nash et al., 2001). Deriving from the findings, the Tongan metaphors facilitate a holistic view and approach.

Payne (1997) states that “models describe what happens during practice in a general way, applying to a wide range of situations, in a structured form, so that they extract certain principles and patterns of activity which give the practice consistency” (p.35). Payne goes on to distinguish between positivist and postmodern views on what social work theory is and adopts a postmodern view which he explains includes models, perspectives and explanatory theory. He takes a pragmatic approach, contending that debates about distinctions between models, perspectives and explanatory theory are more about the politics of theory than about what is helpful for practice. He argues that:

social work theory, in the sense of organised accounts of social work designed to offer guidance in practice, succeeds best when it contains all three elements of perspective, theory and model. (Payne, 1997, p.36)

This sense of social work theory is similar to what I endeavour to achieve in my discussion of metaphors and furthermore, this understanding of theory reflects the participants’ narratives.

There has been recent attention to models for human services work with Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally. A report on research into Pacific models of mental health service delivery in Aotearoa New Zealand concluded that many of those used by mental health practitioners were more models of health belief than models of service delivery (Agnew et al., 2004). According to the authors, models of service delivery need to indicate how to define and assess competency and performance criteria. Models such as the *faafaletui* model were not, in their view, a clear service delivery model, but rather a process model which is about a “method for discussion and interaction” (Agnew et al., 2004, p.60). The stance taken by these authors is indicative of dilemmas which lie at fundamental levels of epistemology and ontology. The dilemma in this case is the question of whether the notion of a “service delivery model” that can measure competency is itself contrary to Pacific ways of knowing and understanding the world. Perhaps appropriate Pacific models are more holistic and necessarily more implicit deep within the values of Pacific cultures. Newport (2001), for instance, demonstrates that Pacific ways of knowing for practice are spiritual and sensory in nature, not purely rational, and have a focus on process. She asserts that indigenous Pacific knowledge must compete for acceptance against Western notions of validity and authenticity.

Reference to a social work model in this thesis is understood holistically. That is, I am not referring to a prescription for practice that can technically be applied devoid of a congruent Tongan system of values and beliefs (Passells, 2004). Accordingly, I prefer to speak of metaphors rather than models. This research has revealed that insights into Tongan social work (social work being a relatively Western construct) are embedded in the worldview and the day-to-day experiences of Tongan peoples. Both models and metaphors are capable of presenting the ideal without being burdened by the limits of what is currently a reality. That is, the Tongan concepts presented within the metaphors constitute ideals which serve as a guide for practice in much the same way as models prescribe what should be done in practice. The metaphors, however, are more holistic and as a framework reflect the diversity of approaches required for contextual practice.

The use of metaphors to present the findings of this study draws on the Tongan practice of *heliaki* (to speak ironically; to say one thing and mean another) (Churchward, 1959, p.219). Herda (1995) describes *heliaki* as the unfolding of several layers of meaning with the use of “metaphors, plays on names or words and poetic or historical allusion” (p.39). She notes that the ability to use *heliaki* to “bring together aesthetic symbols in a politically or historically relevant context is greatly admired in Tonga” (Herda, 1995, p.42). She adds that the complexity of *heliaki* might mean that not everyone in an audience is necessarily able to identify all the meanings and that the layers and narrative change over time. Mahina (2004) states that:

... *heliaki*, the equivalent of the Greek *epiphora*, can be viewed as an instrument through which qualities of two closely associated objects are exchanged in the event, where the qualities of one point to the real in the other. (p.20)

The use of metaphor, as has been illustrated by Tupua Tamasese Efi (2002), gives a quality and depth, the fullness of which cannot otherwise be portrayed by way of direct description. In his discussion on Tongan poetry and metaphor, Helu (1999) suggests that the power of metaphor is that it:

... reduces the frightening aspects of an unfamiliar and chaotic cosmos and makes us feel safer in it. Beauty, then, as the quality of things that exhibit effective rhythm and symmetry can be traced back to the unconscious yearning for self-preservation, nay, for transcending finiteness and limitation, to become eternal. (p.59)



The way in which metaphors have been employed in this thesis to portray Tongan social work is explained next.

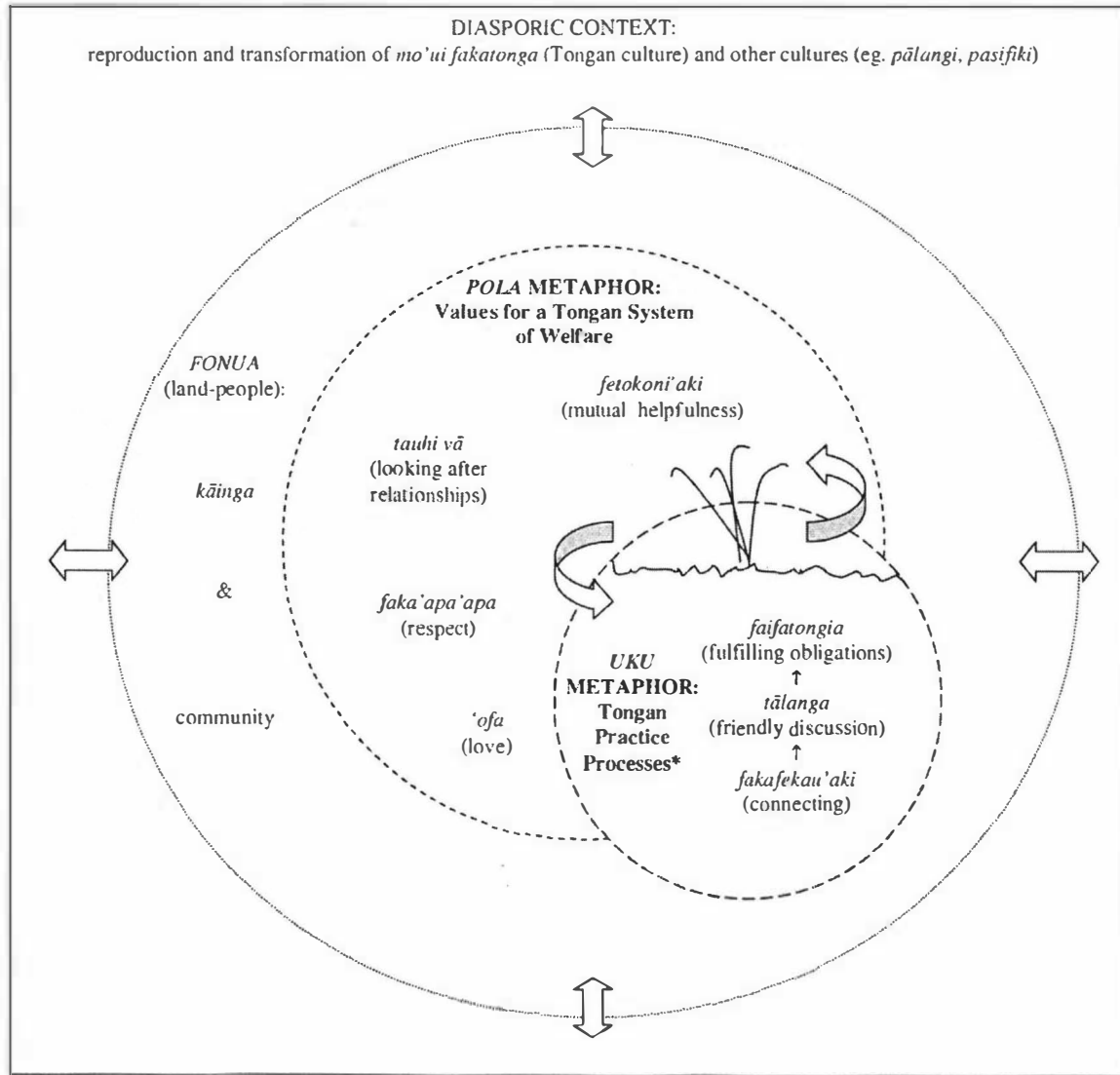
### **Multiple Metaphors for Tongan Social Work Practice**

The increasing diaspora of Tongan *kāinga* and cultural interconnections facilitated by globalisation has brought about the condition of an ever diversifying transnational Tongan reality. Social cohesion and homogeneity amongst Tongans is less likely. As there are multiple Tongan realities so there is a corresponding need for multiple ways of understanding and therefore the possibility of multiple metaphors of Tongan social work.

Here I draw on two metaphors for Tongan social work practice that are drawn from the sea; in particular, two methods of fishing using *pola* and fishing via *uku*. I use these two metaphors, illustrated in Figure 5.1 (also see enclosed CD), to bring together the principles and skills that define Tongan social work. The *pola* metaphor consists of four key Tongan values which are central to Tongan culture and which construct a Tongan system for wellbeing and development. These values then, are foundational to the *uku* metaphor, which represents practice processes and skills. The metaphors sit within the context of, and are given form by, *kāinga* (extended family) and community. The construction of Tongan social work takes place within the diasporic context so that Tongan social work is conscious of and intentional about the reproduction and transformation of Tongan culture within this context.

As explained in Chapter Three, the choice of these metaphors arose from insights regarding Tongan social work that were gained in the course of interaction with the participants in this study, while the specific decision to use metaphors from the sea and from fishing practices arose from ideas gained in conversations with my father, Sosaia Mafile’o (AKA Mohetau), a process which flows from the methodological frameworks which informed this research process.

Figure 5.1: Tongan Metaphors of Social Work Practice



**\* Notes:**

*fakafekau'aki*  
(connecting) includes:  
- *a'u tonu* (in person)  
- *loru* (prayer, spirituality, religion)  
- *fakatōkilalo* (humility)

*tālanga* (friendly discussion) includes:  
- *lea fakatonga* (Tongan language)  
- *hua* (humour)  
- *feongo'i'aki* (feelings/intuition)

*fakafatongia* (fulfilling obligations) includes:  
- *fakatoukatea* (skilful in two opposite ways)  
- *'osikiavelenga* (doing utmost)

While this study seeks to distinguish what are fundamental concepts for a Tongan approach to social work, the depth and breadth of understanding is severely limited if the values and concepts are viewed in isolation from each other. In real peoples' lives, these Tongan concepts are not only lived, but are inseparable from the whole of that living. This holistic perception and understanding was discussed within one of the focus groups as follows:

A: If you look at it from a linear perspective then you tend to think that this [aspect, feature, component] is much more important than this [aspect, feature, component]. But myself, I'd rather look at it in a circle. Each is part of a whole. And then they hook onto each other, they hold onto each other to make the whole.

B: Just like the concept of our living.

A: Yeah.

C: Just like the coconut, you know, it rolls. You can't have one and say, this one is more important than the other, because they have different *fatongia* [duty, obligation, responsibility] in the circle to perform.

The use of multiple metaphors to depict Tongan social work is a means to reflect the holistic nature of Tongan social work.

### ***Pola* Metaphor: A Value and Social System Conception of Welfare**

*Pola* was a practice of community fishing which took place on the *hihifo* (western) side of Tongatapu (the main island of Tonga) up until around the 1960s<sup>11</sup>. Several villages (Nukunuku through to Masilamea) would join together for the event of community fishing or *pola*. Although *pola* has not been practiced for sometime now (T. Hakaumotu, personal communication, November 6, 2004), it is a practice that is illustrative of key Tongan values of *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness), *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships), *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *'ofa* (love). In the *pola*, all members of the village participate - children, older people, women and men. Each family makes an *aū*, used to trap the fish. To make the *aū*, the *vālai*, a type of vine, is used as a rope and the finned leaves of the coconut branch are wound around it. At low tide the people go to the sea (*toafa*) and form a long line for several hundred metres across the inlet. The fishing contraptions (*aū*) are tied to each other and then partly buried in the sand. Everyone stands and waits for the high tide to ensue. As the tide comes in, the *aū* lifts from the sand and its movement and sound in the water directs the fish to remain in *'umu'umu* which are small depressions in the tidal flats. The key to the success of the

<sup>11</sup> My father had participated in *pola* during his childhood in the village of Te'ekiu.

*pola* event is that individuals can not move forward to catch the fish ahead of the group or the good sized fish will escape and there will hardly be any fish for anyone. There are leaders riding along the shore on horses to give the cue as to when to proceed. Fish are first taken for the *hou'eiki* (chiefs) and then the signal is given, 'Tufi!' (gather up the fish). At this stage everyone goes-for-it, catching fish using mats or wire netting. Out of the *pola* several villages are fed.

The *pola* is an example of collectivity, a fundamental characteristic of Tongan concepts of wellbeing and society (Helu, 1999). It represents values of *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness), 'ofa (love), *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships) which give substance to a Tongan social system and philosophy for the promotion of wellbeing for its members. It is about a Tongan way of life which serves the function of social work. Whilst Tongan social work cannot literally facilitate *pola* in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, Tongan social work practice is about capturing and cultivating a value system which can advance the wellbeing of Tongans transnationally. The *pola* then can be understood as representing the goal of Tongan social work; simply, this may be described as strengthening, protecting and promoting Tongan values and social systems which enable the day-to-day needs of Tongan *kāinga* in a globalised context to be met and Tongan aspirations to be realised. The *pola* is in line with the assertion of Pacific social workers that:

... there are many ways in which our purpose in social work differs quite clearly from the *palagi*. As social workers we believe we have a part to play in encouraging awareness of Pacific Island cultures and working to ensure a continuity of our own value systems. This means that in doing our work we must be able to behave in a way which is supporting our culture not undermining it. Our primary accountability is to our people. (Pacific Island Community and Social Workers Auckland, 1986, p.7)

The concepts of *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness), 'ofa (love), *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships) are concepts which both guide the practice of Tongan social work and define the type of society which Tongan social and community work is promoting.

The *pola* reveals possible meanings of the unifying concept of 'ofa. It brings to the fore the notion that individual, family and community wellbeing is best met in selflessness and service. 'Ofa sets a standard for the conduct of humanity, an ideal. A participant

referred to the Tongan proverb of *taki taha uku 'ene fonu* (diving for your own turtle). An explanation of this proverb is:

The fishing for the turtle was done by experienced people. Should the leader of the fishing group see that enough turtles had been caught for their various obligations, he would then tell the men to dive for their own turtles. The looking after of one's own interests. (Tu'inukuafe, 1992, p.256)

This proverb infers that within a Tongan worldview there are systems of redistribution for the welfare of others which occur before one's own interests are met. It is *'ofa* which impels one to meet those obligations to one's *kāinga* and community ahead of one's own immediate interests. This notion of responsibility to the other has been advanced by Bauman (2001b) as that which is needed in the postmodern context. In a context of shifting identities, multiple subject positions and increasing cultural interconnection and yet a rampant individualism, there is a need for community and a moral obligation to the other. Diasporic Tongan communities have largely continued to uphold these values, as suggested in Chapter Four, and it is imperative that this continues. It is in the process of striving for such an ideal that new possibilities for healing and hope are revealed, where *kāinga* and community rise up to become the force and source for social transformation.

To sum up, the *pola* metaphor allows us to view Tongan social work practice as embracing multiple and complex human relationships which are defined by principles about connection and mutuality. *Pola* represents a broad framework of welfare and wellbeing which is preventative and enhancing. It is within this broader framework that a process for practice is cradled. A Tongan practice process both draws from and contributes to the wider Tongan social system of welfare. It is to a metaphor for a Tongan practice process that I now turn.

### ***Uku* Metaphor: Processes for Practice**

The second metaphor, which I employ to depict Tongan social work practice, is that of *uku* (diving). I was also informed of fishing practices in these areas by my father. On the *tonga* (southern) side of Tongatapu can be found hollows in the reef through which the sea water gushes with great force, propelling water and foam up to 30 feet into the air. It is the currents deep under the reef which cause the explosion on the surface.

These are known as dangerous areas and yet there are those who are skilled enough to fish in these areas, diving to catch fish under the reef. It is extremely dangerous to launch a boat in this area and so if one was to fish in the vicinity, the boat would have to be launched elsewhere, on another part of the island, in order to approach the site. People who have the skills to negotiate their way amongst the currents and the reef have to necessarily be knowledgeable, respectful and intuitive in regards to the sea.

The fishing practice of *uku* around *pupu'a puhi* (blowholes) is analogous to Tongan social work requiring skilful negotiation of social issues within *kāinga* and communities. Tongan social work necessarily responds to surface eruptions in *kāinga*. *Uku* alludes to the need to respond to forces and undercurrents which are giving rise to surface eruptions in the lives of individuals and families. The forces and undercurrents are likely to be related to the diasporic context outlined in Chapter Four. It is deep under the surface, however, where strength and sustenance can be sourced. Tongan social work practice is represented by *uku* in that appropriately knowledgeable and skilled practitioners have a role in negotiating and facilitating processes that will bring to bear the resources and strengths required within difficult situations.

The concepts contained within the *uku* metaphor are about processes for practice. Visually, the concepts start well below the surface of the *pupu'a puhi* (blowhole), indicating the depth at which one will *uku* (dive). This is indicative of the indirect nature of practice, as Tongan social work processes do not begin with the presenting problem. *Fakafekau'aki* (connecting) is an aspect of Tongan practice that focuses on revealing the connections between people in a holistic sense. Other factors of *a'u tonu* (going in person), *lotu* (prayer, spirituality and religion) and *fakatōkilalo* (humility) are a part of the indirect way in which issues may be addressed within Tongan social work. This is similar to what Agnew et al. (2004) described as building trust via the roundabout approach in Pacific mental health service delivery.

*Tālanga* (friendly/formal discussion) is a further aspect of Tongan social work practice depicted within the *uku* metaphor. *Lea fakatonga* (Tongan language), *hua* (humour) and *ongo'i* (feelings) become particularly important within the *tālanga* component of Tongan social work. Within *tālanga* processes, understanding and healing can emerge for *kāinga* and communities.

*Fakafekau'aki* and *tālanga* necessarily lead to action which can be understood as *faifatongia* (doing one's duty/fulfilling one's obligations). Principles of '*osikiavelenga* (doing utmost), along with *fakatoukatea* (skilful in two opposite ways) fall under the umbrella of *faifatongia*. Tongan social work involves service and fulfilling obligations to *kāinga* and community with which one is a part. These obligations arise not only out of the social work relationship which is directed by statutory, agency or professional mandates, but by relationships as revealed and affirmed as part of *fakafekau'aki* and *tālanga*.

The success of Tongan social work is realised when relationships of *fetokoni'aki* develop amongst *kāinga* and community. I am not referring here to isolated instances of *kāinga* members giving *tokoni* or help directly to a social worker. Rather, I am referring to a generalised value and practice orientated towards a moral obligation to the other. *Fetokoni'aki*, as a value, ought to be reflected both in the interaction of individuals and in the structure and operation of organisations and institutions. The idea of terminating cases or ending relationships in Tongan social work is more or less unrealistic. A similar theme is identified by critical practice authors, as demonstrated in the following statement:

The ultimate paradox, of course, is that practice may reach a kind of conclusion, but more often than not this turns out not to be an ending so much as a transition to another situation. Critical social work does not follow a predicted course and sign off neatly, delivered at a price, and now a completed contract, on a particular date. (Adams, 2002, p.95)

The values of Tongan social work and the reality of relatively small Tongan communities work to cement relationships rather than to terminate them. This point will be further developed as part of discussions around professionalism and relationships in Chapter Eight. The nature of Tongan relationships, which are best described with reference to *kāinga*, is outlined as part of the final section of this chapter.

### ***Kāinga* (Tongan Kinship Relationships), Community and *Fonua* (land-people): Centring *Pola* and *Uku* Metaphors**

Tongan social work centres in multiple and complex social relationships and so the collectives of *kāinga* and community have prominence as the source and location of social work. The theme of *kāinga* centred social work will be elaborated in Chapter

Eight. For the purposes of contextualising the *pola* and *uku* metaphors, an explanation of *kāinga*, Tongan kinship relationships, is offered here as being fundamental to a Tongan worldview. That is, individuals cannot be viewed in isolation from *kāinga* and, by implication, their community.

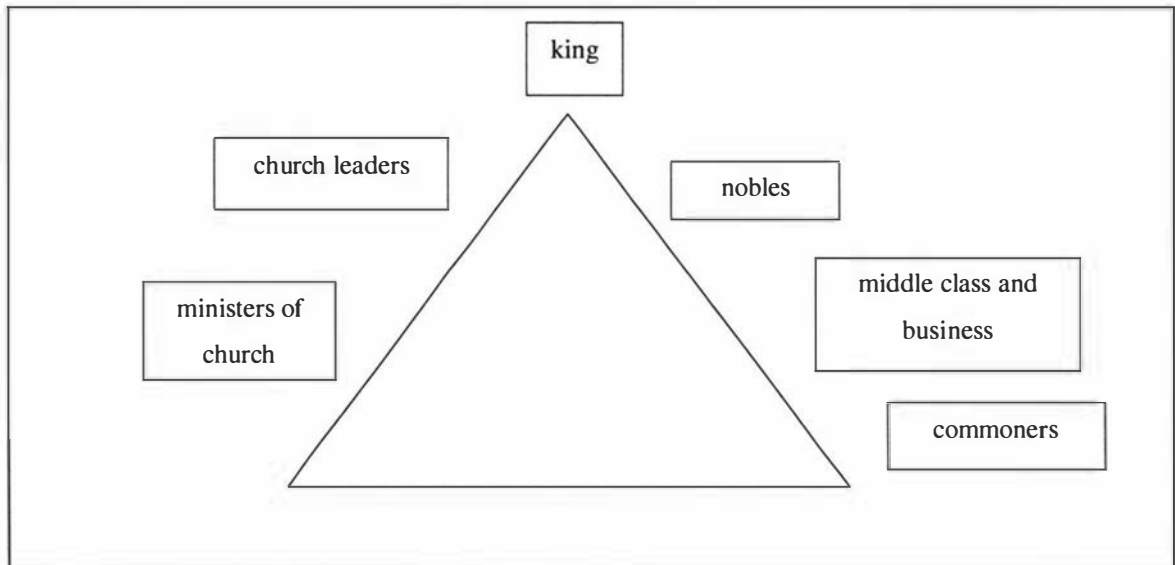
Helu (1999) states that the term *kāinga* originally referred to a local production and consumption unit, but today it takes two meanings. First, it is a unit built around a chief and second, it is a term used for extended family. The *kāinga* plays a role in providing for the economic and welfare needs of its members. Helu (1999) refers to the “Robin Hood” function of *kāinga*:

It serves as a veritable economic leveller by serving as a distributor. It takes from members according to their means and gives to them according to their needs. It acts by arresting and discouraging profiteering, individualism and any capitalistic ambition, chopping off inordinately large individual profits and siphoning them back for *kāinga* consumption. So the *kāinga*, in effect, is an institutionalised Robin Hood, taking from the haves and giving to the have-nots. (p.147)

From a transnational perspective, Vaden (1998) demonstrated that the *kāinga* is a viable entity for meeting the needs of its individual members, evidenced in the flow of ideas, goods, services, money, information and culture within the *kāinga* network. It is further argued that the *kāinga* is a more appropriate tool of analysis when considering development, as compared to the nation-state, since it “relates directly to the way that Tongans perceive their social environment” (Vaden, 1998, p.133).

There is a degree of debate around details of the nature of Tongan social stratification, although there is general agreement that Tongan society is highly stratified (see, for example: Aoyagi, 1966; Helu, 1999; James, 1995). This is perhaps because Tongan kinship structures and subsequent rank and social stratification are context specific and, in some ways, ambiguous. It has been noted, for instance, that the use of terms such as *fāmili*, *kāinga*, *ha’a* and *fa’ahinga* in the literature has been inconsistent and contradictory (Evans, 2001). Notwithstanding this inconsistent and contradictory usage, Figure 5.2 represents one attempt to delineate Tongan social structure.

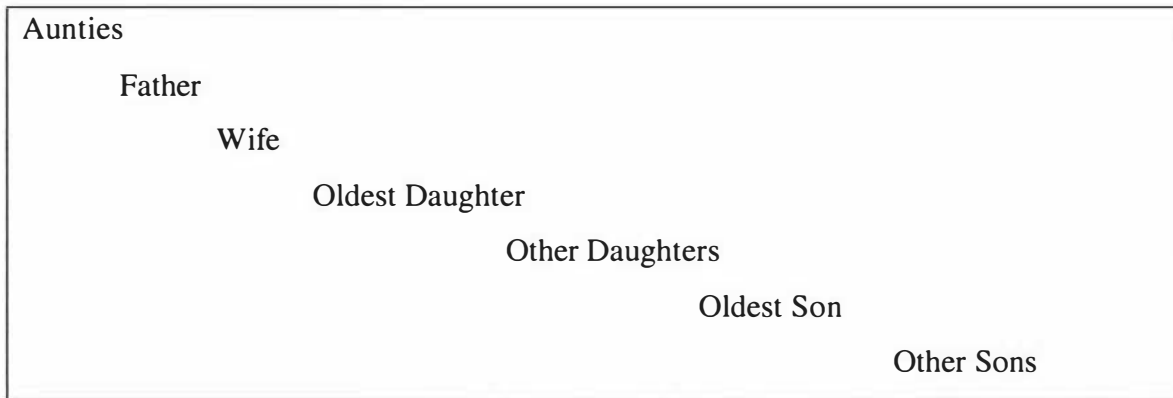


**Figure 5.2 Tongan Social Structure**

Source: Niumeitolu (1993, p.72)

In the pre-colonial period, Tongan society, based on the *kāinga* system, was stratified along the lines of commoners (*kau tu'a*), nobles (*hou'eiki*) and royalty (*ha'a tu'i*). The incorporation of Christianity within Tongan society and throughout the diaspora has added another dimension to status in Tongan society, as demonstrated by the left side of the pyramid. Further education and business development in the diaspora has led to the emergence of a middle class within Tongan social stratification. Niumeitolu (1993) explains that there are social rules within this hierarchical system that determine where one would sit or stand in a meeting or in a traditional setting such as the *kava* ceremony. Tonga social stratification also structures aspects of power and authority in Tongan society in such areas as land ownership or government. The implication for social work is that Tongan practitioners and clients operate, to varying degrees, within this frame of reference and so social work is impacted by the place one occupies within the Tongan social system (see Chapter Six and Eight).

The extended family, the *kāinga*, is the building block of this Tongan socio-cultural setting. At the top of the family hierarchy is the *fahu* (oldest sister of the father) as outlined in Figure 5.3.

**Figure 5.3 Tongan Kinship Structure**

Source: Numeitolu (1993, p.74)

This depiction demonstrates principles in regard to rank, status and respect in the Tongan *kāinga*: sisters are *'eiki* (higher status) in relation to their brothers who are *tu'a* (lower status); the senior is superior in rank to the junior; paternal kin are superior in rank to the maternal and the husband is higher than the wife (Douaire-Marsaudon, 1996, p.142, cited in Aoyagi, 1966; Vaden, 1998). Tongan kinship structure not only has relevance in terms of the clients' systems with which social work intervenes, it is particularly significant in terms of the social worker themselves developing *kāinga* located practice (see Chapter Eight).

The function and role of the *kāinga* has in some ways been interrupted and adjusted in the context of globalisation. Some writers have noted the changing roles within families and for women within Tonga as a result of migration. Gailey (1992), for instance, has shown that while women still have a “repository-of-wealth role, their control over the production of wealth objects has diminished” (p.61). Referring to another aspect of the functioning of the *kāinga* in protecting wellbeing, one of the participants explained how the openness and proximity of homes in Tonga was a protective factor against physical or sexual abuse. That is, if a parent is crossing the boundary in terms of the use of physical discipline in a village setting, there are more likely to be grandparents or extended family in close proximity who will intervene. This situation is quite different to the demarcation of public versus private domains in residential settings that is characteristic of Western nation living situations and which means that there is a lot more privacy, and less regulation of behaviour by family and community. Gailey (1992) makes the point that:

... dominant social institutions, especially church and state, and a range of domestic and international economic processes have encouraged fragmentation of households and nuclearization of families, as well as patrilineal and patriarchal relations. (p.67)

The interruption of the role of *kāinga* was further expressed by another of my participants in the following way:

Where we lived in Tonga, we were more like living close by, and everyone knows each other and ... helped each other. But when we come to New Zealand we are more separated ... and sometimes, like I know it happened to my brother, for example [he] went missing. About three weeks later [I found out]. But back in Tonga, I can know just after one hour or fifteen minutes after it happened. But over here we are more separated.

On the other hand, it was highlighted by a participant that there is a sense of connection and belonging amongst Tongans as a result of genealogical links and that this has facilitated an ability to stay connected and stand alongside others, even in a transnational context:

I think it's born out of the fact that we believe that we are one family in Tonga... the fact that we are all related to the king. You know, how people like to identify themselves with a noble with one particular line to the king... But Tongans like to... talk about their genealogies. And you know, "My grandfather was related to so and so." And it's this sense of belonging together, this extended family concept, the aunts and the uncles. And so it's not something that we suddenly decide, "Hey, I've got to empathise with this family." It just comes naturally. When something bad happens for a person, you grieve with them, you feel for them. It's just that sense of belonging together... When there is a funeral we all gather together and we go. And it's not difficult for us... just to stand alongside.

Although limited in some ways with globalisation, the *kāinga*, as a fundamental Tongan social unit, embodies key values which are central to wellbeing from a Tongan worldview perspective and continues to be fundamental in the social, economic and cultural development of Tongans transnationally (Evans, 2001; Helu, 1999; Vaden, 1998; van der Grijp, 2004).

Taking a broad perspective, Mahina (1993) asserts that the *kāinga* and its function embody the fundamental relationship between Tongan peoples and the environment. *Fonua*, referring to both land and people, is argued to encompass a philosophy of life, providing a broader context in which to understand *kāinga* (Mahina, 1999). It is shown that *fonua* "expressed a form of unity, harmony or oneness between human beings and their environment . . . [a] relationship that is symbiotic and holistic conceptually and

practically” (Mahina, 1999, p.282). Mahina (1999) notes that the concept of *fonua* is one of process, exchange and cycle - as the term refers to a mother’s placenta, the land and its people and one’s grave. The *kāinga* then was “characterised by the cooperative and competitive exchange between people and their environment” (Mahina, 1999, p.282). As a local production unit, the heads of the *kāinga*, the ‘*ulumotu*’a (eldest male) and the *fahu* (eldest female) and their descendants, participated in exchange of *ngāue* (work or consumptive goods such as agricultural, marine or animal products) and *koloa* (non-consumptive ceremonial goods such as mats and tapa). Such exchange reinforced *tu*’a (inferior; low status) and ‘*eiki*’ (superior; high status) distinctions and highlighted the interplay of the economic, political, mental and social elements within the *kāinga* (Mahina, 1999). It is interesting to note that Queen Salote in the 1920s highlighted the use of *fonua* to imply leadership of the *kāinga* (Wood-Ellem, 1999, p.31). That is, she inferred that concerns about land in Tonga are not related to economic production alone; it is the significance of *kāinga* and leadership of *kāinga* which are important when considering land title and production in Tonga.

In relation to the *pola* and *uku* metaphors for Tongan social work, *kāinga* is like *fonua* (land). Land (*fonua*) and sea (*pola and uku*) are best understood with reference to each other – in a similar way, *kāinga* and community are central to Tongan social work. *Kāinga* and community therefore centre the metaphors and are represented at another level with the concept of *fonua*. In this way, *fonua* assumes meanings that are both metaphorical and material. The multiple meanings of the term *fonua* (land, people, placenta, grave) converge here to centre Tongan social work. Embellishing the *pola* and *uku* metaphors which draw from the sea, reference to *fonua* (land) brings a stabilising factor. *Fonua* reflects the position taken in this thesis that there is a point at which hybridity, fluidity and changeability provide inadequate explanations for social reality. It gives support to the idea that there are material realities and that genealogy impinges on social constructions (see Chapter Two). The *fonua* enfolds the values, skills and knowledge of Tongan social work represented in the metaphors and in so doing contributes a further layer of meaning around the centrality of *kāinga* and community for conceptions and practices of Tongan social work.

## Conclusion

This research is underscored with the intention to *pukepuke fonua* (hold on to culture) and this goal has been aspired to at several levels. Not only is the research question concerned with how a Tongan worldview constructs social work, but I have sought to embed the interpretation and reporting of this construction of social work within a Tongan worldview approach. The principal way in which I have sought to do this, is to connect the concepts of Tongan social work within a metaphoric framework. The use of metaphors here is akin to the Tongan practice of *heliaki* where “we can mean more than we can say” (Helu, 1999, p.60). Although the study set out to explore a Tongan model of social work, the research findings which emerged led me towards the employment of metaphors to depict social work. Metaphors align with the findings, allowing better consistency with the content and form for communicating the findings. This approach also reminds us that the discussion of concepts of Tongan social work should not be isolated from the whole of *mo’ui fakatonga* and that the principles cannot be viewed in isolation from each other.

Hence, I have presented here two metaphors based on fishing in Tonga which illustrate the connection of land, sea and people in a holistic sense. These metaphors provide a framework through which the nature of Tongan social work (i.e. foundation values, knowledge and skills) can be introduced and explored, the practice itself being integrated within a Tongan worldview. The *pola* metaphor represents four particular values on which a Tongan system of welfare hinges. The *uku* metaphor represents processes and skills which, in social work practice, draw on and seek to uphold the values of Tongan social work. The approach to social work represented by the *pola* and *uku* metaphors is centred within a further metaphor, *fonua* (land/people). *Fonua* represents *kāinga* (extended family) and community which is central to social work from a Tongan worldview paradigm. There is further recognition that Tongan social work takes place within the diasporic context whereby culture is reproduced and transformed.

The next three chapters identify, examine and discuss the values, knowledge, skills and the construction of Tongan social work as represented in the metaphors of *pola* and *uku*.



## Chapter Six

# Values for Tongan Social Work

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*Makafetoli'aki* (chipping rock with rock; working collaboratively)

This chapter expounds key values of Tongan social work as represented in the *pola* and *uku* metaphors. The values of *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness), *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships), *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *'ofa* (love) are core values emerging from the data which form the foundation of Tongan social work. In the early 1900s, Queen Salote urged Tongans to uphold these same Tongan values, stating:

What is the real meaning of Love of Country? It means to work, to cling to our own peculiar customs that are good and ought not to be abandoned. The things to be prized by us are love, respect and mutual helpfulness... (Wood-Ellem, 1999, p.89)

Evans (2001) notes that “the broad outlines of Tongan kinship patterns can be discerned in the ways that people bring together the three core concepts, *'ofa* (love), *faka'apa'apa* (respect), and *fetokoni'aki* (helping each other)” (p.69). There are of course many other Tongan concepts and values which illustrate and are part of the whole of *mo'ui fakatonga*. Of these, the concepts of *fie'aonga* (wanting to be useful), *fakafekau'aki* (making connections), *matakāinga* (behaving like family), *a'u tonu* (going in person), *fakatōkilalo* (humility), *'osikiavelenga* (doing utmost) and *lotu* (spirituality/faith/religion/prayer) are presented here to illustrate social and community work within a *mo'ui fakatonga* worldview framework. This chapter therefore details the meaning of both core and illustrative values for the construction of social work as a Tongan system of welfare (*pola*) and as processes for direct practice (*uku*). For ease of

reference, Table 6.1 below presents the core and illustrative values that will be discussed in this chapter:

**Table 6.1**

<b>Core Values</b>	<b>Illustrative Values</b>
<i>Fetokoni'aki</i> (mutual helpfulness)	<i>Fie'aonga</i> (wanting to be useful)
<i>Tauhi vā</i> (looking after relationships)	<i>Fakafekau'aki</i> (connecting)
	<i>Matakāinga</i> (behaving like family)
	<i>A'u tonu</i> (going in person)
<i>Faka'apa'apa</i> (respect)	<i>Fakatōkilalo</i> (humility)
<i>'Ofa</i> (love)	<i>'Osikiavelenga</i> (doing utmost)
	<i>Lotu</i> (prayer/spirituality/faith/religion)

An important reminder for this discussion of Tongan values for social work is the point made earlier in the thesis that the concepts presented here do not neatly translate as values. Values are “sets of concepts adopted by a group of people that prescribe the actions of that group of people”, the basic components of which are that they are intrinsically desirable, lead towards action and become the goals of society (Friedman, 2002, p.5). The concepts outlined in this chapter may also be described as processes and knowledge for social work practice.

