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One Person, Two Worlds? Two Persons, One World?
Cultural Identity Through the Eyes of New Zealand Born Samoans

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the cultural identity of New Zealand born Samoans by analyzing interviews conducted with several individuals in the Auckland area. My research is concerned with the factors that shape their cultural and personal identity, such as their fluency in the Samoan language, their adherence to Samoan cultural practices and values, and their family life. They expressed in detail their perceptions of the Samoan culture, how they managed to function and adapt in two different worlds.

The process of migration has brought about a transformation of the *fa'a Sāmoa* (the Samoan Way), and the degree of adherence to it by migrant parents affects the next generation's perception of the Samoan culture. Surrounded by non-Samoan influences, young Samoans born in Aotearoa will inevitably choose to abandon, modify, hold on to, and/or return to the *fa'a Sāmoa* as it fits within their lives and goals.

Another factor in the formation of cultural identity, the concept of opposition, is analyzed in this paper. One of the most difficult processes of cultural adjustment for the New Zealand borns is the treatment and stereotyping they experience from their own Samoan born counterparts. This intra-group opposition greatly affects the cultural orientation and self identity of many young Samoans.

This research paper shows how the *fa'a Sāmoa* is changing in the hands of the new retainers born in New Zealand, forming hybrid and unique versions of the “traditional *fa'a Sāmoa*” in order to fit their new way of living in a non-Samoan environment.

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Introduction

“. . . I had a lot of European friends and I didn't quite fit into the European way - the lifestyle and stuff - and then, I didn't quite fit into the Samoan way of doing things because my parents were very hard line on that. They wouldn't, they didn't teach us how to speak Samoan. So all I learned was from my friends and that, about Samoan culture and that. And because I couldn't speak Samoan and most of my family could - even my cousins - it was sort of isolated in that way, so I didn't quite belong in either worlds.” - Lise

“Well, when you're born here, you're told you're Samoan by your parents, but when you go to school and when you're growing up from New Zealand - facing you is New Zealanders. And when you go home, it's a different world. Like, you're expected to live by what way our parents brought back from the islands. So, it's like . . . you know, live a life outside of home and live the island life in the house. So you had two personalities in a sense.” - Rose

“At times I do, especially when I go to Sāmoa - when we visit home - because what you see there is nothing to what you're used to. You think that you're traditional, but when you go there you begin to learn that half the things your parents have told you, you know, the things your parents told you is really like half truths about your culture because there are some things which are very, very extreme Samoan . . . Yeah, I do get caught up when it's real *fa'a Sāmoa*. That's when I begin to doubt, 'Well, maybe I'm not really Samoan. I'm just a New Zealand sort of version of it.” - Mata

Do you ever wonder about where you belong and how you came to be there? Or, maybe you already believe that you belong to something, but are not quite sure how you fit into it or what part you play? Have you ever felt caught between two worlds or felt that you were two different people functioning in one world? Which world do you belong to? Which world do you actually identify with and how did you come to that identity? Do you reject, modify, or constantly fluctuate between those two worlds?

I asked these questions of several New Zealand born Samoans, and the responses I received were surprising and enlightening. The replies above are just a few of many made by my informants when asked whether they felt caught between two worlds - being ethnically Samoan,

but born in New Zealand. They detailed how they perceived the Samoan culture, how they functioned in two very different worlds, and how they viewed the stages of adaptation they underwent. It is the personal accounts from young Samoan people themselves which are absent in the literature. I have found those insights extremely valuable to my own understanding of cultural identification and change for the Samoan people. Because of this, you will be hearing a great deal of their voices throughout this paper as we look into the personal and cultural identification of New Zealand born Samoans.

The purpose of my paper is to document how a first generation of New Zealand born Samoans perceive themselves culturally, and what factors produce and shape that identity. I will do this by examining their attitudes toward the Samoan language, cultural practices, family life, and values. I will further examine and analyze what I believe to be an additional factor in the formation of cultural identity - the concept of opposition. This is not an opposition that is necessarily between the dominant society and the immigrant community, but an opposition that involves members of the same ethnic group (Anae 1995). I will be specifically looking at the responses of New Zealand born Samoans to the treatment and perceptions of their Samoan born counterparts because of their foreign birthplace and adaptation to a western environment. These opposing views and splits between members of the same ethnicity I found to be another decisive influence on how New Zealand-Samoans have come to perceive their cultural identity and in turn, how that identity continues to affect their socialization.

Cluny MacPherson, in his paper about ethnic and cultural identity of Samoan migrants in New Zealand, suggests that, “. . . [they] showed little inclination to set aside Samoan values and institutions in favour of those of the host community. Samoan migrants exhibited a strong sense

of ethnic identity and a pride in that identity . . .” (1995:3). According to this statement, Samoans consciously attempt to keep their language, customs, and values; not necessarily because of an aversion to the host community’s institutions, but due to the familiarity of the Samoan way of living, which is called *fa’a Sāmoa*. It is this tight grip on the culture encompassed by the *fa’a Sāmoa* that has kept their indigenous language and way of life alive, even after the infiltration of the western value system within the Samoan islands. Yet I believe we are now witnessing a transition within the *fa’a Sāmoa* in New Zealand, in which the children of Samoan immigrants are “reinterpreting” what is or, for that matter, what is not passed down to them as they attempt to function within a non-Samoan cultural setting.

New cultural practices are continuously developing, and it can never be said that the evolution or maturity of the Samoan culture is complete. In the same way, neither can it be said that the end point of Samoan cultural identity has been attained. So what is the *fa’a Sāmoa* becoming if one takes the view that culture is always in transition? Can it be called *fa’a Sāmoa* if a child is reared with influences and values other than what is traditionally considered Samoan in Sāmoa? If one takes the opposing view that the *fa’a Sāmoa* can never change, then many children in New Zealand that are Samoan by ethnicity would not be considered truly Samoan culturally because they were raised with more non-Samoan influences and a radically altered *fa’a Sāmoa*. This is where the interesting transition and development of the Samoan identity occur, and it is at this intersection that this study examines the cultural perceptions and factors that have led the New Zealand-Samoan young people to their particular attitudes and beliefs.

The level at which an individual such as a Samoan is able to participate within his or her culture depends on conditions such as the degree of exposure, the kind of encouragement,

opportunities for interaction, and the opposition experienced toward the culture by non-Samoans and Samoans alike. All these influence the acquisition of one's cultural identity. In this paper, I will discuss several factors which affect the construction and retention of both cultural identity and personal identity, such as language use, home environment, social environment, church involvement, local community activities, and extended family involvement. Descriptions of home life and parental influence are essential in this research in order to understand Samoan cultural identity and social adjustment.

I will also examine the idea of opposition within the same ethnic group as important in understanding the process of developing and evolving cultural identity and for the maintenance of the Samoan culture by New Zealand born Samoans. Anthropologist Edward Spicer has emphasized the concept of opposition as a mechanism utilized by a "persistent identity system" (1971). For Spicer, a persistent identity system characterizes ethnic groups or "a people" who have maintained a common identity in the midst of opposing and dominant socio-cultural environments, such as the Samoan community in modern New Zealand. He maintains that these external oppositional processes can bring about an "intense collective consciousness" or a sense of shared identity by those groups within a foreign setting. I will take Spicer's theory a step further and look at the perceptions of New Zealand born Samoans toward Samoans born in Sāmoa. It is my hypothesis that New Zealand born generations of Samoans share a greater affinity and identity with their New Zealand peers and to the dominant society than to their own ancestry, and in the extreme cases are no longer accepted by members of their own ethnic group. In a similar study, Melani Anae, a Samoan, in a paper titled, "Papalagi Redefined: Towards a NZ-Born Samoan Identity," in which she discusses opposition within the church setting amongst

her own ethnic group, theorizes that, “ethnic solidarity of this particular group of NZ-borns is a result of opposition mounted by island-born Samoans . . .” (1995:6).

Time, geography, and cultural interaction have brought about variations of what it means to be a “real Samoan” and we can see this clearly within the Samoan community in New Zealand. The *fa'a Sāmoa* is not only difficult to define to the non-Samoan, but even amongst the Samoan people themselves there are various interpretations as to what is the “true *fa'a Sāmoa*,” because it is ultimately shaped by individual experiences and personal feelings. For the New Zealand-Samoan, the dilemma of looking Samoan physically, but being raised in a more *pālagi* (white, foreigner) way, adds to the difficulty in defining a new cultural identity.

I found that the greatest and most difficult process of adjustment for the Samoan individuals that I interviewed was how they are viewed by others of their own ethnic group - by their island born counterparts. Are they considered Samoans if they cannot speak the language fluently? Do the island born Samoans consider them to be “real” Samoans? How do they label themselves or with whom do they identify themselves? Which are they - Samoan, *pālagi*, something in between, or something completely different? What kinds of self-perceptions are created among the New Zealand born Samoans who know that their island born peers view them as different? What factors are they using to determine which culture they identify with and how should we consider these factors in order to understand cultural identity in future studies? This kind of opposition within a single ethnic group is important to understand since it may lead to the formation of a unique and hybrid cultural identity amongst migrant communities over succeeding generations. For the Samoan community in New Zealand, cultural identity studies have a wider

application to similar communities in Australia, Hawai'i, the mainland U.S. and in American Sāmoa.

Methodology

I utilize four areas of research methodology in this study. First, I reviewed materials relevant to my project in the Hawaiian and Pacific Collections at the University of Hawai'i, as well as information from other agencies, offices, and programs which have conducted studies in the area of immigration and cultural adaptation. Research from New Zealand and California directly relates to my own project, and has been valuable in providing direction and focus. Because of the high immigrant Pacific Islander populations in New Zealand and the West Coast of the United States, many studies have been conducted, which illustrate the need for further research on the new population of non-island born Samoans. In my research, I examine the *fa'a Sāmoa*, Samoan migration and settlement in New Zealand, the concept of opposition in the development of identity, and cultural identity and its adjustments among Samoans in New Zealand.

Second, I analyze personal interviews conducted in English with New Zealand born Samoans from the Auckland vicinity. These interviews were structured in such a way as to allow open-ended responses. Because of my direct interaction with each individual, I was able to choose questions that would allow for as much comfort and openness as possible. Some respondents were eager to discuss their viewpoints and others, due to the sensitivity and painful recollections, took a longer time to speak of their personal problems and issues. I focused my inquiries on parental backgrounds (ethnicity, birthplace - village), home life, language use, involvement with extended family and church, and social life. These interviews yielded

invaluable information as to the cultural identity process of Samoans in New Zealand and Hawai'i. The main questions addressed were: How do you culturally identify yourselves and why? What does it mean to be Samoan? What is the *fa'a Sāmoa*? How do you feel about your parents choices in what they taught you? What are your reactions to the opinions and perceptions of Samoan born Samoans toward you in regards to the Samoan culture and being a Samoan? Using these questions as a spring board, my interviews delved further into the factors which influenced the shaping and development of their cultural identity, and how they viewed the extent of their Samoanness in comparison to island born Samoans and other Samoan New Zealanders like themselves.

Third, I conducted field work and did a great portion of literature research in New Zealand from October 1996 - December 1997. This offered me a chance to conduct research in a location where I believe more studies have been done in the area of Samoan ethnicity and cultural identity, and more programs created to meet culturally based needs than in Hawai'i or the rest of the United States. I was able to conduct my interviews in Auckland as well as to do research at the University of Auckland, using the excellent library resources on Pacific Islanders. I have also been able to do library research at the University of California at Berkeley.

The final methodological aspect of the research involves my own personal experiences and participation in the Samoan community of Hawai'i for several years. Though not an expert, I have learned a great deal and would like to add to this area of study. This is clearly subjective, but it will contribute an additional perspective, as well as supplementary information in this research.

The Literature

There were three major areas of research that present themselves in this paper. They are Samoan migration to New Zealand, the Samoan culture and its effects on cultural and self identity and cultural intra-group opposition.

There have been extensive studies conducted on the history of Samoan migration and the many issues that have developed, be it political, social, economical, and/or cultural between the senders and the receivers. I have mainly utilized sources that show and analyze the effects of migration on Samoan cultural progression and identity such as Kallen (1982) and MacPherson (1984). They describe in detail how the migration process affects the persistence of cultural values and institutions in the non-Samoan environment. Robert Franco's Samoan Perceptions of Work: Moving Up and Moving Around (1991) accounts for the cultural perceptions of work and the strategies used by migrants to adapt in new work environments. Current statistical information from the New Zealand Department of Statistic's Census of 1996 provided excellent and invaluable data on Pacific Island populations within New Zealand.

There is a large body of literature that focuses on the subjects of cultural identity and its relation to personal/self image; biculturalism and multiculturalism; and ethnicity and race relations. My discussion of cultural identity is founded on a collection and combination of several resources. Hall (1990) sets the theory of culture being in a state of motion and transformation, which I use as a spring board for my questions within the interviews. Morton (1998) deals specifically with young migrant Tongans in Australia and focuses on the construction of their cultural identities. MacPherson (1996, 1991, 1984) along with Pitt (1974) and La'avasa MacPherson (1995) have written prolifically about the Samoan community in New

Zealand and on Samoan cultural identity and how it is changing with each succeeding generation. Korgen (1998) provided useful information on how racial identity transforms and alters through time by examining the identity of biracial black Americans. Caws (1994) and Wassman (1998) wrote a great deal in the area of multiculturalism and the construction of identity. Wendt's ("Towards a New Oceania" [no date] and Ritterbusch's interview with him in 1982) and Hau'ofa's (1994) views and opinions were invaluable since they provided an indigenous perception to cultural identity and migration.