### ***Fetokoni'aki* (Mutual helpfulness)**

*Fetokoni'aki* translates as “to help one another, to co-operate” (Churchward, 1959, p.178). The prefix “*fe*” is commonplace within the Tongan language and is known as the “reciprocal prefix” (Churchward, 1959, p.147), referring to something which is reciprocated between two or more people. The word *tokoni* translates as help and the suffix *'aki* implies action. The centrality of *fetokoni'aki* points to the idea that wellbeing within a Tongan worldview is achieved through processes of reciprocity and mutuality. Participants described *fetokoni'aki* as something which occurs within the *kāinga* (extended family) and the community at large. Within *kāinga* one participant described his role of being the eldest male in his family:

*Fetokoni'aki* means, you know, supporting, caring for one another. Being the eldest, it is expected of you to... [be a] good role model... It is expected of you to give, it is expected of you not to say “No” to your brothers and sisters... Give of your time, give



of your crop from your farm, you know, anything, even a horse... As the eldest, you are expected to care for the rest of the family, in every form and every way. You care for their children, care for the time of celebration. You expect to contribute the most, you expect to organise. You are expected to speak, you are expected to take control and make sure that everything is okay... And you are supposed to have the most love from everybody else, hhh... But I find that the resource does not drain out, because that's your bank as well, the family. You know, when [its] your time of need, the family will come around and then you get support as well. You play your role [and] they will do their part as well.

In a community setting, *fetokoni'aki* is a production mechanism and a part of everyday life as explained by the following participant:

That's part of [the] Tongan custom of *fetokoni'aki*... I'll help you today, you help me tomorrow... I'll *tau vau* your *koka* today, [then] when you do your *koka'anga* they come and *tau* your *koka*<sup>12</sup>. It's become... a norm. It's not something, "Oh, you have to." No, it's just the culture and custom of Tonga to help one another.

Another stated:

Back home when I was young, the *fetokoni'aki* is not only on a wedding or a funeral, *fetokoni'aki* is a daily thing... If you're going to build a house, *fetokoni'aki* is applied to that, because all the family comes to help you set up the house. It's not only in our *kavenga* [burden, load, responsibility], but it's [in] everything... Sharing, you know, whatever you've got that I don't have, you share it with them.

The value of *fetokoni'aki* is reflected in a number of Tongan proverbs<sup>13</sup>. *Makafetoli'aki* (quoted at the chapter opening) refers to stones chipping away at one another in a rough sea and promotes the need for all to make their contribution. An example given of this principle in action was how a village rugby team worked at the copra boats as a team to raise funds for rugby boots; even those who could, and would, buy their own boots still worked to raise the funds in a spirit of *fetokoni'aki*. Another proverb which is about working collaboratively and collectively to achieve a task is "*takanga 'enau fohe*" (mates at their oars, perhaps their oars are mates). It uses the analogy of voyaging in a treacherous sea where those at the oars must work together in order to successfully navigate their way (Ka'ili, 2004). *Tā e lango kei mama'o* (cut the slips while still at a

<sup>12</sup> *Tau koka* is the process of extracting juice from the scraped bark of the *koka* tree, used to dye *ngatu* (tapa cloth). *Koka* scrapings are put in a bag and then logs are used to squeeze the dye out. A group of around four may be needed for this process.

<sup>13</sup> These Tongan proverbs were identified by participants but are also noted in a booklet put together by the Education Office of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga ('Ofisi Ako 'o e Siasi Uesiliana Tau'ataina 'o Tonga, 2000).

distance) refers to how people prepare for a sea vessel approaching the island by cutting the logs to assist in bringing the vessel ashore. This proverb is about working together. If during an occasion there are not many helpers the saying “*ko e mo’ui foki ko e tou ngāue*” (life is about working together) may be referred to. These proverbs are an indication of the prominence of *fetokoni’aki* within *mo’ui fakatonga* (Tongan worldview).

In *fetokoni’aki*, the mutual helpfulness that is given is both material and social. The principle of *fetokoni’aki* is the traditional basis of collaborative work in the production of *koloa*<sup>14</sup> by weaving or tapa making groups and in plantation work. For occasions such as weddings or funerals, there is a coming together of resources and labour in order to *fetokoni’aki*. Historically in Tonga, *fetokoni’aki* was essential for survival as part of a subsistence existence. In contemporary transnational Tongan communities, the effect of *fetokoni’aki* is that more is achieved materially, socially and spiritually, as noted by one participant:

... say ten families, for example, contribute... Little bits and pieces added... make a richer, spiritually and financially, occasion, than one or two people [who are] really rich and have everything [can achieve]... because it lacks the spirit and the contributions of *fetokoni’aki*.

It was pointed out that the strength of the collective means there is a good return on invested time and that work is not boring in the application of *fetokoni’aki*. Socially, *fetokoni’aki* strengthens relationships and learning from each other (Fanua, 1990). When individuals who are part of a group *fetokoni’aki* (help each other), their synergies lead to both material achievement and strengthened relationships. Pressure is exerted against *fetokoni’aki*, however, by the Western capitalist emphasis on independence and individualism (Tau’akipulu, 2000).

There were a number of examples given by Tongan social workers of this concept of *fetokoni’aki* in action within the Aotearoa New Zealand context. On a community organisation level, one participant shared an account about their new church building, the financing of which was substantially assisted with an interest free loan from another Tongan congregation. In relation to this example, it was stated:

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<sup>14</sup> Refers to mats, tapa and so on.

... this is why sometimes the cultural ways do have [their] positive side. When you look at that, you'd be more or less paying a quarter of a million dollars just for the interest, and yet you don't have to. It's been helped out, and you build your church, and when its time for us, you'll do ours. We give back their money, no interest, but when theirs come[s] along, there will be a time they will come and ask for some money, and then we lend them the money.

Another example was that of a social service which facilitated a community garden project whereby families were allocated a garden plot to grow home produce as a means to improve health and to relieve poverty. The success of this project is realised in the fact that clients of the service now deliver food parcels to the agency rather than the other way around. A further example given of *fetokoni'aki* was that if a family are late for an appointment it is accommodated, whereas it was noticed that non-Pacific practitioners tended not to operate in that way. Clearly, in this latter example, there is no immediate evidence of reciprocity. The action of the practitioner, however, was done in the spirit of *fetokoni'aki* where one does not expect immediate or direct benefits back to oneself. This has been clarified as the difference between reciprocity, in which one offers something in the expectation of a return, and *Pasifiki* ways of gifting whereby gifts are given in the spirit of giving with no expectation of a return (A. Rongo Raea, personal communication, July 23, 2004). Finally, one participant reported concern about her agency becoming more clinical in focus, including funding being cut for client social functions, impacting the spirit of *fetokoni'aki* and participation within the agency:

... they feel like "We're not really needed at [name of agency] now." ... its back to a *pālangi* [way]– just walk in, do your thing and walk out. But now, we hardly see them to come and say, "Hello," to us. It's really hard... Sometimes I say to our meeting, "There's no use of us going around and talk about discrimination, the way that I have looked at us staff, we are the first ones to discriminate [against] them."

The value of *fetokoni'aki* builds sustained and ongoing relationships that ultimately benefit the individual in the context of the collective.

In social work practice, the application of the principle of *fetokoni'aki* departs from the kind of giving or help characteristic of charity which has more potential to be paternalistic. *Fetokoni'aki* occurs when there is mutual helping. In the case of Tongan social work, the *tokoni* or help may appear to be one way if viewed narrowly. Taking a wider perspective, Tongan social work is construed in a way that allows the client to

*fetokoni'aki*, not necessarily helping the social worker directly, but by arriving at a position of wellbeing they are in a position to *tokoni* others in a way that strengthens and sustains their *kāinga* and community. This was explained by one participant in the following way:

As part of my role, I like to give out as much as I can to those that... do need... help. I don't expect anything from them, because there's another way... I like to see that I give you that much help, and then you give it to the others, not to me. I don't expect things to pay me. Because I like my blessing more than what they're going to give me, but I like them to give it to somebody else. And that... will enhance them to go back to the value of our own tradition.

*Fetokoni'aki* is comparable to collective philosophies that underpin many indigenous and *Pasifiki* cultures and therefore social work practices. Crummer et al. (1998), for example, identify collectivity as a principle guiding social work practice with Cook Island families. They state:

Each individual is seen to contribute to a larger group such as family, church, community. Each individual has a role to play and recognises, supports and complements the roles of others... the individual functions as part of a collective rather than solely for him or herself. (Crummer et al., 1998, p.3)

A collective philosophy underlines *fetokoni'aki* and also underlines the principle of usefulness which is outlined next.

### ***Fie'aonga* (Usefulness)**

While *fetokoni'aki* is a principle which emphasises mutuality and reciprocity, *fie'aonga* (wanting to be useful; usefulness) is a related value with a communal emphasis. Wellbeing within a Tongan worldview paradigm is achieved when one is *'aonga* (useful) to their family and their community. One participant perceived *fie'aonga* to be a basic human attribute:

There's a Tongan saying that says "*ikai ke 'i ai ha taha e ta'e'aonga*", nobody is useless, you know... "*fie'aonga*" - you are wanting to be useful... I know that this is an important thing, wanting to be useful. We all want to be useful. There is no human that doesn't want to be useful...

Arising from their study on a Tongan homework centre, Fusitu'a and Coxon (1998) state:

*Tokoni ki he kakai Tonga* (helping the Tongan people) is an important criterion for status within Tongan migrant communities and a significant motivating force behind Tongan parents' desire for their children to be successful in schools is their hope that their children will be *fie 'aonga* (useful) to their own community. (p.27)

Similarly, in this research one participant noted the following:

A lot of us Pacific Island graduates, once we become qualified we have a lot of choices which is very different to what our parents and maybe other people in our community have. But then I think people really respect you when you make the choice to hang around and try and be useful.

The concept of *fie 'aonga* aligns with a focus on the strength of one's actions rather than on one's ability to talk. This was expressed in the following ways by participants:

Action always speaks louder than words. What I mean by that is, I make a real effort to be present at lots of things, whether I have something to say or not. And that shows commitment. I always participate.

They don't believe in talking, they believe in action. And you must action what you talk. And if you talk, talk, talk and you come to a family, that's a typical Tongan [family], they will never open their door for you... That's the trust you must earn, you must earn their trust.

The value of *fie 'aonga* connects with other values such as *'ofa* and *fetokoni'aki*, giving rise to the practices of sending remittances to Tonga, financially contributing to *kāinga* events such as weddings and funerals and giving to the church.

### ***Tauhi vā* (Looking After Relationships)**

*Tauhi vā* refers to maintaining or nurturing relationships. *Tauhi* means to take care of, keep safe and look after and *vā* literally refers to the intervening space. Therefore, *tauhi vā* refers to looking after the space between people – the relationship. Within Tongan social structures, and particularly in *kāinga*, Tongans are entwined within a matrix of multiple and complex inter-relationships. There are principles and values which govern the operation of inter-relationships and which in turn constitute wellbeing within a Tongan world view perspective.

The notions of *vā* (space) and *tā* (time) have been articulated by Mahina (1993; 2004) as central organising concepts for Tongan culture, including language, art and history. Ka'ili (2005) has demonstrated that *tauhi vā*, the nurturing of sociospatial ties, provides

a framework within which to understand Tongan transnationality. Based on his research and experience with Tongans in the USA, Ka'ili shows how *tauhi vā* occurs amongst Tongans in the form of church membership, genealogical acknowledgements, market dealings, sharing of food and so on. He states that “vā is creatively organized by Tongans to construct connecting spaces within the ‘alienated’ spaces of capitalism” (Ka'ili, 2005, p.112).

Adherence to values of *tauhi vā* are increasingly challenged both by Tongans themselves and observers of Tongan culture and wellbeing<sup>15</sup> (Gregory, 2004). The expression of *tauhi vā* in globalisation was raised in a focus group. The example was given of visiting a *mehikitanga* (paternal aunt):

- A: We make it so expensive and out of reach of people's budgets, it drives us apart... I feel if I just go with one cake or a mango and visit... they will look at me and think I'm rude or making a joke... So I will stay [away] until I've collected ten mangoes. You know, I can't visit an aunty or someone [for] less than \$50 or \$100 at least.
- B: They measure it now aye, they measure the principle.

Mahina (2004) states that there has been a:

... transfiguration of Tongan society, culture and history, informed mainly by the Western capitalist democratic ideology, and scientific and technological culture which transforms the Tongan cyclical arrangement of time and space into a state of linearity. (p.24)

It is from a cyclical perspective that the value of *tauhi vā* can be fully understood. How principles are materially interpreted may change within this context, nonetheless the value of nurturing and looking after relationships (*tauhi vā*) remains important for Tongan wellbeing. Specifically within a social work context, effective Tongan social work is characterised by maintaining, rather than terminating, relationships. The nature of the relationship may change from being one of regular contact for a specific purpose, but having achieved that purpose, relationships are cemented rather than ended. While an aspect of the social work process has come to some sort of conclusion, this does not necessarily prescribe an ending. In essence, relationships are nurtured and accountability towards clients becomes an important Tongan ethical reality. Within the Aotearoa New Zealand context, Tongan *kāinga* and community may not be in close

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<sup>15</sup> A number of media articles question the impact of remittances and church giving on Pacific families in New Zealand. See Gregory (2004) and Perrott (1999).

geographical proximity, but the long arm of the Tongan kumara vine stretches transnationally so that close community networks remain a reality. It is within this reality that *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships) becomes an important Tongan social work concept.

*Tauhi vā* has resonance with the Samoan concept of *va fealoaloa'i* which Autagavaia (2001) describes as mutually respecting and maintaining the “sacred space within relationships” (p.77). She explains that in embracing this practice principle, social workers must understand themselves in relation to those present in a room. This could include the ability to recite genealogy or *fa'alupega* via which relationship spaces are manifest. The following section elaborates on the processes of connecting.

### ***Fakafekau'aki* (connecting)**

In describing their practice, Tongan social workers consistently referred to the process of connecting or *fakafekau'aki* as a key dimension. *Fakafekau'aki* is a verb which means “to cause to be related to each other, to bring into relationship with each other, to correlate” (Churchward, 1959, p.33). The process of *fakafekau'aki* occurs between the social worker and others so that they establish association with, connection with and belonging to each other. This connection may be based on genealogy, church affiliation, which school(s) one attended, or shared knowledge of people and/or places.

*Fakafekau'aki* then becomes a foundation for change. The primacy of *fakafekau'aki* was highlighted by the following statement during the first interview:

So first and foremost, relationship and connections are most important. So if you wanted a strategy for helping this family, first and foremost it is about alliances, it's about friendships... Step one: Build some rapport, build some friendship, build some alliance.

*Fakafekau'aki* involves the social worker in a significant degree of self-identifying and self-disclosure. As reported by one participant:

When you sort of introduce yourself and start talking about where you come from, there's always that connection there.... I introduce myself; tell [the client] where I come from, my parents and my village back in Tonga and the church I belong to. It may not be necessary to do all those, but it all depends on the person that I'm dealing with... And then I didn't realise that [the client] herself [would] sort of sit back and relax and [say], “Oh yeah, I know your father, him and I used to work together,” or, “I

know your grandmother.” You know, and then they open up and start talking. And then you are able to pick up, or get the information that you’re after, when they start opening up and when they start talking to you. And I think it’s important to have a way of approaching people, and especially Tongan people.

The prefix *faka* means having to do with making connections; it implies an active role on the part of the social worker or the client, while the prefix *fe* in *fakafekau’aki* is referred to as the reciprocal prefix (Churchward, 1959, p.147). The word *kau* in this context means to be a part of, to belong to, relate to, to be concerned or connected with. The suffix *’aki* is similar to the English preposition “with” (Churchward, 1953). *Fakafekau’aki* now means to bring another matter or party into relationship with another; to incorporate. In social work it infers mutuality and reciprocity in the connection and something which is reciprocated between two or more people.

While self-disclosure has been raised in the literature, the guideline regarding timing is that “if it occurs at the beginning of the engagement process, it is more likely to fall under the client’s right to know” including such information as fees, training and experience and theoretical orientation (Raines, 1996, p.364). Processes of *fakafekau’aki* move beyond this because, within *mo’ui fakatonga*, information such as training and theoretical orientation is not likely to be at the forefront in the worker-client interchange. As illustrated above, *fakafekau’aki* within a Tongan worldview framework means that the exploration that takes place in the early stages of assessment may involve the social worker in sharing and self-disclosure at a high level in terms of who their family are, their religion, or whether they are New Zealand-born or Island-born.

It was pointed out by one participant in the initial interview that, as a young Tongan working with other Tongans, there are inherent challenges associated with the fact that you may know those whom you are working with in other settings:

Participant: I notice the Samoans are listening really well; they are wanting to come on board. The Cook Islanders and Niueans are listening. You’re not getting much of a challenge from them. But it’s the Tongans that are giving me challenges.

Researcher: Why do you think that is?

Participant: I don’t know... I think for me it’s more that we know each other. We know each other and they’re saying, “Well, you’re the little snout-nosed kid that was at Sunday School when I was teaching.” And all that... Those things cause some kind of difficulty.



In this context, *fakafekau'aki* is a process by which to manage relationships from an insider position, particularly within a hierarchical culture where social status is typically based on such factors as rank, age and family background.

A further implication of *fakafekau'aki* is that social workers are seen by clients, and/or other Tongans with whom they work, not just as individuals or in terms of their profession or agency, but as representing their own family. This was conveyed in the following statement by a participant during a focus group:

If I'm Tongan and [the client] family is Tongan, that is my whole family and its history on the line. And they shoot the messenger and their family, not necessarily the service or the organisation.

It was also explained that co-working with non-Tongans can be a point of contention, as the way the co-worker relates and interacts with Tongan clients also reflects on the Tongan social worker's family. Co-working can therefore put a degree of pressure and expectation on the Tongan social worker if the non-Tongan co-worker is not skilled and knowledgeable about working in a Tongan way.

It is clear, however, that *fakafekau'aki* provides an essential platform from which social work can proceed as illustrated in the following example. One participant recalled how he was experiencing difficulty in gaining the cooperation of a family to locate a young person who had absconded. When the family realised the social worker's surname and was then able to identify a connection with that social worker, there was a notable change in the information they were prepared to share and the young person was successfully located within the extended family. *Fakafekau'aki* in this instance opened doors to family information. It should be noted, therefore, that as identity is defined in relation to others, it is important how one connects to others.

Given the importance of *fakafekau'aki*, Tongan social workers benefit from having sound knowledge of Tongan genealogies and their associated geographies. It was explained in an initial individual interview that:

A lot of the time it does help if you know the connections of family trees. When you start talking about that there is automatically a link, a conscious link between you and that person when you know that ancestor or family background. It makes them feel that

you do know, or they belong to a network which would help. To me, I think it's Tongan... knowing the connections and the background does help.

Knowledge of Tongan genealogies, however, is an aspect of *mo'ui fakatonga* which is potentially under threat in the diaspora. There are traditions of story telling, for instance, as part of *faikava* (*kava* drinking) ceremonies or *toulālanga* (weaving groups) whereby such knowledge is passed onto younger generations. An issue in *pālangi* contexts is accessibility to Tongan language and traditions as the majority cultures do not necessarily value and therefore facilitate the development of this knowledge.

Related, it would seem, to such realities, is that there is some difference between how New Zealand-born and Island-born social workers reported their utilisation of *fakafekau'aki*. For the Tongan-born working with Tongan-born clients, this connecting process is likely to be focused in Tonga. New Zealand-born Tongans working with New Zealand-born Tongans, on the other hand, are more likely to focus initially upon the connection with events and places in Aotearoa New Zealand, leaving connecting in terms of village and family name to later in the process. It was also expressed by some New Zealand-born participants that Tongan-born families were not so willing to open up to them (to connect), and the reason for this was perceived to be a lack of shared knowledge of things back in Tonga.

### ***Matakāinga* (behaving like family)**

The value of *matakāinga* is also illustrative of the value of looking after relationships (*tauhi vā*). The term *matakāinga* is used to refer to behaving like family – that is, when warmth is shown on the face and in body language. *Mata* is face and *kāinga* is relatives or extended family, so in the literal sense it is saying that one has the face of a family member. One participant described his understanding of *matakāinga* as taking the initiative to acknowledge your family:

I suppose *matakāinga* being a really good concept. [It's when] you... manage to pop in at a distant relative's place, an older couple, and drop in a fish or a can of corned beef or something. That kind of stuff...

Another participant commented:

... *matakāinga* is when your face looks welcoming. You don't know the person, but as soon as you know, *ko ho'o* cousin *eni mei*... [this is your cousin from...], and you don't

know them and you still welcome them. [Then] they think, “*O, matakāinga*,” because you welcomed them whether they are family or not. And I think that’s good... for social work practice.

It was explained that *matakāinga* is also about extending assistance and includes those outside of one’s kin group:

It shows that you reflect family identification with them. And that means that you love them and you want to help them. But *matakāinga* is now... used to describe anyone who relates in that way... to anyone.

The notion of inclusion was a key theme raised by participants in relation to their practice approach. They described how in their social work practice they would include themselves in the families or communities they worked with and hence treat clients “as if they were your own.” In becoming like family, social workers are including themselves in the family. One participant explained that using inclusive language is a way in which this is affected:

When you approach them you have to include yourself in the family. For example, “*ko ‘eku ha’u ki heni, ko’ etau fānau*” [I have come here about our children]. You have to include yourself so they can feel that you want to be a part of them, you are there for them. If you say, “*ko ‘eku ha’u ki heni, ko ho’o tama*” [I have come here about your child], you are more isolating yourself.

Another participant reported an incident where a girl from a family in the church at which he was a leader ran away to his home because she was fearful of excessive physical discipline. The participant had a meeting with the father and framed his discussion in inclusive language:

I said to the parents, to the father, I said, “Our daughter has come home to me...” You know, putting me alongside him, we are the fathers. You know, we’re responsible for this girl. She’s not just your daughter; she’s my daughter as well. And I think that approach, which I think is a peculiarly Tongan approach, is very important.

The principle of *matakāinga* is therefore about perceiving a social work relationship as a type of family relationship. The way in which *matakāinga* makes connection was highlighted:

... if that client is older, then he is a father to me. I give him that title. And it works. It works because you need to make that family comfortable, that if the guy is older then they know that you are respecting them. And if it’s younger, you’ve got to give that fatherly figure, that he’s your son. And you are including yourself on that and they know that you do care. And that’s what’s wrong with the clinician. They are clinical

people, okay, ask this and this, and asking questions straight away. And of course that shuts the family up. They say, “No, we don’t want this guy here.”

One participant also pointed out that *matakāinga* is relevant to collegial relationships within the agency context, that is, that other members of the management team were treated like brothers and sisters. Another participant put this theme across in a slightly different way, saying that in terms of priorities it was like “building a mountain” – that is she needed to first be “faithful” in her roles as a daughter, sister or aunt as a base to her “faithfulness” in her role as an agency manager.

This Tongan practice which I have referred to as *matakāinga* is similar to Mulitalo-Lauta’s (2000) description of *fa’asamoa* (Samoan way) social work practice. He describes a young woman probation officer referring to men she worked with as father or brother, and explains:

The use of names such as *tama* (father) and *tuagane* (brother) effectively induced a sense of Samoanhood, brotherhood, sisterhood, fatherhood and familyhood... The inmates regarded her as their own blood – sister and daughter. They accepted her within their *fa’asamoa* protocol known as *feagaiaga* [code of respect by which a brother honours his sister]. (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000, p.101)

Similarly, Lynn’s (2001) study of the ‘Murri Way’ within Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social work, found that there is an emphasis on the “relationship between the worker and client that is based on familial/cultural connections rather than individualisation” (p.907).

### ***A’u tonu* (to arrive in person)**

The principle of *a’u tonu* is another aspect of Tongan social work that was raised by participants. This was highlighted by one participant who said that she tended to make more home visits to, and generally had more contact with, her Tongan clients as compared to non-*Pasifiki* clients. Other participants related that in setting up groups, including parenting skills, anger management and older person’s groups, they approached potential group participants in person. In relation to setting up a group for older Tongans, the practitioner reasoned:

Well with the old people, the Tongan thing about it is the personal approach. I went individually and asked those people...

Letters and phone calls, as means to communicate with Tongan families, are seen as inappropriate and ineffective and so effort and resource is put into making face-to-face contact. A practitioner working in a Pacific agency described this as follows:

Participant: There are some things that we do from a service perspective that are slightly different from other mental health teams. So, for example, if you don't show up for an appointment, we'll go home and visit them.

Researcher: You chase it up.

Participant: We'll chase it up. And that's a very simple thing to do and it's not a big deal, but it's something that we put a lot of effort into.

Participants also highlighted issues arising out of the practice principle of *a'u tonu*. One participant who was engaged in contract work for a government agency had to advocate for resources to cover mileage and travel for the counselling work she did with Tongan clients. It was pointed out by another participant that in using Pacific ways of building rapport, there needs to be agreement by the agency about such things as the appropriateness and the amount of face-to-face contact involved:

So you can... arrive at the same goals but work at it in a Pacific way. And that has to be agreed to by your agency. Otherwise your agency will say, "Well, I didn't tell you to go a hundred times to that family!" "Oh, building rapport, you know, this is what we do." Well, no, that has to be cleared. I think when the Pacific person makes assumptions in their mainstream agency we can get into trouble. It has to be, for the *pālangi*, it has to be clearly contracted to and agreed to. That's one of my learnings... For our people, the more shame provoking the incident, the less we see them, they don't turn up. So, by giving them those tools at the initial visit – we can do things a Pacific way, but this is the ultimate goal – they will feel empowered to engage in the process and not run away and hide.

The practice of *a'u tonu* is similar to approaches from some other cultural frameworks. Lui (2003), speaking as a mental health practitioner practicing from a Samoan cultural base, highlights the importance of verbal and personal contact as opposed to written or telephone contact for maintaining *va fealoaloa'i* (the space between relationships). In Māori terms, *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face-to-face) is a principle which resonates with *a'u tonu*. Lui (2003) points out, however, similar to participants in this study, that this can create a dilemma for Pacific practitioners as these practices conflict with clinical practice norms whereby "workers should not form personal relationships with clients" (p.4). This conflict underlines the need for supportive supervision and advocacy for Tongan and Pacific social workers (discussed further in Chapters Eight and Nine). To

summarise, *a'u tonu* is a principle that requires in-person contact in order to make appropriate connection in Tongan social work and to *tauhi vā* (maintain relationships).

### ***Faka'apa'apa* (Respect)**

*Faka'apa'apa* has been translated as showing deference, respect or courtesy (Churchward, 1959), and is afforded by one who is *tu'a* (inferior) towards those who are '*eiki* (superior). James (1995) argues that the '*eiki* and *tu'a* categorisations have often been misconstrued by Europeans as complementary and mutually exclusive categories, whereas '*eiki* is encompassing of '*tu'a*. *Faka'apa'apa* is epitomised in the *tuonga'ane* – *tuofefine* relationship. A *tuonga'ane* is a brother or male cousin of a female and a *tuofefine* is a sister or female cousin of a male<sup>16</sup>. James (1995) states:

The most strongly marked aspect of relations between cross-siblings, especially between those who were the eldest, was concern for one another's well-being, which was summed up in the notion of *faka'apa'apa*.. [denoting] love, reverence, fear and even dread. (p.63-64)

In the family setting, as described above, there is *faka'apa'apa* on the part of *tuonga'ane* towards their *tuofefine*, by *fānau* (children) towards their *mātu'a* (parents), and in particular their *mehikitanga* (paternal aunts), and so on. *Faka'apa'apa* also refers to relationships in society at large so that *kau tu'a* (commoners) display *faka'apa'apa* towards *hou'eiki* (nobles) and *kau tu'i* (royalty). A transgression of *faka'apa'apa* is seen to be a breach of *tapu* (Churchward, 1959, p.183) and by implication both individual and collective wellbeing is undermined when one does not afford *faka'apa'apa* towards another. An individual's status or rank within a given context would determine their place and therefore to whom they *faka'apa'apa* and from whom they receive *faka'apa'apa*.

In the wider context of globalisation, expressions of *faka'apa'apa* have expanded beyond kinship relationships to include ways of relating within the system of the church. In the church setting, *faka'apa'apa* is afforded by *kāinga lotu* (parishioners)

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<sup>16</sup> Helu (1999) argues that by translating *tuonga'ane* and *tuofefine* as brother and sister respectively, misunderstandings emerge as the words brother and sister are a distinction of the nuclear family, focus on sexual categories and emphasise the individual; rather Tongan society is about interactions between groups of people and the extended family.

towards *faifekau* (ministers). One participant expressed the view that such hierarchical relationships in the church actually represent a misinterpretation of Christianity:

They've kind of pushed the scriptures into the culture so all the ministers sit in the front row too. It's supposed to be the other way around in the scriptures; you're supposed to be unseen and serving actually.

Another participant commented that respect is sometimes afforded to those with status in terms of wealth, occupation or education, while those of status within *kāinga* relationships are not appropriately recognised:

If I come to a church, I come to a wedding, I know what my status is in relation to other people. I will never go and push myself to take up seats... We sit in relation to the relationship, how we stand in the family - except if the royal house is there, then we know where they are. But today the close tie of the family doesn't exist because we put people in the front... according to ... who they are in public... but don't forget who is there in relation to the *fāmili*, your *fahu* and your '*ulumotu*'a.

There is a realisation that the interpretation of *faka'apa'apa* is changing over time, as relayed by the following statement:

When we grew up, the *tapu* was still there... When I grew up... my father will always wear a shirt, just in case the sisters turn up... or no one lies down when the boys are around. It's still around, there are still some homes where it's still around, but it's no longer this strict observation that we used to do, that my parents probably would have done.

While the importance of *faka'apa'apa* to *mo'ui fakatonga* was generally agreed by participants, there was also evidence that particular expressions of *faka'apa'apa* are diverse and changing. *Faka'apa'apa* is highly valued and is an indication of wellbeing from a Tongan worldview perspective. The salience of this concept amongst participants is exemplified in the following statement:

There [are] a lot of things within the Tongan culture that I actually honestly believe needs to be looked at. But the actual value that the Tongan culture has of respect, you know, for each other, is something that I will not change.

When asked about what is particularly Tongan about their practice, most participants referred to respect and this was translated in Tongan as either *faka'apa'apa* or *feveitokai'aki*. *Feveitokai'aki* has been translated as “to respect or honour one another; or to respect one another's feelings or scruples” (Churchward, 1959, p.183). That is,

respect is about knowing your status in relation to others within Tongan social structures. One participant responded:

My Tongan values, as a Tongan - its respect... The Tongans, they are very structured at home; you have royalty, the nobles, the commoners. I know my position as a commoner. I know what is expected of me, I know my role, and I know how to move around that role. I know how to sneak around that role. I know how to survive in those situations whether it be for the church, in the village or the community.

When a Tongan social worker is aware of their place within social structures, they are able to manoeuvre their practice in a way that utilises *faka'apa'apa* within social work.

Tongan social workers in this study spoke passionately about the principle of *faka'apa'apa*. One participant stated that, as someone who works in the community, she saw herself as being a role model in living the principle of respect. Showing respect was seen as an important addition to having a qualifying degree, as explained below:

One of the values and principles of a social worker is [respect]... If you can't respect them, there is no use, even though you... are professional... if you don't have all those principles on you... then what is the use of getting there... *kapau 'e 'ikai tete mahu'inga'ia 'ihe kakai, ke te hanga 'o faka'apa'apa'i... pea te tu'u 'o pehē, "Ko au ia 'oku 'osi ma'u hoku mata'i tohi pea koe fu'u polofesinale au he me'a koe," uHINGA koe 'oku ma'olunga. He mahino koe he 'ikai 'i ai ha taha ia tene hanga 'o respect you. Kapau te te lava ke kamata pe kita mei lalo, pea 'alu 'alu fakataha hoto poto mo 'ete, 'alu 'aki he 'ofa, 'alu 'aki e ongo'i, o 'ikai 'alu ke sio ki he ma'u ha pa'anga, pe fa'o hinga tafa'aki.*

[... if you don't regard the people as important, to respect them... but you stand and say, "I have completed my degree and I'm a professional in this area," that means that you are above others. In doing that, others will not respect you. I must regard myself as starting from a lower rank; then this can go together with my knowledge, love, feelings and not looking at monetary gains or anything else].

The above statements indicate that *faka'apa'apa* and *feveitokai'aki* in social work practice are about negotiating one's way around hierarchical social structures in a way that maintains the dignity of all involved. This is done by taking into consideration the relations of *'eiki* and *tu'a*, which define one's superior (*'eiki*) or inferior (*tu'a*) status in relation to others. Social workers are, in a way, in an *'eiki* position due to job position, education or statutory power. In another sense, they could also be *tu'a* in terms of age or commoner status.

Tongan social workers utilise *faka'apa'apa* in the construction of social work relationships by assuming *matakāinga* or kinship-like roles in relation to clients, thus



integrating '*eiki/tu'a*' roles. One young, New Zealand-born female social worker used *faka'apa'apa* to facilitate her anger management group work with young men:

There were lots of things on the programme that I implemented that were Tongan, and I guess my values and my character. A lot wasn't Tongan too traditionally, but I wouldn't call that not being Tongan. Like I sat in a forum with six guys for 12 weeks and gave anger management. That's not Tongan. But... I came across as their sister and they respected me in that sense.

This social worker demonstrates how by coming across "as their sister" she drew on the *faka'apa'apa* relationship between *tuonga'ane* (brothers) and *tuofefine* (sisters) and was successfully able to engage with the young men she worked with.

On the other hand, some participants revealed how *faka'apa'apa* in social work practice either precluded them from working with some groups or was, at times, intentionally not adhered to. A female health worker, for instance, in her training, was required to give a talk on reproductive health to a group of Tongan men. She discussed how she was uncomfortable with this expectation and was not able to talk in depth as this was an inappropriate expectation given the value of *faka'apa'apa* that was shared by both her as a worker and the men's group. Further, one participant highlighted how the Family Group Conference model prescribed within the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989, raises issues for practice with Tongan families if sexual abuse is being discussed. In such cases with Tongan families, it was identified as more appropriate to hold separate discussions as it is unlikely that aunts and uncles of the child, who relate as *tuonga'ane* and *tuofefine*, would attend the meeting if the process would be *tapu* in terms of *faka'apa'apa*. In any case, great care needs to be taken in terms of meeting preparation and facilitation to ensure issues are discussed in a manner that will engage all members of the family. It was also stated that at times, in cases of abuse, things may have to be dealt with in ways that are not respectful in a Tongan way:

There are times when there are abusive relationships within a family unit, where you know that you need to hold someone accountable, hold somebody to task. And to do that you can't, you know, I think you can do that tentatively with a sense of respect, but the actions themselves are not respectful. So you have to deal with it in a way that is sometimes not respectful.

A further example of discernment in adherence to *faka'apa'apa* was explained with reference to working within a mainstream organisation:

Its funny, because when we're working with... a Tongan church... then the whole thing about humility and respect all kicks into place. The moment you walk in the door it's all there. And we sit there being very, very quiet and they tell us what the agenda is and we say yes, yes, yes... But yeah, there's no room for that inside [name of mainstream agency].

In this case, *faka'apa'apa* was not strictly adhered to within an organisational setting which constituted a non-Tongan cultural context. The use of *faka'apa'apa* is therefore a foundational value that is negotiated alongside contextual factors. This is similar to Tau'akipulu's (2000) suggestion that *faka'apa'apa*, as a Tongan communal value, needs critical revision for interpretation within the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

Instances where the participants believed that *faka'apa'apa* was not adhered to when it should have been were also cited. An example was the trend for people to represent Tongans on certain government forums without other Tongans knowing about it. This was referred to as showing a lack of *faka'apa'apa*. A further example was when a minister asked a participant to assist getting someone a permit to stay in Aotearoa New Zealand because the participant knew the appropriate consultants. The participant concerned stated that this portrayed a lack of *faka'apa'apa* because it put her in a difficult position, inappropriately expecting her to tell a "small lie".

In a very practical sense, *faka'apa'apa* is shown by such things as dress as explained in the following description of *anga faka'apa'apa* (habitually deferential or courteous):

Never wear a mini skirt when you know you are going to see a Tongan family, hhh... For me, I plan when I go and see a Tongan family. I don't wear long jeans, long pants. I wear long skirt looking things, like the one I'm wearing today, a long dress. For example, this is really short sleeved. I would always, no matter how hot I was, I would always wear my jacket because its short sleeved. So it's like respect for them as well. Always take your shoes off at the door. Being level, being on the same level as them, not you're up here and they're down there...

It was pointed out that if you hold a professional position as a social worker, Tongan clients will likely show respect to you. In this case, it was seen as important that the social worker reciprocate respect by the way they presented in terms of dress and language. The following anecdote was given:

When you go to people's home, they have that respect towards you, as an officer or an agent of the department, and so it's important that you behave likewise.... I know of one guy who went to a family. [His] hair was shoulder length, that's okay, but [he was

wearing ] cargo shorts and jandals. And the social worker was saying something, and the lady of the house [said], “Oh, I thought you were just coming from a marijuana party or something!” You know, just the way he dressed, the way he talked.

The notion that dress is important when working cross-culturally has been mentioned by Egan (2004) who states that:

While comments about attire may appear ‘old hat’, sexist and possibly not relevant to this new millennium, these considerations are part of being sensitive to the differing cultural milieus in which we practice. How we dress conveys respect and power. It can impact on the way we are able, or not able to engage with clients, especially during the first meeting. (p.80)

Finally, *faka’apa’apa* impacts on practice in terms of the use of the language of respect (see Chapter Seven), the importance of greeting, acknowledging, connecting and asking. This was described in the following way:

You have to like, “*Malo e lelei, pea fakatapu atu ki he matāpule [name]. Malo e ‘ofa eiki he tau a’usia he aho ko eni...*” You see it goes with that spiritual thing as well. “*‘Ofa ae ‘Otua tau a’usia he aho ko eni. Me’a pango pe, oku i ai ha me’a pehe i hoko i ho’o tama. ...Lele mai ai o fai ... aho ko eni... Ha’u pe, ko eku kole atu...*” It has to be an asking thing. You don’t come here and tell them, your son is sick. No, no, no, you ask them for their permission to have this thing done. And you ask them in a nice way, you know. And you also have to connect it. Before you go there, you catch up your knowledge. Now, which family is this? Where are they from? And when you go there, that protocol is brought in... “*Teu manuatu pe ki he tau ki’i kolo i [village]. Anga tauhi na’e fai ai, pea mo tau fai fatongia, pehe ne pehe teu kole atu. ... faingamālie ke fai ai kau tokitā e nau ngāue ki tokoni atu ko ho’o tamasi’i.*” I tell you man, it always works! The old man starts crying, “*‘Ikai ke u ilo ko e ha ha me’a, I don’t know what’s happened and I cannot handle it, thank God that you are here.*” You see, now they are saying that it is good that we come. And yet, when you ring them on the phone they tell you to get, you know, hhh!

Respect is considered a core quality of a social worker (Cournoyer, 2000; Miley, O’Melia, & DuBois, 2004). Social workers who possess the core quality of respect have acceptance and respect for the worth and dignity of the person regardless of difference and in spite of unacceptable behaviours on the part of the other. Notions of *faka’apa’apa* or *feveitokai’aki* need to be understood from within a Tongan worldview, which implies that the meaning of respect in social work may vary according to the cultural contexts within which it is expressed. Tongan respect must be understood within Tongan kinship and social structures and hence is more about enhancing the collective than focussing on the individual.

Respect has also been shown to be a pivotal principle within Cook Islands and Samoan social work approaches (Autagavaia, 2001; Crummer et al., 1998; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000). Referring to the Cook Island perspective on the social work role, Crummer et al. (1998) assert the following:

...the social worker has a dual responsibility when working with Cook Islands families. The social worker's power and authority in protecting a child is recognised, but he or she also has the responsibility of working for the family.... Mutual respect, humility and service are necessary elements of the social work relationships with Cook Island families. (p.6)

*Faka'apa'apa* as a value for social work is integrated with the value of *fakatōkilalo* (humility), bringing balance and moderating the possible abuse of power arising out of 'eiki/tu'a relations.

### ***Fakatōkilalo* (humility)**

*Fakatōkilalo* is an adjective meaning to be humble, self-abasing and infers being self-derogatory (Churchward, 1959, p.112). In the Tongan social work context, *fakatōkilalo* refers to the use of humility, a lowering of oneself and showing deference in relationships with those with whom you work. A literal explanation of the term *fakatōkilalo*, is to cause to (*faka*) fall (*tō*) down (*kilalo*). One participant explained during our first interview:

We are always crawling... Crawl into the family, and they will take you up – instead of you coming from up-down.

As graphically portrayed in the above statement, the use of *fakatōkilalo* brings about a reciprocal response. The position of *fakatōkilalo* may be portrayed in such actions as: taking shoes off at the door; physical levels and the choice of seat one takes within a room; understatement about what one has to offer; allowing others to speak; being of service in roles such as doing the dishes; and the language one uses to articulate a message.

The position of *fakatōkilalo* is expressed both verbally and non-verbally. For instance, in elaborating on the use of humility in Tongan settings, one practitioner used the term *faka'aki'akimui* which means “to speak in a self-disparaging way or in self-derogatory

terms; to pretend or profess inability or unworthiness” (Churchward, 1959, p.127). During one of the focus groups, it was stated:

I think one of the things [that is a] part of us... is that word there *faka'aki'akimui*. You don't want to run in the front line [or] move with power. When we have something to eat, “*Ko e ki'i tou loumohomoho pe*” [this is only a bit of *tou loumohomoho*].

The *tou loumohomoho* are the banana leaves put on top of the food when cooking in an 'umu (earth oven), before soil is piled on top. Someone who has prepared and provided a feast table (*pola*), may use the expression “*ko e ki'i tou loumohomoho pe.*” That is, they do not state exactly what they have, but use *faka'aki'akimui*, expressing that what they have to offer is not worth much. *Faka'aki'akimui* then, is an aspect of humility or *fakatōkilalo*. One Tongan social worker reported in the initial interview that this is a feature of her practice:

In me that's a given, the humble thing. And I suppose it's that Tongan thing about always, you know in Tongan speeches, “I have nothing to offer.” And the reality is that we have more than anyone can think about at the time. Whether that be in material things or whether that be in knowledge... And that is how I practice, that is how I do things, that I always come from the basis of not having anything to offer. Whether it be in team meetings or things like that where you are just constantly questioning and asking so that you have a clear understanding about what the thoughts are, and if you have anything to contribute then that comes after... If I sit back and look at the way I am at work and the way I am in general, at home and away from work, you always have that view that you have nothing to offer, and yet the reality is that you always have loads. But the thinking is always coming from not having.

An important clarification about the practical effect of *fakatōkilalo* is that it is not so much about thinking less of oneself as it is about thinking of oneself less (Alefaio, Hunt-Ioane, & Vaaga, 2004).

The use of *fakatōkilalo* enables social workers to develop social work relationships which are engaging, sustaining and therapeutic. A participant in the initial interview stated that:

I use my Tongan humility to get through because our people are proud people. They will say, “We are okay, we have got no problems.” And yet they have problems. But when they see a real... humility in the person who is approaching them... then they open up to you.... *Fakatōkilalo*, he?... I am lucky to have that island thing with me, because I can work with my other counterparts and I can see that they are really high up.

To sum up, *fakatōkilalo* is a value and a practice requiring the social worker to take a step down from their positions of status, in order to be lifted up by those with whom they work.

One young female participant stated that she took a back seat in meetings with parents in a school social work setting, and introduced herself as her parent's child. This allowed her to *fakafekau'aki* (connect) and *faka'apa'apa* (respect), but also portrayed her *fakatōkilalo* (humility) by not asserting her status as a school social worker. This was particularly important given that she was young. A humble approach builds rapport and respects the dignity of others.

The skill of *fakatōkilalo* in Tongan social work contrasts with the promotion of assertiveness in other areas of social work. Thompson (1996), in his book on skills for practice in the human services, states that personal effectiveness depends largely on “the extent to which we are able to assert ourselves” (p.38). It has also been cautioned, however, that assertiveness is “based on dominant white cultural norms” and does not take account of what “constitutes acceptable interpersonal interactions” in different cultures (Thompson, 1996, p.45). Autagavaia (2000), discussing Pacific Islands supervision, noted that humility can easily be misunderstood:

Unfortunately the display of Pacific Islands humility in the supervision relationship is too often translated by non Pacific Islands supervisors as an impediment to professional practice. As one... non-Pacific Islands supervisor stated: ‘I can't stand their humility. It gets in the way of developing their potential.’ (p.51)

Autagavaia believes that humility is important for dialogue to occur within Pacific social workers' supervision. Practice with Tongan communities is most effective when Tongan social workers *fakatōkilalo* and practice deference as a way to enhance effectiveness.

### **‘Ofa (Love)**

‘Ofa (love, kindness) is a core Tongan value which characterises wellbeing. Kavaliku's (1961) analysis of ‘ofa in Tongan society concluded that ‘ofa is the philosophy underpinning Tongan society and that Tongan behaviours, customs and ceremonies are often explained in terms of ‘ofa. Derivatives of ‘ofa include *loto'ofa*,

which translates as “kind-hearted, of a kind or loving disposition” (Churchward, 1959, p.305), *‘ofa fakatonga* (Tongan heart), and *fe’ofa’ofani* (to be friendly with one another).

A participant in this study made mention of the Tongan proverb of “*fe’ofa’aki ‘a ‘ofato*” which refers to the ‘love’ that caterpillars have for each other, yet they live with their backs to each other and do not work collaboratively. Obviously, this proverb presents a contradiction, reminding us that if we have *‘ofa* then we will also be working in cooperation and helping each other (*fetokoni’aki*). Other participants also highlighted the value of *‘ofa*:

I think it is important that you have a love for people. I think of my background; I think like my own Tongan relatives, they show love and genuineness for people and I think that is the most important thing. For example, if someone has got no money and they’re on the unemployment I don’t charge them to help them get their residency. They get their residency. If they’re working, I give them a nominal fee, \$100 or \$200 depending on how many things I have to do and how much time I spend. It’s never in proportion to what it should be.

Another stated:

*Loto’ofa* means to me... Not just to look at yourself, what you get out of it... Often my family... made an extra dollar to do something that’s nice, but there was a family there that needed it more. *Loto’ofa* is to me giving it to that family that needs it, [rather] than giving an extra luxury to my family... It’s an unselfish giving of one’s self, possession[s], time, everything, and never thinking that I’m going to get anything good out of it.

The proverb “*Tonga mo’unga ki he loto*” (Tonga’s mountain is in their heart) highlights that we make courageous decisions with our heart. *‘Ofa*, however, is more than feeling and emotion; it implies the action of self-sacrifice for the benefit of another.

Within social work practice, the value of *‘ofa* (love) is both attitude and action intertwined. Social work was identified as a career for one participant because she was referred to as *ta’ahine ‘ofa* (a girl who had *‘ofa*). A participant recalled how she provided support to a woman who was being held in custody for a stabbing, by remaining with her in the cells for the day. She stated that *‘ofa* was pivotal in the way she provided support:

I was in... the jail for 8 hours with one of the clients. They said, "What about your safety?... Aren't you scared?" I said, "No." I said to them, "If you go there because you really love them, they won't mind because they can tell the feeling." ... if you don't have the feeling you can't... go inside, [its] no place for you. Here is... your mind together with your heart<sup>17</sup> and then you can do the work properly... If not, you just come here to work for money.

For Tongan social workers, '*ofa* meant that their practice was not about the money.

The more successful social workers are the ones who can convince the people that you are not doing it for a job; you're doing it because of your personal passions... It's something that you... really love to do and its not money... The people in the helping professions, I believe that they are people who have a genuine love for people, otherwise they wouldn't be in the field.

Tongan social workers referred to '*ofa fakatonga* (Tongan heart) as fundamental to their practice. As one participant put it:

I think it's just my Tongan heart... I just did it from my heart. I think that's another thing that is Tongan.

Another noted that '*ofa fakatonga* (Tongan heart) was the principle underlying her provision of transport to clients if she knew transport was an issue for them in order to keep appointments. She stated that:

It is not in my contract to take people to doctors and things like that, but because of the Tongan heart that I've got I can do it. As long as I have the time, I can do it.

Another stated:

It's not an easy job... But when you have the heart for your people, there is nothing difficult.

The concept of '*ofa* or Tongan heart here is similar to Mulitalo-Lauta's (2002) explanation of Samoan heart, as an aspect of *fa'asamoa* woven into Samoan social work practice. He explained how Samoan social workers appealed to the 'Samoan heart' as a means to address youth offenders. Further, he notes some commonalities between Samoan Heart as a technique with many features of psychodynamic and humanist approaches in social work.

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<sup>17</sup> At this point the participant shed tears as she spoke passionately about her practice of '*ofa*.



'*Ofa* is seen as a value which distinguishes Tongan practice from some *pālangi* practices within agencies. For example, one participant said that agency policy did not account for her use of '*ofa* as a practice concept. Another stated that '*ofa* may not be perceived as good practice, yet it is an important Tongan aspect of his practice approach:

So there's that tension between practicing in a safe way, which is very European, which is to remain quite aloof... But I can't practice that way; I have to actually get quite involved emotionally, otherwise I don't feel like I'm doing justice to the people that I am trying to help. So that would be very Tongan... As Polynesians we have a real depth of feelings for other people that I'm sure is just a part of our upbringing that we can't separate when it comes time to perform in a profession. So '*ofa fakatonga* would be something that would be obviously a part of how I operate. It's such an obvious difference between me and other people I know who are practicing.

Some participants acknowledged that '*ofa* is not necessarily ethnic specific, but it is nonetheless important amongst Tongans:

It's a very human quality. But I just wonder, having left the villages just more recently, that that sense of belonging to one another is still stronger. And I think people come here and get served by us and that sense of belonging to one another is present.

Tongan social work premised on '*ofa* has some similarities to the concept of love of humanity espoused by Morley and Ife (2002). It is argued that the concept of love of humanity challenges dominant discourses and incorporates human rights and social justice because it is about action as much as it about values and also links the private and the public. They state that a love of humanity:

... is a discourse that binds the optimistic theory of those who dare to dream with the realist practicalities of those who dare not to... A 'love of humanity' works towards a position where no assumptions need be made about human experience except that our humanity connects us, despite the limitations imposed by privilege and under-privilege. (Morley & Ife, 2002, p.76)

A Tongan framework for social work practice has at its core the concept of '*ofa* which in many ways is the exact opposite of values found at the core of neo-liberalism and managerialism which are increasingly characterising mainstream social work contexts (Parton, 2004). From a Tongan worldview perspective, '*ofa* is an essential hinge on the door to wellbeing for Tongan *kāinga* and community and sometimes displaces the dominant discourses within social work.

Within the context of diasporic realities, there is a tendency to critique the rhetoric of 'ofa when it is not actioned with integrity:

You know, they always talk about love. But sometimes I don't know whether it is love from the heart or love from the mouth.

A focus group agreed that there are tensions between the Tongan system whereby the more you give away the richer you are and the *pālangi* system where the more you accumulate the richer you are considered. These were identified as incompatible systems, but importantly, it was agreed that both can be corrupt. One participant voiced her concern that there is a change in the sector from *loto'ofa* towards "lining your pockets." She explained with the following example:

... the only thing that worries me is [that] thoughts have shifted... from the *loto'ofa* to lining your pocket, getting contracts, getting work from out of the government, representing the Tongans... Where does it go from there?... Is it for the goodness of the people?... [Its] very disappointing because its all done in little groups... That's why I deny the fact that there is *loto'ofa* there and *faka'apa'apa*... A person works for the Pacific Island Ministry, or Health Ministry for that matter... And everything that comes to the Pacific Island is supposed to be passed on. But this is the basket here, this is our little group of friends and ministers or whatever over there. Now they pay here, the ministry, they do things for her... but because she... lines their pockets, she fills them with information, they are invited to the governor's house...

'Ofa in this illustration contrasts with values of competition evident within funding systems that have taken on market models of operation. The participants' critique of the application, or lack thereof, of genuine 'ofa highlights a tension which arises out of intercultural interface between Tongan and non-Tongan contexts.

'Ofa, extended with *'ofa fakatonga* (Tongan heart) or *loto'ofa* (loving disposition), is a principle of Tongan social work that emphasises the serving aspect. A person who has 'ofa will also *'osikiavelenga*, or do their utmost in a serving capacity.

### **'Osikiavelenga (doing utmost)**

'Osikiavelenga refers to a person who does their utmost, and gives all they have in the pinnacle of effort. It was stated that Tongan speakers would say "*malo e 'osikiavelenga*" (thank you for giving all you have got). In social work practice this translated as Tongan social workers, at times, going beyond agency guidelines or job

descriptions. For example, one community health worker involved himself in assisting parents to look for jobs. Another stated:

When you come to a workplace there is a criteria and there is a structure that you must follow... there are guidelines that you must do. I think the value of being a Tongan, [is] that I can be able to do a bit more... Say, for example, that something is given for me to do with a Tongan family. And I go there and I follow what the guidelines tell me to do. But I don't only go with that guideline. I've got my own ways.... [and] they will see me as not a worker here, but I'm coming there as a Tongan.

A practitioner working in a hospital setting spoke of breaking the rules in terms of the numbers of visitors allowed and providing resources for family to travel in order to provide a service to clients. Another participant explained how she had provided a BBQ for her clients annually on her birthday for the past three years using her own funds, although the clients just understood this as a BBQ ran by the agency. One participant reflected on whole hearted commitment as practiced within the *kāinga* context:

I also think there is this willingness of people to deny themselves, to help others. I think that is a very real value. You get people who come from Tonga, they come here and they stay for three months. And before they go back they hold a fundraising event. And the family just feels that they need to help this person out. And so they give them money and they give them the television set, and sometimes people take their cars around. So there is willingness from people to deny themselves to help another person.

As a balance to '*osikiavelenga*, one practitioner stated that:

We must understand that we must divorce ourselves from trying to be the answer for everything.

Participants also identified that Tongan clients at times have unrealistic expectations. For example, because someone works for the probation service, clients may expect that person will be able to assist with immigration matters and that they do not need a lawyer. Nonetheless, '*osikiavelenga* was portrayed by Tongan social workers as a value which prompted them to do their utmost by way of serving within their social work practice.

### ***Lotu* (spirituality/prayer/religion)**

In Tongan, the word *lotu* as a noun refers to worship, prayer or religion. Clearly, *lotu*, and more precisely Christian religion, is an integral aspect of many Tongan people's

lives. The 2001 Aotearoa New Zealand Census revealed that 92 percent of Tongans reported affiliation with a Christian religion<sup>18</sup>, whereas almost one-third of the general Aotearoa New Zealand population reported that they had no religious affiliation (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). A common Tongan saying is “*ko Tonga ko e fonua lotu*” (Tonga is a country of faith and prayer). In discussions of Tongan social work, participants iterated that *lotu* is an influential and powerful dimension of practice. The following was pointed out:

... lotu has to come into it because people who are going to look at your writing are going to, you know, “Where’s the *lotu* here?” Seriously, that is what they are going to look at, because they have already been taught our way of life...

There are at least two ways in which *lotu* becomes a practice principle. First, in terms of gaining access to people and inviting engagement and participation, the *faifekau* (minister) may be used as an avenue:

The reality... is that we are Tongan, and religion... is integrated into our culture... the people really value [going] through the *faifekau* [minister], if you want to reach out to the people.

Tongan people may be more willing to listen when a message comes from the *faifekau*. Likewise, biblical sayings may be used as a way to frame communication in social work with Tongans:

Was it Paul who said... “God is the beginning of all wisdom.” Some of those things, its important that you put it across... ‘*Apasia* means it’s related to God. ‘*Apasia* is truthfulness, you come up with truthfulness, with total honesty, openness and genuineness and with respect to the issue of the people we are dealing with.

This participant highlighted that in using biblical language, Tongans gauge the seriousness of a situation and are more likely to respond with genuine openness. This may be particularly important when working with non-voluntary clients.

Second, in terms of a practice process, Tongan social workers often use *lotu* (prayer):

... this couple have got very significant spiritual values to their family. So when we begin the session I say, “Can we say a prayer before we start?” So the father said the prayer. So the spiritual aspect of it kind of harmonises and sets everything in place

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<sup>18</sup> Older and overseas-born Tongans marginally were more likely to report a religious affiliation: 97 percent of older Tongans (45-64 years), compared to 94 percent of younger (25-34 years) and 98 percent of overseas-born compared to 89 percent of New Zealand-born Tongans reported a religious affiliation (Statistics New Zealand, 2002).

before we start. So after the prayer it is very peaceful, because quite often the spiritual aspect has contributed to Tongan culture and it really becomes, like, *ko Tonga ko e fonua lotu*... after the prayer it was just so peaceful and they were able to share because it kind of brought us to an equal level, to the same level.

*Lotu*, I would suggest, is a means of asking not only for the participation of the people involved, but also inviting a larger spiritual force (Jesus/God - in the case of Christianity) to be a central part of the social work process. This was identified as effective where the clients affiliate with Christianity. It is noteworthy that *lotu* was identified as a significant value for a range of participants, not just the few who were ministers of religion.

Some writers have argued that Christianity and social work are compatible and complementary (Mupedziswa, 1996) and that there is agreement between social work and Christianity at the level of principles, for example with the principles of love and justice (Sherwood, 2002). Further, it is argued that it is important to consider spiritual and religious issues in social work:

How can we say we deal with the whole person-in-environment while ignoring one of the most important dimensions of people's lives (for good or ill?)... The short answer is that we can't and shouldn't ignore spiritual and religious issues. The key is that we must do it from a client-focused and client-led perspective. (Sherwood, 2002, p.4-5)

The place of *lotu* in a Tongan framework for practice has many similarities with the role of spirituality, prayer and religion in *Pasifiki* approaches to practice in general (see Crummer et al., 1998; Hurdle, 2002; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Nainoca, Kurusiga, Vakacokaivalu, Waqairadovu, & Finau, 2005; Newport, 2004). Prayer, for example, is used for beginning Hawaiian *ho'oponopono* (a family conflict resolution process) meetings (Hurdle, 2002) and prayers and singing is also used to 'set the mood' in group work or grief counselling with Samoan clients (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000). Given the missionary influence and the uptake of Christianity in the colonial era, for many *Pasifiki* peoples today, Christianity, religion and spirituality is central to the construction of social work practice. Nainoca et al. (2005) state:

Religion is adored by the people of Fiji. It is a major influence on the cultural and traditional beliefs. In some circles Na Lotu [church, religion or faith] preserves cultural identity. It is part of what we are and becomes the cornerstone of our individual and

family life... The client may be helped through aligning himself/herself to divine relationship. (p.9)

Further, Newport's (2004) study found that Cook Island women combine aspects of Christianity and Shamanism (traditional spirituality) as sources of knowledge for social service practice. Christianity currently has tremendous influence amongst Tongans, whether their practice of Christianity is a source of strength for them or whether they are negatively impacted by the institution of religion. In either scenario, the data shows that *lotu* is an essential value and process in Tongan social work practice.

### Conclusion

The metaphors of *pola* and *uku* accentuate *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness), *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships), *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *'ofa* (love) as foundational values for the practice of Tongan social work. The value of *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness) speaks of reciprocity and mutual assistance integral to Tongan social systems and social work practice. When a social or community worker is part of a network of reciprocal relations there is less likelihood of paternalistic relations. The associated value of *fie'aonga* (wanting to be useful) arose within this research, whereby the importance of benefits to one's family and community underlie Tongan social and community work practice. *Tauhi vā* (looking after relationships) points to the salience of maintaining and nurturing the social spaces (*vā*) between the social worker and their clients. *Tauhi vā* integrates *fakafekau'aki* (connecting) which is about processes of revealing and establishing social connections; *matakāinga* (behaving like family) where the social worker includes themselves as like family with clients; and *a'u tonu* (going in person) in which an in-person approach is given primacy. The core value of *faka'apa'apa* (respect) gives structure to Tongan social systems according to *'eiki* and *tu'a* differentiation. Further, this is contingent on age, gender and family position and is context specific. Tongan social work was shown to operate within this social system while also being adaptable to circumstances when a Tongan understanding of *faka'apa'apa* was not ideal for the circumstance. The value of *fakatōkilalo* (humility) has a moderating role, highlighting the dynamic interplay of positions. The value of *fakatōkilalo* would involve the social worker assuming a lower status than what is in reality the case. Finally, the foundational value of *'ofa* (love) emerged in this research as a defining value in Tongan systems and social work approaches. *'Ofa* moves beyond

the realm of emotion and into the realm of self-sacrificing action. In this way, it resonates with aspects of *lotu* (spirituality, religion, prayer), a core aspect of which is Christianity. It has been argued elsewhere (Markus and Kitayama, 1991) that many non-western cultures have a view of the self as interdependent and focused on the ‘other’, as opposed to an independent view of self which is recognised within Western paradigms, with implications for cognition, emotion and motivation. An interdependent self-perception is evident in Tongan social work values and processes such as *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships), *fakafekau’aki* (connecting), *fetokoni’aki* (mutual helpfulness) and *faka’apa’apa* (respect).

It is important to reiterate the point established in Chapter Five, that each of the values explicated here cannot be separated out from each other. The value of ‘*ofa* (love), for example, is a unifying concept for Tongan social work, and must be present in all Tongan social work if *faka’apa’apa*, *fetokoni’aki* and *tauhi vā* are to avoid the trappings of self-interest. Further, while certain values have been highlighted here as core, the list of illustrative concepts are not exhaustive. The multidimensional and encompassing nature of culture, and in particular the circularity of Tongan worldview (Mahina, 1992), does not lend itself well to dissection. It raises the question of what is missed or lost in written explanation, in comparison to that which is experienced in the everyday. While this chapter has highlighted how these values ideally determine practice, the issues and complexities that can arise have also been pointed out.

The next chapter extends the exploration of Tongan social work by presenting key skills that emerge from this research as fundamental to a Tongan framework.





## Chapter Seven

# Fakatoukatea: Diverse Skills and Knowledge for Tongan Social Work

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*Tā ki tahi, tā ki 'uta* (having regard for sea, having regard for land)

The values identified and discussed in the previous chapter incorporate a constellation of knowledge and skills for practice that contribute to the characterisation of Tongan social work. The central theme of this chapter is that there are diverse knowledge and skills required for Tongan social work, arising from within a Tongan worldview and in response to the need to bridge between diasporic Tongan *kāinga* in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. The data in this research points to a number of salient ways in which diverse skills are practiced to achieve the goals of social work. The first aim of the chapter is to investigate the scope of skill diversity (*fakatoukatea*) in Tongan social work with reference to the diversity across Tongan and *pālangi* contexts, fields of practice and the various family-like roles social workers assume. The second aim of the chapter is to demonstrate distinctive skills emanating from a Tongan worldview, represented by the *pola* and *uku metaphors* (Chapter Five). Namely: *lea fakatonga* (Tongan language) as a key communication skill of Tongan social work practice; interpreting, an inevitable aspect of social work within a non-Tongan context such as Aotearoa New Zealand; the use of *heliaki* (indirect communication/symbols) and *talanoa* (story telling); *feongo'i'aki* (intuitive use of feelings) as a way of knowing; and finally, *hua* (humour), as a skill for relationship building and self-care.

### ***Fakatoukatea* (Multiple and Diverse Skills)**

From a *mo'ui fakatonga* worldview perspective, social workers must possess skills that are diverse in order to manage multiple roles. This may be understood as the quality of *fakatoukatea* within Tongan social work practice. The figurative translation of *fakatoukatea* is to be good or skilful in two opposite ways or directions (Churchward, 1959). The proverb “*ala 'i sia ala 'i kolonga*” (skilful at *sia*, skilful at *kolonga*) also explains this ideology. Tu'inukuafe (1992) explains that this saying is applied to someone who has many abilities. It refers to snaring pigeons, where the *sia* is the mound on which the pigeons were trapped with a net and the *kolonga* is the place where food is prepared for the bird catchers. Likewise, the proverb *tā ki tahi, tā ki 'uta* (having regard for sea, having regard for land) at the beginning of this chapter, speaks of the specialised skills of one who is competent while at sea and is equally competent in regard to working on the land. In a similar way, Tongan social work in the context of the Tongan diaspora (Chapter Four) requires social workers to have diverse skills to be a bridge between Tongans and non-Tongan contexts. In line with the *pola* and *uku* metaphors presented in Chapter Five, Tongan social work is defined by the enhancement of Tongan values for a social system of welfare. The context of Tongan diaspora in which this takes place is sometimes at odds with Tongan values of *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness), *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships), *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *'ofa* (love). In order for diasporic Tongans to achieve wellbeing transnationally, they must be able to experience the best of both worlds in an integrated way. Tongan social work, therefore, requires that social workers, through the constellation of skills and knowledge that they carry, are able to demonstrate and facilitate *fakatoukatea*.

Tongan social work encompasses a diversity of skills in a number of respects. There is the need to possess skills and knowledge in terms of both Tongan and *pālangi* cultural contexts, in a broad range of fields of practice and to know how to play a variety of roles within Tongan *kāinga* structures. These dimensions of *fakatoukatea* are explored next.

#### **Diversity of Skills across Tongan and *Pālangi* Contexts**

Tongan social workers participating in this study sometimes referred to themselves as a bridge between cultural worlds for their Tongan clients; that is, between Tongan and

*pālangi* cultural contexts. While this is somewhat of a simplification of dynamic and fluid social spaces, it does indicate a requirement for Tongan social workers to have credibility and cultural competence in both Tongan and *pālangi* settings if, to continue the analogy, the bridge is to be anchored and sturdy. A Tongan social worker who practices *fakatoukatea* would, for instance, be capable at both academic and practical endeavours; the worker may be a government employee but would also be active in his or her community. One participant indicated his belief that his Tongan upbringing, combined with an Aotearoa New Zealand education, enabled him to effectively assist Tongans to maintain Tongan values in a way which is practical in an Aotearoa New Zealand context:

Being brought up and raised and educated in Tonga, you know I've learnt all the Tongan values of caring for one another, respect and mutuality, reciprocity... But also, having part of my education here and having grown up almost from the grassroots to where I am today... But learning all those things and being able to apply the Tongan values in the New Zealand setting, or interpreting the Tongan values in the New Zealand setting, and helping people to hold onto those values... We've got to express those values in a way that is relevant and meaningful and practical here in New Zealand.

The notion of *fakatoukatea* draws on the quality of *fakapotopoto* (to be wise; mature; prudent; sensible). While such a characteristic might appear to be an individual quality, the meaning of *fakapotopoto* in a Tongan worldview is actually more to do with an individual's behaviour towards their family and community. Helu-Thaman (2003a), in her study of educational ideas in Tonga, asserts that the traditional use of *poto*, the base word of *fakapotopoto*, is about maintaining good inter-personal relationships and using knowledge and skills wisely for the welfare of others.

Within a focus group the nature of *fakapotopoto* was discussed as follows:

One of the old ladies in my family has referred to me when she talks, “*koe fakapotopoto.*” But not because [of] money or anything. It's just that whatever I've got, I work it out so that its not just me, but the rest of the others have got a share on it.

In further discussion, it was explained that *fakapotopoto* involved being multi-skilled or *fakatoukatea*:

A: *Ko e tangata 'oku lavame'a 'i tōkanga, lavame'a 'i falehanga. Ko e*

A: A person who is able to achieve working at the plantation, but also

*fefine fakapotopoto e 'oku ne lava e lālanga, 'oku ne lava e koka'anga, lava 'o tauhi hono 'api, tauhi hono fāmili - 'oku ui ko e fefine fakapotopoto.*

achieve when working within home. A woman who is *fakapotopoto* is able to weave, she is able to *koka'anga*, able to look after her home, keep her family - she is referred to as woman who is *fakapotopoto*.

B: As I said before, in education, they call you *fakapotopoto* if you achieve... by studying everything. And they say, “Oh, *tamasi'i poto e*” [clever boy]. But to come to the *fakapotopoto* [you] have to... *Ala 'i sia ala 'i kolonga* [be skilful at *sia* and skilful at *kolonga*].

A: That's right, *lava 'i fanga lava 'i vaha*. [can cope when at shore and can cope when out at sea.]

Tongan wellbeing involves achieving *fakapotopoto* and this includes achievement not only in terms of formal education or job security, but when one has also been able to use this to the benefit of others who are a part of their *kāinga* or their community. Helu-Thaman (2003a) states: “It seems as if modern education is valued not so much in itself, but for its instrumental value in ensuring that people can use their education for the betterment of their families, communities and ultimately their country” (p.77). Within the Tongan diaspora, *fakatoukatea* is salient as Tongan *kāinga* seek to achieve success in both Western and Tongan cultural terms. This is similar to Fagaloa's (2002) statement about weaving worlds:

As a practitioner I need to understand both worlds: the New Zealand-born and the Samoan-born. When there is understanding of these two worlds, there is an ability to weave them together so that children, young people and families can move in and out of them when it is appropriate. (p.135)

Furthermore, Mulitalo-Lauta's (2000) *lalaga* model of practice centred on establishing equilibrium between contemporary and traditional strands.

The concept of *fakatoukatea* takes on new meaning in a transnational context; it moves beyond simply referring to diverse skills in the sense of weaving or pigeon snaring and now includes the ability to traverse diverse cultural worlds for the benefit of the *kāinga*. This translates into social work practice as the skill of traversing, and connecting, Tongan and *pālangi* cultural worlds for the benefit of clients.

### Diversity of Skills across Fields of Practice

*Fakatoukatea* was also evident as a practice skill because of the expectation that Tongan social workers would work across a range of fields of practice or at a number of levels. One participant explained that even though she was employed as a health worker, her Tongan clients expected her to know everything concerning a range of areas such as immigration or Work and Income New Zealand<sup>19</sup> systems. Another participant found that in her work with a Tongan client group she wore many hats outside of her original role:

So you become a very key person, not only to mediate some of the stuff with the family, between them and providers, or try to voice their issues to mainstream disability providers... like we talk about many hats. You become an educator, because you are providing information... when decisions are being made about particular services or... needs that they have... You become an advocate, because there have been some long standing needs that haven't been met. Also a support person - you find yourself supporting some people in terms of applying for lottery transport. Because of the impact of low socio-economic [status], a lot of them don't access transport. So you become a whole lot of things when you intervene with Tongan people.

Tongan social workers, when they *fakatoukatea*, play a part in pulling together diverse strands and assisting clients to negotiate their way through. This research has shown that from a *mo'ui fakatonga* perspective and given the diasporic reality, social work is perceived as a role which is there to “help” in whatever way the client or family perceive that help is required. This stands in contrast to the social work role being defined by agency, professional or legal guidelines and boundaries. The client-directed nature of Tongan social work is undoubtedly intensified because of the minority ethnic group status of Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand. Language limitations, for example, tend to force clients to look toward a Tongan social worker for more support and advocacy in dealing with a range of government departments. The positioning of Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand on the socio-economic margins amplifies the need for *fakatoukatea* on the part of social workers as they not only bridge a cultural divide, but also strive for change whereby the cultural and socio-economic gaps are reduced. Thus, in Tongan social work, *fakatoukatea* is an important concept signifying a rounded and holistic role, where social workers have diverse skills and knowledge bridging a range of issues and fields of practice.

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<sup>19</sup> Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) is the government income support agency, administering benefits and pensions.

### Diversity of Skills across Family-Like Positions

On another level, the skill of *fakatoukatea* is indicative of the value of *matakāinga* discussed earlier (Chapter Six) where social workers adopt family-like relationships with clients. In this way, *fakatoukatea* is about diverse skills and knowledge allowing one to assume various family-like roles. One participant highlighted that a range of community members approach her and she accordingly takes on diverse roles:

There are a lot of young girls that approach me. I don't know why they come to me. It might be because I am more social. I can be an elderly [person] today and be a young girl tomorrow and a young mother the day after. And I think when I am floating like that I am able to approach some people because they need help... I think because we never had counselling in our community and there is nobody to trust to talk about things.