The material that is presented in Chapters Four and Five deals largely with Anae's conference presentation on the cultural identity of New Zealand born Samoans (1995) and Spicer's theory of opposition (1971). Like Anae, I found that the opposition imposed by Samoan born Samoans greatly affected the cultural identity and self image of their New Zealand born peers. Stepp (1989) also discusses how social adjustment is related to cultural identification, Samoan Christianity and the immigration process.

Chapter 1

Samoa Migration and the New Zealand Born Experience

“My father said, ‘If I really wanted you to learn Samoan, we would have stayed in Sāmoa. The reason why we came to New Zealand was for you to learn English! And to get an education.’ And I said, ‘Yeah,’ like that [sarcastically].” - Lise

“They worked for like a dollar or 33 cents an hour. They brought them over because they were cheap labor, whereas now, this is like a new generation. More Pacific Islanders are educated now.” - Lise

“I think they wanted the kids to be educated here in New Zealand. That’s why they came to New Zealand - to have a better education. For them it was kind of like a vision, a goal for them, to have their kids growing up in an environment to learn more than what they knew in the islands. I think there were a lot of options here in a different environment, you know, more options here in New Zealand and they just wanted us to learn how to speak English without putting that pressure on us.” - Dave

Migration is not a recent phenomenon for island people. The Pacific Ocean is the largest and deepest expanse of water covering the Earth, and sailing, discovering and then exploring the islands was a feat of incredible endurance, fortitude, and navigational skills. Contact and migration between islands occurred for centuries and became part of daily life in island society. Whether long term, temporary, or permanent, it should not be surprising to see the modern islander moving and relocating, since from their earliest beginnings they have had an affinity for travel. Epeli Hau‘ofa has pointed out that, “Human nature demands space for free movement, and the larger the space the better it is for people. Islanders have broken out of their confinement, are moving around and away from their homelands, not so much because their countries are poor, but because they were unnaturally confined and severed from many of their traditional sources of wealth, and because it is in their blood to be mobile. They are once again

enlarging their world, establishing new resource bases and expanded networks for circulation” (1994:156).

Samoans have been migrating to New Zealand since the mid-nineteenth century, but the most dramatic increase in numbers came soon after WWII when the economy in New Zealand began to grow and the need for unskilled labor was increasing within urban industry (MacPherson 1991, Kallen 1982). This influx went on for more than two decades, yet islanders did not only come for economic reasons. Many others came for educational betterment, freedom from binding cultural expectations, the need to support family back in Sāmoa, to be with the migratory family members, and for more opportunities in their daily lives (Franco 1991).

Once employment and housing were secured in urban areas by the initial migrants coming into New Zealand from the rural areas of the Pacific Islands, it became easier for other relatives to move over and settle - hence, the term “chain migration” used to describe this process (MacPherson 1996). These “chains” brought over increasing numbers of migrants who began to concentrate in low income housing sectors that were near their work places. As a result, populations of islanders began to consolidate in specific cities and within those cities, in particular suburbs. In the 1996 census, those areas with the highest percentage of the total Samoan population in New Zealand were Auckland ($\approx 32\%$), Wellington ($\approx 9\%$), Christchurch ($\approx 2.2\%$), Canterbury ($\approx 2\%$), and Waikato ($\approx 1.4\%$). (Population and Dwellings: Pacific Islands People Population and Dwellings-Table 3).

Looking over the last five decades, the Samoan population in New Zealand has been steadily multiplying due to immigration and natural increases. As of 1996, the Samoan population made up more than 50% of the total Pacific Island population living in New Zealand.

Of that resident Samoan population, over 56% (approximately 57,00) were New Zealand born, as Tables 1 and 2 show. With this growing number indicating New Zealand as their birthplace, it becomes important to understand, from a socio-cultural perspective, the change occurring in the *fa'a Sāmoa* and the adaptation and evolution of cultural identity with this new generation.

Table 1: New Zealand Born Pacific Islander Population, 1996

	Pacific Island Ethnic Groups			Total
	Birthplace			
	New Zealand	Overseas	Not Specified	
Samoan	57,027	43,374	1,353	101,754
Cook Islander	32,190	14,160	666	47,016
Tongan	16,086	14,805	498	31,389
Niuean	11,877	6,144	453	18,474
Fijian (except for Fiji Indian/Indo Fijian)	3,546	4,059	90	7,698
Tokelauan	2,916	1,926	75	4,917
Society Islander	705	330	18	1,053
Other Pacific Islander	1,785	2,415	54	4,254

Source: National Summary, 1996 Census of Populations & Dwellings.

Table 2: Population of Samoan Ethnicity Resident in New Zealand, 1986 - 1996

Summary Measure	1986	1991	1996
Samoan Population as Percent of:			
Total New Zealand Resident Pacific Island Population	50.85	51.32	50.31
Total New Zealand Resident Population	2.03	2.54	2.81
Percent New Zealand Born	49.73	49.33	56.79
Percent Samoan Born	48.94	49.32	40.81

Source: Pacific Islands People, 1996 Census of Population & Dwellings.

Although many migrant Samoans have the initial intention of returning home, more often than not they have made New Zealand their permanent residence. Pitt and MacPherson, who have undertaken many studies of the Samoan community in New Zealand, indicated more than 20 years ago, “More important still, the migrant himself has changed while he has been abroad whether he realizes it or not. He has built up new attitudes, new networks of commitments, constraints, and comforts which are hard to break . . . Thus if the dream remains [to return to Sāmoa] it seems likely that it is nostalgia for the past rather than a plan for the future” (1974:15-16). In addition, as the roots continue to grow and the *‘āiga* (family, the extended family) becomes firmly established in New Zealand, the family networks continue to build and strengthen, and this in turn lessens the desire to leave and return to Sāmoa - especially if family well being is one of the top deciding factors for many migrants when deciding to return home (Pitt and MacPherson 15).

For the same reason, returning “home” to Sāmoa, except for the occasional holiday sojourn or the unexpected family crisis, is not a strong longing for most Samoans born in New

Zealand, who now outnumber the Samoan born population in the community. Most of those interviewed have never traveled to Sāmoa, but many of those who have traveled there found adaptation difficult because of the very different lifestyle, the uncomfortable special treatment they were given, the lack of fluency they had in the language, and the uneasiness and clumsiness they felt with the *fa'a Sāmoa*. Many young Samoans may still acknowledge Sāmoa as their home, but they view it as more remote. One woman, Rose, said during her interview,

Sāmoa is, you know, it's home. You acknowledge it as your home. My mother always told me, "You'll always have a place back home," whether you know it or not. Because you're born with the family. You're born from someone Samoan. And they'll always be your link home. To me, if you have a link . . . but don't know it that well . . . my mum always established in me that you'll always be Samoan because of the link with her.

Generally, the New Zealand-Samoan young people still feel that they are Samoans first and foremost, and New Zealanders second. They continue to uphold those institutions and values which they perceive as Samoan, such as the traditional food, the Samoan language, showing respect, and the importance of family, yet because of the disconnection with the intricacies of the *fa'a Sāmoa*, and the differences in attitude between them and their parents' generation, the idea of living in Sāmoa permanently is as far off as the islands themselves. When asked if they would like to return to Sāmoa to live, the responses were often like the following:

TI'E: I'd like to go there for a first time. You know, I'd like to visit there and find out all about the places . . . You know, it's one of my big goals in life to go back and find out where my roots are. But, that's about as far as I'll go really. I guess I'm too westernized. Too westernized in my thinking and my living. I could probably learn to adapt, but I can't see myself wanting to. It's just a whole other life that I have to learn. But, if I have a choice, I would not go back to live. If I went for a prolonged period, I'd still come back. I feel at home in New Zealand because I know New Zealand. It's my birthplace. I've grown up to think New Zealand ways. I've grown up to live in New Zealand ways.

BEV: No. No. I guess because this [New Zealand] will always be my home. It's where I was brought up with the extended family. My friends are here. It's just that, no, I would never go to live over in Sāmoa. I've always seen New Zealand as my home, always. It

would be wrong for me to go to live in Sāmoa someday and say, “Sāmoa is my home,” when I’ve only been there a month.

PULE: Honestly, I’d say, “Well, I don’t want to go to Sā.” . . . That’s how I feel. I know I really like New Zealand. I like, you know, it’s where I call home and not really the islands. I suppose I’ll like living in the islands for a couple of months, but I wouldn’t live there for years or anything like that.

REINA: Yeah, but I wouldn’t want to live there permanently. I’ve always wanted to live there for a couple of years. Yeah, I’ve always wanted to live there at least two or three years, I think. It’s my parents’ home and I know my parents want to go back and retire there, but I don’t think I’d be able to retire there in my own village. I’m pretty sure I’d miss the conveniences of New Zealand, you know, the lifestyle of New Zealand. It would probably depend on who I went back with as well. Yeah, but I can’t see myself retiring there or dying there . . .

Traditional Samoan society varies tremendously from New Zealand’s dominant westernized environment in that it is founded on the importance of family as the main unit, rather than on the individual. As a result, the need for cultural adjustment of a Samoan, upon arrival in a very westernized New Zealand, is extensive. This adjustment, in turn, influences the values and customs which parents select to teach their children and will be the main determinant in a child’s perception of the Samoan culture, and how their children will mold the *fa’a Sāmoa* for the next generation.

In talking to the children of Samoan migrants, I found their definition and perception of the *fa’a Sāmoa* very different from that of the island born Samoan. I believe this variation exists because of the process of migration which allows the migrant to make deliberate decisions about what they pass onto their children born in a non-Samoan environment. In regards to the flexible nature of *fa’a Sāmoa* in the migratory situation, Evelyn Kallen states that “. . . while migration in many ways is built upon and reinforces *fa’asamoā* values and institutions, the continuing exchange of migrants, visitors, letters, monies and ideas between Western Samoa and overseas

inevitably and inexorably sows the seeds of change. Thus migration, internal and external, has acted as a prime mover in the shift from the old to the new ethnicity” (1982:132). For migrants, balancing the foreignness and isolation of their new atmosphere with the familiarity and closeness of their cultural upbringing, provides a sense of stability and community in an otherwise tumultuous time. But for the many Samoans born in New Zealand, the adjustment is difficult and even doubly complicated because they are living in two very different worlds - one in which the home and family are considered central, and one in which the western concept of self reliance pervades. How the Samoan young people adjust to and define their cultural identity is directly connected to the aspects of the *fa'a Sāmoa* their parents passed onto them, which they must decide to choose, reject, or change.

In looking at diasporic Tongans, Helen Morton has found that, “Migrants do not construct their ‘ethnic identity’ from scratch; they each bring their own evolving version of it with them to their new home” (1998:3). MacPherson has also written, “To explain the divergent orientations, we have to understand the diversity of migrants’ experiences of Samoan culture because these have shaped their orientations to it and their determination to reproduce it in New Zealand” (1991:76). Thus, children and parents alike seek to find that balance between cultural and personal identity in a predominantly *pālagi* environment. One of the young women, Mata, spoke of that difficult balance during her interview.

But, I guess the hardest thing for a lot of New Zealand born Samoans is to find that balance, to find a balance that’s them and also to know when to give up certain things, when not to give up certain things. And also, to find just that balance in life where they’re not compromising their culture, but they’re just really affirming who they are. And I think it’s quite difficult because when at home, your parents are telling you to think one way and then you go into the real world, they’re telling you not to think like that. You know, to think individualistic, that you are the only person that matters and that’s when it begins to

be very difficult . . . So I find, yeah, a lot of New Zealand born Samoans do find it difficult to adapt. They do. It's just knowing that balance and knowing that there is . . . they've got to have that - I don't think it's wisdom - I think it's that - even common sense. You know, knowing how far you can go in terms of your culture.

Chapter 2

Two Views on Culture

“I view culture as something that people possess and so because people possess it - the changes - because people change.

That’s funny because I think once it’s transferred from the islands to here, it becomes more . . . they try to preserve it because it’s away from its natural home. So called ‘natural home.’ And so they take certain aspects and they’re really strict about, you know, keeping them precise and preserving them - how they should be - so that those sort of things don’t change a lot. But then, I think, people have different perceptions of culture. And in the islands, they’re not as strict about things like that.” - Reina

“. . . I mean, I don’t know, because I feel like there’s a lot of . . . like in our generation we’re more *pālagi* oriented. We’re more like, ‘Aw, we don’t know the *fa’a Sāmoa*.’ Whereas, in Mum’s generation, a lot of parents seem . . . in Mum’s generation that’s when most of the Samoans migrated to New Zealand and it’s like, there’s still that *fa’a Sāmoa* with all those people in her age group. And, they’re still trying to pass it down to us. But, it’s like, we don’t want it. We don’t want that because we know what it entails because we see our parents struggling.” - Becca

For many Samoans, the phrase *fa’a Sāmoa* is tenaciously held onto and could be, at best, translated in English as “the Samoan Way” or anything connected to “being Samoan.” *Fa’a Sāmoa* can be a very ambiguous concept since it embodies multifaceted meanings for many Samoans, which range from culture, language, traditions, family life and lifestyle to even strict physical discipline. Language proficiency, dance, discipline, home life, response to *fa’alavelave* (lit. meaning: troubles or disturbances to daily life such as weddings, funerals, social/familial entanglements), church involvement, friends, and extended family participation are all aspects used to describe and measure what being Samoan really is. Samoans use these aspects to gauge how Samoan they or other Samoans are. The closeness to which the *fa’a Sāmoa* is adhered to determines whether they label themselves and others as “Samoan Samoan,” “extreme Samoan,”

“very Samoan,” “ true Samoan,” “old Samoan,” “modern Samoan,” “traditional Samoan,” and/or “a white Samoan.” During her interview, Sue described the kind of Samoan she saw herself as by saying, “I definitely say that, yeah I am Samoan. Yet, in a different way. Not the Samoan Samoan style, but more like a *pālagi* Samoan style. That sounds funny. Yeah, like half and half . . .”