This social worker recognises that she can be positioned in multiple and changing ways by her community. Importantly though, this ability to take on diverse roles allows her to be accessible and effective in her work with the Tongan community. This is especially significant for new migrant Tongans who may not be aware of the services available in Aotearoa New Zealand, considering that in Tonga itself there are few formal social service agencies and no established counselling or social work professions. Furthermore, even in the diaspora, the role of social support may be met by those who can *fakatoukatea* in the way described by this participant.

A practitioner recalled an incident where she was providing support to a Tongan man who was being confined due to mental health concerns involving violent actions. The client referred to her as “aunty” and responded when she asked him to put a chair down with which he was threatening other staff. In this case, the ability to take on diverse roles, including that of being like an “aunt” was a key ability in diffusing a crisis situation. Another participant explained how being able to play multiple roles was an advantage in her practice:

Well I think one of my strengths is that I kind of know my place... And I play the role in a sense that I can be a young ignorant New Zealand-born Tongan woman, and yet at other times I can be a Tongan woman that has achieved in life. And then I can be [name of father] daughter and so-and-so's grandchild. And then I can be a person that's half Tongan and half Samoan. I play the roles quite cleverly and in that way I find I can be more accessible in areas that other people that keep themselves significant can't get involved in. For example, I'm involved presently in individual and group counselling, and I'm also involved as a family worker and social worker for a school, and I'm involved in training. I did some training for [institution] and I'm going to do some at

[name of school] to decrease expulsion and suspensions for Pacific island people. I think that's kind of cool.

To sum up, *fakatoukatea* is a dimension of Tongan social work which constructs social work as requiring a diversity of skills in Tongan and *pālangi* cultural contexts, across various fields of practice and skills associated with positioning in various family-like roles. *Fakatoukatea* increases the accessibility and success of social workers in change work. That is, because of accelerated cultural change, diversifying Tongan identities and other impacts of globalisation, there is a heightened need for social workers to be accessible to a wide range of Tongans and to be relevant and appropriate in a wide range of situations. The rest of the chapter explores distinctive Tongan communication skills which enable such diversification.

## **Communication**

The data in this study clearly indicated the importance of skills around language, in particular Tongan language, intuition and humour as features of communication within Tongan social work approaches. Communication, including verbal and non-verbal forms, is the exchange of information, but culture is always an influencing factor and a lense through which messages are interpreted (Miley et al., 2004). Sue and Sue (2003) explain how communication varies across low and high context cultures and point out cultural differences in terms of level of voice, timing of responses, body language and so on, with implications for clinical practice. The following sub-sections outline aspects of Tongan communication skills emerging from the participants' narratives.

### ***Lea fakatonga* (Tongan Language)**

Use of the Tongan language, *lea fakatonga*, was recognised by many participants, in both their individual interviews as well as the focus group sessions, as an essential facet of their social work practice. This is not surprising; since the focus of this inquiry was on Tongan social work practice approaches, and Tongans may be seen as an ethnic group with a shared culture, one would expect the Tongan language to have prominence. What is elaborated here is the way in which Tongan language impacts on direct practice.

Some participants viewed Tongan language usage as defining a Tongan approach. From this view, Tongan language encompasses and expresses that which is central to Tongan social work. For example, one participant reflected on her use of *lea fakatonga* in group work with older Tongans:

The Tongan thing about it is the occasional get together, you know, like the weekly meetings... Telling the stories of the village where you grew up and relating to each other and joking in your own language with the old people.

The ability to use the Tongan language was pinpointed as making work with families easier as they are more likely to trust and to initiate contact with the social worker. As one participant put it:

I think the big difference is being able to speak the language and being able to ask questions and relate to them in your own language. That makes a big difference. It's different from a Samoan person that you go to see, because I cannot speak the [Samoan] language...

The participant, in this comment, highlights that although there may be some shared qualities amongst *Pasifiki* (for example Tongan and Samoan), language is clearly a point of significant difference when it comes to communication within Tongan social work. In this way, the Tongan phrase “*’oku fananga ai ’etau lea fakatonga*” was referred to, meaning “the Tongan language can really talk”.

The use of Tongan language is all the more important, practically speaking, for work with first generation migrants who may have limited English language knowledge and skills and would be more comfortable using the Tongan language. *Lea fakatonga* is important for this group of Tongans for clarity of communication and for depth of understanding. In this way, use of *lea fakatonga* becomes somewhat of a bridge between Tongans and the wider social context which is predominantly English-speaking. There is some variance as to the degree of Tongan language used, as most Tongan families include significant differences in language skill amongst their members<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Bell, Starks, Davis and Taumoevalou (2001) show that amongst Tongans in the Manukau region of Auckland, New Zealand, there is identifiable Tongan language loss from age 55-64 downwards.



The Tongan language was variously referred to as “strong”, “healing” and “delicate.” It was stated:

... ko 'etau lea fakatonga 'oku 'i ai 'a e ivi mo e mālohi ke tau ngāue 'aki 'i hotau ngaahi fānili mo hotau ngaahi community.

... in our Tongan language there is power and strength that we can use with our families and our communities.

*Lea fakatonga* was shown to have capacity for healing because of phrasing which uses emotional prefixes. For example, one practitioner claimed that:

... the secret weapon to approach our people is using those emotional words – *si'i*, *si'a*, *si'e*.

By using these prefixes, empathy and feeling is communicated. In Tongan grammar, articles and possessive pronouns have both ordinary and emotional forms. Churchward (1953) explains that:

An emotional article, in addition to marking its noun as definite or indefinite, indicates that the speaker's thought is coloured, as it were, by feelings of affection, friendships, pity, humility, or respect. (p.23)

The delicate use of the right words at the right time was shown to be a means to express *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *fakatōkilalo* (humility):

*Koe me'a ke te matu'aki tokanga'i 'aupito...*

There are things that you must acknowledge. There is room to make manoeuvre to correct your mistakes...

*Hānge ko e lea Tonga ko e "potopoto 'a niu mui" ... ko 'etau lea fakatonga 'oku fu'u mā'aki pelepelengesi 'aupito, mahuinga 'aupito. Kapau te te lava 'o ngāue'aki ko e taimi ko ē 'oku te fakafotunga kita, pea 'oku ha'u 'i ai 'a e faka'apa'apa, fakatōkilalo...*

Like the Tongan saying “the emergent cleverness of a young coconut”<sup>21</sup> ... Our Tongan language is extremely delicate, it is very important. If you can use it at the time you present yourself, then respect and humility will result.

<sup>21</sup> Tu'inukuafe (1992, p.260) gives the following explanation of this Tongan proverb: “When the young coconut tree begins to bear, it can bear a lot interspersed with a fruitless season. Likewise those who are young or those who are not yet experienced in a job or profession... can appear to be proficient, but it will take longer to be really good at their work” (p.260).

Tongan language intricacy is capable of relating *faka'apa'apa* and *fakatōkilalo* in ways not possible in English. This is particularly important for social work with those Tongans who operate predominantly within the Tongan language. One participant explained that the value of respect underlies her use of the Tongan language and that this is a way to deal with issues of *fakamā* (shame) on the part of client families:

Some of them have the perception that: “My daughter, she is disabled because it’s a curse or I’ve sinned against somebody and I’m being punished [by] God.”... And at first they feel very *fakamā*... when you go into the home. But once you start to communicate in a respectful manner – and also feeling that... rather than coming from outside... you are Tongan and you are owning the issues that are really affecting them. It’s how you language [i.e. say] things. It’s a very important part of interacting with them. It shows them that you’re respectful. And you find a selection of language to use, acknowledging particular family members present. All this kind of stuff really enhances and harmonises the interaction with particular *kāinga*.

An important feature of *lea fakatonga* for social work is the language of respect. In explaining the language of respect, Churchward (1953) identifies the expression *tapu mo* as the most characteristically Tongan. It is used in either the beginning of public address or in conversation. He states:

A reference to the human body or any part of it, or reference to fire or food or cooking or animals, may be followed immediately by an interpolated *Tapu mo hou'eiki*... This is equivalent to saying: ‘If you will excuse my using such a word or mentioning such a matter.’ Similarly, a reference to a person who is not present – such, for example, as an expression of opinion as to what such a person might think or say or do – may be followed by an interpolated *Tapu mo ia!* ‘With all due respect to him’... Such remarks, of course, are used, at times, in English; but their use is far commoner in Tongan, and far more important. Their frequent use, indeed, is an essential part of Tongan etiquette. (Churchward, 1953, p.304)

He further explains that respect for status could mean that up to five different synonyms would need to be referred to. This is likely because there are three dialects in the Tongan language for use among *kau tu'a* (commoners), *hou'eiki* (nobility) and *tu'i* (royalty). Churchward (1953) notes that:

The majority of Tongans themselves are not masters of the language of respect. Such a Tongan, desiring to speak to a high chief, will often ask someone else – a person who is thoroughly conversant with the language of respect – to act as intermediary. He himself will be present while the conversation is going on, but will just sit there in silence while the other person does the talking, including even the expressions of salutation and leave-taking. (p.305)

Some Tongan social workers clearly have extensive *lea fakatonga* skill and ability, including using the language of respect, while others indicated that they utilised another person to assist them with this aspect of their practice. A person who is highly skilled in the craft of Tongan language oratory may be referred to as: *ko e tangata tufunga lea*. Such a person is able to manoeuvre their way around language to make it *ifo* (fantastic). Similarly, working in collaboration with a skilled cultural consultant/advisor or orator is a concept that was proposed in *E Kaveinga*, the Cook islands model of social work (Crummer et al., 1998).

Writers on Pacific social work practices have reiterated the importance of Pacific languages in social work with specific ethnic groups (Autagavaia, 2001; Crummer et al., 1998; Masoe Tulele, 1994; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000). In relation to *gagana* (the Samoan language), Autagavaia (2001) notes that “the depth and breadth of *fa’asamoa* is conceived and brought into existence by the language” (p.81). She asserts that “Samoan people would prefer to express themselves in the Samoan language so that the emotion and essence of the exchange are not lost” (Autagavaia, 2001, p.81). This role for Pacific language resonates with participants’ statements on the role of *lea fakatonga* in healing and in expressing respect. In relation to work with African peoples, John-Baptiste (2001) makes the following statement regarding cultural and language translation:

... the translation of need and pain from one cultural life and expression to the Eurocentric culture which, in effect, will be the culture of need assessment and interpretation, inevitably means that something will be lost in between. This would be to the detriment of people of African origin who would lose their originating ground and the strengths associated with their natural forms of expression. (p.271)

For the growing majority of New Zealand-born Tongans, issues around language take on a new focus, as their Tongan language skills are likely to be at a more basic level in comparison to Tongan-born social workers (Bell et al., 2001). A New Zealand-born participant shared her experiences and reflections on this issue:

... everyone was saying that you’re only Samoan if you speak Samoan and you’re only Tongan if you speak Tongan... I just think that you can have a Tongan speaking social worker that has no love and no humility and no respect and no support. And that person would just do more harm than any good to our people. And I think there is one thing that my parents taught me and it’s those principles... I acknowledge that, with the

Tongan system around nobility and ranking and hierarchy, one way that they saw to esteem themselves... was through education. And our language was [the] enemy... They made a decision in order to give their child a higher esteem. I watch my parents, this is quite personal, but I watch my parents get upset when people make those speeches, because it was a consequence of their decision, not something their children chose... That's who I am. I'm very New Zealand-born, in that English is my first language... [while] being Tongan in every other shape or form, understand it fluently but not speak it fluently... I just think, yeah, it's just a shame if we can't begin to work together.

The views of this participant were supported by the statement of a Tongan-born participant who argued:

Someone can say all the right words but it's so impersonal and so technical... Some people think that speaking Tongan language is enough, but its not. It comes with your body language, the rest of it. So people... who are not quite as fluent, if you feel more comfortable speaking your own language, then do it like that... its your presence, its how you come across... its their gut feeling of how you come across, whether you say it in Tongan or in English.

Whilst Tongan language was acknowledged as important in bringing older Tongan people into social work discussions, one participant surmised that it was also that she as a social worker was Tongan and not just that she was conversing in Tongan:

Participant: With Tongan families I always speak in Tongan. If they're willing to speak in Tongan we always speak in Tongan, the co-worker of course will sit there and wouldn't know what is going on if we're speaking in Tongan. With other families, what I have found is that they don't invite their grandparents to come in. They get locked away in the room... I would invite them to come in and they might say it's OK... With Tongan families, they actually do want to come in.

Researcher: Do you think that is because you are Tongan-speaking?

Participant: Yes. I believe it is because I am Tongan. I believe if it was another social worker from another culture, they would not be inviting the grandparents.

Researcher: So do you think that it's more because you are speaking Tongan or because you're Tongan?

Participant: I think it's because I'm Tongan more so than speaking Tongan. You know, how I said before, I go in with my family's surname.

This clarification indicates an important link in the integration of Tongan values such as *tauhi vā* (maintaining relationship) and *lea fakatonga* (Tongan language). The use of Tongan language is more than a technical skill; it gives expression to and is fused with a way of being in the world. In terms of Tongan social work, Tongan language is integrated with the value and process of maintaining and nurturing relationships via

connecting genealogies, shared faith and so on. The above quote also demonstrates that at times, a Tongan social worker is also a bridge between the client and other non-Tongan social workers who may be co-workers in a case or working on a project. In this way, the non-Tongan social worker necessarily places a great deal of trust in the Tongan social worker in terms of assessment and understanding, even if they are present in the room, because language and other cultural cues require interpretation.

A New Zealand-born participant reported that in her work with the family of a Tongan young person she enlisted the assistance of a fluent Tongan speaker to facilitate a meeting with the parents. The lack of Tongan language skills amongst many New Zealand-born social workers is in part a reflection on the *pālangi* social, cultural and political context of Aotearoa New Zealand. Mila (2001) highlights the divergence between expectations of Pacific social workers and the undermining impact of the context:

As Pacific Island social workers there is an even deeper expectation. We are there to occupy the Pacific positions, provide the Pacific perspectives, identify with and establish immediate rapport with all Pacific clients, be authoritative and knowledgeable to the 'Pacific Way' and of course, speak Pacific language (one or more if possible). The irony is that many of us (especially those who have undergone tertiary training) are the product of an assimilation process so successful, that Pacific languages, values and customs have dramatically deteriorated... (p.23)

New Zealand-born Tongan social workers with limited Tongan language skills may still self-identify as Tongan and uphold Tongan values, but may do so against the currents of a non-Tongan context.

Action towards the maintenance of Tongan language, with the development of Tongan language nests for instance, is one way in which social justice is advanced for Tongans transnationally. Maintaining Tongan language in the diaspora is a form of resistance and a means to facilitate wellbeing. Importantly, Autagavaia (2001) raises the issue that the English language “is a tool for the domestication of Samoan people through which the values of the dominant culture are expressed and the legitimising of dominant control is achieved” (p.81). Dominelli (2004a) also argues that language has been a means of exclusion on a personal and structural level within social work, and that this has taken place within the operation of international social work organisations. Taking a poststructuralist analysis, she highlights the importance of:

... language as a means of communication, a way of structuring our understanding of our role in the world or situations, the social relations that we are positioned within and the power relations elaborated and through our interaction with each other. (Dominelli, 2004a, p.516)

Given the above points made by Autagavaia and Dominelli, it is clear that the use and promotion of *lea fakatonga* is a means by which *mo'ui fakatonga* is maintained and developed amidst globalising and universalising forces. For Tongan social work, *lea fakatonga* is not only a skill for practice but its maintenance and development within a context of transnationalism contributes to social justice, social inclusion and wellbeing for diasporic Tongans.

### **Interpreting**

Given the central place of *lea fakatonga*, interpreting was often identified as a role that Tongan social workers took on in the predominantly English-speaking Aotearoa New Zealand context. For many, interpreting roles for their own *kāinga* or other Tongans was part of their entry into social work. One participant, for example, was a cleaner in a hospital in the late 1970s and at that time was frequently used as an interpreter by medical staff. This role also led her to offer social support to Tongan patients and their families. Although interpreting services are now more readily accessible as part of health and social service agency functioning in comparison to the 1970s, interpreting was still identified by participants as a skill they required within their practice. This is especially so in regard to the employment of specialist health and social services for Tongan clients who are not proficient in English.

Undertaking interpreting, however, can raise role confusion challenges for social workers. One participant stated:

The majority of... the time that they see me is through a referral from the system, social welfare or the court. So I thought, "People are getting confused, not knowing whether I am from the community" ... They were starting to question which side I was on... They had to use me for interpreting, use me for counselling, I had too many hats and people were confused.

Another participant talked about her experience of starting in a social work job:

I went in [and] just because I was Tongan I was dumped all the cases Tongan that there was. I wasn't sure if my role was interpreting or social working or what.

A resulting issue is that colleagues may unfairly overburden Tongan-speaking social workers with interpreting roles:

...another challenge for me is, being Tongan, being able to speak the language, [is that] a lot of my colleagues, health professionals, [are] wanting to use me as an interpreter.

In relation to Asian social workers in the British context, the issue of being under pressure to do two jobs (their own and interpreting) has been highlighted (Ahmed, 1982). Likewise, a review of literature on bilingual health workers also identified as a theme the tension experienced by ethno-specific workers between the roles of “facilitating access and the demands to provide direct services” (Johnson, Noble, Matthews, & Aguilar, 1999). In light of this literature, the issues associated with interpreting and *lea fakatonga* experienced by Tongan social workers reflect a pattern that is associated with the interface between Tongans and non-Tongans in English-speaking contexts.

Despite the resource implications, the importance of the qualities of interpreters was stressed by participants. Within a health setting, for example, an interpreter needs to be familiar with medical terminology. In relation to communication and translation within Pacific health research, it has been suggested that individuals from within the health sector be utilised as direct and literal translations involving sensitive body parts, or bodily functions, “can often be offensive (equated to swear words), if not managed carefully” (Health Research Council of New Zealand, 2003, p.17). Attention given to the calibre of interpreters was noted by the following participant:

You have to pick someone whom you know the calibre of their character. Why? Because [of] interpretation... I can make a different meaning from what you’re saying although we use the same words. And if you don’t know the character of the person then you’re in big trouble. They’ve got to know the meaning of what’s being said. Time and time again I have got into trouble. I would think [regarding] the team, “They’re educated, they’re fluent... I thought I told them.” And then, “Oh, I didn’t check the meaning.”

Another participant recalled an instance of professionals utilising a male gardener at a school to interpret for a meeting where issues about a young girl’s incontinence were being discussed. Later, the family were referred to by the professionals as being non-compliant. This was raised by the Tongan social worker as an issue because of the inappropriateness of the person brought in to interpret, and the subsequent impact of this

on the nature of participation by the family in the process. This issue was reiterated in a recent study on social work with immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Aotearoa New Zealand which identified the need for more training and support services, including “accessing and working with interpreters and skilled cultural advisors” (Nash & Trlin, 2004, p. viii). The data in this study, however, is showing that Tongan social workers are undertaking interpreting roles as part of their social work role. This would not preclude them, however, from the need for training in interpreting per se to address the issues outlined above.

Training in interpreting and the use of interpreters is all the more important when one considers the variation in types of interpreting. Two styles of interpreting have been identified by Baker (1981): verbatim, where words are communicated as close as possible; and independent intervention, where the interpreters use some of their own judgement and take on part of the casework. It is suggested that “the ‘ideal’ interpreting style falls between these extremes and varies according to client, circumstances, and the personalities of the worker and interpreter” (Baker, 1981, p.393). This is similar to what has been described as either “surface” or “deep” interpretation, where the latter takes account of the cultural context and is more concerned with the meaning of ideas (Horwath & Shardlow, 2004). Tongan social workers, who are likely to have an understanding of both Tongan and *pālangi* cultural contexts, are more likely to provide “deep” interpretation when they undertake interpreting with their clients. This has important implications for the wellbeing of transnational Tongans as it is possible that issues around language and interpretation are often underestimated in social work with Tongan communities. Chand (2000), for instance, has demonstrated the contribution of language and interpreting issues to the over-representation of black children in child protection systems in the United Kingdom. In addition, where there is recognition of specific needs around language and interpretation for social work with Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand, there may still be a lack of the necessary financial or human resources to enable best practice around interpreting.

Although, as a Tongan social worker, using *lea fakatonga* within client interactions does not necessarily involve interpretation, it is inevitable that interpretation occurs at some stage when the social worker communicates with non-Tongan speaking supervisors, co-workers, other professionals and in case notes or reports regarding their interactions



with Tongan clients. While guidance on the use of interpreting in social work (Ahmed, 1982; Chand, 2000; Glasser, 1983) is scarce, there is even less discussion on minority social workers' interpretation and translation back into the mainstream agency context. As Howe (1994) states, the role of the social worker in the postmodern world “is not to cure, control and *legislate* according to alleged universal standards, but to *interpret* and understand one world and present it to another” (p.523). Howe points out that interpretation, in a more general sense, is inherent in social work. For Tongan social work then, when issues around language for diasporic Tongans are added to the mix, interpretation is all the more complex and pivotal.

***Heliaki* (indirect communication, metaphor, symbols) and *Talanoa Fakatātā* (story telling)**

Tongan social work skills include the ability to use *heliaki* (to speak ironically, or to say one thing and mean another), including the use of *talanoa fakatātā* (storytelling). As explained in Chapter Five, *heliaki* or metaphor has been used as a framework for interpreting the findings of this research project. Mahina (2004) advocates the use of the word *heliaki* in place of transliterations for the word proverb (*palovepi*). According to Mahina (2004), *heliaki*:

Is deployed more in the context of formal language, embodied in oratory, poetry and proverbs. In these distinct yet related areas, *heliaki* is instrumental in the exchange of qualities between closely related objects proposed in language. (p.20)

In other words, Tongan social work practice includes the ability to employ, when appropriate, an indirect style of communication so that one does not necessarily go straight to the point. The importance of this skill, as a matter of cultural etiquette, is signalled in the following discussion that took place in a focus group:

A: ... the co-worker sometimes just rushes in there, goes up and over and out. And you just want the floor to open up and drown yourself because they see you as their family. *Sio mai pe kinautolu ia ko e ki'i ta'ahine 'a* [participant's mother's name][They just look and know that that is [participant's mother's name] daughter]. They are all thinking, what did she teach her? ....

B: ... But it is something here that is part of Western practice. You just shoot from the hip.

A: ... There are so many subtleties, in working across the cultures...

This indirect communication that *heliaki* produces is given credence in light of the arguments offered by Waldegrave (1990) regarding the inappropriateness of direct questioning relating to the self in work with Pacific families. In this regard, Waldegrave (1990) states that for people of communal and extended family cultures:

Questioning that refers directly to self-exposure, or self-assertion, is often very confusing... Questions relating to self alienate people because it crudely crashes through the developed sensitivities prevalent in communal-based cultures, where identity is expressed in extended family, rather than individual terms. The questioning is experienced by these people as intrusive and rude. (p.16)

In a community work context, the indirect communication pattern was played out slightly differently according to one participant, who related that in his experience a *fono* may be held to talk about a particular issue, but may in fact focus on another topic altogether. He states:

We'll call the *fono* and [the] *fono* becomes a discussion of something else. You know, it gets hooked into the old bible talk. You know, we'll never actually talk about [the intended] issues. We talk about the role of the church and the bible... Our jobs expect us to start at a particular point, get there and talk about the actual issue. We get there and the church wants to talk about something else.

In the instance described above, there was a process of communication which involved prayer and biblical illustrations as a route to addressing the issue at hand. In this way, it is possible for the new focus, incorporating *lotu*, to address the intended issues. The time needed and the route taken, however, may not be in line with the expectations and resource provisions of agencies and bureaucracies.

A particular way in which communication styles are indirect is in the use of stories or *talanoa fakatātā*. One participant said:

*Ko hotau anga fakatonga foki, ko e talanoa, ko e oral, that's the power. Ko hotau malohinga ia 'o kitautolu 'e taha.*

Our Tongan way, it's telling stories, its oral, that's the power. That is also one of our strengths. If you work as a group and if you know how to tell stories... you just do the talk and it will make them work... I could talk, and make sure everybody moves.

The telling of stories was identified by participants as a useful skill in terms of three key aspects of practice. First, *talanoa fakatātā* is used as a means to educate migrant Tongans on aspects of society in Aotearoa New Zealand. One participant, for example, would relate stories to discuss child discipline methods. He would talk about how (in Tonga) men are not allowed to walk around without a shirt or people are not permitted to swim on Sunday and so a *pālangi* could be reprimanded in Tonga for these actions. He would then relate this story to how physical discipline is restricted here in Aotearoa New Zealand, and that this restriction applies to Tongans here as well. By use of a comparison or story about familiar events, situations and contexts, the social worker was able to draw comparisons to assist his clients to understand and adjust to the context of Aotearoa New Zealand living. The sharing of stories in this way is described by Foliaki (1994) in an example of her social work practice with a Tongan father who had used excessive physical discipline with his daughter. Foliaki describes how she facilitates conversation about life back in the islands as a means to bring about new realisations about life in the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

A second way in which *talanoa fakatātā* is used is for therapeutic purposes. A practitioner illustrated this when he referred to the use of Tongan storytelling in his approach to work with a young person:

...my sort of idea was [about] generating a whole lot of different stories, using the whole sort of Tongan way of storytelling, and finding the answers within the stories.

Another participant explained how she engaged her client's stories as a basis for their change work and healing, identifying this as a Tongan aspect of her approach:

[It is] the art of couching one's woundedness, one's disturbance, discomfort in the structure of a story. Because a story is very, what we call, containing and embracing – as the Māori call *manaki*, its *awhi*. It's like a little basket that holds you all together and maybe it's like a womb. The story is like a womb, it holds all that, and remains compassionate so that naming my wound doesn't become moralistic, judgmental, critical. It's very comforting. Because people can just take what fits and put back the rest, so they're not judged good or bad, right or wrong. So it's the art of couching those psychic wounds in the basket of a story.

This participant was able to relate the use of psychoanalytical concepts with Tongan *talanoa* to construct a practice approach which was effective with Pacific clients with whom she worked.

Third, *talanoa* is used to decipher discourse, to assist in assessment and intervention formulation. The following example illustrates this approach. The social worker had discerned that the dominant stories about a Tongan boy in his school had been about violence. The school had not previously connected with the parents, and the social worker's role was to develop a more comprehensive picture of this boy. A family meeting was called to generate alternative stories, as the school never perceived itself as part of the problem. While the outcome was that the boy left the school, what is important in this case was that the outcome included some preservation of family dignity as an appropriate process was undertaken. This approach integrated narrative (Combs & Freedman, 1990; Waldegrave, 1990; White & Epston, 1990) and strengths based (de Jong & Berg, 2002; Saleeby, 2002) approaches with the *mo'ui fakatonga* aspect of *talanoa*. The use of *talanoa* has therefore been integrated by Tongan social workers with psycho-analytical and narrative approaches for the purposes of education, therapy and challenging oppressive organisational practice.

To summarise, *talanoa fakatātā*, involving skills of facilitating and contributing to story telling, is employed as a practice process for the purposes of educating immigrant Tongans about life in an Aotearoa New Zealand context, for therapeutic change and for dealing with oppressive discourses within organisations. This aspect of Tongan social work practice is comparable to principles, techniques and processes that have been described in the literature on social service work with Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand. Notably, Tongan *talanoa* aligns with the narrative tradition and the “Just Therapy” approach developed and implemented in work with Pacific peoples by The Lower Hutt Family Centre (Waldegrave, 1990). In “Just Therapy”, stories are shared by people and the process of therapy facilitates new meanings of resolution and hope, taking account of the gender, cultural, social and economic context. Writing from a community development practice perspective, Williams, Labonte and O'Brien (2003) describe their transformative use of storytelling with Tongan women (along with Samoan and non-Pacific women) within an action research project. It was found that:

There is much empowering scope in the use of storytelling with communities at the economic and social margins... While marginalised communities may be relatively powerless in relation to social and economic structures, they have considerable scope for exercising power and agency. Storytelling is an important tool in this process, which enables the conscious reconnection to and reconstitution of people's identities. (Williams et al., 2003, p.39)

Similarly, storytelling has been used at Massey University in workshops with Pacific social work students as part of structural analysis, de-colonisation, cultural grounding and learning support<sup>22</sup>.

The use of *lea fakatonga* and *talanoa fakatātā* in Tongan social work draws on the art of poetry. A participant explained that she draws on client symbols or metaphors that are close to nature, illustrating the more indirect form of relating. She elaborates her explanation as follows:

In the Western world... most of the transactions in communication are done in a very rational, cold, linear, up to your face, type of language. So the Western person would say, or the *pālangi* would say, you know, “Stop beating around the bush and just get to the point.” Where as for us we have this beautiful art of poetry of using symbols... In the Pacific Island context, if someone beautiful or lovely comes into the room I don’t say... “Can I take you out?”... We would say something symbolic like, “When you walk into the room the sun shines,” or, “There is a beautiful perfume that walks in with you when you enter the room.” That kind of poetic language is very important to our people. So the art of speaking in symbols and speaking in poetry, we’re born into that and its protocol and that’s what I use a lot in my counselling with Pacific islanders. I draw it out of them. I say, “What is this pain like? What does it remind you of back in the islands? Tell me about your pain in our island way.” And they will say something like, “It’s like the rough seas, hard rocks and no sun”. They just tune into it automatically. “What’s your heart feeling like?” They won’t say, “I feel depressed,” or “I feel anxious.” They will say, “My heart is like dry mud with lots of cracks and no water.” So we have this art of describing things close to nature, our symbols come from close to nature, very important.

Samoan writers have similarly noted that metaphors are fundamental to communication patterns within *fa’asamoa* (Autagavaia, 2001). Tupua Tamasese Efi (2002), for example, argues that the use of metaphor and indirect communication is a way of communicating that maintains the dignity of all. Challenges can be put forward in a way that can be picked up by the other as they are ready to take on the challenge. As illustrated with descriptions of *heliaki* and *talanoa fakatātā*, the communication in Tongan social work is characteristically indirect, but there is a significant degree of depth of awareness and understanding which is attained in the interaction when symbols or metaphors are brought to bear. This resonates with developments in contemporary

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<sup>22</sup> I refer here to several *Telling Our Pasifika Stories* workshops facilitated by Rev Mua-Strickson-Pua with students at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand between 1992 and 2004 in which I was involved as either a student or a staff member.

social work and human services more generally around narratives and stories (Combs & Freedman, 1990; O'Donoghue, 2003; Parton & O'Byrne, 2000).

### ***Feongo'i'aki* (intuitive sensing of the feelings of others)**

The final micro communication skill to be highlighted here is that of *feongo'i'aki* or the ability to intuitively sense the feelings of others. Churchward (1959) defines *feongo'i'aki* as a verb which means “to feel for each other, sympathize with each other” (p.171). Being able to work on the level of intuitive feelings emerged from the focus groups and interviews as a significant facet of Tongan approaches to practice. One participant who had been involved in developing a Pacific social service pointed out that:

[We need to] tap into how... Pacific peoples... bloom best... Pacific peoples first work at the level of intuition or inner knowing, before they work across or up, up to the level of theory and skills and facts. Whereas I believe that for mainstream western society it's the other way around. I think we have both, but we are kind of programmed into using one more than the other... It's not that we are dumb about linear, abstract, conceptual matter. It's that we work first from the intuition and instinctive wisdom base before we go to facts and data... And that is what has helped the team.

*Feongo'i'aki* is the ability to intuitively sense where others are at emotionally or cognitively and therefore to know how to interact appropriately to work towards change. A participant explained:

As we go along in our discussion, in our meeting, there are certain indicators when I sense that they start to understand things... There is a certain psychological moment when they are soft enough for you to give a new solution or position.

It was identified by one participant that the experience of growing up in an extended family situation assists in developing intuition, empathy and *feongo'i'aki*. He stated:

One of the things we have, as Polynesian practitioners, is intuition, which comes with having spent long periods of time in big extended family networks... When you're dealing with people who have problems, at a cognitive level you can understand some of these problems, but genuinely, if you can empathise and feel what they are going through, it's a different story. And I think that that part of myself as an individual, and therefore as a practicing mental health professional, makes my ability to connect deeply with people very real. And so there are times when you know that the pain is so much that nothing you can say is going to make any difference. And so in my practice I have long periods of silence. And I know that silence is very therapeutic. And I don't know quite how you learn those sorts of things. You can't learn that sort of thing from a manual.

*Feongo'i'aki* is not unlike concepts of inner knowing or deep listening found within other indigenous practice approaches. McDermott (2005) suggests that cultural and interpersonal divides can be bridged through deep listening, through having a still awareness. Newport's (2004) research identified 'inner knowing' as a source of knowledge within Cook island women's practice approaches.

Intuition and inner knowing is largely a non-verbal aspect of practice which adds to social work's "collage of ways of knowing," where practitioners know "more than they could tell" (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita, 1998, p.208-209). It has been argued that intuition is authoritative knowledge that is used in conjunction with and to balance rational and technologically obtained information (Davis-Floyd & Davis, 1996; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita, 1998). Freud and King (2002) suggest that moral intuitions and emotions require increased attention in ethical decision making and Elks and Kirhart (1993) found that intuition, refined by experience, formed a part of social work practitioners' implicit models of practice self-evaluation. While *feongo'i'aki* may not neatly translate as intuition, intuition is a commonplace skill in social work, albeit not well elaborated in the social work literature (Ringel, 2003). Moreover, in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, Tongan social workers' use of *feongo'i'aki* may easily go unnoticed or unacknowledged. Arguably, *feongo'i'aki* or intuition is a defining characteristic of social work operating from a Tongan worldview paradigm that deserves recognition as a core social work skill.

To summarise, themes emerging from the data show that distinctive aspects of Tongan social work communication skills centre on the use of *lea fakatonga* (Tongan language), *heliaki* (metaphor and stories) and *feongo'i'aki* (intuitive use of feelings). *Lea fakatonga* is the primary means of communicating respect and humility, as the essence cannot be communicated in the same way via the English language. The primacy of language and language issues also implicates interpreting as a prominent Tongan social work skill. *Heliaki* and *feongo'i'aki* indicate the indirect, non-verbal and sensory characteristics of Tongan social work communication. The final section discusses humour as a key finding in relation to a Tongan social work framework.

***Hua* (humour)**

Humour (*hua*) is another key aspect of Tongan social work practice processes that has emerged from the data in this research. The Tongan word *hua* has been defined as “jolly, jovial, friendly in manner, sociable, easily approached, agreeable; humorous, funny, jocular (of persons or things)” (Churchward, 1959, p.233). One participant explained that she enjoyed being part of the Tongan community partly because of Tongan humour:

Well, its just the humour. Like, for example, say somebody had a car accident and usually you would say, “Oh, I’m really sorry, how are you and blah, blah, blah.” They would walk in, the person that had the car accident would walk in, and they’d be laughing about it. You know, they see the funny side of it... And the person... who had the accident will just laugh along with it!

In a social work context, *hua* includes the ability to have skill with words and to use one’s wit. A focus group identified humour as a rapport building skill, with one of the group’s members stating:

I believe that it’s how you break a concrete wall when you visit... You add some kind of flavour within your visit, so the other family will feel comfortable, will accept you in... You have to have a sense of humour... Like I say, “‘*Osi hau he faka’ofo’ofa* [it’s very beautiful].” You know, its something that you have to break the ice.

Another participant in an individual interview explained how humour can be part of his practice interactions even when there is very serious content or when a high level of emotional pain is being expressed and acknowledged:

When things get really, really serious, Polynesians have a way to laugh at the world. Even when things hit really rock bottom, there’s still a sparkle of humour that I think we haven’t lost, and it’s a powerful therapeutic thing to have inside of us and to be able to give. Just thinking about that lad who spent the whole session crying, if we wouldn’t cry, we were laughing. So it was a really emotional session in terms of the fun and humour that we got out of it, but an immense connection with the despair... And that’s another thing we have as a community that we haven’t quite lost. I can spend long periods of time with European staff and European [clients] and never have the spark of laughter. And yet you couldn’t work in this team here, you couldn’t get through a day without the laughter... you can’t help but be infected by the humour that people who have enormous problems still bring to this place. And I love that.