Stuart Hall has stated that there are two different ways to look at cultural identity. The first view is that cultural identity is defined by the shared history of many others who have similar experiences and practices that have become distinctive, relatively unchanged, and static through time. There’s a kind of eternal point of cultural reference to which many others unite, creating an ethnic bond. Hall writes, “. . . our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as ‘one people’, with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of references and meaning . . .” (1990:223). The second view is that cultural identity is always in a state of change and fluidity - it is not only about what a culture once was, but what one’s culture can and will be. Hall goes on to say, “Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past . . . Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation” (225). The *fa’a Sāmoa* survives today as a blend of these two views. There exists in the Samoan culture a dual characteristic of being unmoving and traditional which can be seen by the fact that it remains strong even today, yet also being fluid because it has lasted through decades of modifications as western ideas were introduced and adapted to the *fa’a Sāmoa*.

Those who maintain that the *fa’a Sāmoa* can never change find the “New Zealand *fa’a*

Sāmoa” not only as a deterioration of the original, but also a threat to the complete breakdown of the “true *fa’a Sāmoa*.” By contrast, In “Towards a New Oceania,” Albert Wendt favors cultural progression and states, “Like a tree a culture is forever growing new branches, foliage, and roots. Our cultures, contrary to the simplistic interpretation of our romantics were changing even in pre-papalagi times through inter-island contact and the endeavors of exceptional individuals and groups who manipulated politics, religion, and other people” (75-76 [no date]). He questions whether a “traditional culture” ever existed, and wonders at what point in the growth of a culture does it become labeled as “traditional.” He goes on to say, “No culture is ever static and can be preserved (a favorite word with our colonisers and romantic elite brethren) like a stuffed gorilla in a museum. There is no state of cultural purity (or perfect state of cultural goodness) from which there is decline: **usage determines authenticity**” (76 [no date] - emphasis added). Here, he disagrees emphatically with those who believe that culture is unchanging and static. The authenticity of a culture is not based on how safeguarded it is, but rather authenticity comes from how that culture is used, to be a freely transformable and manipulated identity. Jürg Wassmann agrees with this viewpoint, “Today, culture is understood as a pastiche or a collage, as a hybrid or a creole form. There is much rhetoric involved. Our search for purity, homogeneity and boundedness of cultures is no longer appropriate although there is a deep longing everywhere for primordial meanings . . .” (1998:11).

As a compromise between both views, I found Lise’s insights on the transformational, yet fixed nature of the *fa’a Sāmoa* very enlightening.

I see culture as being the same, but moving. I mean moving with the times, but not losing its essence. Not losing what makes the *fa’a Sāmoa*, the *fa’a Sāmoa* way. I think it’s good to change with time, but not at a loss, not at the expense of losing its essence - what makes the Samoan culture the way it is.

Kathleen Odell Korgen, in her paper about the racial identity of biracial black Americans, states, “. . . history critically influences both individual and group identity. Moreover, transformations in identity are often tied to particular changes from one epoch to another in history” (1998:43). Yet, the contemporary cultural identity of many young Samoans born outside of Sāmoa seems to be only slightly grounded in history. Of those interviewed, only two individuals made a reference to any point of Samoan history as an aspect of the *fa’a Sāmoa*. One interviewee said that although she may be Samoan, she hardly knows the history that formed her identity, “I really do need to check it out. Check out my parents’ roots, where I come from. It reminds me of the book, Roots, by Alex Hailey and how he wanted to check out every single part of his roots from Africa to America. I am proud that I’ve got the Samoan background, but to have the history behind it, I really need to delve through it.”

Helen Morton similarly noticed that “the cultural identity of younger Tongans seems to be only weakly based on explicit historical identification . . .” (1998:11). For the majority of those interviewed, the *fa’a Sāmoa* is seen in a modern context and how it affects their lives. I rarely heard of old Samoan legends or historical accounts from those I talked to. If “the past” was talked about, it was recounted as their parents described it and the Samoan tradition was seen through their parents’ experiences of being born and raised in Sāmoa with stories of their childhood. While in New Zealand, I observed how this “historical identification” contrasted with their Māori counterparts, in which a child’s upbringing and cultural identity is heavily based on “the past” and the teachings of Māori history. As a result most symbols with a historical

reference made by the non-Samoan born would be mainly seen in Samoan dance, music, and dress for special occasions during the *fa'alavelave*'s and church functions.

Jürg Wassmann comments on how individuals are becoming more "autonomous" with weak links to their historical pasts because of the larger global systems that they are drawn into: "This correlates with a move from culturally strong identity, from ethnicity, to weaker forms as lifestyles, which is the least ascriptive in so far as it refers to the practice of a culturally specific scheme which makes no claims to historical legitimacy and which can be freely chosen by the individual subject" (1998:11). Interestingly enough, National Geographic addresses the concept of a globalized system with a recent edition called "Global Culture," explaining that "globalization" of culture is inevitable and will affect the progression of traditional cultures and people's identity within those cultures. As a former editor of the journal, Erla Zwingle states, "Still, the basic dynamic remains the same: Goods move. People move. Ideas move. And cultures change" (1999: 12) and later writes, "Cultures don't become more uniform; instead, both old and new tend to transform each other" (33).

Chapter 3

The New Zealand Born Perspective of the Fa'a Sāmoa

To find out how some of the interviewees defined their culture, I asked them what they thought the *fa'a Sāmoa* was. Their answers gave a strong indication of how many New Zealand born perceived “traditional *fa'a Sāmoa*” and how growing up in a non-Samoan and very westernized environment influenced the shaping of their ideas on their culture and self identification:

Oh, I definitely see it as respect.

Well, Samoan culture is . . . you have to go to church on Sunday.

Fa'a Sāmoa would probably just be the rituals, the beliefs and also the language itself, like, the etiquette that comes around it as well and what you do in certain ceremonies like a wedding . . . That it's the rituals, the beliefs, and also the customs that occur at weddings and functions like that.

I view *fa'a Sāmoa* through my own experiences with *fa'a Sāmoa* and so those aspects, those things like language and the dancing and, of course that's all really important. But, I think the heart of it all is other values of *fa'a Sāmoa* - other values that the Samoan community looks for - honor, respect, obedience, doing good for God, and have your whole family rather than just yourself.

I'd say it's discipline. It's having traditions . . . customs, *'ie koga's* [fine mats], *makai's* [title holder/chief], money, food, and families.

. . . *Fa'a Sāmoa* to me would be more like looking at the language. Like, if I can speak it. I would not know what *fa'a Sāmoa* is culture like - not culturally, traditionally - I wouldn't know. I would say more into the language, whether I can speak it or not.

For me, I define *fa'a Sāmoa* as, *fa'a Sāmoa* as a - like a poor way of living . . . They give everything. Their house, whatever they have - food and all that. But, it's like a competition. That's what I find in the *fa'a Sāmoa*.

Whereas, *fa'a Sāmoa*, it's your life. You live it. You don't question it. I don't think you question it. You might have negative feelings, but you do it anyway because it's “the Way”.

Violent, aggressive in life.

Fa'a Sāmoa is basically the Samoan way of life. That's the way to live if you're a Samoan. You must know *fa'a Sāmoa*. And it's funny because *fa'a Sāmoa* is . . . suppose to go hand-in-hand with Christianity. *Fa'a Sāmoa* has a lot to do with Christianity.

I don't know [a long pause]. I don't know what *fa'a Sāmoa* is.

Oh gosh . . . putting into practice the old traditions. It is the extended family first - the extended family. I think it's about constantly giving, constantly giving to the wider family. It's about tradition, you know, holding onto the old values; the old story tellings.

It's the way you serve other people; the way you serve other people; the way you give to other people; the old chiefhoods.

I think it would be respect. Yeah, respect is the biggest, the biggest aspect of Samoan culture that I recognize . . . That and communal living. The extended family rather than just the nuclear family. Doing things to better your group rather than just yourself. Yeah, so I think that's what defines *fa'a Sāmoa* for me.

These different definitions and impressions of the *fa'a Sāmoa* speak a great deal to the home life and parental teachings. Another interviewee, when asked what aspect of the Samoan culture she would leave out of her children's upbringing, simply stated, "The *fa'a Sāmoa!*" Because she had witnessed her mother undergo long stretches of "slaving away" to meet the financial demands of the culture, her own dedication and sentiments to the *fa'a Sāmoa* had become negative. MacPherson has stated, "the transformation of ethnicity commences at home in the ways in which the host and migrant culture respectively are experienced and reflected upon . . . They [migrant care givers] then represent the cultures to their children in ways which lead the latter to particular evaluations of the respective importance and utility of Samoan and non-Samoan culture and society," (1984:113). Within households and families, decisions are constantly made to what extent the *fa'a Sāmoa* will be taught and used. In turn, these decisions will have a profound influence on how the Samoan culture will be shaped by the children and may also explain the wide variations of the *fa'a Sāmoa* that occur within the same ethnicity.

Many immigrant parents prefer to take a western approach to raising their children with the view that it will ease the adaptation process and bring about more success in life. This was the situation for the majority of those interviewed. In order to understand how their upbringing influenced their cultural orientation and personal development, it is helpful to hear the stories and testimonies of some Samoan individuals.

Reina

Reina is a twenty-four year old college student who was born and raised in Auckland. Both her parents came from Savai'i to New Zealand in order to provide their children more educational and employment opportunities than could be obtained in the islands. Reina wishes that her parents had stayed in Sāmoa because she regrets not knowing the culture fully, yet she still views herself as Samoan. In her own words, she describes herself as, "Definitely Samoan. Yeah, but I recognize that I am New Zealand born Samoan. I recognize that there is a difference." The difference she saw was, as she put it,

Not having all that knowledge that my counterparts in Sāmoa would have about the culture and the language and just obviously the lifestyle is different. And I have access to different . . . I don't know if I would call them opportunities because I think they're only opportunities if they're perceived as opportunities. Sometimes I really regret that my parents decided to come here and leave their families because we could have been born and raised in Sāmoa, gotten a scholarship and come here to have the same educational opportunities - which is why they came here.

Her parents chose to speak to their children in English at home once they started going to elementary school. The only experience Reina had with the *fa'a Sāmoa* was during special occasions and while on brief trips to Sāmoa to see her mother's side of the family. She reflected on why her parents decided to raise her in the "*pālāgi* culture" and she wishes that she had been taught more of the Samoan culture.

I used to find - feel that - you know, my Samoan culture wasn't given as much importance as my New Zealand culture was because, like I said, we used to speak Samoan until we started school and then my parents decided to speak only English at home because they felt that would help us with our education. I think being Samoan when they were here, when they first arrived, was very different to being Samoan now. They probably had, they would have had a whole lot more pressures because they're struggling with the language themselves and they're realizing how difficult things are for them, not being totally fluent in English. And I think they just thought that it would help us out better at school if we were fluent. And they didn't, at that time they probably, they wouldn't be able to access all the studies that say, "Actually, children learn languages faster when they're younger and they're actually better off if they know more than one language when they're starting out at school." That would be the only reason I can think why. But then that's - it was quite strange because then all of a sudden we hit twelve, thirteen - getting into the teen years and then you get those adolescent problems with parents. And then they start saying, "Aw, it's the *pālagi* culture." You know? Then they revert and all of sudden they expected us to speak only Samoan. They went through this stage where they said, "No. No English at home." And we had to suddenly switch to Samoan and we didn't have that practice at that time. My grandfather had always lived with us, so we all spoke Samoan to him because he wouldn't take English. He didn't want to be spoken to in English. So then at that time he took a whole lot more - a bigger part in our language learning at that time. But that stage only lasted a couple of years, two, three years, I think. So it was kind of interesting. So I think that's something too because we had access to two different cultures. It was very easy to pick and choose which parts of that culture you want to practice and which parts you don't. So they say, you know, "Get the best of both worlds," but it can also be used as a screening mechanism. Like, my parents for instance, suddenly blaming the *pālagi* culture or the influence of the *pālagi* culture for any problems they were having with us. So I suppose you couldn't have the best of both worlds too.

. . . Because in my experiences, I've only been - the only time I get to see *fa'a Sāmoa* is at funerals or at weddings, on special occasions . . . I really regret that I don't know enough about it, about those things. Like, when my grandfather passed away, which was just last October, it was - all the grandkids, we did the *fe'au's* [duties] and everything - all the fine mats and everything. But, we had to ask how things were done because we weren't too sure. But, we did it anyway which we were happy about and we learned a whole lot about how to do it properly next time. It was really good. It was a good learning experience. It's just a shame that we have to learn it that way when something happens. I really wish that I had those oratory skills. I think it would be wonderful. I regret that my brothers don't have them and those dancing skills as well.

Bev

Bev, twenty-seven, was born in Auckland and is now married with a child. Both her parents were born in Western Sāmoa and moved over individually in the early 60's. When I asked her how she identified herself, she simply said, "European." Much of her home life was

lived in a “European way” and English was “always” spoken at home. She began the interview with saying that she felt no confusion at all about her identity and that,

I still have the same respect for both cultures, not one is higher than the other. I never disrespect the culture that my parents were brought up in. It’s always on the same level as the European culture that I was brought up in.

Yet, by the end of the interview, her response changed upon more reflection and she ended with feeling very caught between two worlds. Her shifting position on her personal and cultural identity shows how identity is not always fixed, and that individuals can hold multiple positions in regards to identity depending on the context (Morton 1998). Bev expressed her frustration of inadequacy both in speaking the language and in her knowledge of the customs. Her parents believed that speaking Samoan would not get her anywhere in the real world.

. . . A lot of confusion - just knowing my own culture and that even though mum and dad talk about it, but it just suits the event [special occasions when family flies in from Sāmoa] because it’s not very strong in our own family. It’s really hard to keep it up, sort of thing. I think that if Mum and Dad were really into the Samoan culture - the real *fa’a Sāmoa* way of being - I think that I’d have a better understanding, but we don’t. That’s what makes it really hard now. Even when our grandparents come over, they have to teach us how to say certain things when you go in front of them and that . . . Sometimes you can feel like you don’t want to do it, you know. Why force it upon us to speak the other language when all along you’ve been, you know, you’ve been brought up in and spoken to in the European language and that.

I think it’s because it wouldn’t get us anywhere - our culture in the European workforce. You can’t get work speaking Samoan to your boss and that! You can’t take your culture with you to your work place. When you leave home, you go into a work force where everything is European. You talk English. That’s the main language around the work force here. That’s the only way you get through the day. That’s why, I think, that’s why they emphasized English, speaking English.

Ti’e

Ti’e, twenty-two, was also born in Auckland and was raised in a single parent household. He said that his mother taught him that the Samoan culture will never change and “drums that into his head every other day.” Looking back, he was grateful for how his mother taught him and his two other siblings the “basics” of the *fa’a Sāmoa*, yet he knows that he will always be

westernized in his thinking. Now married with two children of his own, Ti'e wants to teach them about the Samoan culture - to a certain degree.

There are some things I would want to carry on because for me heritage is important. Heritage is very important . . . For me, the whole idea of being Samoan is that it's important to pass on your heritage, your lineage - things like that. But, only the positive aspects of your culture. I mean I don't really want to pass on all the western ways of life. I don't think . . . I'm not saying that the western culture is doing the most, the exact, and is the perfect culture in the world. It's not. There are many aspects in the western culture I disagree with in some ways. But, I guess for me, it's just taking the best of both worlds. That's what I would like to do - take the best of both worlds and bring my children up as best as I can. That's not a sense of stealing. It's a sense of looking out for your children's benefit. You know, looking out for their best interests. Looking out for your own best interests as well.

Earlier in the interview, Ti'e maintained that there are aspects of the *fa'a Sāmoa* which he identifies as "50% good, 50% bad." There are parts which he takes pride in and parts which he "hates." He went on to say, "I guess that's my European side coming out, you know. That's my European way of thinking." His mother was instrumental in how she relayed and lived out the Samoan culture before his eyes as he grew up. Like most of the other parents of New Zealand born children in the interviews, his mother believed it was best to focus on English and "being a New Zealander."

I mean, where I come from, it's natural for a New Zealand born Samoan not to know his culture fully. There are a lot of Samoans who I know have successfully mastered that - being born in New Zealand, not having visited the island, but they still fully knowing their culture and language. And, I guess, it really comes down to the upbringing. I wasn't really brought up in the Samoan culture . . . We were brought up in quite a European culture where Mum thought it was best for us to get a good European education. You know, so that we could grow up and live good lives rather than the life that she lived, which was a hard upbringing, brought up in the islands, very cultural upbringing - discipline and things like that. I mean Mum still disciplined us, but we were brought up more in the European side of life which is why I can understand the difference between the cultures. And I know exactly what it's all about, rather than the Samoan side, which I'm still learning . . . My mum is extremely stubborn, but she's raised me up as best as she can. And she's raised me up according to the western way of life, but at the same time she's always talked to me in Samoan which is really awesome. And that's the one thing I really appreciate about my mother because she had the best of both worlds in mind.

Rose

Rose is married and a mother of two. Her father is Tongan and her mother is Samoan. She remembers both parents speaking to her in Samoan when she was little, but English soon took position as the main language spoken in her home when she entered school. She recalled a trip she made to Sāmoa with her family when she was seventeen and how different the *fa'a Sāmoa* was there from that in New Zealand.

I enjoyed it. I enjoyed getting to - being part of that because I don't think I was part of that in New Zealand. That's different to New Zealand Samoans' *fa'a Sāmoa*. Being in Sāmoa is different to here. Different because, I think more . . . we grow up with a different society and trying to live that and trying to be relatable to the people around you. And as well as my own parents, they taught me all the way when I was young until about five - Samoan. They taught me the culture and tradition . . . then they left it because they thought we needed to fit into New Zealand. So, they started teaching us English, which, well, is sad because we never carried on with that - keeping the Samoan, keep speaking Samoan in the house and keeping some of the traditions that we learned when we were young. Or, even when we grew older - how my mother was brought up - she didn't keep those traditions because she thought to keep me relatable, my brother and I. Just to fit in because she knew it was different.

Rose said that it was confusing and frustrating growing up, especially during her teen years, to deal with not knowing her own cultural identity because her parents thought it was best for her to relate to New Zealand life. Yet, they still had expectations of her to know the Samoan culture and to uphold cultural demands. She found these expectations to be baffling and unfair since she was not raised in that cultural environment in the first place.

But, now and then, she [her mother] would go back to the old ways and it was hard because then we'd get really angry because we weren't used to it and she'd bring in, "You have to do this for so and so's family." But, you know, it wasn't consistent living that life and that's where, I think, that is what frustrates a lot of New Zealand born Samoans because they're not consistently living it, in the house and out of the house . . . It's [the *fa'a Sāmoa*] not taught totally here in New Zealand. Whereas, Samoan children born in New Zealand or brought up in New Zealand, I think, for myself, we do live two lives. When I was brought up, I did live two lives.

. . . I'd try to fit in and not be the outcast, in a sense. It was sort of hard because you're sort of an outcast there and then you come back home and your family wants to try to be *fa'a Sāmoa*, but then you're still an outcast because you can't fit in. So you don't win. It's like a cycle. You don't win. So you always go having a life with your family, having a life with your cousins and relatives, and then with friends or in your work place - you're different! You live up to their standards and then you live up to what your parents or relatives think of you as.

Rose believes that her lack of knowledge of her cultural background directly affected her personal identity growing up and continues to influence her view of the Samoan culture. Thus, she now wants to teach her children from any early age, and consistently throughout their lives, the very Samoan heritage and language that she missed out on - in hopes to offer them a more solid foothold in cultural matters that she never had.

Now, we teach them, because we have two daughters ourselves, my husband and I. He's Samoan. So, we've asked our mum to teach them Samoan because it's something that I've missed out on. Because I don't fluently know and I do want - at least not just for the children - even to go back to school because there are classes here in Samoan. Or, even learn off Mum when she speaks in Samoan - ask her more questions because I think it will give our children more identity and not feel frustration of not being able to communicate with a lot of your relatives because I couldn't communicate. Like, there's a lot of older relatives I couldn't talk to because they didn't speak English and that was frustrating. And in a sense, I don't want that to go down to the children.

Lise

Lise is a twenty-seven year old single adult female. The fact that she grew up in a household where the *fa'a Sāmoa* was “not allowed,” nor the language spoken, directly influenced her cultural and self identity for many years. It was not until college that she finally saw the “importance of children knowing their first language and how much more confident they are about themselves. It's like I feel a bit - it makes me really insecure actually because I know that I don't belong in both worlds. Because I don't have that confidence of who I am, you know?” As a result, she believes it is very important to teach children at an early age their cultural

background. Because of her recent resurgent interest in her culture, she says that she will teach her children their heritage in a way that she was not taught.

I'm just going to teach them the best about their culture. I mean, I'll be realistic and tell them the downfalls of it. I want them to just do well in whatever they do and I know that knowing who they are will give them the strength - will help them in the long run rather than denying who they are, other than trying to make them be something that they're not. That's how I was for a long time in my life - trying to be white.

Being the main decision maker of the family, Lise's father chose to not promote the *fa'a Sāmoa* in his children's lives. She reflected on the way she was raised and what she believed to be her father's reasoning behind it.

I never - my father wouldn't let us join any Samoan culture groups. We went to a Pacific Island Church, but I never had anything to do with the Samoan - or any of the cultural things. I really never had anything to do with the Samoan groups in the community or anything. It wasn't until I came into the church that I'm in now that it's the first time I ever been in a culture group. And I'm 27! It's the first time I've ever been. It's the first time I ever learned a Samoan song because I had no experience with my culture in that way. I mean, I wanted to, but I was never allowed. After a while, I didn't think it was important. Didn't really.

I guess because he saw that - I guess he saw it that way because he knew that was the way to go. An education will give us more opportunity - that Samoan was important for him, but he knew it was not valued. In the real world, it's not valued as being important, or you can't get a job knowing how to speak Samoan. I guess he values it, but not for us, you know? . . . I think he . . . I remember that so much about my dad - was that was all he would say to us: "We didn't leave Sāmoa . . . If we wanted you to learn Samoan, we would have stayed in Sāmoa. The reason we came to New Zealand was for you guys to get an education!" I guess he just wanted the best for us and he knew that, you know, learning the Samoan and learning my culture wouldn't get me anywhere in life, you know? My dad was very hardworking and he really thinks about things. He thinks a lot about his family and he just, um, I think that was his mind set - was to drop the culture. "We're in New Zealand. We need to do things the New Zealand way because no one is going to hire you if you're fluent in Samoan."

In his study on the evolving ethnicity of Samoans in New Zealand, Cluny MacPherson (1984) represents three different environments created by migrant parents in which their children live. Those environments have a strong influence on how the next generation will perceive Samoan and non-Samoan culture, and therefore affect the construction of the *fa'a Sāmoa* within

New Zealand. In the first household, the Samoan language, values, and institutions are adhered to and fostered. The second household situation is characterized by equal exposure to the Samoan and non-Samoan culture. In the third environment, the non-Samoan culture is promoted with limited exposure to things Samoan. My overall assessment of those I have interviewed is that most individuals were raised in homes where either the second or third environment prevailed. However, I do believe that there are definite variations to these structures and of course, exceptions to the rule, especially when you consider the subjective nature of identity and the purposeful decision making of each individual regarding their cultural identity. Home life may not determine the choices individuals make, but it does give a strong indication of the particular path they follow.

Spicer (1971) explains that one of the most distinctive elements of an identity system or culture is the language. There are variations as to the degree and the motivation for which parents will encourage or discourage their children from speaking Samoan in the home. It is very interesting that one of the most central elements of the Samoan culture, the language, was the first to be eliminated by many parents in an effort to open wide the doors of western thinking and lifestyle in their childrens lives. In the minds of many parents, success in New Zealand would depend highly on English language skills. Lena who is twenty-three years old and attends college said that her parents both agreed to avoid teaching their children the Samoan language in an effort to have them be more successful in school.

Well, it's really funny because when my parents first came, they hardly knew any English and they were here for like 10 years before I was born. But, I've got three older . . . an older brother and two older sisters before me. So, when I was very small, from zero to five, they spoke Samoan to me and as I went to school, I learned English. And I don't know how my parents learned English, probably from work and stuff, but come home and now we just speak English. We don't speak Samoan. We communicate in English,

except my dad. Now and then he says a couple of Samoan words to me that he knows I'll understand. My mum's totally opposite. She doesn't want to say a thing in Samoan.

Well, I think the question now for a lot of Pacific Island families is education. Like, I guess they think education means money. Money means supporting the family and means being happy and being well looked after. And so, they thought sacrificing a language, I guess . . . they didn't really think of it that it was sacrificing a language. They just thought, "That would help me more if they speak English." And I guess it did in terms of . . . It is sort of a bit strange to think about that once I used to speak Samoan and now I just speak English and now I don't know a word of Samoan except little phrases. I think my parents were thinking of education. They were thinking of how far it would take me if I knew English. And I think for them in Samoan when they were growing up, they had to learn English and it was very difficult. So they thought, "If we speak it at home, it would be far more easier."