This participant highlights humour as comprising a healing capacity for both clients and practitioners. The healing function of Tongan humour is supported by Mahina’s (2002) suggestion that Tongan humour (he uses the terms *fakaoli* and *fakakata*) is a work of mind and art:



The revealing of the contradictory character of the human situation, concealed by subjective interests, can be a source of objective knowledge. When a portion of this subjectivity is formalised into humour, the creation becomes an artistic celebration of human absurdities through laughter. Formally beautiful as a work of art, the experience derived from humour is functionally one of healing. (p.6)

Whilst social work is not usually known for humour, Siporin (1984) concurs that humour is an art which does indeed have a role in social work contexts:

Humor is a creative act that helps transform pain and deviance into constructive growth, for clients as well as for oneself. To laugh is not only to last but also to have fun, to grow, to be free and human, to celebrate one's own life with the fellow members of one's community'. (p.464)

One participant recalled an incident where humour was shared amongst clients and staff of the agency. The occasion was a government audit of the community health service in which officials were interviewing clients and staff. The participant had worked with an older man who had been known for making inappropriate innuendos to new female nurses. He told the following story about the audit day:

And as soon as I turned my back, the auditor... she sat beside him and started talking away. And then in the last question she asked him, .... "What would you rather this service did to help you?" Straight away the old man didn't hesitate, "I want to make love better." Man! The auditor got up and walked away, hhh!... When they left and we had a cup of tea with the clients and this guy got up and told the story. And I said to him, "Why did you do that?" And he said, "She asked me, and that's what I want." Well, fair enough... It was fun man. And that's the sort of humour that makes me happy, that clients are... starting to tell stories, they are speaking and sharing this stuff with us. And the other clients were laughing as well. You know, ladies and men. And to hear them tell their stories, I tell you, it's quite amazing. And to top it off, one of our clients grabbed the guitar and started singing.

Humour in this story was part of a process of equalising of relationships, and clients of the service were able to interact with workers on a human level. Humour, in this sense, is a skill which can give life to the values of Tongan social work such as *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships), particularly in ways that are defined not only by the professional-client role, but by roles associated with Tongan social structures such as *kāinga*.

A survey of the literature shows that the role and importance of humour has been noted in widely varying social service situations. For example, humour has been identified as

an aspect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander helping styles, where “having a laugh” or sharing “a yarn, a joke and a cup of tea” is characteristic (Lynn et al., 1998). Also, van Womer and Boes (1997) identify a variety of humour used in a hospital emergency room setting: tension-relieving nonsense, play on words, a sense of the preposterous and incongruous, gallows humour and foolish jest. They conclude that more research is needed “on the use of humour as a vital dimension of social work practice” (van Wormer & Boes, 1997, p.91) including exploring cultural perspectives on humour.

*Hua* as Tongan humour, therefore, is a Tongan skill and art form which may be used to reframe realities, to build rapport with clients, to bring healing, and as a way to reconstruct social work relationship according to Tongan values. Relating back to the metaphors of Tongan social work, *hua* or Tongan humour is an aspect of the practice processes represented by the *uku* metaphor for dealing with *kāinga* and social change. *Hua* represents a pattern of interaction, of *tālanga* (friendly discussion).

## Conclusion

This chapter has outlined prominent skills for Tongan social work which flow from and enable congruent action from a Tongan value base. These skills demonstrate the overarching requirement to *fakatoukatea* (be skilful in opposite directions) within Tongan social work approaches. In Tongan social work, the practitioner needs to traverse Tongan and *pālangi* cultural contexts and so needs skills and knowledge of both contexts as well as skills and knowledge in bridging and weaving these multiple realities into a sensible whole. One must also be skilful across a range of fields of practice in order to facilitate a useful and holistic service for marginalised Tongan families and communities. A Tongan social worker will also be skilful and knowledgeable about positioning themselves in various family-like roles that they will assume in the course of their social and community work practice. The multiplicity of role and identity inherent in *fakatoukatea* is an apt response to the transnational and postmodern conditions in which Tongan social work operates, where there is increasing diversity simultaneous to increasing assertions about the importance of localised solutions. As was established in discussions about Tongan diaspora in Chapter Four, there is diversification and change amongst Tongans, but it is also possible to distil

distinctive local Tongan approaches to social and economic wellbeing. Tongan social work practice within a Western industrialised country such as Aotearoa New Zealand exemplifies processes of intercultural interaction at every turn. *Fakatoukatea* is not only a Tongan response, but a Tongan strength, because of the way in which diversity is harnessed. As Young (1996) states: “The internal resources of a culture, its capacity for self-critical learning are limited – too limited, perhaps, for effective criticism unless we are willing to learn from other cultures” (p.209). *Fakatoukatea*, as the practice of bridging between Tongan and *pālangi* cultural contexts, requires a developed ability to intuitively and critically gain from more than one cultural worldview or reality. Furthermore, it is about making the many components, segments and layers of the Western, democratic, albeit dismantled, welfare state work to the benefit of Tongan *kāinga*. In part, this is achieved in and through Tongan social structures such as *kāinga* roles (*matakāinga*) that a social worker assumes.

The most distinctive skills within a Tongan worldview and represented in *pola* and *uku* metaphors are skills around *lea fakatonga* (Tongan language). There is a general lack of attention to language in the social work literature (Kornbeck, 2001) which is ironic given increasing discussions around cultural competency, diversity and multiculturalism within social work. The importance of language cannot be underestimated as a significant component of any social work. The nuances of *lea fakatonga* incorporate *faka'apa'apa* (respect) which provide a framework for social work interaction and activity. *Lea fakatonga* enables social workers to engage and address clients in ways that are *fakatōkilalo* (humble) and considers *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships). From a slightly different perspective, *lea fakatonga* is more than a skill for practice, its use and promotion is a means by which Tongan discourse is strengthened and legitimised in a diasporic reality. A characteristic of *lea fakatonga*, which may also transfer over to English language use in Tongan social work, is the prominent use of metaphor, symbols and stories, or *heli'aki* and *talanoa fakatātā*. The exercise of *heliaki* and *talanoa fakatātā* together with intuition (*feongo'i'aki*) in *mo'ui fakatonga* social work prescribes an indirect style of communication. What is common to the language of respect, metaphor and intuition is the quality of “beating around the bush”. With reference to communication within Māori and Pacific cultures, Waldegrave (1990) suggests that it “often requires subtlety and indirect processes that are less common and more complex than in most European and North American cultures” (p.16). To once

again draw on the *uku* analogy, to dive around *pupu'a puhi* (blowholes) one must launch the vessel on a different side of the island – approaching the site indirectly. Similarly, a paramount skill in Tongan social work is the ability to use a circuitous form of communication.

Finally, the findings draw attention to *hua* or the use of humour as a characteristic of Tongan social work. Tongan humour is an art form used in Tongan social work to affect rapport and relationship building and to bring therapeutic benefits for clients and workers alike. A focus on skills is often associated with a technical-rational emphasis in social work. This thesis is showing that Tongan social work skills lean towards the construction of social work as an artistic-humanist endeavour. However, Martinez-Brawley and Zorita's (1998) argument that social work reaches beyond the purely scientific or purely artistic, thus occupying a position at the edge of the frame, may also be noted.

The skills presented and discussed in this chapter demonstrate the importance of qualities related to *fakatoukatea*. Tongan social work, in being concerned at the level of interaction between people and their environment requires diverse skills as they intervene at the interface of Tongans and non-Tongan contexts. Specifically, Tongan social work skills require diversity of skills around Tongan language: ideally skills would include competence in both Tongan and English in the Aotearoa New Zealand context; interpreting skills would be developed; there would be ability to use *heliaki*, *talanoa fakatātā* and *hua* appropriately. These skills are the vehicle for the expression of Tongan values represented as part of the *pola* metaphor. The next chapter will take this discussion further by articulating how the values, knowledge and skills of Tongan social work presented in Chapters Six and Seven configure to contribute a Tongan construction of social work.

## Chapter Eight

# A Tongan Construction of Social Work

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*Hangē ha pā kuo fa'u'* (just like a skilfully crafted fishhook)

Based on the foundational values and skills encapsulated within the interacting *pola* and *uku* metaphors and detailed in the two previous chapters, the aim of this chapter is to articulate the Tongan approach to social work at yet another level of abstraction. This chapter articulates the defining aspects of a Tongan contribution to social work grounded within Tongan social workers' conceptualisations of practice. In so doing, the foundational Tongan knowledge represented by the metaphors are given focus.

Five interrelated defining aspects of the Tongan approach to social work are discussed in the following pages, namely: the location of social work primarily within *kāinga*; the reconstruction and repositioning of professionalism and professional boundaries; the particular emphasis on the social worker-client relationship itself as a force for change; the directive and empowerment balance; and the need for an advocacy role. The chapter concludes with three stories shared by participants about their social and community work practice to demonstrate and reiterate the *pola* and *uku* metaphors of Tongan social work, as well as the integration of Tongan values, knowledge and skills, in practice.

### ***Kāinga* Location of Social Work**

A key theme emerging from this study is that the location of social work is within the everyday life of Tongans and, more particularly, within the realm of *kāinga*. That is,

social work emanates from and is centred within Tongan family and community structures.

There are a number of ways in which participants' responses point to the primacy of the *kāinga* or family domain within which Tongan social work practice is situated. The most obvious is that clients are perceived, understood and dealt with as part of *kāinga*, rather than as individuals. While the client may, in agency terms, be the child, a Tongan social work approach will always engage the family, rather than deal with a child or young person in isolation from the *kāinga*. A participant who worked with youth, for example, advised that she endeavoured to be consistent with the message Tongan parents would be giving their young people when speaking with them regarding education or sexual health issues. She was conscious not to undermine the parental role. Another participant explained that in a child welfare practice setting she made an effort to mitigate the impact of removing a Tongan child or young person from the home and placing them within a *pālangi* home. Such placements would often, in her experience, make it more difficult for integration back into a Tongan family setting because they had been exposed to a different set of values, norms and behaviour which often meant that they were more estranged and isolated on their return. The Tongan saying "*fofola e fala kae talanoa 'a kāinga*" ("roll out the mat so the family can talk") was identified as indicating that family issues are dealt with in a family context. The *kāinga* will come together to talk, facilitated by the '*ulumotu*'a or head of the family. The individual therefore, from a Tongan perspective is best worked with in the context of *kāinga* or family, a theme which is central to other indigenous and non-Western approaches to practice such as the *whare tapa wha* framework (Durie, 1995b; Joyce, 1994).

Aside from client work involving *kāinga* as the principle unit, social work was presented by many of the participants as largely evolving out of the helping roles they assumed within their own extended families. One woman, for instance, explained that as the eldest in her family, and because she did well in English at school, she started at an early age to play a social support role for her family. She stated:

I started helping my family when I was still at primary school, when I was in Standard Three. I was involved in banking and doing our shopping... My family, Mum and Dad, didn't have much English... and because of the loving and the caring type behaviour that I had, that sort of got me into helping out other people... the extended family as well, they were sort of looking up to me for things to do with office type stuff...

Moving to New Zealand... they were sort of enhancing me to continue on [with] the [same] sort of work...

Another participant said that she was involved in translating for her extended family at around five years of age, including translating for a registry office wedding. She perceived that her social work started at an early age when she was called upon for interpreting and support roles for her own *kāinga*:

As a child growing up, often nobody spoke any English and I was one of the ones that went to school here. So I was assumed to be the one who could interpret for the family. Through that, some of my experience was around having to make decisions as well, while you are interpreting. Because sometimes family members were not able to understand some of the processes and, as part of covering for them I suppose, I would jump in and make some of those decisions, whether they be big or small. But that started at an early age for me. That was like 3, 4, 5 and going through school and just always being looked upon as, you know, “[participant’s name] will be able to help you. Take her to the doctor’s with you.”

She identified that such roles led her to take up social work as a career option. The same practitioner saw her mother as a social worker because of her mother’s assistance to *kāinga*:

A lot of it has got to do with my mum. She came over from Tonga. She has brought over 84 people from the islands. She does a lot of social work in just who she is.

A senior male practitioner identified that being the eldest in his family, with consequent responsibilities for a lead role within the *kāinga*, prepared him to practice social work. Overall, these reflective accounts of journeys into social work, illustrate the sense in which many Tongan social workers perceive their current social work identity as being a part of, and an extension to, informal social assistance roles they undertake within their *kāinga*.

Some studies on social responsibility suggest that the degree of social support given to family is prevalent within non-Western cultures. A study carried out in the USA (Hughes, 2001), for example, found ethnicity was a factor in differing patterns and expressions of social responsibility. It was found that among urban black and Latino adults, “obligation to and participation in community life [civil society] was modest relative to their obligation to and participation in family life” (Hughes, 2001, p.214). Further, within these ethnic minority groups, there was no noted relationship between

age and family participation, compared to middle-class White Americans. This difference was attributed to ethnic minority “respondents’ ongoing involvement in the provision of social and economic support to extended kin through-out the life cycle” (Hughes, 2001, p.214). Comparable findings and observations may also be evident with other groups fostering chain migration. I would suggest that there is a similar high degree of support to extended kin within Tongan families, which has impacted on the positioning of social work within the domain of family. The practice of sending remittances to Tonga and the way in which Tongans have engaged with globalisation more generally (as discussed in Chapter Four) demonstrates the emphasis on kin-centred social responsibility amongst Tongans. As has been stated in relation to Pacific social work more generally:

The family is the core of our existence, it is our identity and security. As social workers we, each one of us, must first be a responsible member of a wholesome family before we have any right to go into our communities in the role of a social worker. As a social worker one represents one’s family, village and church. (Pacific Island Community and Social Workers Auckland, 1986, p.7)

This leads to another way in which the position of social work is located within *kāinga*. That is, the participants gave accounts of being identified by clients foremost in terms of their family, for example:

I know that I’m a Tongan young person and when people see me they see not only me but my parents and my family and that I have to really present myself in a way that respects them...

They explained how Tongan clients will often ask who your parents are, particularly if the social worker is not senior in years, before getting to the core issues. This is part of the process of *fakafekau’aki* (connecting) and *matakāinga* (behaving like family) and reflects core values of *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships) and *faka’apa’apa* (respect). It grounds social work within the dimensions of *kāinga* and pushes social work beyond being simply an occupation or professional activity which sits apart from the private and family domain of the social worker.

A further way in which the Tongan approach to social work is located within *kāinga* is that the family of the social worker can be a resource for the social work role within



*mo'ui fakatonga*. Participants referred to family members contributing to their social work practice by way of providing information about family genealogies, giving practical assistance and providing a form of cultural supervision<sup>23</sup>. A participant, for example, identified the family *akonaki* (family prayer and teaching) that his grand father facilitated morning and evening as an important de-stressor and learning point for his practice, fulfilling some functions of cultural supervision. It was noted, however, that using the *kāinga* as a resource for practice might be undermined by the current context. For example, a New Zealand-born participant reflected that in his upbringing, his father was often away from the home in service roles in the wider community. His mother therefore had primary responsibility for raising the children and managing the home. He also recalled, however, that there were always extended family members staying at their home who offered assistance. This, in a way, was both a response to his father's absence but it also enabled his father to take on roles of responsibility within the community. He compared this to his own present family situation where he had to achieve a work-life balance because of the more nuclearised nature of living arrangements – a situation indicating that the nature of family support has changed. The *kāinga* of the social work practitioner themselves can be an important resource and support for practice, particularly when communal and extended family arrangements are maintained.

Social work was frequently portrayed by participants as something which was an “everyday thing” in that “everybody is a social worker” within *mo'ui fakatonga*. The implication of this conceptualisation of social work was explained with this response:

People [Tongans] just come to you, regardless of what job you are doing, they come for your assistance when they need it.

Another participant talked of members of the Tongan community waiting on his front lawn for him to arrive home to assist with a situation. It was commented by another that:

... there is a belief in you... [because] you've grown up and seen those things. That belief there, you can't take it off. Its like a shadow, follows you all the day. And that's what the mentality of the Polynesian people [is].... don't say “No” to anybody calling for help.

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<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of cultural supervision see Walsh-Tapiata and Webster (2004) and Mafile'o and Su'a-Hawkins (2005; 2004).

These anecdotes show once again the way in which social work is seen less as a job within an agency, and more as an extension of everyday life.

The theme concerning the location of Tongan social work within *kāinga* may be compared to the location of mainstream Western forms of social work, within the welfare state. Social work emerged within modernity, as a profession which sought to address personal and social troubles that arose within the context of Western industrialised nation-states. Its development as a profession in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century saw the responsibility for social care move away from the family and into the realm of civil society and the state. Parton (2004) argues that social work developed as a hybrid in the space between the private (household) and public spheres of society. At a most basic level, civil society is the realm of operation which is distinct from that of the state, the market and the private domain. In the case of Aotearoa New Zealand, early welfare work centred around the development of charitable aid, largely operated by religious groups (Tennant, 1989). Furthermore, Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial history meant that welfare developments were largely influenced by cultural values emanating from Britain. With the development of the welfare state, social work was extended to be an activity of the state. It has been pointed out, however, that the boundaries around civil society are not sharply defined and there is considerable interchange between the state, market, civil society and the family domains. Deakin (2001) states that the “boundaries of the space in which civil society activities take place are permeable” (p.7).

A post-war collapse of consensus around social welfare, including that of the values underlying welfare states, is well known (Hugman, 1998). This disrupted consensus has in part arisen from non-Western ethnic groups challenging assumptions about the universal appropriateness of western-based social work (see discussions of anti-racist critiques and new social movements such as Pierson, 1991; Williams, 1989). Payne (1997), in his discussion of social work theory, suggests that the construction of social work involves the three elements of the social worker, the client and the context. The context refers to the agency and the wider social and political environment within which the agency exists. In Tongan social work, as explored within this thesis, the social worker and the client may be primarily influenced by *mo'ui fakatonga*, and yet the context is essentially *pālangi*. This makes for an alternative construction of social work, one that departs from the orthodox conceptualisation and practice which placed

social work within the civil society and state domains. As a construct of Western political economies, social work is a profession which is typically separated out from day-to-day life and from the so-called private domain. Within Tongan social work, however, the family domain is centred within the public and civic spheres in the construction of social work. That is, in the construction of Tongan social work, the practitioner's practice brings *kāinga* – their own and that of the client – into the centre of public and civic realms.

The embedding of Tongan social work primarily within Tongan *kāinga* has perhaps occurred, not only because it makes sense from a Tonga worldview perspective, but because Tongans have not necessarily enjoyed the benefits of full participation as citizens in their most recent destinations of migration given their position at the social and economic margins (as was shown in Chapter Four). The anti-racist critique of political economy has pointed out that ethnic minorities face a “double process” of disadvantage in the welfare state:

First, their economically and socially less privileged position tends to make them more reliant upon provision through the welfare state. Secondly, this welfare state upon which they are peculiarly dependent treats them on systematically less favourable terms than members of the majority community. (Pierson, 1991, p.80)

Ironically, others have pointed out the resourcefulness of immigrant Pacific families and communities in the operation of a form of welfare as part of cultural processes of reciprocity and obligation (Hau'ofa, 1994; Ka'ili, 2005). The family, or *kāinga*, has therefore has been a capable and sufficiently flexible mainstay in which to position social work, a position that makes sense from an *mo'ui fakatonga* worldview perspective.

Tongan social work's position within family, however, ought to be distinguished from the neo-conservative and neo-liberal aim of placing greater responsibility back onto families for the purposes of freeing families from state interference (Hugman, 1998). Such views are about the privatising of what are essentially social problems. Tongan social work, on the other hand, is more about bringing the complex social structures of *kāinga* into the public domain for the purposes of integrated, positive social change. So there is an integration of the family and work domains in Tongan social work whereby

there are less definite lines between what might be a professional matter and what is a family/private matter.

In summary, social work was perceived by the participants as an inseparable extension of day-to-day life, rather than as an activity tightly boundaried as a profession or job. In this way, it is similar to George's (2005) assertion from a Fiji context that a social worker is someone who devotes their entire life to service, not just their professional life. It was frequently noted by participants in this study that their professional roles were an extension of the roles that they played within their families. This perception of social work indicates that their social change role within a Tongan worldview arises first and foremost out of a social work type role within their kin group.

### **Professional Status of Social Work**

A related theme reflected in the *pola* and *uku* metaphors is that social work from a *mo'ui fakatonga* worldview perspective reconstructs ideas around social work as a profession. A reluctance to identify as a professional was expressed at times by both formally and informally qualified Tongan social workers. As one participant put it:

You know how our people freeze up when they go and see a profession. So I don't label myself as professional. I just label myself as a person who goes out to help people. And when I identify myself with them, then we can work together.

It was clarified by one participant that *fakatōkilalo* meant that: "When I go to the home, I don't wear my professional hat." In these instances professional identity was perceived as elitist, alienating and ineffective. The process of *fakafekau'aki*, with the use of self-disclosure on the part of the practitioner, and *fakatōkilalo*, with a lowering of self, does not necessarily align with what is widely perceived as professionalism.

Professionalism is itself a socially constructed and contested phenomenon within social work and beyond (Barnes & Hugman, 2002) and there are calls for human service professionals to (re)professionalise and deprofessionalise (Finlay, 2000). Debates regarding professionalism are not new within social work. Greenwood (1965) noted that:

... the attainment of professional prestige, authority and monopoly by social workers will undoubtedly carry disturbing implications for the social action and social reform components of social work philosophy. (p.522)

Others have argued that social work professionalism needs to be congruent with core social work standards. Ehrenreich (1985), for example, asserted:

To the extent that professionalism represents a real effort to maintain competence and high ethical standards – a commitment to client needs even when they conflict with agency rules, a commitment to openness and collegiality, a commitment to the goal and the actuality of social justice, which is at the core of social work's reason for its existence – it needs no defence. But if professionalism does not measure up to, or conflicts with, these standards, it should be discarded without regret. (p.230)

Postmodern critiques of social work have argued that “the professional knowledge claims of social work can become a means of ideological domination” (Pease, 2002, p.137) and have called into question the assumption of empowerment in social work. Durie (1995a) makes a similar point in relation to Māori public servants, stating that “professional development in New Zealand has paralleled the diminution of Māori initiative and the loss of Māori effectiveness” (p.4). Moreover, Gray and Fook (2004) suggest that rigid professional boundaries hinder international exchange and interdisciplinary cooperation in social work, and claim that “a broader view of human need and broad conceptions of welfare render professional boundaries relatively superfluous” (p.639). Tongan social work as depicted in the *pola* and *uku* metaphors takes an appropriately broad view of need and welfare, providing some explanation for the participants' caution in relation to professionalism.

Further, it is suggested here that among the Tongan social workers participating in this study, professionalism is used to represent what is, in fact, cultural appropriateness in *pālangi* (Western) contexts. The use of the term “professional” in this sense masks the *pālangi* dominance within social work. In doing so, various *pālangi* cultural ways of practicing social work are positioned in a place of assumed normality, while Tongan ways - perceived as differing in some manner from professional practice – are relegated to a subordinate position.

While Payne (1997) has asserted that social work is reflexive - whereby workers, agencies and theory change as a result of interaction with clients and their needs - it is

suggested here that the extent to which social work has been effectively reflexive to multiple cultural contexts has been limited. To be more specific, the ability of social work to be reflexive is limited when there is not a shared culture amongst clients, agency, workers, and those in positions to define the practice of social work in the profession. Tongan social workers' flexibility in their use of a professional identity is an example of reflexive social work, in that they are constructing and being reflexive, with their integration of Tongan concepts as a foundation for practice. It does not necessarily follow that social work as a profession is reflexive in a manner that is inclusive of this. By not asserting their professional identity, Tongan practitioners are applying Tongan practice norms within the *pālangi* context of the social work profession. Discarding professional identity, as described by Tongan social workers, does not infer a lack of ethical or safe practice; rather it represents a reconstruction of practice based on the values of *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness), *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships), *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *ofa* (love), in order to practice competently within a Tongan paradigm. Perhaps Hugman's (2003) argument for the development of a new professionalism is worthy of consideration. He advocates a professionalism which is (Hugman, 2003):

... seen as part of the more complex web of social relations, in which social values are expressed through the mutual obligations and responsibilities of people, including all potential stakeholders in social welfare, as members of families and communities, and as citizens. (p.164)

Such a reconfiguration of professionalism would be in harmony with Tongan values and practice in social work. It is not, therefore, that Tongan social work is not professional but that it adopts a certain type of professionalism; one that emanates from the values and skills reflected by the *pola* and *uku* metaphors of social work.

### **Relationship between Social Worker and Client**

A further overarching theme of social work from a Tongan worldview perspective is that of relationship. Participants' accounts of their practice approaches gave primacy to relationship aspects over those of task, time or structure. While relationship is certainly not unique to Tongan social work, it is asserted here that the nature of the relationship is uniquely constructed. The dilemma which emerges when we search for cultural uniqueness is that it is easy to undervalue those aspects which are held in common

across cultures. At a cultural universal level, relationship is a feature of all social work, but its significance should not be overlooked because of its universality. At a cultural specific level, however, the way relationship is constructed is characteristically Tongan.

Multiple relationships are inherent within Tongan social work practice. This is especially so given the concepts of *matakāinga* (behaving like family) and *fakatoukatea* (skills in two opposite directions) that have already been established as foundational to Tongan social work. Religious, family-like and other relationships are often present in addition to a purely social work relationship. The probability of dual expectations as a result of these relationships is not unlike that which has been discussed in relation to Cook Island social work (Crummer et al., 1998, p.6) where the role of the social worker has been likened to that of an *ariki* (high chief):

On one level the *ariki* receives services, goods and kudos for the position he/she holds. But in return for this power and respect, the *ariki* is also expected to carry out services for his or her community, such as settling disputes and officiating at ceremonies. Similarly, the social work role has dual expectations within the Cook Islands community.

Social work commentators have raised concerns about dual or multiple relationships and resultant boundary issues (Reamer, 2003). A distinction may be made, however, between boundary violation, which is exploitative, manipulative, deceptive or coercive and a boundary crossing which may not necessarily be harmful or unethical (Reamer, 2003). One young female participant, for example, related the following in discussing her approach to practice with the Pacific people she worked with:

I think it probably means being a bit more personal, especially with Pacific women, than I would be with anyone else. Like, they are often interested in whether I've got a boyfriend or not and things like that. So you would like tell them stories and go into details... and get their advice and just sort of joke about it and that would probably never happen with somebody that wasn't Pacific and you probably wouldn't joke about it in the same sort of ways. I certainly wouldn't feel comfortable discussing that with my *pālangi* men clients [laugh]. It's a different boundary.

Tongan social work certainly embraces “boundary crossing”, but does so within a Tongan cultural framework which redefines the ethics of practice. Put another way, *mo'ui fakatonga* as a worldview system incorporates certain social boundaries and offers a paradigm in which to assess and moderate behaviour. Therefore, the absence of

a professional boundary does not necessarily imply an absence of boundaries altogether. In this way, a Tongan social worker who knows a client in some capacity, say through being from the same village, is accountable to their whole family and community for their actions and is guided by Tongan values such as *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *'ofa* (love). These Tongan values may in fact be more restrictive, and yet paradoxically facilitative, in setting boundaries than those imposed by *pālangi* professionalism.

Relationship boundaries are also affected by what Lee et al. (2002, p.82) have referred to as complexity associated with being an 'insider' in work with an oppressed or marginalised group:

Mainstream social work's dictum to keep [the] professional and the personal apart is often overlooked as the insider professional is, in part, necessarily personal in many instances.

Tongan social workers share common experiences associated with being an immigrant and/or ethnic minority group member in Aotearoa New Zealand in addition to shared aspects of *mo'ui fakatonga* (Tongan culture). This may mean that in working for social change, Tongan social and community workers are working to address their own marginalisation in conjunction with that of their client families and communities. Thus relationships become part of a holistic and integrated system where such boundary crossing is a strength and hallmark of Tongan social work. As has been highlighted by Egan (2004), although "from a Western perspective setting clear boundaries is an integral part of the early dialogue between worker and client... This may not be so from different cultural perspectives" (p.82).

Relationships are also more revealed and solidified and less likely to be terminated given that Tongan social workers and Tongan clients may be part of the same community. Merrett (2004) points out that if:

... a worker places too much emphasis on planning for the end of their work, they are likely to achieve little, due to cultural values about the importance of relationships and the process by which relationships are built up and maintained. (p.285)

The nature of relationships as 'ongoing' is integral to the value of *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness), as explained in Chapter Six. Mitaera (1997), proposing a pastoral care approach from a Cook islands perspective, argues that "attending" events such as



birthdays, church functions, funerals or weddings is important in consolidating kin ties and affirming relationships. In a similar way, within a Tongan practice framework, a social worker's relationships must be seen as ongoing, and their participation in the Tongan community events is the way in which these relationships are affirmed and understood.

The focus on relationships in Tongan social work means that power and status afforded because of certain relationships and roles need to be used wisely. This is particularly so in the hierarchical Tongan social structure. One participant pointed out that those born and raised in Tonga are accustomed to an environment of power and of control and that social workers need to be careful not to overuse power:

Back in Tonga there is the *hou'eiki* (chiefs), the king and there is power and control between the people and the *hou'eiki*... We have to be aware of using wisely the power that we've got, and to know... the boundaries, and don't overuse that power.

It is useful to note Allan's (2003b) explanation that power is inherent in social work, but that it is the use of that power for just and humane practice which is important. Tongan social workers need to negotiate inherent social work power as well as power and powerlessness from within the Tongan world. The value of *'ofa* is central as it directs just and humane practice. Indeed, it has been suggested that humanist values "transcend cultural boundaries" (Ife, 1997, p.103) and must be a part of an alternative to the Western modernist tradition in social work.

Participants in this study offered comments on the implications for social work of Tongan social hierarchy and structure. There was some variance whereby hierarchy and one's place within it was seen as both enabling and constraining. A participant born in Tonga explained that:

The Tongans are very structured... you have royalty, the nobles, the commoners. I know my position as a commoner. I know what is expected of me, I know my role, and I know how to move around that role. I know how to sneak around that role. I know how to survive in those situations whether it be for the church, in the village or the community. That's the way things are. It's still healthy.

Similarly, a New Zealand-born participant stated:

For me it's always important knowing where my place is. And that's something that you do heed, and there's a time to speak and there's a time not to speak... In saying that, I'm not subservient.

Tongan social work takes place on the basis of contingent notions of status, power and equality, but it is important that relationships are underpinned by *'ofa*, despite the *'eiki/tu'a* variance defining relationship expectations.

There is an implicit acceptance within *mo'ui fakatonga* social work that relationships are often unequal and that this is not necessarily something from which people need to be liberated. Whereas in much western social work thought equality amongst individuals is pursued, within Tongan social work Tongan hierarchical social structures embody the very complex resource within which values of *'ofa*, *faka'apa'apa*, *fetokoni'aki* and *tauhi vā* are most fully experienced and from which wellbeing can ensue. This is so because one's equality within *mo'ui fakatonga* is contingent, ambiguous and context specific. When a social worker takes an inclusive approach (*matakāinga*) they are showing their respect and humility in their willingness to enter a complex network of relationships. The worker's privileged professional status is negotiated alongside *'eiki* or *tu'a* status derived from *kāinga* roles. In this way, relations of equality or inequality may place the client or client group in a more powerful position relative to the worker; for example, if the social worker is much younger. It is noteworthy that unequal professional relationships may be replaced with unequal *kāinga* relationships, for example the social worker has a lower status than the client based on nobility or age.

To summarise, relationship is integral and central to the values of Tongan social work. It is within relationship that healing and social change can be facilitated. The complexity of relationships within a Tongan worldview paradigm is for a purpose. The multiple and dual roles and boundary crossing associated with being an insider within a community, provides the necessary complexity to facilitate social work practice and is a force for change.

### **The Directive and Empowerment Balance**

The discussion of relationships and power leads into a fourth theme that emerges from the data - that Tongan social work often entails management of the tension between a

directive style on the one hand and striving to empower on the other. This was explained by one participant in the following way:

[As] professionals trained here, we need to empower people. We need to support people to come to their own conclusions, their own decisions, about what needs to be done. And a lot of our Tongan families come to us for help, wanting us to provide some solutions... And I get really confused sometimes about what is the best approach... It's a real struggle, because I don't think its one or the other. We all have some knowledge and some wisdom and it's important to share... I find it particularly hard with the Tongan families because they sit back and rest in you [i.e. place themselves in your hands] because of your education... With European families they will discuss with you, they will tell you exactly what they're thinking, and there is a degree of... discussion and debate. With Tongan families they don't debate with authority figures, they tend to allow us to make decisions for them.

A Tongan-born participant stated that:

They look up to professionals to tell them what to do. They look up to God to tell them what to do... Here is a land where there is legislation, it opens up an avenue for them to come and play a part in this process of what needs to happen for their child who has committed a crime. So its understanding the way a Tongan thinks, understanding their... limitations in the English language, and understanding how the Tongans sort of throw everything to you and expect you to be the answer and the end of everything. For you to sort of tell them [what to do]... At some stage along the way I have to say to them quite clearly and directly, there are some things that they need to know.

Some Tongan clients, namely first generation migrants, expect a directive approach. It is likely that the values of *faka'apa'apa*, which sets an '*eiki/tu'a*' framework in place, facilitates this. That is, within a *faka'apa'apa* framework one is likely to expect and accept directives from those who are above. One explanation offered of this expectation of a directive approach in Tongan social work is that for those Tongan families who are not aware of the social work role, social workers may be perceived to be like the police. One participant described an occasion where a Samoan man insisted on talking to the participant and was later thankful for the "telling off" given to his son:

I was wearing... a tapa shirt. And that day there was a Samoan guy with his son being sentenced to community work and he was supposed to report at the front to the admin officer... When the admin officer says, "Yes, can I help you?" He said, "No, no. I came to see that man." And when they came and told me I looked in my diary and I said, "No, its not [me]." ...And when I [stood] and looked at him he waved. I went over there and I said, "Can I help you?" And he said, "Oh yeah. We've just been in court and my son is sentenced to 50 hours community work and we were told to come here." "Oh fine, shall we go over there and we'll book you a time..." And I said to his son, "Look here, and this is the last time. When you finish your sentence, I don't want to see your face here again. Okay? If I see your face here again do you know where you're going? Rimutaka prison. That's where you're going. Finish this one and I don't want to see you breach your sentence. Fifty hours you are going to complete and after

that one I will check it.” ...The old man came back and said, “Thank you.” And I said, “What for?” “That’s what I wanted to hear, somebody telling off my son.” ...And this is what community people from the... Pacific expect social workers to do.

It was pointed out by another Tongan-born participant that he found motivational counselling did not work as well as a more instructional approach with his Tongan clients:

I remember how I... learn[t] in Tonga. There is a teacher standing from the front and tell[ing] me what to do. Then when I look at my counselling and my client, they don’t match with the New Zealand [emphasis to] motivate. Then I said, “This is what you [do],” and they feel good about it.

Tongans are socialised into the directive approach as part of socialisation within *kāinga* and communal living (as outlined in Chapter Five) and so there is an expectation that social workers will also have a directive style in work with clients.

Discussion by Tongan-born participants in a focus group about the importance of taking directive action took place as follows:

A: As I said, it’s a doing culture. They are more interested in things happening, not trying to be politically correct for everyone. Someone can be marginalised from our point of view, from New Zealand... But they’ve come to me to do something. They expect to come and meet and the decision is made. Not a consultation – a decision is made. And they make decisions very quickly, and they do things.

B: They don’t wait, and wait, and wait for another consultation.

In a disability setting, one participant stated that while Western practice is about the empowerment of the disabled individual to voice their own needs, in Tongan families decisions are made by key people in the collective.