There were some parents of those interviewed who wanted to keep the *fa'a Sāmoa* alive in the home. They would, therefore, put less emphasis on communicating in English by setting rules such as, speaking only Samoan when in the house or on certain days. Yet, the majority of the interviewees stopped speaking Samoan as soon as their first year of primary school began and communication from then on was solely in English between their parents and themselves. Most claimed to know in their daily lives only a smattering of Samoan - a few phrases or commands. Language proficiency is also the main aspect which young Samoans use to determine how Samoan someone is. A great deal of self-identification comes from language proficiency. For this very reason, most of the interviewees did not "feel" very Samoan because of their inadequate speaking capabilities even though most claimed to be fluent in understanding the Samoan language when it was spoken. During her interview, Pule remarked on how she felt about her limited Samoan language skills and how those limitations affected her self image and cultural identity,

I actually feel insecure. I feel really guilty, like, I should have learned my language really thoroughly. I should have listened to my grandmother or my mum when she said, "Don't speak English at home and just speak the Samoan language so that when you grow up, you know what you're talking about and you know how to talk to elders." It's even funnier - it's even more intimidating when you speak to Europeans who lived in Sāmoa and they

speaking it fluently. I just can't say it - ah, too embarrassing. One guy did. He spoke really fluent Samoan and he goes to Faye [Pule's friend] . . . and goes, "Why doesn't she [Pule] speak Samoan, in the Samoan language?" Because I was too intimidated! You know? I felt really intimidated, like, "Wow, he speaks it better than me!" I felt really funny. I felt like, "Gosh, man, I'm Samoan and I don't even know my own language!" I hated myself for not knowing it fully.

Bev also commented on the language skills of her generation and how New Zealand born Samoans are changing because of it.

The lack of speaking the actual language itself. I think just the upbringing, just being in New Zealand has a real big effect on the language itself on the Samoan children. I mean you can't go to school to speak Samoan. You've got to go to school to speak English and that's where it's broken down. You go to school to speak English and you come home and speak Samoan. And I think it's a real breakdown in the family itself. You know, so the children have to divide their language during the day and it gets real confusing for them.

What is significant is that just as readily as the Samoan language was dropped by their parents, the New Zealand born children were eager to pick it back up again. Although most New Zealand borns were frustrated and ashamed for not being fluent in their mother tongue, they did exhibit a strong desire to learn the language by either taking language courses or by returning back to Sāmoa for a few months to reimmerse themselves in the everyday living of the *fa'a Sāmoa*. Interestingly enough, though many people expressed a reluctance to live in Sāmoa earlier in this paper, going back to Sāmoa briefly was considered the most effective method to change language acquisition by about eighty percent of those interviewed. Although, most of the interviewees stated that it would be very uncomfortable for them to attempt to learn Samoan from their parents again, all agreed that sending their children to their grandparents, if they lived in New Zealand, would be the best method. Also mentioned as a possibility by two interviewees was the "Samoan 'Āoga" (The Samoan School) or also known as "'Ā'oga 'Āmata", which are certain schools that have a curriculum designed for New Zealand born primary aged school

children to help them learn about the Samoan culture and to begin speaking the Samoan language.

W. L. Renwick believes that in the future Pacific Islanders born in New Zealand will advocate the teaching of the values of their cultural heritage in the public school system: “And if they are second or third born generations in New Zealand, they may well be looking to the public education system for teaching in the language and culture of their parents and grandparents” (1988:20). Currently, curriculum-based language programs, ranging from early childhood to the high school levels, are being implemented in several selected schools throughout New Zealand that have a high concentration of Pacific Islanders in their enrollment. New Zealand’s Ministry of Education and Samoan educationalists launched the “Samoan in the New Zealand Curriculum, Ta’iala mo le Gagana Sāmoa I Niu Sila” in 1994 due to the increasing demand for children to be educated in their own language as well as English (Tongati’o 1996). Presently, the number of mono-lingual English speaking Samoans born in New Zealand is increasing at a rapid rate. As Table 3 shows, the number of mono-lingual speaking Samoans born in New Zealand is greater than those who claim to be bilingual in Samoan and English and those who are mono-lingual Samoan speakers.

Table 3: Languages Spoken by Birthplace

	Samoan Only	English Only	Samoan & English (with or without other languages)	Samoan & Any Other Languages (excluding English)
New Zealand Born	2,799	24,747	21,738	120
Samoan Born	9,765	2,763	27,138	120
All Birthplaces¹	12,915	28,764	50,238	267

(1) Includes individuals who did not specify a place of birth or were born elsewhere.

Source: Pacific Islands People, 1996 Census of Population & Dwellings.

Parents or care givers are the main influence in the cultural identification process. However, we must also factor in other institutions such as the Samoan church, the extended family (*'āiga*), and social/community activities, all of which contribute to the transmission of the *fa'a Sāmoa* and therefore affect acculturation and the reaffirmation of that identity. These institutions are important networks for the Samoan immigrant because they provide a sense of belonging, the assistance in their search for housing and employment, and transitional support and guidance as they begin to settle in a foreign environment.

Many New Zealand born Samoans would probably say that besides their family, the Samoan church has the greatest influence on how the *fa'a Sāmoa* is conveyed and maintained. For someone to really know the culture, active participation within a church that upholds Samoan values is almost a requirement since Christianity has become so intertwined with the Samoan ethos.

TI'E: To be in that Samoan community, you have to be in a Samoan church, really. So I never participated in those because I was not a member of any Samoan church.

BECCA: Like a lot of . . . there are a lot of New Zealand born who went to church. That's how they know the *fa'a Sāmoa* because if you go to the Samoan church, you're brought up in the Samoan way.

VAI: . . . I would say in regards to the church, that's probably where it's a lot stronger. That's probably the only contact or connection they can relate to more in Sāmoa is through the church and where they do a lot of activities as well - Samoan activities. Because usually with families just gathering and it's not like - yeah, you do that a couple of times a year - whereas most of the contact is through the church. So, if you lose out on the church then there's no contact at all for the Samoan community.

Yet there are two very disparate groups within the New Zealand church setting: the migrant Samoans who were brought up surrounded entirely by the Samoan language and culture and speak a limited amount of English, and the New Zealand Samoans who are more acquainted with the European, *pālagi*, way of life than the *fa'a Sāmoa* and are fluent in English rather than Samoan (Anae 1995). Though it might be difficult to find common ground, in reality, both groups learn from each other. Pitt and MacPherson describe how some churches have addressed this potentially divisive situation, "The churches have attacked the problem of the generation and cultural gap, not by forcing integration upon the various groups, but by attempting to provide separate activities for them under the roof, so that there is nothing to stop the groups from mixing if they want to" (1974:55). Being able to mix with one another and with each other's peers, can both reaffirm and reconstruct cultural identification. And despite some cases where churches conduct the Sunday school classes and services mainly in Samoan, which may cause the New Zealand born young people to feel disconnected, ultimately, it is the Samoan church which provides an optimum context in which differences in cultural identity can be encountered and even confronted.

LENA: Oh, that's funny because our church is very European. Our pastor is European, but he is married to a Samoan. An 'afakasi [half] Samoan. Now and then, they read poems in Samoan like if there's a *kai* [Māori: food, a meal]. And now then they pray in Samoan if the person praying can only speak Samoan. So, it's just now and then. I don't

think they really get into it, which I like because, like, we wouldn't be able to understand it. A lot of fa'a Samoan churches are the very ones that lose their young people because the children get really bored. They often can't relate to a lot of the hymns they sing and at times it's very boring.

VAI: . . . Half of the Sunday school teaching will be done in English because a lot of the times when the teacher's saying something, you just don't get it. It's really hard to understand, so most of the times it's usually half Samoan and half English. Or, if they have to explain it in English, then they'll have to explain the whole lesson in English. But, with the church service, only when the minister wants to speak English then it will be done in English, but a lot of it is in Samoan.

ROSE: Singing in Samoan. Sunday school was in Samoan. So it was quite weird to be in there, but I went for the sake of my aunty taking me. But even then, I was sort of an outcast.

Additionally, there were several individuals who had a few negative remarks during their interviews about the adherence to the *fa'a Sāmoa* within the church, especially with the connection it has to the financial demands of the *fa'avelave*. I asked Vai about her view on the *fa'avelave* and the Samoan church.

MARY: What is your view of *fa'avelave*'s?

VAI: Hmm . . . good question. I don't mind giving money to families, but when they abuse it, that's when I won't be able to give. I'll say, "This is it. I'm not giving any." With the fact that they'll start competing, in a sense, that they'll start competing who puts in the most and who puts in the least sort of thing. But, if they put it in a manner that's helping other people and won't abuse it, then I'll be happy to give it.

MARY: What do you think the original way of *fa'avelave*'s were? Do you think it's been completely twisted around now?

VAI: Yeah, totally twisted around.

MARY: What do you think the original intentions were with the *fa'avelave*'s in Samoan society?

VAI: It would be more like helping the other person that needs help and to me the way it seemed like - it doesn't really matter what you give as long as you give and help out that person. It doesn't really matter how much, how much or how many stuff you put in as long as it's counted that you helped that person. Whereas now, it's more like how much you give that will be counted, not by how it's presented . . . it's not from the heart anymore. It's more like competing - who's giving more.

MARY: Is there anything about *fa'a Sāmoa* that you don't want to pass down to your children? What are some of the things you're going to pick and choose in terms of passing down to your children?

VAI: I'll probably pick things like helping out other people when they need help and sticking with the church. But, if the church is abusing the donations and the things being given them, then they shouldn't have to take it. They can give from the heart. That's

probably the most important thing rather than competing who's putting in a lot more and who's putting in less. And also, it's more like family and helping out other people outside of the family when they need it. Yeah, those probably be it.

MARY: Do you think Samoans here have tried to get away from the *fa'alavelave*'s and even *fa'a Sāmoa*? And why do you think so?

VAI: Yep. I think it's because like half of your life here is more spending, a lot of spending is into *fa'alavelave*'s. It's more like you're not really . . . you've moved away from Sāmoa to avoid that. Not totally avoid it, but start your own family with your parents and the children, rather than doing *fa'alavelave*'s nearly everyday of the week. It's more into that here than in Sāmoa itself.

MARY: Why do you feel like it's more into it here?

VAI: Because a lot of it is with the connection to the church and there's always something happening in church. It could be somebody's father or aunty or something like, dying. And so then there will be a church meeting. You'll have to give in to help this person and then it will be more donations. And there's always something happening if it's not a funeral or weddings or something else is happening. And it's always like . . . To live in New Zealand, money is the most important thing for survival. And it seems most of the Samoan families aren't really stable in New Zealand because they're always giving money to *fa'alavelave*'s rather than establishing their own families first before they start giving more to the outside.

Among the Samoans I interviewed, the main grievance about the *fa'a Sāmoa* was the monetary contribution expected of them from the *'āiga* and the church because of the *fa'alavelave* that seem to surface, as Vai said above, "everyday of the week." Some stated that the frequency with which they have had to contribute has driven them away from the culture and its demands. They acknowledge that the Samoan way of life is based on "we" rather than "I", and that the money given is to support the family, but they have difficulty with the frequency, competition and prestige associated with "who gave more" or "who gave less." How does this affect cultural identity? It creates an animosity within many hearts towards the Samoan culture and can even break family bonds. Many New Zealand borns believe, firstly, that the *'āiga* living in Sāmoa envision New Zealand too much as the "land of plenty" or the "land of milk and honey" and do not understand the demands of New Zealand life; and secondly, they are embittered by the fact that they are expected by their migrant parents to provide continuously for

the *fa'alavelave* of people they hardly know, a practice rooted in a way of life that they were not raised in.

LISE: I think over the years since the European influences, really, they came into Sāmoa with money, with materialism. It's corrupted the culture. It's corrupted the *fa'a Sāmoa* way. People, whenever you hear, "Ah, it's going to be a *fa'a Sāmoa* wedding," everyone grumbles because they know a lot of money will have to be given and a lot of tins of corn beef or containers of salt meat will be given. Just a lot of money is what people grumble about. And, whereas, in the old days it never used to be like that. If you don't have money, it didn't matter because you had fine mats and fine mats are worth more than anything else. But now, you know, since I think Christianity hit Sāmoa, it's changed heaps. It's no longer that way. It's more money orientated now. And I think the *fa'a Sāmoa* way is good because it's all about loving and looking after each other, looking after the extended family. It has a lot of good values. It's just been corrupted along the way.

BEV: Giving of the money. That's one thing I just really hate about the culture. Like when there's a wedding or a funeral or . . . it's just always money and everyone has to compete even though it's a family. Everyone competes on how much each family gives. If one gives less then, then they will say something that - then we have to make up to match. That's why I just don't like it. Everyone has to be on the same level and if you're not on the same level with them, you're not regarded as, you know, as a family member, or we'd be talked about behind your back. That's the one thing I've never liked about it. That the culture is . . . the money situation. That's the one thing I don't like about it. It's the money issue.

. . . I think that that's the way it's always been. It's always been. My uncle was telling me once that the cultures are different. The culture over here is different the way the money is issued over here. If a set amount, if the money is set at a certain amount then you have to give that amount. Whereas, in the islands if you can only afford \$50, well, that's fine. If you can only afford \$20 then, that's fine, but my uncle was saying over here it's really different because everyone knows that each member works in the family and they can afford to give out money and that. Then, "Why can't they afford to give out \$400, you know, for your family and that?!"

ROSE: *Fa'a Sāmoa*, I think, the good thing is that they build up unity. A unit is like everyone belongs, everyone helps everyone, but the down side is when you live over here and you're having your own life here. The down side is they expect you to still give nearly everything back to the family when you're trying to live a life in New Zealand, which - you have to pay bills and you have to pay rates and you have to pay rent and all that. You can't really ask people here to help you because it's part of your status . . . you're just giving all the time to your family. I don't mind helping if it's within our means, but if it's not then that's where I struggle because I'm thinking, "I've got a family and I wasn't totally brought up like that!" But, my parents and, I think, even my mother-in-law sometimes are tossed and they see that side. But, they've been living in that *fa'a Sāmoa* for so long. It's like second nature to them. Whereas to me, it's like I have to choose. Whereas for them, that's how the family is run - that's when . . . "They'll help you" attitude.

In the following statement, Melani Anae (1995) argues that the actual worry of island born Samoans and church leaders is not the loss or dilution of the “true *fa’a Sāmoa*,” but the loss of financial support that New Zealand borns generate for the Samoan church, the *‘āiga*, and the *fa’alavelave* within and without New Zealand.

While NZ-born Samoans are seen to be losing their “culture,” what they have obviously not lost is their ability to actually “power” the *fa’a Samoa* in terms of the financial “giving” to meet *fa’a Samoa ‘aiga* obligations, both in New Zealand and in Western Samoa. In practice, it is this aspect of Samoan culture that the church leaders are afraid that NZ-borns are losing. And it is this expectation that forces some NZ-borns to opt out of Church (14).

One would think that for the millions of dollars that are given through remittances and monetary contributions for *fa’alavelave* every year by migrant and New Zealand born Samoans that this would indicate a strong relation to those cultural values and expectations. Yet, those Samoans who are either born or raised in New Zealand, more often than not, feel disconnected the cultural values of their parents.

RINA: Here in New Zealand it [the Samoan customs] isn’t [important] - the language, yes, but the customs not as much because it’s done by our parents. When it comes down to it, I wouldn’t probably have anything to do with it. I feel like to me they don’t play a big role in my life. They may mean a lot to my parents or the older people, but to me - not really.

Titles, status, and respect which are intertwined in every aspect of the Samoan born’s life are not pursued by the New Zealand born simply because they hold little weight in the modern New Zealand world that they know. Island village life seems so idyllic and far removed from the metropolitan world that they are familiar with. Coupled with different political aspirations and economic needs, the *fa’a Sāmoa* becomes a cultural ideology that is best left to be treasured at special occasions. Again, the cynicism and dissociation that Samoan New Zealanders feel towards the financial demands of the *fa’a Sāmoa* are stated in the following comments:

TI'E: . . . And I think they hold onto traditions too much. Like rituals and things like that. If there's a death, the whole family has got to come over and give "X" amount of dollars and I mean not little amounts. I'm kind of in a situation where the family has to give \$2,000 - each part, each member of the family has to give \$2,000 and that's impossible when you think about it! Because if it was a "once off" thing, yeah, I wouldn't mind, but when it's every other day, it's distressing! And the children are always called upon to help out. I'm fine with helping out my parents. I found that helping out my mother . . . I have no qualms or regrets about that or no niggles about that. I love to help out my mother wherever I can. But if I can't, I don't like her badgering me, you know, when I've told her twenty thousand times, "I can't help out!" You know? And it just builds up more anger about the culture. I can't understand why you need to get the whole family together to do this. I guess in a way when I look at it from a positive point of view, it's good to keep the family together. That's about it. But, I just can't understand why you have to give so much when you have nothing to give. Why can't Samoans understand that? It's not a point of understanding, it's a point . . . as my mother says it, "It's a point of giving so that later on when something happens to you and your family, then they can come help you out." I just can't - I guess that my European side coming out, you know. That's my European way of thinking. I don't know. That's just me. I just don't like those areas of *fa'a Sāmoa*.

DAVE: When I hear that word [*fa'a Sāmoa*], before when I used to hear that word a lot from my parents, I used to hate it because it used to bring a lot of problems. All my parents used to say was "*fa'a Sāmoa*," and I didn't like the *fa'a Sāmoa* way.

Just some of the things they expected from me. When family comes or when there's a *fa'alavelave*, like a problem - when a problem arises, there's always a big issue with money and finances and things like that and which families are involved. That's one reason why my mum came back to New Zealand - to get away from *fa'a Sāmoa* and that way of life. She holds the title in the village, being the oldest child in the family and when she came to New Zealand she gave the title to her brother as the *matai*. But he died and she still holds it, but she doesn't want anything to do with it. She doesn't like the way they organized things in the islands. That's from what I've learned. The *fa'a Sāmoa* way brings a lot of pressure to a lot of families and individuals . . . The way of life there, the way they do things, is not the same to what we do here in New Zealand.

Although respect toward elders and parental authority in Samoan culture goes without question, children of Samoan migrants are not outside the decision making process of their own cultural identity. They too, govern what they want and don't want to identify with. They ultimately have the power to select, reject, and transform what they see and what they have been taught. Though a child may choose to reject certain aspects of his or her cultural identity, this decision is not unalterable or fixed. Once again, that child may choose to pick up and reassert

the very identity which she or he had originally found repellant or unfamiliar. MacPherson has stated that “the elements of ethnic identity are learned, they can, and will, be reclaimed and ethnicity reconstituted under certain circumstances, as ethnic renaissance throughout the world has shown. Thus, no apparent loss of ethnic identity can be regarded as permanent. One generation’s orientation to their heritage may be reversed in the following. At any given time, for instance, one will find New Zealand-born Samoans quite deliberately reclaiming the Samoan language, and through it, access to the beliefs and social institutions” (1991:71). Helen Morton coined the rather humorous term “born-again Tongans” to describe those young people who have rediscovered their cultural identity and have gone back to find their roots (1998:19). This resurgence of cultural identity is especially visible amongst those New Zealand borns who are now young parents, and who desire to teach their children aspects of the *fa’a Sāmoa* that they were never taught or had abandoned. Those Samoans who did not have children, when questioned about what they would endeavor to teach their children, overwhelmingly identified language proficiency, and knowing certain elements of the *fa’a Sāmoa*, such as respect and keeping strong ties with the *‘āiga*. They would want their children to know their heritage and to take pride in being Samoan, even though they would be born as New Zealand citizens, just as they were.

REINA: I’ve always thought about that. I was talking with my sister about that too. We were both saying how we regret not having the language because language is the most - apart from skin color - is the most identifiable part of your culture. So I’d want to teach my kids the language. I want to teach them those respective values - those values of respect - especially respect for elders and appreciating the wisdom that your elders have. Putting value on their knowledge, not only western knowledge. Because I think sometimes education can . . . it is very biased, you know? A lot of it is pretty ethnocentric. Yeah, my sister has just enrolled her nephew in a Samoan *‘Āoga*. It’s a preschool . . . She said that she notices the kids who are in those Samoan *‘Āoga*’s, they’re just a whole lot more confident she said. I don’t know. I haven’t been there myself. But, I always

thought that if I do have kids, they would spend a lot of time with my parents, you know, their grandparents. And I would make my parents speak Samoan to them. Raise them speaking Samoan. If possible, but then that depends on who you marry too, you know?

BECCA: Well, I'd like to teach them the language - of what I know - and to tell them where their parents came from. And I'd love to teach them some of the songs I knew, you know, Samoan songs. And just give them things that were given to us from our parents, you know, things Samoan, created things that were given to us and show them, "This is made by your mother when she was young." Or, just tell them that Sāmoa . . . gosh, that's a very hard question to say if I haven't been to Sāmoa myself, but just of what I know. I'd love for my children to know that, to be proud to be Samoan, you know, to have that Samoan blood in you.

Furthermore, since the *fa'a Sāmoa* is so flexible in nature, individuals can easily negotiate the progression of their identity and how the *fa'a Sāmoa* will continue onto the next generation, thus, forming hybrid versions that are still identifiably Samoan. Evelyn Kallen has stated that, "Moreover, the infusion of new ideas through the easy incorporation of introduced criteria for *fa'asamoan* identification, enables different population sectors, both at home and overseas, to express their contemporary cross-national, Samoan ethnicity in ways compatible with their (various) lifestyles" (1982:140). Individuals do not have to silently agree to all elements of what is considered absolutely "traditional," in order to be considered Samoan themselves. The flexibility of the *fa'a Sāmoa* allows young Samoans to choose what they desire to identify with and to be able to experiment with the different cultures that they come in contact with. This freedom of choice will give young Samoans the space they need to "figure out" who they are on both the cultural and wholeness-of-self levels. Peter Caws, writing about multiculturalism, talks about the power of choice that individuals have when it comes to their cultural identification and the importance of parents recognizing this need for free choice,

It is the mark of a free agent that he or she chooses, within the limits of possibility - which are flexible though not eliminable altogether - both identity and cultural affiliation . . . we do not choose to be born when, where, and to whom we are born, and the fact that it has always been thought right for parents to determine the cultural formation of their children

does not mean that it *is* right. On the contrary, I believe it to be an obligation upon parents to help free their children of their culture of origin if that is what the children decide they want - certainly to make them aware of the alternatives, and to equip them with the critical resources (as free of cultural bias as may be) necessary to make judgments about their own eventual identities (1994:384).

Most of those I interviewed took up Caw's position, in which they would encourage their children to know their original heritage, but would also expose their children to both Samoan and non-Samoan cultures alike. They would speak of the "good and bad" aspects of the Samoan culture and eventually their children would need to make their own decisions as to which culture they would identify with or to create an overlap of ideologies from each culture. Most thought the ideal manner of "showing" the Samoan culture would be to make a cultural pilgrimage to Sāmoa, or the next best method: to spend time with their grandparents where they could be exposed to the *fa'a Sāmoa* while still living in New Zealand.

REINA: But, I always thought that if I do have kids, they would spend a lot of time with my parents, you know, their grandparents. And I would make my parents speak Samoan to them. Raise them speaking Samoan. If possible, but then that depends on who you marry too, you know? So it's hard to say because we're in a big melting pot in New Zealand, I think. I think there's a new subculture emerging, you know, with young Polynesians in New Zealand. That's a different issue, but it just means that the survival of strict *fa'a Sāmoa* - I don't think will stand up to it because I think it's changing, however. I don't see it as a bad thing. Hard to say.

LISE: I'd teach them to be proud of who they are. I'd teach them the Samoan culture as much as I can. I'd encourage them to go to Sāmoa. I'd encourage them to mainly be proud of who they are and I'd teach them all about who they are, where they come from, about their grandparents . . . I'd tell them about their great grandparents. You know, just to let them know who they are - about the history. What's life in Sāmoa. I'd tell them the *fa'a Sāmoa* way and the goodness of it and the down side of being traditionally Samoan and stuff. I'd tell the good side as well as the bad side . . . and so I would teach them as much as I can about my culture. Teach them to be confident about who they are and to love being who they are.

MATA: I think just the parts that I value - the family, the importance of family, of sticking together, of maybe sharing your grievances. But also, my dad has also brought us up to communicate well. So communication, you know, being able to communicate well in the family. To share things. I guess also to support one another in whatever field, in whatever decision they make for their lives. No matter whether or not you agree. I think

another thing I've been brought up with as a Samoan is my parents have always taught me to value other people and their cultures. And I think I'd like to bring up, give those sort of values to your kids. I can't think of anything else. I think just the really good sides of *fa'a Sāmoa* and also just to, I guess, appreciate their culture and to appreciate where maybe their grandparents have come from. And like, I definitely know when I have kids or if I have kids, that I'd like to take them to Sāmoa so that they can begin to see, you know. I definitely don't want to bring them up so that they think they're European or they think that they're New Zealanders without knowing that they are Samoan.

ROSE: . . . We've [she and her husband] asked our mum to teach them Samoan because it's something that I've missed out on. Because I don't fluently know and I do want, at least not just for the children, even to go back to school because there are classes here in Samoan or even learn off Mum when she speaks in Samoan. Ask her more questions because I think it will give our children more identity and not feel the frustration of not being able to communicate with a lot of your relatives because I couldn't communicate like - there's a lot of older relatives I couldn't talk to because they didn't speak English and that was frustrating. And in a sense, I don't want that to go to the children. Not just the language, but I think I'd like to teach them as well as "Family is important." Not as an extreme, the *fa'a Sāmoa* way. I know that family is important, but to make right choices and not to . . . like I said, I do believe transition in culture. I'd like them to think that they can get good out of anything and there is good and not to always teach them the negative sides like of the culture. But, to teach them what is good, like, the family and just that everyone helps each other, but to know that they can also like other cultures. And they can take of other cultures and see that it's okay. It's not a weakling thing for them.

Chapter 4

Looking for a Samoan Identity

In constructing a cultural identity that is their very own, many young Samoans begin to incorporate elements of different cultures into an identity that is unique and generationally distinctive. On the issue of bicultural selfhood, Andrew Sharp discusses the benefits of incorporating multiple cultures into self identity and self expression, “Such arguments from necessity are the most powerful for there being bicultural selves. If people cannot help being as they are, and if what they are is not evidently a bad thing, then it is wrong to deny the basic foundation of their selfhood, by denying them the expression of what is in them” (1995:121).