On the other hand, New Zealand-born practitioners in this study tended to consciously seek to empower Tongans in their practice, rather than be directive:

So for me it is about being pro-active about encouraging them to talk about their issues and come up with their own solutions... [For] a lot of Tongan families... when we go into a bigger group that may include, like the police, or the lawyers or something, they say, “*Ai hake koe [name] me’a na’a tau talanoa ki ai*” [“You say it [name] the things we talked about...”]. And that’s why I... say, “When you go to the meeting I’ll send an interpreter.” ... I have to always say, “*Ko kimoutolu ‘oku nofo mo e tamasi’i*” [“You are the ones that live with the boy”]... Its supporting the culture, but its helping them to understand how they can make their own decisions now.

This practitioner highlighted that while she understands the expectation of a directive approach, she makes a conscious effort to encourage Tongan families to take a more pro-active role. In this way, she is working to benefit Tongan families as she is creating space where they can learn skills that will assist them to interact with non-Tongan contexts. In a sense, she is developing Tongan families' cross-cultural skills.

New Zealand-born participants also talked about giving their clients suggestions, options and encouragement, rather than being directive. This was exemplified in one participant's mentoring programme with predominantly New Zealand-born young people:

They're not overlooked by a teacher or a tutor or parent or someone of a scary significance. They're just worked alongside. And I've said to the students, "If you fail, come back to school, we want to work with you another year... And it's not a pass, you know, life is not an exam, you don't have to always pass..." You just keep it really simple for our young people in that sense.

A different New Zealand-born practitioner made a similar comment about his work with a young person:

For me it was keeping things really informal and... just letting him take charge. And whether that is a Tongan approach or not - allowing people to take charge... it sort of works.

In summary, Tongan-born clients would likely expect a directive approach, contrasting with the practice of New Zealand-born practitioners with New Zealand-born clients, where empowerment became the more predominant mode of practice. The skill here is the ability to use both directives and empowerment in practice with Tongan families and communities, according to the particular needs of the situation, in line with principles around client-centred practice. This point is affirmed by Diaz (2002) writing on social work with groups from an "Asian Pacific Islander" practitioner perspective. She notes that Asian Pacific Island hierarchical family structures translate into an expectation of a directive style of leadership by a social worker within a group setting. To expect spontaneous contribution with these group members, she explains, would cause embarrassment for them. On the other hand she reflects on group work with primary school children in Brooklyn, USA where she learnt that her authority as a social worker was not a given, and so she needed to build relationships to gain respect, trust and

attention. Diaz (2002) states that “there is a middle ground somewhere between being directive and supporting the group’s autonomy that a group worker must find in order to determine what role authority plays in his/her practice” (p.47).

These findings beg discussion of the use of the term empowerment and whether the directive approach is, in effect, disempowerment. Parker, Pease and Fook (1999) have critiqued modernist notions of empowerment stating: “It is professionals who have colonised empowerment and this, by definition, means that empowerment is taken out of the hands of those who are being empowered” (p.151). The range of practices around directive and empowerment approaches in Tongan social work can conceivably be equally ‘empowering’ or ‘disempowering’ from a postmodern perspective, as power relations and empowerment are contextualised; hence the postmodern process of empowerment is about “being open to alternative interpretations of situations through developing communicative competence” (Parker et al., 1999, p.156).

The practices outlined by participants in this study are similar to four sets of empowerment practices outlined by Allan (2003a, p.63) drawing on the work of Parsons, Gutierrez and Cox (1998). The first is the establishment of a relationship with individuals to address immediate needs and goals. A second empowerment practice is assisting individuals to develop knowledge and skills that may lead to forming support networks, self-help and collective action. Third, empowerment practice includes assisting people to develop competence for dealing with professionals and organisations. Finally, social action and political change at various levels is highlighted as an empowerment practice.

In light of this framework, descriptions of Tongan practice, including what appear to be directive styles at the micro level (potentially undermining of personal empowerment), arguably reveal the potential for structural empowerment for Tongans as a minority group in Aotearoa New Zealand. That is, the insider position a Tongan social worker occupies in practice with Tongans is accompanied with certain benefits. The politics of cultural identity enable a Tongan social worker to speak for a Tongan client in a way not possible by a non-Tongan. Hence, the foreseeable lack of individual voice on the part of a client may contribute to change at the structural level, which in the end enables Tongan empowerment. The approach advocated here resonates with the assertion of

Ruwhiu (1994) in relation to *whanau*-based healing as a Māori practice approach which is “structured on concepts such as tuakana-teina [older-younger], matua-tamariki [parent-child], koro-kuia-mokopuna [grandparent-grandchild]” (p.137). He states:

Some of my colleagues in social and community work practice and training have argued that the worker should let the client determine the direction and pace of contact. In *whanau* mode, there will be times when you need to be a matua and the director of action must come from you, the worker. That, to me, is good, informed and connected practice. (Ruwhiu, 1994, p.137)

Practicing in a *whanau*-based way, similar to *matakāinga*, is an out play of *tino rangatiratanga* (self-determination) and a basis of structural change in post-colonial contexts.

### Advocacy

A final theme which can be abstracted from this study and the *pola* and *uku* metaphors is that Tongan social work involves advocacy. Advocacy “seeks to represent the interests of powerless clients to powerful individuals and social structures” (Payne, 1997, p.266) and was recently identified as one of the most common forms of intervention or service in social work with immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Aotearoa New Zealand (Nash & Trlin, 2004). It appears to have arisen in Tongan social work in response to the needs of Tongans within the context of transnationalism. Payne (1997) has identified and distinguished between case advocacy, which is “provided by professionals to enhance [client] access to provision designed to benefit them”, and cause advocacy, which seeks to “promote social change for the benefit of social groups” (p.270). In the 1980s self-advocacy and peer advocacy developed which focused on “helping people speak for themselves” (Payne, 1997, p.271).

By virtue of Tongans being an ethnic minority in Aotearoa New Zealand, there is often a real gap between the cultural modes of Tongan clients and the implicit culture of systems, organisations and institutions that are a part of social work and of social life more generally in Aotearoa New Zealand. Aware of this situation, one participant stated:

You become the tool... It’s how you manage conflict in that process. It’s how you manage culture conflict, the Department conflict[ing] with family, and how you bring people to an equal level and they feel, “Yeah, we are standing on the same ground.”

Another participant, employed as a social worker in a hospital setting, reported that “non-compliant” is often written on Pacific patient’s notes, and at times this is an assumption made without talking to the patients. The social worker stated:

In the last five years that I’ve been here, I’ve learned I have to stand up for my patients. And though, [with] the doctors and social workers and OT [occupational therapists] and physios, we’re working as a team... I have to keep in mind that we work as a team with [the patient as] the priority.... Not with the doctors and not with the rest of the team [as the priority].

Other health workers indicated that they have had to advocate for the use of traditional Tongan medicine (*vai* and massage) or for relatives of patients to stay at the hospital, particularly when the patient had limited English language proficiency. Such advocacy is all the more important in light of the argument presented by Toafa et al. (1999) that Tongans experience “disapproval directed towards their indigenous ways by a system with so much power and influence” (p.165). They argue that this leads to a type of spiritual illness or malaise for Tongans in Aotearoa New Zealand. Advocacy is a pertinent aspect of social work from a Tongan perspective that works to counter the impact of, and to bring change to, systems.

A participant recounted her advocacy work with a young woman who had contacted her in distress due to her visa expiring the following day:

The case [was] quite complicated because none of the immediate family included her in their application and there [were] no other areas [under which] she could lodge her application. I picked her up [and] we went to the Immigration [Service]... I didn’t go on the queue but I got there and I demanded an appointment with one of the workers there... So we went inside and she got her 6 month visa... We went back and I lodged her application and it wasn’t accepted because it has to be an immediate family [member] to sponsor her... So I came home and I contacted the mother in the [United] States and said, “Come back to lodge [your] daughter’s application. Her future is in your hands.” So it was a big fight... There was a lot of letters and they said they were going to seriously consider her application... Yesterday she got her permanent residence... They don’t know where to turn to get help from and it can lead them to being depressed or lead them to mental illness if they don’t have enough help or enough support, especially the young girls [and] young men in the community.

Assistance and advocacy with immigration matters was a typical task amongst the participants in this study, despite the fact that they worked in diverse fields of practice. Issues of access to services and resources, participation in society and citizenship are related to immigration status and so for those born in Tonga it is not just cultural



barriers<sup>24</sup>, but legal and bureaucratic ones, that they need to overcome. Advocacy skills, therefore, require resilience on the part of the social worker, as implied in this participant's comment:

I remember someone asking me, "So what do you need to work with at-risk kids?" And I said, "Well, you need to expect to go through what they've gone through. So you need to be expecting to be abused, and it could be in different shapes or forms. It could be institutional abuse... or it could be just being abused by the client or the family." I kind of expect a little bit of abuse and a little bit of exploitation from contractors in the position I'm in because I go in to bat for that group of people.

There was also a sentiment expressed by participants about the need to be proactive with regard to the perceived needs of Tongans, rather than merely wait for mainstream organisations, including government, to respond to these needs. One participant, who had done considerable voluntary work, stated that:

There was no funding and I didn't even care. I just [did it] because I knew that they [were] needing it. And if you won't stand up and do it, government won't know... that there are needs... But if you get up and do it, you let them know that there are missing parts there to be completed... And I didn't want to lie down and wait for the money to come. I just wanted to start...

Another made a similar point:

There are processes with particular cultures that really, you know, resolve some of those things... Use those protocols, because you can't afford to leave families behind... And as Pacific social workers you [can] talk about those things and be serious about implementing it in our practice. And don't moan about [the shortcomings of the] mainstream, because we have to get up and do it ourselves!

Being proactive requires social workers to advocate for both the needs of Tongan *kāinga* and/or communities as well as the appropriate Tongan ways of dealing with those needs.

Although advocacy was undertaken primarily in relation to mainstream systems, some of the participants also discussed taking on advocacy for individual clients (for example, women, children and young people) in relation to Tongan systems, particularly *kāinga*. For example, one said that:

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<sup>24</sup> See Gershon (2001) for a comparative ethnography of how Samoan families negotiate neo-liberal government bureaucracies. Gershon concludes that the way Samoan families practice their culture contradicts the liberal Eurocentric assumptions about families and minorities.

It's also for the husband to know that there is a time for the wife to be involved... Most of the... Tongan homes, the men are the powerful people in the house. All these courses we run here are really powerful in that men start to understand that... he's not the only one in the family. We have the mum - the wife - and the children. They have a voice... They have a right to say what they want...

Another practitioner highlighted her advocacy for an older client around both the mainstream system and the family:

I... provided a lot of social work input... advocating for the patient, when dealing with the Doctors... with the treatment options... [with] the patient's right to say yes or no to treatment... with arranging family meetings and trying to bring the family together, to an agreement about what is going to happen to the patient on discharge... I provided some cultural input in there and some moral support for the patient, and to encourage her to make decisions, instead of relying on her children, like the daughter that came from Tonga and the children that she has been living with.

The many faces of advocacy were further elaborated by participants who spoke of advocacy action which indirectly affected their clients but more directly was about advocating for themselves and for the use of Tongan approaches to social work practice. Consequently, social workers need to be supported as they negotiate practice alternatives arising from an ethnic specific perspective (Al-Krenawi, 1999; Autagavaia, 2000). One participant indicated that it can be lonely being the only Tongan in an agency:

[I'm the] only Tongan practitioner and, to be honest, sometimes it is lonely. Sometimes you do need that support. I believe it's really lacking.... [With] the cultural side of things, sometimes they're good when they talk about it, but I believe there's no action at all.

In some mainstream agency settings (for example, Child, Youth and Family), Pacific staff members have formed networks, partly as a means to advocate for their needs as Pacific employees but also for policy and practice development appropriate for Pacific peoples. This is an example of successful alliances built between diverse Pacific cultural groups for the purposes of a stronger political voice. Pacific networks are an avenue by which Pacific staff may advocate for practices appropriate to Pacific clients and/or professionals.

Advocacy, whilst intrinsic to mainstream social work, has another layer when it comes to Tongan and other minority group social work practitioners who may experience racism in a practice setting. The need for advocacy at this level is reflected in the

following account of a Tongan practitioner who had experienced prejudice from non-Tongan clients:

I've had experience [with this] when we're on duty... I've walked into a room, introduced myself to European families and people have said "Where's the [practitioner]?" as I'm about to introduce myself... Even though I can cope with that sort of prejudice, you know, that's no big deal, I work with that, and I don't get upset by that. I just see that as an ignorance and something to be sad about in terms of all of us. That is a sadness because of prejudice that stops them and me from genuinely being able to connect and from me being able to genuinely demonstrate the skill that's been acquired over the years of study and work.

Subtle undermining was reported by one practitioner who held a middle management role in her agency. She recounted a planning and team building day that she organised. The one non-Pacific team member did not perceive this as a good use of time, had spoken to senior management and the participant was later questioned. The participant reflected:

I try so hard to work in a way that is professional and acceptable for people and then I see somebody else's planning day, and they've barely done anything and I go, "Look at the depth of the work that we'd done in comparison!" And yet I was totally undermined... To me it was a feeling of, "I'm that dark girl." You know, "That little brown girl. Does she know what she's doing?"

Advocacy in Tongan social work then is, at times, about advocating for one-self as a Tongan practitioner and for the legitimacy of Tongan practice approaches in the face of subtle forms of racism. Similar points, examples and arguments have been made by ethnic minority professionals in a variety of studies both in Aotearoa New Zealand and abroad (Aranda, 2001; Autagavaia, 2000; John-Baptiste, 2001; Pacific Island Community and Social Workers Auckland, 1986). Bennet and Zubrzycki (2003) writing in the Australian context recommend that the social work profession critically reflect on its professional culture, given that their research showed that there are:

... aspects of social work knowledge and practice which are alienating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners and communities and can be regarded as oppressive in their application to indigenous realities. (p.69)

Anti-racist, anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive writers such as Dominelli (1988) and Thompson (2001) assert the need to challenge subtle forms of racial and other oppressions which are manifest in social work at both institutional and individual levels. Importantly, many social work scholars are now initiating "critical debate on the

possibilities of transcending racial divides in social work” (Dominelli, Lorenz, & Soydon, 2001; Gray, 2005). These more recent debates are attuned to the complexities of interchange across fluid cultural spaces, but also the imperatives of equality and justice amongst diverse groups.

### Stories of Tongan Social Work

This final section will relate three practice stories recounted by participants. These stories highlight a range of Tongan values, skills and knowledge and thereby illustrate Tongan social work practice frameworks in action. I will provide some discussion of the ways in which the metaphors of *pola* and *uku* are ingrained within these stories.

#### The Story of a Fisherman

A Tongan social worker in a community setting related the following story:

This couple are not young themselves... They have got no jobs and yet they have these three old people to look after... This couple also has three kids... What they are living off is the pension or the money that comes for the three old people... They have family who sometimes [help out]... Our Tongan ways, you know, we take stuff to the old people. We look after them, the church looks after them.

.. I wanted to find out what he [the father] is good at. When I could see that he is good with his hands in the garden, and a very good fisherman back at home I said, “Why can’t he make use of that?” So I offered to see if I can help and he said, “Look, if I could have a dingy or a boat, just to get out to the middle there in the waterfront, I’ll be alright.” And I said “Well, I’ll try.” I did try... I met up with this guy, he’s got a dingy... We had a bit of a deal, and he [the father] used the boat... When he came with his [catch of] fish, it was huge....

But then I heard he was giving them away. He put some fish at his home, just enough for his food and then he was giving them away. I said, “Look, you fish and I sell.” That’s what I did for a week... After a week of running around for him then he was all right to do it. I think that’s the hard part. He was finding it hard to sell his catch. Then as soon as the people found out that this is his way of [making a living]... he doesn’t have to go out. They know that he is going out tonight, so tomorrow they just come to his house and give him \$20.00 to buy his catch. And all I did was to let the word out. People go and buy their fish from him. And he’s okay, he comes out good... It’s good to see a man with a big smile and getting proud again. Join in the *kava* party and he’s able to talk about his fishing, you know, and now he turns up to church...

You should of seen outside, right up to the doorstep he’s got taro growing up this high. ...To supply not only the family with good food as they need for their children to be healthy, but also for the old people. They love the leaves for their food, like at home, for the *palusami* [food made from taro leaves] and all this. So, every time I go there, before I’ve turned the car off, the old man has already... opened the door.... It’s a good feeling, you know, [it] sort of just gives me the lift I need for the rest of the day.

In the first place, the worker is a part of the same community as this family. This is a diasporic Tongan community in Aotearoa New Zealand based around a shared ethnicity, church and geographical location. The *pola* metaphor helps to explain this scenario in that there is a value system in place which is significantly providing for the care and welfare needs of this family which included older people and children. The values of *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness) and *faka'apa'apa* (respect), including respect based on age, means that extended family and the church community provide food and other goods. This is not the same as charity, as the meaning behind such actions is around reciprocity and mutuality that spans generations, space and time. The social worker's involvement stemmed not from a defined professional role, but rather out of his inclusion and role as part of a Tongan community.

Social and community work practice in this story is also about transformation at a localised level. It is about harnessing and bridging a Tongan social system and the Aotearoa New Zealand neo-liberal economic context (see Chapter Seven). The worker collaborates with the father, demonstrating *fakatoukatea* (skills in opposite directions). The social worker advocates and negotiates on behalf of the father both in terms of accessing the boat and then in terms of selling the first few catches. In taking on the selling of the fish, the social worker is taking a directive approach and demonstrates alternative ways that professionalism operates. In his action, he is operating from a value base of *'ofa* (love). He is working in the interest of the father in quite tangible ways. Further, his actions are showing *'osikiavelenga* in that he does his utmost to achieve the final outcome(s). The outcomes are that the family have better access to healthy food choices, they have access to a self-generated income, the Tongan community have access to fresh food choices, the Tongan system of welfare is strengthened and enhanced, and the father has a sense of belonging and pride that is celebrated within community settings. It is noteworthy that the social transformation that has occurred for this family is at a local level and as such is likely to go unnoticed and unaccounted for by the legitimated social welfare funding and monitoring bodies. The *pola* and *uku* metaphors represent a type of social work that is integrated within Tongan *kāinga*/family and community functioning as a part of everyday life. This may not usually be visible to those concerned with formal systems of welfare. The social worker has a role to facilitate links between this Tongan system and the formal systems in a way that enhances the former.

## The Story of a Young Person

A New Zealand-born Tongan social worker based in a high school setting related this story about a Tongan boy:

Since he started at that school he had always been in trouble. And they just didn't know how to deal with him except to punish and just keep on punishing giving short-term solutions. And they just didn't know... how to work with the family... The dominant... story about this kid - he is a violent person, he is an angry person... The school had ... made attempts to contact the parents but they had never connected. I think my role was in there trying to find something else about this young person. We ran a family [conference]. Well, he's known to be a bully... at school. But the thing for me is that the school never saw the reasons why, you know, the school never saw that they were also part of the problem. They contributed to the bullying. So we managed to get the family together, grandparents and cousins.

...And for me it was going straight to the family... People always argue that you have to go through the church and go through the leaders... I just didn't want another person. Let's just go straight to the parents and let them know what's happening.

[Its] surprising, because the parents had always seen their child as this angel - which I have come across with a lot of Tongan parents.... At home he's an angel and why he is an angel we don't know. Maybe the discipline might be tougher at home. So, that's a different story that the school hadn't known.

... We went to the parents [and] I think having a Tongan face and being able to speak Tongan, I think it matters who speaks, and the colour of your skin matters as well. They came on board really quickly. I think they appreciated the fact that the school had approached it personally. In the past a lot of letters had gone home. They just kept on sending letters. And either the letters got home and they weren't taken into account, or ... kids get to the mailbox before the letters get home... But I think having a personal approach with Mum and Dad, acknowledging that Mum and Dad exist really helped. And they called in the rest of their family, we didn't have to go and visit them.

It was an informal meeting, run in the evening. [I] asked the school to offer some food... And it was good because we had it in the staff room as well. There's probably other places we could have held it but the mum and dad appreciated they were welcome in the staff room. We tried to create that as well.

For the first time the school heard all these different stories from the family, also from the sports coach. .. The reports that were read out... And for the first time the family had heard those stories.

...There's nothing legally we could of done to keep him in school... Talking to the family after that, they were happy with the process. And they were happy that they were able to hear the different sides. That was more important to them than legal battles.

... I think in the first place, [it] was being Tongan, speaking Tongan..., trying to create a process that is different from the process that is usually done. Where the school saw themselves as being the people in authority, the people who know it all, we tried to... give the family some kind of status. They're the experts, and they know their child more than the school does... [I was] trying to create this atmosphere of different stories

about the kid, about the young person. And I [was] trying to create an avenue for the rest of the family to participate - for the grandma and grandpa to get in....

This Tongan family wasn't interested in the legal ideas - it doesn't matter who did what and what time this happened. They were trying to add meaning out of the whole process and create some kind of meaning for why their son was at school in the first place. The whole Tongan side was trying to negotiate the meaning of education... Whereas the school was coming from a totally different [place]... yeah, just two different worlds.

The social worker constructs his role from a *mo'ui fakatonga* perspective, while also being informed by narrative and critical theory approaches. Thus there is a weaving together of Tongan and non-Tongan theory and practice. The *kāinga*, via the parents, are central to this work. Although the client is a student in the school, the social worker seeks to include the *kāinga*; this makes sense as whatever the outcome, it is the *kāinga* (not the school, and not just the parents) who will have an ongoing role in the care and nurture of this young person. The young person should not be separated or isolated from the *kāinga* system in this scenario.

Past actions on the part of the school were appropriate from a legal standpoint, including giving written information to the parents. From a *mo'ui fakatonga* perspective, however, this is inadequate. The social worker utilises *a'u tonu* (going in person) to approach the family. This in combination with the use of *lea fakatonga* (Tongan language) meant that the social worker was practicing from a value base which sought to *tauhi vā* (look after relationships). When it came to the family conference, holding the meeting in the staff room and providing food was important in terms of *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *fakatōkilalo* (humility) and *'ofa* (love). The social worker understood, from his knowledge of Tongan migration to Aotearoa New Zealand, that education was important to this *kāinga*. It was the relationships which were established that facilitated the healing and understanding for the family around the boy's action and the impact on his education and their family. The process is important – less so than the legalities. As such, the *uku* metaphor, which is about skill in a specialised process, sheds light on the significance of process in this scenario.

The social worker had a role as an advocate and of being a bridge (see Chapter 7) between the family, the boy, and the school. In this way, he was facilitating pathways of connection between Tongan and non-Tongan systems and organisations such as the

family and school. He was also incorporating *fakatoukatea* (being skilful in opposite directions). The practice demonstrated in this story highlights practice processes represented in the *uku* metaphor, but also shows the way in which the *pola* metaphor is drawn on and enhanced by practice.

### **The Story of a Group of Older People**

A Tongan social worker in a community organisation spoke of a project to support older people in the Tongan community:

We saw our old people being not so valued as they are in the islands because of the economic pressure of their children to go to work. You know, a different environment and they are so isolated... Their only outing, social outing, is the church on the Sunday and other than that they are just babysitters. It's going really, really well and the families are opening up and they are quite supportive... they can see what a difference it makes...

... I also have a personal passion for old people because I lost my grandparents while I was a baby... That's where my heart is..., that's where my passion for old people has come from... There's 22 old people, men and women, in the old people's group. So there are 22 grandparents for my children, and I really love it!

We meet weekly... I make lunch for them and they play cards and they dance to the Tongan songs and they tell stories...

I feel that their time is limited and they've got so much to leave behind for our younger generation. That's why [I have formed this group]... What I would like to do with them is to get into their family tree... I want them to go through their genealogy and get as far back as possible on both sides of their parents, and gift that, at Christmas time, to the children.

Well with the old people, the Tongan thing about it is the personal approach. I went individually and asked those people... and make them feel important...

In Tonga it's different, growing old is just part of the natural process in the community, but here it's quite different... People are not themselves anymore. People sort of behave according to the environment and the kind of systems that we work in... Grandparents are not relating to their children anymore because they are not there, they are always working to earn a living. The Tongan family structure just breaks down because of that. And that was my deliberate reason for starting with the old people.

...I had to somehow reach to their children, the importance of the limited time that the grandparents [have]... that they need to have some kind of relationship with their parents... because in doing so they are showing their children what they should be doing to them. It's sort of inter-generational like that. If I want my children to love me, then I must show them unconditional love to my grandparents. In that way, it has to have a rippling effect. It's my thought behind rebuilding the family, the Tongan family structure that's broken down because of the new environment, being a migrant.

So I see if that respect can be reinstated again, the status of, the value of the old people, then I can't see why it can't start reaching some sort of stronger family structure... ... I



think what is Tongan about it is the way that their attitude around family is still very Tongan... That's why they've responded so well to it... it's very Tongan, the valuing of old people.

They [the children of older people] are going through a sort of a guilt trip process. I'm trying to work through with them [that] it's not because they didn't like their parents, it's because of the pressure of where we are at. So I'm trying to work and trying to get them to balance it. They tend to go to the extreme. When I say, like if we're going to have a special lunch, I'll say to them, "We're just having a shared lunch." They'll bring a suckling pig! You know, they'll just go to extreme because they want to show with their generosity with food and all that to show how much they love their parents... In the Tongan way, they always go to extreme when it comes to food... we celebrate with food... I've got all the birthdays of all the old people, and I want to celebrate with just a little prayer just to make that person feel special.

We get some funding for little projects like that. I take them to the zoo. I take them to see the fish. I've even taken them to the Casino... I took them on a bus. I wanted them to see the environment that their children go and loose money on, so they can understand how the glitter and the glamour influences people's minds... They can understand now why their children get carried away... with that kind of environment. Everywhere you look it's sort of very tempting, inviting, and you just forget about your wife and your family when you go into an environment like that. And I wanted... [to] explain to them, and just respond to their questions. When we came out of there they put a lot of pressure on those children who go there... constantly at them about how they can do that when they are so poor, they haven't got any milk in the fridge, that kind of stuff. It wasn't a trip to try and teach them how to play on the machines.

We have what we call a garden project with the old people. The men have their vegetable garden so they feel that they are participating. We go every quarter around all the members and look at their little vegetable garden. The women have a little flower garden around the house. We've got so many beautiful photos... They only live in state housing. The Housing New Zealand are so happy, they have never seen the houses so clean because they're so proud now of living in their own homes. And there is no rubbish outside because they get their grandchildren to pick them up...

In Tonga you own your own home so you take pride in growing your own garden. But in here, all of a sudden they develop this attitude because it's not their house they don't have to worry about it. But now I get them to have the attitude that the roof over your head is your home for the time being and you've got to treat it with respect. You can't look after yourself if you don't look after where you live as well. It's got to be a total attitude change about yourself, the environment you live in.

...Being together, sharing in your own language and relating, telling the stories, telling the stories of the village where you grew up and relating to each other and joking in your own language with the old people.

... I think the challenges would be because we come from a small community, we know each other really well. The protocol around hierarchical [structures].... You've got to know your community. You've got to know which family they come from so you're not insensitive too... Like in [Aotearoa New Zealand] here, if you are running a project, everybody is treated more or less... the same. But in the Tongan approach if there is sort of like nobility you've still got to acknowledge those... If you're not a Tongan working with the Tongans you may not work as well because you need to know what family each of them come from, where they come from.... I think that's maybe why my projects are working well, because I make sure I know where they are coming from...

There is an analysis by this worker of the impact of the diasporic reality, in particular the Western industrialised economic context of Aotearoa New Zealand. She understands that these systems have brought about some change to Tongan families to the point that “people are not themselves anymore” as people “behave according to the environment”. The support group for Tongan older people was established as a means to counter an undervaluing of the contribution of older people, to counter isolation of older people and to enhance Tongan family structure. As such, the goal of this project was essentially about enhancing Tongan *kāinga* systems of welfare as represented in the *pola*. By working with the grandparents, increasing their understanding of the context, these older people were better able to exert influence over such behaviours as problem gambling. The intervention revealed *kāinga* centred practice in that the primary aim was to enhance and rebuild *kāinga* structures in the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

The valuing of older people is premised on the value of *faka'apa'apa* (respect). The worker also highlights the need to know her community and knowing who the families of the older people are, in order to *faka'apa'apa* people appropriately according to their status and *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships) as a value is reflected. This depicts the construction of professional boundaries and relationship characteristic of social work from a Tongan worldview perspective. The social worker also alludes to her use of processes of *fakafekau'aki* (making connections) and *a'u tonu* (going in person), particularly in the establishment of the group.

The worker's casino visit activity and the project of taking care of the gardens and homes are illustrative of the workers' success at *fakatoukatea* (multiple and diverse skills). The worker demonstrates skills and knowledge in terms of both Tongan culture and the non-Tongan context. Her interventions are concerned with bridging a gap between diverse worlds, facilitating new meanings for Tongans in the non-Tongan context of Aotearoa New Zealand - understanding the commercial and addictive characteristics of casinos, awareness of housing in an Aotearoa New Zealand context and, ultimately, Tongan conceptions of *kāinga* in a diasporic context.

The use of *hua* (humour) and *lotu* (prayer/religion/spirituality) as part of her work with the group, especially as part of celebrations, were noted aspects of the practice. The

skill of *lea fakatonga* is important here, considering the older Tongans are likely to be Tongan-born and may not be proficient in English.

There are some ways in which the practice of this worker reflects established community work practice, for instance, the manner in which the worker “located” herself (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2000) in relation to work with older people, noting that her passion derives from her own loss of grandparents at an early age. While the *pola* and *uku* metaphors are demonstrated in this story of practice, there is also a demonstration of the way in which Tongan social work coincides with practices from other cultural contexts.

### Conclusion

This chapter has elaborated on a number of themes arising from *pola* and *uku*, the metaphors of Tongan social work practice. The metaphors respectively represent a Tongan system of welfare and specific practice processes which draw on and enhance foundational values and skills for social and community work in a transnational context. The *kāinga* is the prime location of Tongan social work in several respects: the *kāinga* is always the client, and the individual cannot be seen as separate from *kāinga*; the social work role flows from roles that one assumes within the *kāinga* system; social workers are identified by clients foremost in terms of their *kāinga* ahead of their social work role; and the social worker’s *kāinga* is a resource for practice. From a *mo’ui fakatonga* perspective then, social work is regarded as something which is part of everyday life. This calls into question the professional status of social work. The definition and boundaries about what constitutes social work have historically been furiously contested (Thompson, 2000). As a socially constructed phenomenon, Tongan and other non-Western social work (see, for example: Bennett & Zubrzycki, 2003; Newport, 2001) redefine the boundaries of social work according to the values inherent within their corresponding worldviews. Tongan worldview constructs social work practice around relationships that are *kāinga* oriented rather than bounded professional roles.

The chapter also examined the tension between a directive approach on one hand and empowerment on the other. The practice of Tongan social work with recent immigrants

tends to involve a more directive approach, but this does not necessarily equate with disempowerment. Practice with and by New Zealand-born Tongans may require a less directive approach similar to strengths-based approaches (Greene, Lee, & Hoffpauir, 2005; Saleeby, 2002), where social work interactions engage clients to identify areas of resilience and exception. This requires a great deal of flexibility and creativity on the part of social workers to blend these two approaches to work effectively with a broad range of family members.

The need for advocacy is then raised as having particular salience in Tongan social work. Given the cultural dissonance between Tongan and mainstream cultures, Tongan social work must have an advocacy role for Tongan culture. Tongan practitioners may experience considerable isolation within mainstream social work settings and advocacy for themselves and Tongan practice approaches becomes a feature of Tongan social work practice. Finally, advocacy takes place for Tongan clients in terms of Tongan systems, for example advocacy for the needs of women and youth within Tongan *kāinga* and communities.

The social and community work stories which concluded this chapter provided examples of Tongan social work. While these are just snapshots of complex and real experiences, they do give a picture of the construction of social work from a Tongan worldview perspective. The next, and final, chapter of the thesis discusses the implications of Tongan frameworks for mainstream social work discourses.

## Chapter Nine

### Conclusions and Recommendations

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Learning from the wisdom and practices of those who are ‘differently civilised’ is becoming an essential necessity for our common survival. (Boulet, 2003, p.245)

Educators and practitioners must rethink their approaches not only to accommodate and promote the growing understanding of indigenous practices but also to valorize the theory and practice of indigenous people as significant sites of learning for western social welfare work. It is hard to overplay the value of these emerging discourses to the task of future knowledge production in social work. (Lynn, 2001, p.914)

In this final chapter, the aims and the main findings of the research are reviewed, and their implications are highlighted and explored. I offer some reflections on the research and conclude with recommendations for future research and development.

#### **Aims of the Research**

This thesis set out to explore Tongan social work practice. Understanding the socially constructed nature of social work (Payne, 1997, 2005), I explored Tongan cultural foundations of social work practice - that is, Tongan social workers’ Tongan values, knowledge, skills and processes. The key research questions were:

1. Given that social work is socially constructed, what are the Tongan philosophical and value bases that inform conceptions of personal, family and community well-being?
2. What are the distinctive Tongan ways of bringing about personal and social change?

3. What are the key components of a Tongan theoretical framework for social and community work practice?

The participants in this study were 28 Tongan social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand, who took part in in-depth individual interviews and focus group meetings about their practice. The study took a broad and inclusive definition of social work and included participants who worked in the human services but were broadly defined by Tongan communities as ‘social workers’. A qualitative and, in the main, inductive approach was adopted to engage in conversations with the participants about their practice. The study drew on social constructionist, critical and Tongan methodological approaches in the design, data collection and analysis of the research (see Chapter Three).

In the absence of substantive academic material on Tongan social work practice (see Chapter Two), this study explored Tongan practice as an ethnic-centred approach, similar to writers exploring African-centric, Asian-centric or indigenous Indian social work (Chan & Palley, 2005; Daniels, 2001; Graham, 1999, 2002; Nimmagadda & Cowger, 1999; Stewart, 2004). The topic resonates with other *Pasifiki* social work studies, including those about *fa’asamoa* (Autagavaia, 2001; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Bennett & Zubrzycki, 2003; Lynn, 2001; Lynn et al., 1998; Lynn et al., 1997) practice, and adds to the growing literature about the wellbeing and social service practice of *Pasifiki* peoples. It was intended that this study contribute to the development of cultural or ethnic-centred approaches by identifying and proposing a Tongan framework for social work practice with Tongans and Tongan communities, particularly in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### **Summary of Key Findings:**

#### **A Tongan Worldview Framework for Social Work**

The participants’ narratives reveal Tongan concepts which are foundational for social work and demonstrate the ways in which these give form to practice. Chapter Six outlined and examined core values of Tongan social work – *fetokoni’aki* (mutual helpfulness), *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships), *faka’apa’apa* (respect) and *’ofa* (love) - and reference was also made to a number of other concepts, principles or processes which illustrated the core values.

*Fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness) is an aspect of Tongan social life which has meaning for social work. In a Tongan village setting, mutuality and reciprocity is certainly necessary for survival and prosperity, particularly when production is more subsistence in nature. *Fetokoni'aki* is also, however, practiced amongst diasporic Tongans. Notions of *fetokoni'aki*, for instance, are central to community development initiatives such as community gardens and interest free loans between churches. The concept of *fie'aonga* (usefulness) highlights the value of action which benefits and helps the wider family and community. In this way, Tongan social work might be assessed according to its ability to be helpful and useful to Tongan *kāinga* and the broader community.

*Tauhi vā* (looking after relationships) is a Tongan value which emphasises the nurturing of the social spaces between people – the relationship (Ka'ili, 2005). In social work, the concept of *fakafekau'aki* (connecting) ensures that relationships are revealed and acknowledged in a manner that facilitates the social work process. So connections might be revealed around family links, shared faith, knowledge of people and places. Family-like relationships, or *matakāinga*, are established in client-social worker interactions. This implies that a social worker should behave as if they are family with those that they encounter within social work. *A'u tonu* (going in person) refers to the process of engaging in-person contact, as opposed to a reliance on written forms of communication within Tongan social work.