As an example self identity and self expression, while living in New Zealand I had an opportunity to watch a performance during a wedding reception done by the *'autalavou* (youth group) of the church that the newly married couple belonged to. The group of 25 teenagers performed a high energy dance exhibition that lasted for over 45 minutes. Within the performance was choreographed the “traditional” Samoan dance steps and forms of dance such as the *fa'atau pati* (a dance that involves clapping) and *taualuga* (dance/last dance especially by a young woman). But the most fascinating points of the different dances occurred when the performers suddenly broke into the modern, non-Samoan “hip-hop” dance moves featured in contemporary music videos. During those abrupt breaks, the hall would echo with the resounding hoots, hollerings, and applause from the audience, which consisted of both migrant parents and their New Zealand born children. I looked around and I saw no generation gap. There was no hostility from those raised with the *fa'a Sāmoa* toward the break in tradition.

Instead, there were only encouragement and smiles for the young performers. This is just an illustration of how the next generation is relating their Samoanness with things that are considered non-Samoan, and finally making it their own. Anyone who was a supporter or an advocate for the set and unchanging *fa'a Sāmoa* would have been offended or felt highly threatened by this obvious non-Samoan inclusion in something which has such deep symbolic ties. Albert Wendt has stated, "There are no **true interpreters** or **sacred guardians** of any culture. We are all entitled to our truths, insights, and intuitions into and interpretations of our cultures" ("Towards a New Oceania," 77 [no date] - emphasis added). A fascinating question to ask is how have the New Zealand born begun to change or reinterpret the *fa'a Sāmoa*?

TI'E: I think they're trying to change - New Zealand born Samoans - because most of them have no formal training in Samoan. They've learned to grow up in New Zealand and being New Zealanders. And so, you know, they have to adapt to the way of New Zealand life, but want to uphold their Samoan values. And so they obviously tried to create their own sort of *fa'a Sāmoa* in a way. Still trying to uphold the values they've learned off their parents, but also still trying to stick to the western civilization life.

VAI: I'd say they're changing what Samoan is. From being traditional to bringing it to a more modern Samoan - creating your own things and also trying to relate it back to the old Samoan.

I think it keeps changing in time with every generation that keeps coming. Yeah, it keeps changing all the time. It's not really static at all. I'd say it keeps changing every year. It depends on what generation that will come up.

BEV: They've changed it probably by not participating in the actual unique culture things that come around the community and that. Not being involved in trying to stay away from it. Trying to change it, trying to make it less effective in that way, you know? Trying to keep away from any community involvement with the island culture and that. That's their way of changing it - really going towards the European way now. They don't see themselves . . . being in New Zealand, more involved in it than the island way. And really, you know, that leaves nothing here for them to do or speak the language. So, why not just keep on going the European way and just speak the European, and just do the European way. And that's their way of trying to change, trying to keep away from it.

These different statements recall the relationship Pitt and MacPherson speak about that exists between the "old Samoan" and the "modern Samoan." Both are considered Samoan,

rooted in the same ground, but very unique in themselves: “All the evidence we have points to the formation within New Zealand of a Samoan subculture, having important connections with the homeland and replicating its structure in many ways, but still distinct from and independent of the main cultures of both countries” (1974:20). While others may be able to relate back and forth, shifting their identities depending on the context they are in, there are other young Samoans who have a difficult time with adjusting the cultural expectations with their self identity. As a result, these young individuals begin to change their situation by creating a culture that they can relate to - a “moral lawlessness” - as Ti‘e terms it. This confusion of identity is not uncommon as he points out, since he found himself in this state during his early adolescent years.

I personally know a lot of Samoans who are in that kind of predicament. My advice to them usually is to really stick with their families. You know. Really stick with family life because a lot of these people end up in trouble. And that’s the common fact I’ve noticed with a lot of Samoans who are like that, who don’t know their own culture. Well, they’re the ones who are stuck in two different worlds, which is very sad. They don’t know English properly, but at the same time they don’t know Samoan properly and I used to be in that kind of situation. So, I guess this is a bit from experience. I was very scared when I was in that situation because it was like - lack of identity. You don’t have anyone to identify with you. You can’t really put your whole weight into one category or group and say, “That’s me.” And it’s a scary situation and the only way that I know friends of mine got out of it or tried to rectify the problem was to create their own sort of culture, which is very dangerous in a way because it is a bit of a lawless attitude in life . . . it is a bit of a moral lawlessness. They lose all sense of moral value and they create their own culture. And that’s why a lot of them end up on the streets or in trouble because they’ve got nothing to put themselves against. They got no wall to put themselves against in terms of identification, in terms of culture. They have to make their own. And so, a lot of guys I knew who were in that situation, I used to say to them, “Just stay with your family, stay with your family. And learn. Keep talking to your parents.” Funny thing is is that a lot of older Samoans, you know, have sort of learned that and it’s always just the young generation. It’s always the teens and that’s the hardest part of life for any Samoan who’s in that situation. I guess that’s hard as far as life for anyone really. It doesn’t matter what culture you’re in. Just learning to identify. Some people pick it up early. Other people find it very hard. You’ve got to spend your teen years trying to learn as much as you can. I didn’t really start learning until I got to the age of 17, 16-17, around there. I started making inroads in my cultural life. I joined up with the Samoan group and I started hanging around with my parents - my mum more. And I started learning to talk Samoan back to her and things like that. So, that really helped me.

While Ti'e felt that "returning" back to his roots helped him figure out who he was and so advises others to do the same, many Samoans feel that transformations with the Samoan culture are inevitable and returning back to your heritage would be difficult to do, especially within a multi-cultural society like New Zealand. Depending on their viewpoint of whether the *fa'a Sāmoa* can change or be changed, will be a large indication of how Samoan they see themselves in relation to others and what impression they give their children of the *fa'a Sāmoa*. Mata, for example, felt that the *fa'a Sāmoa* was changing, but not enough - since it continues to dictate relationships and social interactions, especially between parents and children. She believes that the *fa'a Sāmoa* breaks down communication between parent and child because of the authoritative role elders have and the unquestioning obedience children must have in Samoan society. She is of the opinion that a "good *fa'a Sāmoa*" is one that is reserved for special occasions to be honored - not to dictate the way she lives daily in New Zealand. Mata believes that living in New Zealand not only influenced her mentality, but also helped to change her parents thinking, "I actually like it, how my parents aren't governed by *fa'a Sāmoa*. They're flexible, but they've had to learn that. They really have - because their parents weren't like that. They had a very strict upbringing." She goes on to say,

Well, I see culture as something that changes because the way that Samoans are now is not the way they were before. I guess if we took it right back to before even the Europeans settled in Sāmoa and brought over religion, they were different in terms of . . . in Sāmoa because there's been so much influence of westernized thinking and westernized development that it's changing. Even the school system is changing. So I see culture as something that changes, but in terms of the laws that they have in culture like, "This is what you do in this situation," or like the rituals and beliefs, they are pretty static. They stay the same. But, the way people are in the culture changes because their whole environment is changing.

. . . Some people are so cultured that it almost dictates even how they act in their families and how they actually run their whole life. But for me *fa'a Sāmoa* - I think a good *fa'a Sāmoa* is the one that you only keep in the ceremonies, because you cherish it well and you keep it for special occasions. It's a bit like, it's a lot like china. You bring

out your nice chinaware. I see it more as being something that you cherish. Something that is valued. I think the way some families do it is they allow culture to dictate even their relationship with each other and I think that's when you being to lose out at times because of that. You find children not relating to their parents well. You find children rebelling against their parents and you find that how difficult it is for relationships to be of a good standard when it's dictated by culture. Whereas, if you allow *fa'a Sāmoa* just to be in ceremonies and just to be in these set places where you sort of appreciate them, then that's when it's valued. So I tend to take the side that *fa'a Sāmoa* is really something for special occasions. That it's the rituals, the beliefs, and also the customs that occur at weddings and functions like that.

Both Ti'e and Dave saw the *fa'a Sāmoa* in different ways. Ti'e believed that the *fa'a Sāmoa* would never change no matter what the circumstance, and Dave simply did not want it to change despite the circumstance. Dave did not want the continuity of the *fa'a Sāmoa* to be halted in Sāmoa, because it gives Samoans born outside of the islands an eternal point of cultural reference of who they are and what they "once were." He stated that the *fa'a Sāmoa* would naturally change in New Zealand because it exists in a multi-cultural setting. Ti'e, on the other hand, said that no matter what path you choose or how far away you go, the "old *fa'a Sāmoa*" will always be there - waiting.

TI'E: Yeah, I believe it's more a static thing, stable. That's my personal view of culture. There are some aspects of culture that will never change. I believe that and I'm witness to that. Obviously everything has to change at some time. I've seen some changes in culture, in the Samoan culture itself, but you know apart from that, those are only minor issues that change. The basis of the Samoan culture - the *fa'a Sāmoa* - is always stable to me. And what I've known, the values are always the same. The traditions are always the same. They never change. And my mum drums that into my head every other day. So from what I view of the culture, it never changes.

. . . And I guess in the respect . . . yeah, it is changing, but it's mostly with the younger generation. The funny thing is that when most of them grow older, they'll realize that with the stability of *fa'a Sāmoa* and how it will always be drummed into them to do it that certain way. There is no other way in *fa'a Sāmoa*. Most of those, most of that generation, they change their ideas. They changed their way of thinking and later on, they settle for the one and only way they know how. You could always try and change *fa'a Sāmoa*, but I believe that with the presence that we have in the Samoan community in South, in South Auckland, and just their stability in the old culture, there's no way that you can change it. No matter what kind of religious new values you introduce. There will always only be that one *fa'a Sāmoa*. That will never change. When you grow older, you see it.

DAVE: I guess I call myself a Samoan because I know how to speak some of the language, but saying the “Will culture stay the same?” I’d say that culture will always stay the same in the islands, but people can change it, making it look different. They’re sharing it with other nationalities and getting other nationalities involved with the culture and understanding it, which is totally different because you never see different nationalities in the island speaking the same language together. But here in New Zealand, you get an option. You can have different nationalities understanding the culture and just being creative. Just changing the culture. I don’t know. People tend to have an idea of what culture is to them - what they see culture is and they make something of it and create something out of it. But for the Samoan born people, especially in the islands, I would say that culture would be the same - to the parents before them and the parents before them. They taught the culture that goes way back. I feel that the culture in the islands should stay the same because it shows you Sāmoa and shows you the Samoan and where Sāmoa came from.

From Reina’s standpoint, cultural change comes in and goes out with each generation.

And with each new generation, comes a new stage that has a homogeneous struggle. She believes the stage that New Zealand born Samoans are currently in is characterized by cultural neglect, but this is due to wanting to relate to the larger host community. Eventually she foresees this second generation of Samoans returning back to their roots once they have captured a stronger presence and “political voice” within national matters as a whole for the Samoan people in New Zealand.

I think with any people, any large number of people that migrate to start again in a new country, I think they go through different . . . they seem to go through different stages. The first immigrants arrive and they struggle through, you know, the stage of trying to set up the community. And then they bring their kids to it and the kids are starting to get their education and get into better jobs. Then those kids have their own kids and then I think they start to get into politics more, into voicing their own views and then they start to . . . I think, I think that the second stage, the second generation tend to try to fit into the culture. That’s their - so they might neglect their own Samoan culture because they’re trying to fit into their host community. And then I think with the third stage, you get them going back, aye, ultimately. Once they get their political voice, once they can be heard then they start fighting for their own, for what’s theirs - recognizing what’s theirs and I think they’re bound together with that. Because I think at this stage in New Zealand, I think it’s . . . we’re going from the second to the third stage. We’re getting more and more people coming through education, starting to see the value of education or the value that’s close to education. And then they’re starting to look further, pushing for their rights - rights of being a minority.

While in New Zealand, I observed a renewed interest in cultural identity, but as an “Islander” and/or a “Polynesian.” Although many of their parents may see incredible distinctions between their Pacific Island ethnicities, the children born or raised in New Zealand have a sense of unity because of the similar struggles and environments that they have had to grow up in. MacPherson comments on this new generation that has formed a general Pacific Island identity, “The New Zealand-raised population have more in common than their parents did and this may be the basis for the emergence of a new identity within New Zealand in which the distinctions between parents’ cultures are being replaced with a new emphasis on what is common in their experience. The bases of a new Pacific Islands identity are easy to see” (1996:137-138).

At the University of Auckland, an entire floor at the Common’s Building was designed to meet the needs of the increased enrollment of Pacific Islanders. Completely decorated with pan-Pacific motifs, the area saw a constant flux of college students congregating in their newly designed resting area whether to study, have meetings, exchange information or just hang out. Though open to anyone, the floor was visited frequently by the Pacific Islanders attending the University. Some commented that they felt “at home” and “comfortable” in this place. One of the interviewees noticed and commented on the difference she saw within the University’s atmosphere toward Pacific Island minorities from the time her sister attended to when she finally entered.

I know my sister - my older sister - did go through that time because when she was coming to University, she was a minority. Samoans at University - spot the brown person or the black person! But here in Auckland University now, because there are a more of Pacific Island realm, because I hang out with all my Samoan friends, I don’t go through that difficulty. And I just surround myself with Polynesians so that they reaffirm that side of me. Whereas, if I were hanging out with I guess a group of people who were European or who were Asian or not from where I was from, then I would feel sort of like, “I don’t know who I am. Maybe I’m taking on board some things that aren’t me . . .” But, I can

understand what my sister - I remember she used to write an essay, so many essays on "What's it like to be a New Zealand born Samoan," and all the different ethnic things she'd come in contact with. I think it's because the University has become more, I don't know, more sensitive to Polynesians and their needs, that I never have to struggle in that area.