The value and practices of *faka'apa'apa* (respect) acknowledge the 'eiki (above/superior) and *tu'a* (below/inferior) status of others in relation to oneself and portray another core value of Tongan social work. Inherent in this value is an acceptance of inequality on an individual basis. Status in Tongan *kāinga* and community is contingent on the specific situation and context, it is the relational (how one relates to the people present), in addition to the material, which positions one as above or below others. Equality or inequality in a Tongan sense is more than material. It is true that the material (for example, *kai*, cash or *koloa*) often follows but it is the relationship between parties which is essential. *Faka'apa'apa* as a practice value also has implications for such matters as formality of dress and the types of language employed within social work practice. Status is dynamic in the sense that *fakatōkilalo* (humility) as a concept for social work guides the social worker to assume a lower status whereby they are then, in a round about way, afforded status.

'*Ofa* (love) is a core value that has a moderating impact. When '*ofa* is present and genuinely acted on, the potential for oppressive relationships to arise as a result of *faka'apa'apa* is whittled away, allowing multiple interests and needs, those of '*eiki* and *tu'a*, to be met. '*Ofa* too is at the heart of *fetokoni'aki* as a concept of practice and policy. From a Tongan worldview perspective, by helping others, one's own needs (physically, economically, psychologically, spiritually and so on) are ultimately taken care of. '*Ofa*, once again, must be central in processes of *fetokoni'aki* if the act of giving assistance or help is to occur with integrity and not merely in self-interest. The associated value of '*osikiavelenga* (doing utmost) refers to a high level of commitment to be of service and to go beyond the call of duty. Finally, *lotu* (spirituality/religion/prayer) is a foundational value and process for practice, most commonly given expression through Christianity within the contemporary context.

The four core values of *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness), *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships), *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and '*ofa* (love) are the basis of Tongan social life. These values and the associated concepts reviewed above, are largely maintained within the Tongan diaspora. It is these values which give meaning, purpose and hope within Tongan peoples' lives, impacting on decisions to move to Aotearoa New Zealand, the sending of remittances back to Tonga, the role of education, church and so on. What is key within this study is that these values become a basis for a Tongan framework for social and community work practice. Social work is not separated out as a particular professional role, but is integrated as a way of life amongst *kāinga* and community. At the same time, where social workers do operate in particular professional work roles, these values retain significance in two respects. Firstly, a primary goal or purpose of Tongan social work is to enhance these Tongan values within the Tongan diaspora so that *kāinga* and communities experience sustained wellbeing and are self-sufficient, albeit in an interdependent fashion. If cultural maintenance can be achieved then these values allow for the wellbeing of *kāinga* and communities to flourish economically, socially and culturally. Secondly, for social workers these core values provide a basis for practice. That is, they contribute to the construction of (a) the working relationship between social workers and their clients, and (b) assessment and intervention in social work practice.



Skills of Tongan social work were explored in Chapter Seven. *Fakatoukatea* (skills in opposite directions) is a central theme in the discussion of such skills, particularly given the Tongan diasporic reality. That is, social workers are a bridge between the predominantly *pālangi* context and diasporic Tongan *kāinga* and communities. Hence social workers must be equipped with skills appropriate to both *pālangi* and Tongan contexts. *Fakatoukatea* also reflects the expectation that social workers be knowledgeable and skilled in a broad range of fields of practice (including, for example, immigration, housing, income support or health). This is important, as relationship connections are emphasised over the agency role, which means that a practitioner cannot as easily identify a task or concern as being ‘outside of my role’. In addition, *fakatoukatea* aptly reflects the diverse skills that Tongan social workers exhibit when they assume family-like roles (*matakāinga*) in their relationships with clients.

The most prominent and distinctive skill for Tongan social work is that of *lea fakatonga* (Tongan language). The ability to practise social work within the medium of *lea fakatonga* is paramount for work with those whose systems of meaning are constructed within the Tongan language. There are nuances and expressions, such as the use of emotional prefixes, inherent within *lea fakatonga* that are lost or at best compromised when interaction is limited to the English language. Even for the growing numbers of New Zealand-born Tongans, the use of *lea fakatonga* in aspects of practice promotes equity and justice from the point of view that *lea fakatonga* is enhanced and made available rather than silenced. By implication, interpreting and translation is a part of the constellation of skills for Tongan social work. This might mean undertaking the interpreting oneself or selecting and using an interpreter, but in any case, ensuring that that deep translation of language and culture from English/*pālangi* into Tongan and vice versa can occur is important for effective practice. The largely non-verbal skill of *feongo'i'aki* (intuitive use of feelings) was examined, accentuating intuitive knowing in Tongan social work. Lastly, *hua* (humour) was shown as a skill for building rapport with clients and for social workers' self-care.

The values, skills, knowledge and processes of Tongan social work fuse to produce a particular construction of social work (Chapter Eight). Social work then, is legitimately located in the everyday realm, and in particular within *kāinga*. The *kāinga* is a force for change and individuals cannot be understood or worked with in isolation from it.

Furthermore, social workers largely perceived their social work role as developing from their particular role and status within their *kāinga* which was a resource and support for practice, including cultural supervision. Further, Tongan clients typically identify Tongan social workers not according to their agency or professional role, but in terms of the social workers' *kāinga*.

An aspect of the construction of Tongan social work practice is that professional status is redefined along Tongan lines. That is, by drawing on Tongan values, knowledge and skills for practice, their practice is qualitatively different to *pālangi* professional practice. So the concept of *fakatōkilalo*, for instance, means assuming a lower status role and being like family (*matakāinga*). Tongan practice then hinges on relationships, and boundaries between the professional and the personal are necessarily shifting.

A Tongan social work framework requires that a social worker is discerning regarding their employment of directive and empowerment approaches in practice. Finally, advocacy is a critical component of Tongan social work in terms of Tongan interaction with the *pālangi* context, but also with Tongan systems (for example, for young people within their families).

### **Metaphors as an Interpretive Framework: *Pola* and *Uku***

The participants' conceptualisations of their social work practice – the Tongan values, skills, knowledge and processes – have been brought together with the use of metaphors as an interpretive framework (refer to Figure 5.1 and the enclosed CD). Drawing on the Tongan concept of *heliaki*, the interactive metaphors show a picture and tell a story about *mo'ui fakatonga* social work. I drew on fishing methods that my father had shared with me from his experiences growing up in Tonga. *Pola*, as a practice of community fishing, represents a system of values constituting a philosophy for human interaction and the basis of a Tongan system of welfare; it demonstrates the values of *fetokoni'aki* (mutual assistance), *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships), *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *'ofa* (love).

The *uku* metaphor draws on the practice of fishing or diving around *pupu'a puhi* (blowholes) where there are surface eruptions through the reef, and symbolises specialised practice processes. Skilled fishers are able to approach and negotiate these

terrains to catch the fish hidden under the reef. So too do social workers employ particular skills, values and knowledge to facilitate healing for *kāinga* and communities when social eruptions signal danger for those involved. The *uku* metaphor is used to depict clusters of specialised practice processes and skills. Starting well below the surface, direct practice is ironically indirect in nature. The indirect approach, similar to launching a boat on the other side of the island, draws on values, processes and skills which are part of an integrated whole. The *uku* metaphor is used to incorporate three clusters of concepts. *Fakafekau'aki*, the first cluster, is about making connections via *a'u tonu* (going in person), *lotu* (prayer/spirituality/religion), and *fakatōkilalo* (humility). The presenting problem is not necessarily central to the initial contact as it is important for relationships to be acknowledged and established appropriately. *Tālanga* (friendly/formal discussion) refers to a second cluster of processes and skills which define Tongan social work practice: *lea fakatonga* (Tongan language), *feongo'i'aki* (feelings/intuition) and *hua* (humour). The final cluster of concepts represented in the *uku* metaphor centre on action and fulfilling obligations, and is referred to as *faifatongia*. The concepts of *fakatoukatea* (skilful in opposite ways) and *'osikiavelenga* (doing utmost) signify the change action which is part of Tongan social work practice.

The *pola* and *uku* metaphors interact with each other. That is, specialised Tongan practices represented by *uku*, draw on the values represented within the *pola*. Furthermore, the outcome of *uku* practice processes is the enhancement and strengthening of values for a Tongan system of welfare, the *pola* metaphor. The practice processes of *fakafekau'aki* (connecting), *tālanga* (friendly/formal discussion) and *faifatongia* (fulfilling obligations) culminate in the desired arrangement of *fetokoni'aki* (mutual assistance) on a collective basis, *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships), *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *'ofa* (love). That is, *uku* practice processes work to strengthen *pola* social values amongst *kāinga* Tonga, while *pola* serves as a broad value base for *uku* practices.

Tongan social work occurs in a context of multiple factors which impinge upon its construction. The *pola* and *uku* metaphors for Tongan social work sit within the context of *fonua* (land/people). *Kāinga* is the realm in which Tongan social work is sourced, resourced and gains meaning and effect (Chapter Five and Chapter Eight). Tongan

social work, while delineating aspects of *mo'ui fakatonga*, is also influenced by the diasporic context (Chapter Four). That is, Tongan social work is about simultaneously seeking to maintain and reproduce Tongan culture while also seeking to change or transform some aspects of it. Tongan social work exists in a context where Western and other cultures offer both challenges and opportunities for the construction of *mo'ui fakatonga*. Here social work acts as a filter in processes of cultural reproduction and transformation.

### **Implications of Findings: Merging Waves of Knowledge**

This section draws attention to the implications of the findings of this study. The first four implications relate to the context of practice – the creation of new discourses, negotiation, cultural differences and commonalities and values. A further implication is that the application of social work must fundamentally change – consideration is given to competencies and standards, supervision, cross-cultural practice, social work education and community development.

#### **Making Meaning and Creating 'New' Discourses**

The findings in this study clearly demonstrate that Tongan social workers, in their incorporation of Tongan worldview and practice frameworks, are creating new discourses for social work. The findings challenge the description of diasporic Tongans as marginalised, oppressed and subjugated. The development and practice of Tongan ways of doing social work in the diaspora show that Tongans cannot be defined by material realities, poor health or minority status alone. Rather, Tongans are actively and consciously constructing meaning from within a Tongan worldview and in so doing they resist and transform their contexts and the social work profession (Healy, 2005). The location of social work within *kāinga* is an example of the transformation of professional social work.

The findings show that an indigenous Tongan worldview provides a basis for meaning and contributes to a relevant framework for social work practice in contemporary social work. This assertion resonates with the conclusions of others (see Absolon & Willett, 2004; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Helu Thaman, 2003; Huffer & Qalo, 2004; Pawar, 2003; Royal, 2002) that indigenous worldviews have more than cursory

relevance for the wellbeing and development of ethnic groups within neo-colonialism and globalisation. There are heated debates, both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally, regarding the politics of ethnicity, race and culture. Rata (2004a; 2004b), for instance, rebukes what she defines as culturalism, neotribalism and neotraditionalism, for their romanticised overemphasis on culture and tradition; she sees these as problematic because of their “stranglehold as the orthodoxy” of academia (Rata, 2004b, p.8). Rata critiques *kaupapa* Māori education, disputing the existence of a distinctive Māori ethnicity and suggests that *kaupapa* Māori creates a division, pitting Māori against non-Māori. She argues that the notion of the existence of ethnic ‘ways of knowing’ is cultural idealism. While her discussion mainly refers to *kaupapa* Māori in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, the argument of this thesis is also implicated.

In contrast, the work of Pawar (2003) clearly establishes that aspects of ‘traditional’ community hold potential when incorporated in the postmodern context. Pawar and Cox (2004) assert that there are care and welfare continua. There is the continuum of the degree of formality, the continuum from traditional to modern communities, and the third continuum (which combines the first two) is one wherein informal care and welfare systems change over time as they adapt to new conditions. The interacting *pola* and *uku* social work metaphors stemming from ‘informal’ Tongan systems, exemplify the integration of these continua within the context of the contemporary Tongan diaspora. Tongan social work demonstrates the balancing and coexistence of Tongan traditional care and welfare systems and more formalised systems of the welfare state. Similarly, Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001) demonstrate in their Solomon Islands research that indigenous epistemologies are used to produce situated knowledge that addresses local problems, where Anglo-European based knowledge had previously failed as a basis for development. Clearly, the findings of this study show the salience of indigenous systems for the wellbeing and development of Tongan communities in the context of globalisation, and give support to the position that a Tongan worldview, similar to *kaupapa* Māori or other Pacific epistemologies, provides a relevant pathway for development today.

This study of Tongan social work therefore demonstrates that Tongans are not passive victims of globalisation – they are not being unwittingly amalgamated into a homogenous global culture. Tongan culture is being reproduced and transformed within

the Tongan diaspora, ensuring the survival of *mo'ui fakatonga* against and within the currents of globalisation and the creation of new discourses for social work.

### **Negotiation**

Discourses of Tongan social work are then negotiated amongst other discourses operating within mainstream Western social work, and in so doing spaces of possibility are created (Lynn, 2001). Social work scholars (see Davies & Leonard, 2004; Healy, 2005; Ife, 1997; Lovelock et al., 2004; Parton & O'Byrne, 2000) have identified competing discourses within social work. Ife (1997), for instance, identifies managerial, market, professional and community discourses; while Healy (2005) discusses biomedical, neo-liberal, legal and alternative discourses. While a Tongan worldview aligns with aspects of community and alternative discourses, Tongan frameworks for practice also add a new dimension for negotiation. It is this negotiation that creates what Lynn (2001) refers to as the liminal or in-between space which enables indigenous and mainstream social work to “engage in some form of action which may have been impossible in isolation” (p.914). To illustrate this, the neo-liberal discourse in social work, the potency of which has been intensified with globalisation (Dominelli, 2004b), presents a crisis for social work. Powell (2001), for example, states that:

The welfare state, and the humanistic values that support it, are under powerful ideological attack. The institutions of the welfare state are being redesigned in the image of the market. A new managerialism has brought the rationality of corporate capitalism to bear on social services. It has created unbearable strains for social workers as their professionalism is reshaped in the form of hierarchical practice. The ‘contract culture’ is also percolating out to the voluntary sector, as a reinvented public sphere transforms every aspect of human life in the language of the market. (p.24)

In many ways, a *mo'ui fakatonga* social work framework, entrenched in values such as *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness), epitomises the kind of mutual interdependence that Leonard (1997) argues is the foundation of the reconstruction of welfare and “a precondition for any effective ideological counter-move to the dominant, narcissistic individualism of the culture of late capitalism” (p.165). The participants’ narratives show how Tongan social work frameworks offer a viable alternative mechanism for establishing mutual interdependence and community which resist the ultra individualism of postmodernity (Bauman, 2001a, 2001b).

The findings elaborate Tongan knowledge for social work which, when negotiated in practice, reflect the ambiguity, uncertainty and contingency (Applegate, 2000; Parton, 2000) characteristic of the postmodern context. It is important that these competing discourses are not explained away or ignored. As Parton (2000) states:

I would argue that notions of ambiguity, indeterminacy and uncertainty are at the core of social work and should be built upon and not defined out and thereby open up the potential for creativity and novel ways of thinking and acting. (p.460)

In a similar way, Tongan social work is about maintaining and drawing from a Tongan worldview perspective, yet it is also about having a critical approach to certain expressions of Tongan values in a diasporic context. Further, Tongan social work negotiates and displaces, while also embracing opportunities presented by, mainstream and Western contexts. Thus a central element of Tongan social work is a negotiation of contradictions and ambiguities.

To give an example, in Tongan practice, hierarchical relationships based on *faka'apa'apa* (respect) complicate the binary construction of social worker/client roles and impose further layers of expectation on 'social workers' and 'clients'. The Tongan practitioner negotiates the value of *faka'apa'apa*, amidst neo-liberal, legal, managerial and professional discourses which operate within the social work encounter. It is this very negotiation (*fakatoukatea*) which strengthens the ability of Tongan social work to bring benefits for diasporic Tongans. The findings in this study show that a Tongan worldview offers alternatives for social work, but in practice in the diaspora, there is an ongoing process of negotiation amongst discourses, which reveal spaces of possibility.

### **Layers of Difference and Commonality**

This research set out to understand the social construction of Tongan social work, as a culturally specific approach, and yet paradoxically the findings reveal multiple layers of negotiated difference and commonality. That is, exploring the distinctive characteristics of Tongan frameworks also revealed the shared characteristics amongst cultures and various approaches to practice.

At the first layer, the ethnic specific layer, there is a distinctive Tongan worldview, yet there is considerable cultural diversity amongst Tongans (Chapter Four) which Tongan

social workers negotiate as part of their practice. The findings on Tongan social work show another layer of connections, commonalities and distinctions, in that there are strong correlations with other Pacific, indigenous and non-Western approaches. The commonality arises firstly out of similar ways in which indigenous peoples' relationship to the environment is central to their worldviews (Durie, 2005; Mahina, 1992; Royal, 2002) and the communal or collective philosophies held in common. Family identification between clients and practitioners, for example, is important within Tongan social work, but also within Samoan (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practice (Lynn et al., 1998). Points of commonality amongst indigenous and non-Western approaches are also partly a response to colonialism and globalisation which have similarly positioned indigenous and non-Western groups. For example, the need to bridge cultural gaps between Tongans and a non-Tongan context in the diaspora makes interpreting a significant feature of Tongan social work, which is similar to issues faced by many marginalised cultural groups in other contexts. Colonialism may also have had an homogenising effect (Macpherson, 2001) as *Pasifiki* worldviews, for example, were impacted by the introduction of colonial languages such as English or French and a common Christian religion. In the contemporary context, these two factors of language and religion become a point of connection and commonality amongst *Pasifiki* groups.

Their similar positioning within globalisation, and the politics of culture, provide sites for alliances to be formed amongst indigenous groups. Nonetheless, these alliances are negotiated and not assumed. Take for example, policy, research and programme development which has a pan-Pacific focus. While a pan-Pacific focus is reasonable from the point of view of numbers and logistics, the findings presented in this thesis show that despite shared characteristics amongst Pacific groups, a 'Tongan' framework is not the same as a 'Samoan' or a 'Cook Islands' framework for practice, particularly in terms of language and the meaning that it has for those within particular ethnic groups. For instance, a Pacific focused *fono* (meeting) may proceed according to the protocols of the organisers' culture, to the exclusion of others. It is important that there is negotiation, consideration and opportunities for ethnic specific developments, as a strong basis from which to explore and make connections at the broader pan-Pacific level.



A final layer of connection and difference evident within these findings on Tongan social work is the humanity level. There are some aspects of a Tongan specific social work approach which are recognisably universal. An emphasis on spirituality in social work, for example, is gaining in importance in much Western social work (see, Canda & Furman, 1999; Lindsay, 2002; Nash & Stewart, 2002). While there is considerable diversity amongst cultures and groups, there is a level at which we share a common humanity which holds potential as the basis for developing mutually beneficial interaction. Ife (1999) makes the point that:

...it is necessary to hold both a universalist position based on a reconstruction of humanism, and a relativist position which values (indeed celebrates) difference and which allows for diversity in the way in which human aspirations are expressed and realised. (p.219)

As Tongan social workers plough through the demands of working from a Tongan worldview perspective amidst a diasporic reality, they are in effect negotiating the incorporation of universalist and relativist positions. Taylor (1999) suggests that there are fundamental values of helping others, preventing harm, social justice and empowerment that are internationally transferable (at the universal or humanity level) but that “the social, cultural, economic and political conditions of individual countries define how these primary values are to be achieved” (p.311). She goes on to advocate for a “collective morality” based on “social consciousness and collective responsibility” (Taylor, 1999, p.312). This study has demonstrated how Tongan social work negotiates culture across multiple ethnic specific, indigenous and humanity levels, thereby negotiating cultural universals and cultural specifics (Allan, 2003a).

The negotiation of cultural universals and specifics has been noted as an important consideration for indigenous and Pacific practice. Ewalt and Mokuau (1995) argue that the notion of self-determination in social work from a Pacific perspective needs reinterpretation to include a collective orientation since individuals are defined by social relationships within Pacific worldviews. Within social work, self-determination for the client “may include fulfilling group obligations, not necessarily ridding oneself of them” (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995, p. 173). To add to the complexity, given the transnational nature of Tongan communities, a clear demarcation between collectivist and individualist qualities cannot be assumed. As Tongan *kāinga* blend and weave together Tongan and *pālangi* values and as they re-create *mo’ui fakatonga* in the process, I

would suggest that both collectivist and individualist tendencies would be variously evident depending on the specific time, event or social context. As such, Tongan wellbeing may be understood as the successful grafting and expression of a Tongan worldview within a *pālangi* context in a way that essentially maintains a form of *mo'ui fakatonga*.

The position of this thesis therefore, is that there are cultural differences, for example between Tongan and *pālangi*, worth upholding; and further, that cultural boundaries are not inherently oppressive. Marotta (2000) states that “as a consequence of perceiving the social world... as contingent and fluid, there has been an increasing intolerance of social and cultural boundaries” (p.187). The research findings, however, indicate that although there is some fluidity and changeability, and benefits to be gained from sharing across cultures, there is also value in cultural distinctiveness and difference. Freire (1972) asserts that the aim should be to achieve cultural synthesis, based on dialogical relationships. The embracing of cultural boundaries and cultural negotiation in this study give support to the development of ethnic specific services which have been promoted elsewhere in the literature (for example: Afeaki, 2004; Koloto & Sharma, 2005). This is especially important given that mainstream services are often not able to provide for the culturally specific needs of clients from diverse backgrounds (Nash & Trlin, 2004). The challenge is to appreciate the value and inter-relationship of our differences and our commonalities at the various ethnic specific, indigenous and humanity layers of negotiation.

### **Values: The Moral-Artistic Nature of Social Work**

The findings of this study also illustrate the central role of values, affirming the moral-artistic nature of social work. There is some suggestion within the wider social work literature that values deserve more attention. Dean (1993) demonstrates that “constructivist philosophy refocuses our attention on the centrality of values and teaches that we cannot fully get outside of our beliefs and value systems” (p.143). Likewise, Weick and Saleebey (1998) argue that a postmodern approach has reawakened insights about professional practice, in particular that the value base of social work comes to the fore in strengths-based practice:

The vested knowledge of the practitioners, with its attendant premises of objectivity, rational problem-solving and the elimination of value considerations, all slide from view. Instead... the values of human potential, engagement of optimistic beliefs, and energetic, involved collaboration in service of human transformation [are visible]. Without values, our efforts to understand and help are distorted. (p.37)

It has been suggested elsewhere, that rather than knowledge or methods, it is the values and the out-flowing purposes of social work, which define social work (Risler, Lowe, & Nackerud, 2003) and Dybicz (2004) has shown that “the application of social work values, over that of efficacy of interventions, is what lies at the heart of practice wisdom” (p.197). Nevertheless, the findings of this study suggest that cultural values are under-recognised within social work theory and knowledge. Tongan social work is defined primarily by its value base.

Coinciding with an added emphasis on values, social work relationships are also brought to the fore in Tongan social work (Chapter Eight). Early social work literature on relationships in social work practice tended to be offered from a psychodynamic perspective where particular attention was paid to avoidance of undue emotional involvement (Ferard & Hunnybun, 1962; Goldberg, 1963; Perlman, 1979; Salzberger-Wittenberg, 1970). More recently, Coady (1993) has shown how the historical emphasis on the worker-client relationship in social work has given way to a focus on theory and technique. Significantly, he advocates a renewed emphasis on worker-client relationships to enhance “the likelihood of achieving advocacy and empowerment goals in individual, family, group and community work” (Coady, 1993, p.295). The findings in this study affirm the sentiment of social constructionist and strengths-based writers that values and relationships are central to any theory for practice. For example, the notion of *matakāinga* (behaving like family) concentrates attention on the worker-client relationship.

The core values of social work, as identified in the International Federation of Social Workers’ definition of social work, centre on human rights and social justice (International Federation of Social Workers). The commentary to the definition states:

Social work grew out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, and its values are based on respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all people. Since its beginnings over a century ago, social work practice has focused on meeting human needs and developing human potential. Human rights and social justice serve as the motivation and justification for social work action. In solidarity with those who are disadvantaged, the

profession strives to alleviate poverty and to liberate vulnerable and oppressed people in order to promote social inclusion. (International Federation of Social Workers)

There are, of course, country specific core values of social work. For example: in the USA the National Association of Social Workers identifies the values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity and competence as core values (Mattaini, Lowery, & Meyer, 2002); whereas the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers' (ANZASW) bicultural code of ethics focuses on the principles of independence, liberation through solidarity, non-discrimination, democracy and human rights, protection of clients' integrity, clients' participation, self-determination, dismissal of brutality and the principle of personal responsibility (New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 1993).

What about the compatibility of contradictory values stemming from diverse cultural worldview paradigms? In response to the challenges of plurality, Hugman (2003) argues for the use of discursive codes of ethics with emphasis on principles and values rather than tight prescription. He further advocates an embracing of diversity, encouraging social workers to be "morally active" and to recognise context, and advances core values as continua rather than dichotomies. He states that:

In the face of diverse meaning and the plural understanding of the social world, social workers must make choices and must be able to defend those choices not only in terms of knowledge and skills, but also in relation to *values*. (Hugman, 2003, p.1034)

The addition of a Tongan discourse, and the negotiation of cultural universals and specifics at various layers, underlines the role of values in social work. Social work cannot be perceived of narrowly as a technical, rational activity (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita, 1998). A Tongan framework for practice affirms the strength of social work as an artistic and morally embedded activity.

### **Diversity Changing Social Work... "Turning Up the Volume" of the Tongan Voice**

This study lays the foundation for the assertion that indigenous and non-Western discourse must be "heard" within social work. Writing in the 1980s, Dominelli highlighted that social work education, institutions, practices, systems and structures, were in fact systematically suppressing 'black' peoples and knowledges. The discourses have largely moved on to speak of anti-oppression, to incorporate the

multiplicity of oppressions operating within society; at the same time, social constructionism has provided an alternative lens and rationale for social science inquiry (Burr, 2003) and social work has followed suit. Social constructionism has usefully established an understanding of the existence of more than one story or truth and that social work is socially constructed and largely influenced by Western discourses. But of itself, social constructionism has not been strong enough as a philosophical and value base to bring change to social work itself. Critical and indigenous perspectives, however, with their concomitant value explicit stance and indigenous philosophies, have broken through the boundaries towards a more inclusive social work. Despite all the well articulated and powerfully positioned texts within social work which espouse anti-oppression, inclusion and so on, in my reading of the situation (from down under, here in the Pacific) privilege is still largely afforded and enjoyed by a Western and white majority within the social work profession. The challenge remains that the voices from below - those who might not be able to articulate well in the places of high esteem (the international conferences or the internationally acclaimed text books) - may have the most useful things to say on the matter. If only we could 'hear', we might be better able to act to change social work.

A Tongan construction of social work evidences the increasing diversity with which social work is being practiced. The challenge this brings for social work is noted by Graham (1999):

The challenge facing social work... centres upon whether the principles and humanitarian values of social work can be translated by the profession into embracing equally valid worldviews that share diverse human realities and experiences as the basis for social work practice on equal terms. (p.256)

The findings of this study signal the necessity for social work systems, organisations and institutions to not only recognise, but respond to and be reshaped by culturally diverse approaches to practice. In an Aotearoa New Zealand context, the volume of the Tongan voice needs to be turned up within social work and human services. Hannerz (1996) presents seven arguments for cultural diversity. First, is the argument of cultural diversity for its own sake. Second, that people have a right to their own culture. Third, that cultural diversity is a human adaptation to limited environmental resources. Fourth, that difference is a form of resistance. Fifth, that diversity has an aesthetic value. Sixth, that cultural diversity brings about creative intellect. And finally, that cultural diversity

provides a range of tested knowledge and solutions from which to draw. In these terms, Tongan cultural distinctiveness is not only good for Tongan wellbeing in terms of rights or resistance but is of benefit to the *pālangi* majority as it contributes to creative intellect and provides alternative knowledge and solutions. The increasing diversity that is changing social work will impact on the development of competency and practice standards, conceptions of cross-cultural practice, supervision and social work education. Each of these four topic areas is elaborated below.

### ***Competencies and Standards for Practice***

The research findings have implications for the development and monitoring of social work practice competencies and standards in Aotearoa New Zealand. The ANZASW practice standards state that competent practitioners will have knowledge of theories, methods and processes appropriate for working with Pacific islands peoples. The Social Work Registration Act 2003 in Section 6(c)(ii) and Section 13(b)(iv) states that the Social Work Registration Board may register someone as a social worker if, among, other things, it is satisfied that the applicant is “competent to practice social work with different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand” (Social Workers' Registration Board, 2004, p.3). These research findings offer details of what ‘appropriate’ and/or ‘competent’ mean in relation to work with Tongan clients; that is, the processes, skills, knowledge and principles which are represented by the *pola* and *uku* metaphors.

However, the increasing diversity of practice precludes the possibility of specifying appropriate practice from every relevant culture within national, let alone international, contexts. The challenge for educational institutions, agencies, professional associations and regulatory bodies alike will be to recognise the limits of their ability to assess, monitor and develop competency to work with Tongans and other cultural groups; not only because of the degree of diversity but also because appropriate Tongan practice is not easily evidenced and does not lend itself to measurement. The extent to which this is achieved will no doubt be an ongoing point of contention, but failure to adequately account for diverse practice will only perpetuate subjugation of ‘other’ knowledge and reinforce marginalisation within social work. The various layers of negotiation of cultural differences and similarities discussed above means that simply referring to the importance of ‘cultural values’ is of limited usefulness. In reality, all values are in part

cultural. The increasing diversity within social work calls for a more finely detailed articulation of cultural values as part of competencies and standards for practice.

As the research findings suggest, social work must strive to be inclusive not only on the surface but at the core paradigm level of theory and practice (Graham, 1999, 2002). Unless cultural diversity is incorporated at the paradigm level, there will be conflict around the practice of Tongan and probably other indigenous, immigrant and *Pasifiki* social workers. For example, a Tongan social worker practicing in a statutory agency may see their relationships with clients as ongoing, based on the principles of *matakāinga* (behaving like family), *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness) and *tauhi vā* (looking after relationships), which are indicative of competency from a Tongan worldview paradigm. This presents a challenge to a statutory child welfare agency, for example, which may be under pressure to deal with notifications in a timely manner, to reduce unallocated cases and to close cases so as to discourage dependency and promote permanency. It is a challenge that underlines the importance of supervision for Tongan and other *Pasifiki* social workers.

### ***Supervision***

The participants in this study reported a range of ways in which their supervision needs were addressed – including ‘supervision’ from their *kāinga* and communities and formal cultural supervision (Su'a-Hawkins & Mafile'o, 2004). The research findings show that supportive and congruent supervision relationships and agency contexts support Tongan social workers to practice from a Tongan worldview framework. In this respect, Autagavaia's (2000) Pacific Island supervision model is helpful. She identifies three interacting domains of Pacific Island supervision: the personal, the cultural and the professional. It is within the personal and the cultural, she argues, that the professional can be strengthened and enhanced, with trust, humility and dialogue pinpointed as key relationship aspects of supervision for Pacific supervisees. Supportive supervision is pertinent, for instance, when Tongan social workers need to take time to make connections and build relationships based on respect and humility. Certain actions may seem unnecessary within mainstream practice, but from a Tongan perspective such actions are nonetheless appropriate. An example here would be the decision to make home visits as opposed to communicating information via the telephone, or the practical and material assistance that might be given to a client, beyond the scope of an agency's

work or responsibilities (*'osikiavalenga*). Another reason why supportive and informed supervision is paramount is that social workers need to manage multiple roles (*matakāinga*). A young Tongan social worker, for instance, may be required to challenge older parents or grandparents around parenting and family issues. The social worker, however, apart from having an agency social work role, has certain Tongan meanings associated with their connections to clients (*fakafekau'aki*), adding dynamics with which the social worker must contend. Effective supervision enhances professional practice with an embracing of the dynamics, strengths and resources, presented by the personal and cultural domains (including status, age, identity, family, religion). Supervision alliances and processes have a critical change capacity in that social work systems and institutions can be challenged and reshaped to embrace benefits from an inclusion of Tongan approaches to practice.

### ***Cross-Cultural Practice***

Reference to cross-cultural practice in social work and the wider helping professions literature is nearly always about the practice of *pālangi* or 'white' practitioners with ethnic minority clients. My study, on the other hand, informs us about cross-cultural practice by focusing on the perspective of Tongan practitioners as they engage not only with their own communities but also with non-Tongan client groups. Chapter Seven highlighted that there is little attention in the literature on translation from a minority language and culture back into the majority one. In the Tongan diaspora, Tongans live a cross-cultural existence, where they are continually negotiating the reproduction and transformation of culture (Chapter Four). Cross-cultural social work occurs tacitly because their day-to-day living constantly requires them to function cross-culturally - something which is easily taken for granted by themselves and by others. Yet Tongan social workers are likely to have heightened cross-cultural skills in comparison to social workers from the majority culture.

The research findings raise the question about the extent to which non-Tongan social workers can practice from a Tongan practice framework. In a sense, however, this is not the key question. The more important question is how the practice of those working from a different cultural worldview, is challenged, shaped and interfaces with the concepts, values and principles of Tongan social work. There are limits to cross-cultural practice learning and development based on ethnic sensitivity, cultural



competence or anti-racism which start from the positioning of Tongans as ‘other’. A richer place to begin is to examine Tongan social workers’ practice with Tongans, which is what this study has provided. This highlights the strength of ethnic-centred research and practice for social work across the board. This study informs cross-cultural practice from a place of strength, where Tongans are central rather than peripheral to the discourse.

### ***Social Work Education***

The diversification of populations and social work practices has implications for social work education; namely, the need to assist students from diverse cultural backgrounds to develop their abilities to practice appropriately with their particular cultural group. Preparing students to work with culturally diverse groups is a challenge in that it is obviously impossible to have in-depth knowledge on every cultural group (Dean, 2001). Nonetheless, it is inadequate for social work education curricula to be built on the assumption that students are from the dominant culture and to teach cross-cultural competency from *pālangi* perspectives alone. Along these lines, Mastronardi (2004) argues that the social work education in the postcolonial era demands:

...a focus on the deconstruction of white privilege and our ability to listen to and to support aboriginal voices in the reconstruction of their cultural identity and self-determination. (p.140)

Social work education faces the challenge of integrating ethnic specific theory and practice into its content and allowing this to influence pedagogy accordingly. That is, *Pasifiki* knowledge should ideally be taught in *Pasifiki* ways. Ife’s (1997) recommendation that social work education incorporate knowledge from multiple locations, including the use of theatre, poetry, art and music is useful in this regard. Cultural and indigenous models of practice have been raised as an issue for social work education in Aotearoa New Zealand’s history elsewhere (Nash & Munford, 2001). While this issue may currently stand unresolved, the findings of this research suggest that embedded within the diversity of practice arising from an increased recognition of ethnic specific approaches are alternative ideas about social work that can influence practice but also how social workers are trained and educated. Mastronardi (2004) advocates a repositioning of pedagogy “on the borders or the meeting place” (p.141) between indigenous and white cultures so that cultural conflicts become a source of

learning for a more emancipatory pedagogy. In terms of Tongan frameworks, Tongan students would ideally be given opportunities to develop their critical analysis and to integrate and develop their ability to work from a Tongan framework. This would best be done with a range of experiences outside of the educational institution connected with their *kāinga* and community and the use of creative and spiritual processes to enable holistic integration.

### ***Transnational Community Development***

The emphasis in the findings on *kāinga* and community within Tongan social work, resonate with the promotion of community development (Ife, 1997) and social development (Kaseke, 2001; Midgley, 1981) within the social work literature. The positioning of the practitioner as internal (Ife, 2002) rather than external to the community is an aspect of Tongan social work consistent with community development in other contexts (Mafile'o, 2005). The value of *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness) constructs sustained relationships where practitioners remain as part of a community.

This study suggests a need to broaden conceptions of community development to consider transnational and international forms of development relevant to diasporic populations. The nature of Tongan *kāinga* and community as transnational, and the embedding of Tongan approaches within these systems, requires the incorporation of a transnational and international focus for 'community' change. With cultural and economic interchange and interdependence across national borders and a diversification of Tongan realities, Tongan social work is faced with challenges similar to practice with refugees and asylum seekers where macro and international factors must be incorporated (Nash, 2005). The suggestion here is in line with Ife's (2002) recommendation of internationalist community development, where links are made on the basis of a common humanity and there is a two-way flow of expertise. The emphasis on community development therefore points to a dialectic between the local and the international realms. This was evidenced amongst participants, for example, with one participant taking a lead role in Aotearoa New Zealand in organising aid to Tonga after a hurricane, providing a collective mechanism for families in Aotearoa New Zealand to send aid to their kin in Tonga. Perhaps Tongan social workers, albeit unwittingly, are living out in their day-to-day practice resolutions to complex contemporary debates plaguing social work concerning the internationalisation of social

work (Gray, 2005; Gray & Fook, 2004). While much attention is given to cross-cultural practice issues in the literature, Tongan practice is confronting and negotiating these issues, partly via a transnational focus for community development practice. In this way, micro practice is inextricably linked to macro practice, and the local informs the regional, national and international contexts and knowledge (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2005).

### **Reflections on the Research Process**

This research assumed a journey and life of its own while also being closely connected to my journey as a researcher. There were points throughout the crafting of the research and writing the thesis where events within my Tongan extended family directly reflected key findings within this study. This provided a very different lens through which to view this research; it was humbling, but it also brought the significance of the data into focus. These experiences cement my belief that this study is of enormous worth for social work practice with diasporic Tongans. The interweaving of the journeys of the research and the researcher strengthened the exploration and construction of knowledge for social work practice.

The use of in-depth individual interviews and focus groups as means for data collection were appropriate methods for the exploration of Tongan social work practice. The research experience, however, highlighted the various ways in which these methods may be carried out. While there was some guidance from the literature on conducting interviews and focus groups, this did not necessarily prepare me well to undertake interviews with Tongans. In a combination of using my own common sense, seeking advice from my Tongan supervisor and gleaning guidance from the work of other Tongan researchers, I attempted to develop a style and format that was appropriate to the range of Tongan participants and the topic of study.

It is difficult to overstate the significance of language in studies of this nature. Over the course of this project, the importance of *lea fakatonga* for the processes of data collection and analysis became increasingly evident – leading me to a two month stay in Tonga which was not originally anticipated. As the sole researcher, working within my own Tongan language limitations provided a challenge. My trip to Tonga in the middle

of this project was one way I responded to this challenge. I also relied heavily on my Tongan supervisor and others to guide me in aspects of the research. On reflection, however, it is important to value this thesis as a particular construction of Tongan social work which has been shaped by my analysis and interpretation as a New Zealand-born Tongan social worker.

The use of metaphors had the ability to transcend aspects of language by providing a story or picture which “can mean more than what we say” (Helu, 1999, p.60). While others may have selected different metaphors, with slightly different pictures and stories, they would likely have a similar meaning. In this way, the research process is a creative one and the ‘telling’ could take place in multiple forms.

Taking into account the implications of the findings and my reflections on the research process, I conclude by offering thoughts on future directions for research and development.

### **Recommendations for Future Development and Research**

Based on the study’s findings and the implications discussed above, the following offers recommendations for future development and research in terms of Tongan communities, social work practice and policy and additions to the literature. These recommendations are intentionally wide in scope to point to possibilities for the future.

#### **Tongan Communities**

- Tongan community development requires effective and appropriate leadership, and it should be acknowledged that leadership can develop within the younger generations. Tongan social and community work holds promise for Tongan leadership in at least two ways. First, the cultural change that Tongan social work facilitates includes the facilitation of wider understandings of leadership, such as the potential contribution of younger or New Zealand-born Tongans. Second, social and community workers themselves take on leadership roles in Tongan community development. Leadership for the advancement of *kāinga* Tonga will necessarily employ *fakatoukatea* (skills in opposite directions).

- Diasporic Tongan communities could benefit by exploring and negotiating connections and political alliances with other indigenous groups, including *tangata whenua* in Aotearoa New Zealand. These alliances could be negotiated on Tongan terms, in contrast to an imposed positioning defined by marginalisation. The potential mutual benefits of capacity building, knowledge development and social and political action could be explored.
- Tongan churches, acting as quasi villages for diasporic Tongans, have a potential as sites for the development of social services. Future research could therefore include case studies of Tongan churches, to explore the features of organisation, process, values and practices which contribute to effective social support and social change for diasporic Tongans.

### **Social Work Practice Development**

- In setting competencies and standards for practice, consideration ought to be given to ethnic specific, rather than pan-Pacific, definitions. This will require engagement with *Pasifiki* communities on an ethnic specific basis.
- It is important that cultural supervision be made available for Tongan social workers, but it is equally important that supervisors in general, as well as social work agencies, take responsibility to ensure they understand, support and develop the application of Tongan social work frameworks for practice.
- Ethnic specific services ought to be a focus of development. This thesis has affirmed the strengths of *mo'ui fakatonga* for the formation of social work at the practice, theoretical, research and organisational levels. Tongan practice frameworks demonstrate the basis upon which Tongan social services and policy can build.
- The holistic nature of Tongan frameworks mean that mainstream and ethnic specific social services should develop close and integrated relationships with the wider community and adopt broadly scoped service definitions.
- Practice and policy should embrace the strengths and resources of Tongan transnationalism. In this way, internal and external affairs should 'speak to each other' and be closely linked and mutually beneficial collaborations between New Zealand and Tongan based agencies could be developed.

- Community development will be important to the development of Tongan social work. Further, given the Tongan diaspora, community development will best operate at the global as well as local levels.

### **Researching Social Work Practice**

- The cross-cultural practice of Tongan social workers could be a particular focus of future research. In particular, an exploration of the ways in which Tongans' practice with *pālangi* clients and systems could provide useful insights for cross-cultural social work development.
- Research on Tongan social work could focus on the development of human services within the Kingdom of Tonga and assess the factors contributing to their development.
- In the case of social work education, research could explore the efficacy of various *Pasifiki* creative, spiritual and community sources of learning and preparation for social work practice.
- Tongan language should, as far as possible, be the primary language of data collection and analysis within Tongan research to allow Tongan concepts to be explored in depth.

### **Additions to the Literature**

- The research literature is currently impoverished by the lack of writing on Tongan methodologies. While there is a level of knowledge of *pō talanoa* and *kakala* as Tongan research approaches (see Chapter Three), there is a need for more substantive discussion and development of these methodologies.
- The social work literature is currently unbalanced, with large amounts written on ethnic sensitivity, cultural competence and anti-oppressive practice – all of which inform practice with culturally diverse populations. There needs to be more literature which informs practice from the strengths of diverse cultural worldview paradigms.

### A Finishing Note

The voice of Tongan social work is but one amongst a global choir of culturally diverse paradigms – singing different notes of the same chord, sometimes discordant, but at other times resolved and melodic. Like an improvisation, the dynamic of social work is unexpectedly altered, and the crescendo of the Tongan voice enhances the aesthetic of the whole piece. But there must be a lull in the voices of those who have dominated this piece to date. It is in the lull that those whose voices previously dominated can hear, respond and, for a moment, follow the lead of the other; in so doing new chord progressions and melodies are brought forth. Social work will become like an irritating monotone and be irrelevant, if it continues to sing the same tune overtime. In the contemporary context, where there is increasing intermeshing of diverse cultures, social work must be varied and dynamic if it is to facilitate social change. The different voices of the choir must take their place.

The *pola* and *uku* metaphors, which portray Tongan approaches to social and community work, are part of the movement, stirring, crashing and levelling of waves of knowledge. Tongan frameworks are presenting new ways of thinking within the critical postmodern tradition and have potential to add to the core knowledge (Reid, 2002) of social work. As the title of the thesis indicates (*hangē ha pā kuo fa'u*), a Tongan framework could be likened to a skilfully crafted fishhook. There are all kinds of fishhooks, but a well made one catches fish persistently, as it is suited to the locality. Tongan metaphors recreate social work to facilitate the wellbeing of diasporic Tongans while adding to the chorus of humanity.





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# Appendix One: Information Sheet



School of Social Policy and  
Social Work  
Private Bag 11 222,  
Palmerston North,  
New Zealand  
Telephone: 64 6 350 5799 extn 2821  
Facsimile: 64 6 350 5681  
Email: SPSWPN\_Reception  
@massey.ac.nz  
<http://www.massey.ac.nz/~wwwpsw>

## INFORMATION SHEET

### Research Title: Tongan Social Work Models of Practice

You are invited to participate in a research project concerned with Tongan social work models of practice. I am of Tongan descent and have both qualification and professional experience working as a social worker. This study is undertaken for the purposes of PhD research; however, it is intended that it will ultimately contribute to the development of social work with Tongan people. My contact details are as follows:

Researcher: Tracie Mafile'o  
Contact: School of Social Policy and Social Work  
Massey University  
Private Bag 11-222  
Palmerston North  
Telephone: (06) 3505799 ext. 2812  
Facsimile: (06) 3505681  
E-mail: T.A.Mafile'o@massey.ac.nz

My research project will be supervised by staff from the School of Social Policy and Social Work at Massey University. The names and contact details of my supervisors are as follows (please note that you may contact them if you have any questions concerning the project):

Supervisors: Associate Professor Andrew  
School of Social Policy and Social Work  
Massey University  
Private Bag 11-222  
Palmerston North  
Telephone: (06) 3505799 ext. 2835  
Facsimile: (06) 3505681  
E-mail: A.D.Trilin@massey.ac.nz

Professor Robyn Munford  
School of Social Policy and Social Work  
Massey University  
Private Bag 11-222  
Palmerston North  
Telephone: (06) 3505799 ext. 2825  
Facsimile: (06) 3505681  
E-mail: R.E.2.Munford@massey.ac.nz

Te Kūnenga ki Pūrehuroa

Inception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning as a life-long journey

### **What is this study about?**

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Tongan people represent a growing population. As we experience and negotiate the integration of Tongan culture with palangi culture issues arise which often lead to the involvement of social services. For generations, Tongans, like all cultural and ethnic groups have had ways of defining and achieving social well-being and ways of dealing with social and personal issues. This study is about articulating what these ways are, and further, in contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand, how these are being expressed in social work practice. This study is about Tongan social work models of practice. It will explore the question: what are the Tongan ways of thinking about and doing social work?

This study will provide Tongan social and community workers with an opportunity to meet and discuss how they work with Tongan people. It is an area about which very little is known and which is in need of research. This study will contribute to filling this gap. Please note that this will not involve the disclosure of any information about individual clients. The focus will be on models of practice.

### **How did I get to be invited to participate?**

Using my professional and community networks I have compiled a contact list of Tongan social and community workers in New Zealand. Where possible, this has also included details about gender, age group, field of practice, qualification, Tongan or New Zealand born and so on. From this list I selected a sample of Tongan social workers representing a range of social/community work fields.

### **What will participants have to do?**

Participants will be involved in individual and focus group interviews.

1. An initial introductory individual interview where participants will begin talking about their social work practice. This meeting will be of approximately 50 minutes duration.
2. A focus group interview/meeting, where a group of Tongan social and/or community workers will come together to discuss strategies and issues related to social work practice. There will be a choice as to whether you are part of an English speaking or Tongan speaking group. It is expected that this meeting will be of approximately 2 hours duration.
3. A second individual interview, in which participants will further explore social work practice. This will be for approximately 1 hour duration.
4. A second focus group meeting to discuss the information gathered, and which will be of approximately 2 hours in duration.

Overall, this will involve an anticipated total of 6 hours for each participant.

This process will take place over a 3 – 4 month period, in the first half of 2001.

As a participant you would decide the time and venue for individual interviews. The focus groups will be at times and venues most suitable to participants as a group.

With your permission, the individual and focus groups meetings will be audio-taped. I will do the transcription of the tapes myself, but will have assistance with the transcription/interpretation of the Tongan language focus groups. The person(s) assisting me will be required to sign a confidentiality form. If you wish, the tapes and transcripts of the individual interviews will be returned to you at the completion of the study. If you do not want the tape or transcript then they will be destroyed along with the focus group interview tapes at a time to be determined by the regulations of the Doctoral Research Committee following the successful completion of the PhD thesis.

### **What can participants expect from the researcher?**

My part is first and foremost to treat with respect your contributions to this study. That means, keeping you informed of the progress of the research, adequately acknowledging your input and ensuring the knowledge you offer and information about yourself is only used for the purposes you have agreed to. Because of the size of the Tongan community and the fact that we will be meeting in focus groups, it will be impossible to achieve complete confidentiality and anonymity. However, I will do all that I can to promote this, for example, by using pseudonyms instead of your name in the final reports.

At the completion of the research, you will be invited to a closing celebration meeting and will receive a summary of the findings. The thesis will be circulated to those who are interested to read the full report.

### **As a participant you would have the right to:**

- Refuse to answer any particular question and to withdraw from the study at any time. (Please note that in terms of the focus groups, you will be able to withdraw your comments from being used, however, it is not possible after you have already participated to withdraw your total input and influence on the group).
- Ask any further questions about the study that you think of during your participation.
- Provide information on the understanding that steps will be made to achieve confidentiality and anonymity as far as possible, so that you cannot be identified in any reports that are prepared from the study.
- Be given access to a summary of findings from the study when it is concluded.

Thank you for your time in considering this. I welcome your comments and questions.

## Ngaahi Fakaikiiki

### Hingoa 'o e Fakatotolo: Ngaahi Founa Fakahoko Ngaue Social Work

'Oku 'oatu heni ha fakaafe ke ke kau mai ki he poloseki fakatotolo ko eni fekau'aki mo e ngaahi founa ngaue lolotonga 'i he ngaue faka-Social Work ki he kakai Tonga 'i he fonua ni.

Ko e finemotu'a tupu'i Tonga au 'oku fakatou ma'u 'a e taukei ngaue mo e tohi fakamo'oni ako 'i he mala'e 'o e faka-Social Work.

Ko e taumu'a foki 'o e fakatotolo ni ki hoku mata'itohi Toketa 'i he mala'e ni, pea 'i he taimi tatau ke hoko 'o 'aonga mo tokoni 'a e pepa ni ki he fakalalaka 'o e faitatonga ma'ae kakai Tonga nofo Nu'usila.

Tokotaha fakatotolo: Tracie Mafile'o  
Fetu'utaki 'anga School of Social Policy and Social Work  
Massey University  
Private Bag 11-222  
Palmerston North  
Telephone: (06) 3505799 ext. 2812  
Facsimile: (06) 3505681  
E-mail: T.A.Mafile'o@massey.ac.nz

Ko e fakatotolo ni 'e supavaisa mo tokanga'i 'e he kau faiako mei he va'a School of Social Policy pea mo e Social Work 'o e 'Univesiti Massey. 'Oku ha atu 'i lalo 'a e fakaikiiki 'o e kau faiako ko ia mo e founa fetu'utaki kia kinautolu:

Supavaisa: Associate Professor Andrew  
School of Social Policy and Social Work  
Massey University  
Private Bag 11-222  
Palmerston North  
Telephone: (06) 3505799 ext. 2835  
Facsimile: (06) 3505681  
E-mail: A.D.Trin@massey.ac.nz

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

Reception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning as a life-long journey



Supavaisa:

Professor Robyn Munford  
School of Social Policy and Social Work  
Massey University  
Private Bag 11-222  
Palmerston North  
Telephone: (06) 3505799 ext. 2825  
Facsimile: (06) 3505681  
E-mail: R.E.2.Munford@massey.ac.nz

### **Ko e ha 'a e taumu'a 'o e fakatotolo ni?**

'Oku kau foki 'a e kakai Tonga 'i he matakali tupu vave taha honau tokolahi 'i he fonua ni he ngaahi 'aho ni. Pea 'i he 'etau hiki mai ko ia ki he fonua muli ni 'oku tau omi mo kitautolu 'etau anga fakafonua 'o tau filio'i ia mo e ngaahi anga fakafonua 'o e fonua muli ni. 'I he tu'unga ko ia 'oku fiema'u leva ke kau mai pea tokoni 'a e ngaahi Sevesi faka-Sosiale 'a e Pule'anga ni ke tokoni ke hoko lelei 'a e filio'i ko ia ke ma'u mei ai ha founa 'e lava ke fengae'aki 'a e 'ongo me'a ni ki he lelei 'o e kakai 'i he 'ataakai fo'ou ni - ka e 'oua 'e fehanganagai pe fepakipaki.

Pea hange pe foki ko e ngaahi matakali kehe kuo nau hiki mai 'o ui 'a Aotearoa ko honou 'api kuo pau ke nau fetuiaki 'a honau ngaahi anga fakafonua pea mo e anga fakafonua 'o e fonua ni ke lava ke nau kei ma'u pe honau tefito'i 'ulungaanga ka 'i he taimi tatau 'oku nau toe lava ke liliu he ngaahi to'onga 'e ni'ihiki ke hoa mo e fiema'u 'o e fonua mo e 'ataakai fo'ou.

Ko ia ai ko e fakatotolo ni ke 'ilo mo mahino'i 'a e founa 'oku tau ngaue'aki 'e kitautolu 'a e kakai Tonga ke fetuiaki 'a e ongo to'onga ni ke 'ikai ngata pe he kei ma'u hotau Tonga ka 'oku toe lava pe foki ke tau mo'ui mo ngaue 'i he 'ataakai fo'ou ni.

Ko e fehu'i 'e taha ke fakama'ala'ala pe 'oku mahino'i kakato koa 'i he founa ngaue lolotonga 'a e Potungaue Social Work 'a e 'etau tefito'i fiema'u pea 'ikai ngata ai 'oku nau mateuteu nai ke fai 'a e tokoni ni ki hotau kakai?

'Oku ou toe faka'amu foki ko ha faingamalie 'eni ke fai ha felingiaki mo ha fevahevahe'aki pea mo ha ni'ihiki Tonga kehe 'oku nau lolotonga fai 'a e ngaue faka-Social Work 'i he fonua ni ki he ngaahi founa ngaue 'oku nau ngaue'aki takitaha, hono lelei mo e ngaahi me'a 'oku nau takitaha ongo'i 'oku fai ai ha tonounou.

'I he 'eku tui ko e 'elia eni 'oku fu'u fiema'u ke fai ki ia ha fakatotolo he 'oku si'isi'i 'a e 'ilo ki he ngaahi tefito'i fiema'u 'a hotau kakai. Ko e taumu'a leva 'a e ngaue ni ke tokoni ke fakama'ala'ala 'a e ngaahi fiema'u ko ia pea tokoni ki he fakalalakala 'a e mahino 'oku ma'u 'e he tokotaha ngaue faka-Social Work ke ne fakahoko 'aki 'ene ngaue.

Kataki 'o fakatokanga'i ange he 'ikai 'aupito ke tukuange kitu'a ha ngaahi fakaikiiki fakatautaha 'o ha tokotaha ne faka'eke'eke 'i he fakatotolo ni. 'E fakamamafa pe foki 'a e fakatotolo ni ki he founa ngaue lolotonga pea mo e ngaahi founa ke fakalelei'i 'aki mo tokoni ke hiki'i 'a e tu'unga lolotonga 'o e ngaue faka-Social Work 'i he fonua ni ki hotau kakai.

### **Ne anga fefe 'eku fili koe ke kau mai ki he fakatotolo ni?**

Neu lava foki keu ma'u ha lisi 'o e kakai Tonga 'oku lolotonga ngaue faka-Social Work mo ngaue faka-Community mei he Potungae. Ne ma'u foki 'i he lisi ni 'a e telefoni mo e founa ke fetu'utaki atu ai. Mei he lisi tatau ne toe ma'u foki mei ai mo ha ngaahi fakaikiiki kau kiatekoe hange ko e ta'umotu'a, fa'ele'i 'i Tonga pe 'i heni.

Mei he lisi leva ko ia neu fili leva ha ni'ihi mei he tapa kehekehe 'oku 'i he mala'e ni. Ko e faka'amu ko kimoutolu ko ia ne fili temou 'omai mo kimoutolu ha ngaahi 'ilo kehekehe mei ho'omou ngaahi mala'e takitaha ke tokoni ke tau toe mahino'i ange ai 'a e fiema'u 'a hotau kakai.

### **Ko e ha leva 'a e me'a 'e fima'u meia te koe?**

Teke kau foki ki ha ngaahi faka'eke'eke fakatautaha mo fakakulupu.

1. 'E kamata 'aki pe ha faka'eke'eke fakafe'iloaki taautaha 'a ia 'e fiema'u ai ke ke talanoa ki he anga ho'o ngaue 'i he komiuniti. 'E miniti nai 'e 50 'a e loloa 'o e faka'eke'eke ni.
2. 'E fakahoko ha faka'eke'eke pe fakataha fakakulupu 'a ia 'e fakatahataha mai ai 'a e ni'ihi 'o e kau Tonga 'oku ngaue Social Work ke fai ha talanga pe ko hano alea'i 'o e ngaahi kaveinga kehekehe fekau'aki mo e ngaue 'oku nau fai. Te ke fili pe pe te ke kau ki he kulupu tenau ngaue'aki 'a e lea faka-Pilitania pe ko e kulupu ko ia tenau alea 'i he lea faka-Tonga.
3. 'E toe fakahoko ha faka'eke'eke fakatautaha 'a ia 'e loloto ange ai 'a hono vakai'i 'o e ngaahi founa 'o e ngaue Social Work pea 'e houa 'e taha 'a e faka'eke'eke ni.
4. 'E toe fakahoko ha fakataha fakakulupu ke alea'i ai 'a e ngaahi fakamatala ne tatanaki pea 'e houa nai eni 'e ua.

'I hono fakakatoa, ko e houa nai 'e 6 'oku fiema'u mei he tokotaha takitaha ki he ngaue ni. Pea 'e fakahoko 'eni 'i he vaha'a taimi 'o e mahina 'e 3-4 'i he konga kimu'a 'o e ta'u 2001.

Ko e tokotaha kotoa 'e kau 'i he fakatotolo ni, te ne fili 'a e taimi mo e feitu'u ke fakahoko ai hono faka'eke'eke taautaha ka ko e fakataha fakakulupu 'e fakahoko ia 'i he taimi mo e feitu'u 'e faingamalie taha kia kinautolu kotoa 'e kau mai.

'Oku 'i ai e faka'amu kemou faka'ataa ke hiki tepi 'a e faka'eke'eke kotoa 'o tatau pe 'a e faka'eke'eke taautaha mo ia 'e fakakulupu. Ko au pe te u hiki tohi 'a e ngaahi tepi ka 'e tokoni mai ha ni'ihi ki hono liliu mo faka'uHINGA'i 'o e ngaahi faka'eke'eke faka-Tonga. Ko kinautolu 'e tokoni, kuopau kenau fakamo'oni hingoa 'i ha aleapau ke 'oua na'a mama kitu'a ha me'a mei he ngaahi faka'eke'eke. Kapau te ke fiema'u, 'e lava ke fakafoki atu kiate koe 'a e ngaahi tepi mo e fakamatala tohi kotoa 'o ho'o ngaahi faka'eke'eke taautaha, 'i he 'osi 'a e fakatotolo ni. Kapau leva 'e 'ikai te ke fiema'u pea 'e faka'auha leva 'a e ngaahi tepi mo e fakamatala kotoa 'i ha taimi 'e tu'utu'uni 'e he Komiti ko ia 'oku nau fakalele 'a e fakatotolo fakaako ko 'eni, 'i ha lava 'a e ngaue.

### **Ko e ngaahi me'a 'oku 'i ai ho'o totonu ki ai mei he tokotaha fakatotolo?**

Ko e me'a 'oku mahu'inga taha kiate au, ke faka'apa'apa'i 'a e ngaahi me'a te ke tokoni 'aki ki he ako ni. 'Oku 'uhinga leva 'eni, te u feinga ke fakahoko atu ma'u pe kiate kimoutolu mei he taimi ki he taimi 'a e tu'unga 'oku a'u ki ai e fakatotolo. 'Ikai ngata ai, ke fakamahu'inga'i e tokoni 'a e tokotaha kotoa pea ke ngaue'aki pe 'a e ngaahi tokoni ni ki he taumu'a ne tu'unga ai ho'omou fie kau mai. Koe'uhi ko e tokolahi 'o e Komuniti Tonga, 'i Nu'usila kae'uma'a 'etau fakataha fakakulupu, 'e faingata'a ai ke fakapulipuli'i kakato e

me'a kotoa ka te u fai hoku tukuingata ke fakahoko 'eni. Ko e taha 'o e ngaahi founa te u ngaue 'aki ko e 'ikai ke u ngaue'aki homou hinga totonu 'i he'eku lipooti faka'osi.

'I he kakato 'a e fakatotolo ni, 'e fakaafe'i leva koe ki ha ki'i polokalama tapuni 'a ia 'e fakahoko atu ai 'a e fakaikiiki 'o e ngaahi me'a ne ha mei he fakatotolo ni. 'E tufa atu 'a e lipooti 'o e fakatotolo kiate kinautolu te nau fie lau kakato ia.

**'Oku 'i ai ho'o totonu:**

ù Ke 'oua 'e tali ha fa'ahinga fehu'i pea ke fakangata ho'o kau ki he fakatotolo ni 'i he fa'ahinga taimi pe. (Fakatokanga'i, 'i he faka'eke'eke fakakulupu, 'e lava pe ke ke fakata'e'aonga'i ha'o lau ne fai ka 'i he hili ho'o kau, 'e 'ikai lava ke ke fakata'e'aonga'i ho'o tokoni kotoa.)

ù Ke 'eke ha fehu'i pe 'oku ke fakakaukau ki ai lolotonga ho'o kau he fakatotolo ni.

ù Ke fai ho'o tokoni 'i ho'o 'amanaki 'e 'ikai ha mama 'i he fakatotolo ni pe 'ilo 'e ha taha kehe ha me'a fekau'aki mo koe mei ai.

ù Ke ma'u 'a e lipooti Kongokonga lalahi 'o e fakatotolo, 'i he'ene kakato.

Faka'osi 'oku ou 'oatu ha fakamalo loto hounga mo'oni 'i ho'o tuku taimi ki he kole ni pea te u fiefia ke tali ha'o tokoni pe faka'eke'eke.

Tu'a 'Eiki 'Ofa Atu

Tracie Mafile'o



# Appendix Two: Consent Form



School of Social Policy and  
Social Work  
Private Bag 11 222,  
Palmerston North,  
New Zealand  
Telephone: 64 6 350 5799 extn 2821  
Facsimile: 64 6 350 5681  
Email: SPSWPN\_Reception  
@massey.ac.nz  
[http://www.massey.ac.nz/  
-wwspw](http://www.massey.ac.nz/~wwspw)

## TONGAN SOCIAL WORK MODELS OF PRACTICE

### CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission (the information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project).

I agree/do not agree to the interviews being audio taped. I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Te Kūnenga ki Pūrehuroa

Inception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning as a life-long journey

## Ngaahi Founqa Fakahoko Ngaue Social Work

### Foomu Fakangofua

Kuo ou 'osi lau kakato 'a e fakaikiiki 'o e fakatotolo ako ni pea kuo fakama'ala'ala kakato ia kia te au. Pehe foki ki hono 'omai e ngaahi tali fakafiemalie ki he 'eku ngaahi fehu'i, pea kapau 'e toe 'i ai ha me'a teu fie fehu'i teu fehu'i ia 'i ha taimi pe 'oku 'ikai ai ke mahino kakato ha konga pe me'a lolotonga 'a e ngaue ni.

'Oku ou toe 'ilo foki 'oku 'ia au 'a e totonu keu fakangata 'eku kau ki he ngaue ni 'i ha fa'ahinga taimi pe 'oku ou loto ki ai.

Teu loto fiemalie ke ngaue'aki 'e he tokotaha 'oku ne fakahoko 'a e fakatotolo ako ni ha fa'ahinga fakamatala teu 'oatu lolotonga 'a e ngaue ni, ka 'i he taimi tatau 'e 'ikai ngaue'aki hoku hinga kakato ta'eteu faka'ataa ('e ngaue'aki pe 'eku fakamatala ki he fakatotolo ni pea mo ha ngaahi fakamatala 'e pulusi fekau'aki mo ia)

'Oku ou loto/ta'eloto ke hiki tepi 'a e ngaahi faka'eke'eke pe fakataha teu kau ki ai. 'Oku ou toe ma'u foki 'a e totonu ke ta'ofi 'a e hiki tepi ha taimi pe lolotonga 'a e faka'eke'eke.

'Oku ou loto lelei ke kau ki he fakatotolo ako ko eni fakatatau ki he ngaahi me'a ko ia 'oku ha 'i he tohi fakaikiiki 'o e ngaue ni.

Fakamo'oni: \_\_\_\_\_

Hingoa: \_\_\_\_\_

'Aho: \_\_\_\_\_

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

Inception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning as a life-long journey

# Appendix Three: Interview Guides

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## Phase One: Individual Interview Guide

### Introductions

acknowledging connections

explaining process

### Questions

1. What is the story of how you came to be a social and community worker?
2. What is your social work and community work practice experience?
  - Prompts:
    - i. What field of practice have you worked in?
    - ii. Where have you worked?
    - iii. What did you do in your job?
    - iv. Who have your clients been (i.e. general categories in terms of ethnicity, age etc)?
3. Outline a case/situation/project (excluding identifying details such as clients' names) that you have been involved with recently and how you approached it?
4. Reflecting on what you have told me, what was "Tongan" about how you approached this?
  - Prompts:
    - i. What Tongan principles guided your practice?
    - ii. What procedures were Tongan?
    - iii. What Tongan concepts are a part of your practice?
    - iv. What Tongan values and beliefs influenced your practice?
    - v. What knowledge did you draw on?
    - vi. What skills did you use?

5. (If, in answer to 4, the participant does not identify anything “Tongan” about the case they had described). Is there a “Tongan” way that you sometimes employ in your practice? If so, tell me about this.
6. Describe a case/situation/project where you took this “Tongan” approach.
7. What were the challenges of having a “Tongan” approach?
  - Prompts:
    - i. What supports or limitations did the agency environment provide?
    - ii. How were the clients receptive/or not to this approach?
    - iii. How did supervision enhance or detract from your use of a Tongan approach?
8. What suggestions do you have for the focus group meeting – degree of structure, process, content, Tongan or English?



## Phase Two: Focus Group Interview Guide

1. What do we do to help each other (fetokoni'aki) in our Tongan culture?
2. What are the Tongan stories and proverbs that tell us about people working together (kaunga ngaue)?
3. What are some examples of these concepts in your practice?

Fe'ofa'aki	- to love or be kind to one another
Feveitokai'aki	- to respect one another's feelings
Fetokai'aki	- to have consideration for one another's feelings
Fefaka'apa'apa'aki	- to be courteous to one another, respect
Fe'aonga'aki	- to be useful, beneficial or helpful to each other
Fakatōkilalo	- humility
Fai fatongia/tauhi	- service; servitude
Lea fakatonga	- Tongan language
Talanoa/talanoa fakatātā	- symbolic stories
Fakakata	- humour
Kitaki/kivoi/fakamamate	- persistence; perseverance
Feongoaki	- to feel one another's thoughts; to be responsive to each other
Alapoto/matapoto	- able to do things by instinct; skilful though not specifically trained/observant; quick to notice things
Fekau'aki/fetu'utaki	- to belong to one another; to be connected, to be affiliated/to be connected to one another.

4. What would you change/add to these concepts to make them a more accurate reflection of what you do?

## **Phase Three: Individual Interview Guide**

1. Reflecting on our previous meetings, is there anything you would like to add about Tongan social work practice?
2. How has your practice developed over the last year?
3. What have you done in the last two weeks in your practice?
4. What helps you to work in a Tongan way?
5. How does working in a Tongan way make a difference to the people you work with?
6. What are the positives and challenges of social work supervision as a Tongan?
7. What is a programme/project that you have been involve din that you see as providing an effective social service to Tongans?
8. What is it like being a Tongan social worker?

# Appendix Four: Confidentiality Agreement

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School of Social Policy and  
Social Work  
Private Bag 11 222,  
Palmerston North,  
New Zealand  
Telephone: 64 6 350 5799 extn 2821  
Facsimile: 64 6 350 5681  
Email: SPSWPN\_Reception  
@massey.ac.nz  
[http://www.massey.ac.nz/  
~wwpsw](http://www.massey.ac.nz/~wwpsw)

## CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR FOCUS GROUP FACILITATOR AND TRANSLATOR

I, 4ilita Tupou agree to maintain the confidentiality of all  
material I receive for the purposes of assisting with the translation of  
information for the research project Tongan Social Work Models of Practice.

Signed: 

Date: 5.5.02



# Appendix Five: Letter



School of Sociology, Social Policy  
and Social Work  
Private Bag 11 222,  
Palmerston North,  
New Zealand  
Telephone: 64 6 350 5799 extn 282  
or extn 787  
Facsimile: 646 350 5681 or 5627  
Email: SPSWPN\_Reception  
@massey.ac.nz  
<http://www.massey.ac.nz/>  
-wwspw

17 February 2003

Malo e lelei!

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me again to “po talanoa” about your social work and community work practice. I am hoping that our next meeting can build on the discussions we have already had individually and in focus groups. The first time we met we were able to start talking about your practice history and about the Tongan aspects of your practice. Then in focus groups we looked at Tongan concepts and proverbs, in particular about fetokoni’aki and kaunga ngaue and what these mean for Tongan communities and for your practice. In our next meeting I would like to focus more directly again on how Tongan ways play out in your practice, taking our discussion a bit deeper. To this end, I am interested in hearing from you regarding the following:

- Reflecting on our previous meetings, is there anything you would like to add about Tongan social work practice?
- How has your practice developed over the last year?
- What have you done in the last two weeks in your practice?
- What helps you to work in a Tongan way?
- How does working in a Tongan way make a difference to the people you work with?
- What are the positives and challenges of social work supervision as a Tongan?
- What is a programme/project that you have been involved in that you see as providing an effective social service to Tongans?
- What is it like being a Tongan social worker?

The above is just an idea to get us started, but feel free to contribute what you feel is relevant to Tongan social work. I am looking forward to meeting with you again on:

DATE & TIME:

AT:

In case of last minute changes, I can be contacted on [redacted] 8015799 ext 2812.

Malo 'aupito,

TRACIE MAFILE'O

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa



# Appendix Six: Ethics Approval (MUHEC)

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Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North (MUHEC: PN)

Room 2.02, Main Building, Turitea  
<http://www.massey.ac.nz/~muhec>

Telephone: 64 6 350 5249

Fax: 64 6 350 5622

Email: [S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz](mailto:S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz)

**Massey University**

Private Bag 11 222,  
Palmerston North,  
New Zealand  
Telephone: 64 6 356 9099

11 October 2000

Ms Tracie A Mafile'o  
PG Student  
Social Policy & Social Work  
TURITEA

Dear Tracie

**Re: Human Ethics PN Protocol – 00/104  
Tongan social work models in practice**

Thank you for your correspondence and the amended protocol.

The amendments you have made and explanations you have given now meet the requirements of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee and the ethics of your protocol are approved.

Any departure from the approved protocol will require the researcher to return this project to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee for further consideration and approval.

Yours sincerely

Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair  
Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North

cc Associate Professor Andrew D Trlin  
Professor Robyn Munford  
Social Policy & Social Work  
TURITEA

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Massey University Human Ethics Committee  
Accredited by the Health Research Council  
HEALTH FUNDING AUTHORITY

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

Inception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning as a life-long journey





# Appendix Seven: RAC Approval

6 June 2001

Tracie Mafile'o  
School of Social Policy and Social Work  
Private Bag 11 222  
PALMERSTON NORTH



Dear Tracie

Thank you for providing the Research Access Committee with further information regarding the proposed research project 'Tongan Social Work: Models of Practice.

The Research Access Committee has approved your proposal. This letter sets out the terms by which the Children Young Persons and Their Families Agency agrees to your access to information held by it.

Access to our files is contingent on your signing the attached deed of confidentiality as an acceptance of the way in which information held by the Agency will be used by you. We also request that the person you have translating signs one of these forms also. The deed reflects the seriousness of any breach of the information privacy principles contained within the Privacy Act 1993.

You have agreed to send to the Convenor of the Research Access Committee at National Office Wellington the penultimate draft of your report to ensure that legal, ethical and matters-of-fact are adequately addressed.

We look forward to receiving a copy of your draft penultimate paper on completion. Please keep us updated on your progress at regular intervals.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Fielding  
Acting Convenor, Research Access Committee