This resurgence in a unified Pacific Islands identity is also fed by popular culture and the media. With sport personalities like Jonah Lomu, prolific Pacific Island writers like Albert Wendt, music groups such as *O.M.C.*, Pacific Island annual events like the Polynesian Festival, and movies such as *Once Were Warriors*, young islanders are becoming prouder of their Polynesian heritage. Although a young person may not completely identify him or herself as a Samoan, they may assert the more broad-minded identification as an "Islander." In constructing this identity based on similarity and a common background, we are seeing a need for young people to widen the circle of who they relate to since they may not feel fully included within the sphere of their own ethnicity. This extension in the cultural boundaries produces a sense of unity and belonging among the generation of New Zealand born islanders. Helen Morton (1998) also speaks of the growing trend towards a unified Pacific Islands identity, "By attending to the level of subjective experience one can recognize the crucial importance of sameness and identification as a fundamental element of sociality, which can exist in spite of, or even because of difference" (22). After reading *Flying Fox in the Freedom Tree* and *Sons for the Return Home*, Ti'e stated that it gave him a sense of pride knowing that an islander was achieving in an area that is normally dominated by the "white world."

But, it gave me a sense of pride in the fact that Albert Wendt was a Samoan and he achieved well . . . And what I was more worried about was that Albert Wendt was a successful Samoan who learned to adapt to western ways of life. And I guess that really compelled me more to be westernized . . . Getting inspiration out of the fact that a Samoan can do well in a western world as well. It's one thing that's compelled me to be a brown person who excels in a white world. Not in a racial sort of way, but it's just not often heard of - at least it wasn't in my time. He was just really starting in my time.

Chapter 5

The Opposition and the New Zealand Borns' Reactions

“No, it would be more like: ‘She’s a New Zealander, not a Samoan.’ I think it’s because you speak English and you can’t speak Samoan properly. They look at you that way, yeah . . . It’s to me, it would be more like an insult because I think, like, I’ve tried my best to keep up with the Samoan language and with them not to appreciate that - it’s a real insult for us who are living outside of Sāmoa. It should be more, like, they should encourage us to learn how to speak Samoan . . .” - Vai

“No, they didn’t call me *‘fia pālagi’*. They just called me *‘pālagi.’* They used it as a derogatory term to talk about your ignorance. Don’t know the language. Don’t know the culture. Don’t know the villages. Don’t know everything you should know.” - Reina

“I would find that, like, in terms of when we go to Sāmoa and people treat us differently, at times it used to sort of bug me. I used to go to sleep crying with my sister . . . well, everyone naturally thought, ‘ . . . She’s European . . . their family migrated to New Zealand, so this is what you expect of them.” - Mata

As Samoans migrate from the islands to New Zealand and are exposed to different cultures, the *fa’a Sāmoa* transforms with each new generation of Samoan children. As these individuals grow up in New Zealand, they must adapt to not only the dominant white culture, but also to the many other ethnicities with very different values and expectations. These ethnic groups have already labeled the Samoan individual with typical stereotypes which many young Samoans are finding hard to fight against. A great deal of Samoans born in these immigrant communities are confused about their cultural identity, not only because of these outside perceptions, but also from interethnic views held by fellow members. To the non-Samoan they are Samoan simply because of their ethnicity, yet they may be labeled *fia pālagi* (wanting to be white) by migrant Samoans who adhere to the strict *fa’a Sāmoa*. Peter Caws speaks of this

variance between members of the same ethnic group, “There are other arguments that might be deployed along the same general line: to the effect, for example, that as far as the internalization of cultural content goes, differences between two individuals belonging to the same culture may often be as great as, or greater than differences between two individuals belonging to two different cultures . . .” (1994:375).

For several years I worked on a volunteer basis in counseling in Hawai‘i and New Zealand. In several of my Samoan cases, I frequently encountered the same problems, misunderstandings, and discouragements which seemed to stem from the confusion of living in two worlds. Each world had its own expectation, and many individuals found it difficult, if not virtually impossible, to meet all of them. Most had scholastic difficulties and were at the bottom of their classes or were placed into special education programs. I found in many individuals a low self-esteem which originated from cultural differences and perceptions imposed upon them by others. They often considered themselves inadequate because they could neither understand nor function “successfully” in school or in the work environment. Theodore Stepp has said in his thesis about Samoans in Hawai‘i, “For many Samoans living in Honolulu, failure to achieve such practical successes as bringing home a decent paycheck, passing the test at school, or establishing a relationship of trust and mutual affirmation with a non-Samoan can often lead to the low self-esteem that erodes a person’s potential for achieving this quality life,” (1989:2-3). If functioning in a non-Samoan environment is a challenge to one’s cultural and personal identity, then imagine this opposition happening within your own ethnic group.

In time as I began to do more and more interviews, I found that non-island born Samoans were finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the perceptions held by the members of their

own community. They were concerned more about what other Samoans felt about them than the opinions of those outside their ethnic group. To them, it was more difficult to face a migrant Samoan or to even deal with the attitudes from others while visiting Sāmoa than to be around someone of a completely different ethnicity because of the shame they felt of not knowing the Samoan language or the cultural aspects of the *fa'a Sāmoa*. Those who actually visited Sāmoa believed that was when their identity was most vigorously challenged and questioned. For the most part, they felt very out of place and very different. The special treatment they were given by their own kinship group while in Sāmoa, immediately and for the duration of the visit, implied separation and a lack of belonging. One side wanted the other to feel at home by recreating an atmosphere that they perceived as “New Zealandish” and the other half wanted to see and experience what the “true *fa'a Sāmoa*” was and what Samoan-island living was like. Though passive in nature, this form of cultural opposition has its impact on how Samoan New Zealanders assess their Samoanness. For some, the experience can be shocking since up to that point they always thought of themselves as an “insider” of the culture, not an “other” or “outsider.” Several of those I spoke to recounted their sentiments and the incidences when they felt that their Samoan identity was in question while visiting Sāmoa.

ROSE: I know I first felt like a tourist in my own family village and even seen as one. It was like - they said, “These are the white Samoans”. . . It was sort of hard because you’re sort of an outcast there and then you come back home and your family wants to try to be *fa'a Sāmoa*, but then you’re still an outcast because you can’t fit in. So you don’t win. It’s like a cycle - you don’t win. So you always go having a life with your family, having a life with your cousins and relatives, and then friends or in your work place. You’re different. You live up to their standards and then you live up to what your parents or relatives think of you as.

LISE: Because it is so different - the Samoans in Sāmoa are so different from the Samoans here.

Yeah, I would say there is a battle there. When you go to Sāmoa, you’re not looked at as a Samoan, and when you’re here, you’re not looked at as a Samoan as well. I

usually get this, “You don’t look Samoan,” kind of thing which makes it come across to me as, “What do Samoans look like?” sort of thing. Yeah, it’s not knowing what kind of identity you can identify with. You can say that you’re a Samoan here, but when you go to Sāmoa, you’re not a Samoan. You’re a New Zealander. So it’s more like a battle. What really is a Samoan and who am I really?

BEV: Like, it really felt that you were in your own culture and that. You feel like a Samoan and that people were different - really different over there than that’s over here. It was good, it was good because then you got to see the real depth of the culture and you got to learn more within that two weeks we were there.

I got a lot of that - a lot of funny looks. It was really hard to ask and talk to the people in their language. Then again it was hard for them to talk back to me. Communication was a real barrier when I was over there. I would have to ask my cousins who translate for me a lot and that. At times I didn’t feel good around the people and that because the way they were looking at us - looked you down. And they gave the impression that I was more comfortable with the European life than the island life. To focus more on my own culture than the European way. That’s what I felt when I was over there.

Really sad, yeah? It makes me sad to know that they’re thinking and see me like that because they always say, “Aw, you want to be a *fia pālagi*.” It’s just, maybe it’s because, you know, being over here, wanting to speak Samoan, but with them over there, they wanting to speak English. So it’s a real battle, you know, between the two - wishing they could speak our language and we wishing we could speak our own mother language. Yeah, I feel really sad when people do that. They look you down and they speak behind your back and that and they just say things like that, that really hurts. They don’t really know, you know, what it feels like to not speak the actual language.

REINA: And also, I didn’t like being called a “*pālagi*.” We were called “*pālagi*’s” when we were over there because they automatically know that you’re not Samoan born when you’re over there. Kids call you “*pālagi*.” “Look at that *pālagi* walking down the street!” in Samoan.

MATA: I think they’re a lot more polite. It was really funny because when it came to lunch, we thought that they’d just give us what they usually eat, but because they were our cousins. But, they actually made us cucumber sandwiches with corn beef in it and my cousins and I just looked at it and thought, “What? We don’t even eat cucumber sandwiches here in New Zealand!” I think there’s this mentality that because we’re New Zealanders that we can’t handle Samoan food. We can’t handle the Samoan life. That we’re a lot weaker, that we’re . . . they call us “*pālagi*” which means “European” or “white” and they treat us like that too. They talk to us in English. But, then, you’re trying to learn the language while you’re there and so they laugh at you when you try to practice your pigeon Samoan on them. But, they want to speak English to you. I guess they just really go out of their way to make you feel welcomed and to make you feel special, but at times, you just get sick of it because you think, “I want to learn the things that maybe our parents have been brought up with.”

ROSE: . . . You’re teased, but they know. I was more teased, not the younger ones, more my uncles and aunties, but they say, “Oh, go get her some water,” or “Clean it properly

because she's not used to this." They'd say, "You're the *pālāgi*'s Samoan." They treat you different because they think, "You're not used to it." So, you'll end up with clean sheets or water in a new cup or something like that. It doesn't matter if some of my cousins ate off their brother's plate. I'd get a new plate to eat off of. A clean plate. That's more the feeling. Just comments like that. Like, they make things more special or what they thought as special because they thought I was used to it. Whereas, I was trying to be like them and I felt really uncomfortable because my cousins could see it and they giggle and laugh on the side and say, "She won't handle it." Then I'd try to fit in and not be the outcast in a sense.

. . . When I first was there, the everyday duties and that, yeah, I felt uncomfortable. I felt, after a while you sort of catch on and you just start helping out. I know that near the end I felt more comfortable about it. I think, in a sense, I always knew they'll always think of me as the *pālāgi* Samoan. They didn't go any further than just teasing and making comments. Just those things of like, I said, "Get a clean plate for her," or "Water in a glass," or something like that for me. To them, they think they're helping me - to them. When really I was trying to be like them and not make a fuss over or be made a fuss over, but they think, "Well no," because I wasn't brought up hard.

The preconceived notions on the part of the Samoan born insinuate to the New Zealand born that they are viewed as acting "*pālāgi*-ish" or even to the extent of being considered as a non-Samoan. It implies that their identity has already been established more as a New Zealander than a Samoan even before their arrival in the islands. As a result, this has a significant effect and influence on how many Samoans born outside of Sāmoa reevaluate their own cultural identity and ultimately their personal identity when they return home. Most New Zealand born Samoans would simply like to be called a "Samoan" or a "New Zealand born Samoan," yet all of those interviewed stated that it would be unusual to be labeled as anything other than "*fia pālāgi*," "*pālāgi*," and/or "New Zealander" by their Samoan born counterparts.

There is a great deal of intra-group variation which often gets overlooked by academics for seemingly more popular and larger issues between the dominant host community and the migrant section. Upon closer examination, we can see how individual members of the migrant group make decisions about their own culture and the benefits it may or may not have to attaining certain goals in their lives. Some choose to retain their culture, others choose to modify

it, and still others to completely abandon it. Some may decide to return to those cultural elements that they left behind or to discontinue those elements they once believed in. No matter what the circumstance, the Samoan individual is the ultimate instigator of his or her own identity. However they choose to identify themselves, in turn, affects how they see others and finally how those others see themselves in reaction to those judgements.

Facing opposition and the judgements about one's own cultural identity by members of your own ethnicity can bring out either a renewal, deconstruction, or an adjustment. According to Spicer's theory of persistent cultural systems, "Where the pressures are focused in the cultural repertoire of the people, there the symbols and their meanings are brought into the identity system, and these pressures change as the interests of dominant peoples change" (1971:798). In other words, the degree and awareness of one's own identity is strengthened in proportion to the force exerted by the opposing side. If there is not much force imposed by one group, then the need to defend or fight back lessens with the other group. Spicer goes on to say, "The selection of cultural elements for symbolic references goes on in terms of the character of this image; the frequent shifts in emphasis are part of the process of maintenance in response to alterations in the environment" (1971:798). Particularly for those interviewed, I found that their responses to the opposition and pressures exerted by island born Samoans did not necessarily nor immediately lead to a resurgence of the Samoan identity. Some began to question their Samoanness, comparing and contrasting their level of understanding the Samoan culture with a Samoan born's knowledge. The opposition they received from those of their own ethnicity forced them to question how they lived, whom they related to more, where their loyalties lay, and even what national identity they sided toward. A couple of individuals that I interviewed related their

feelings of how opposition in their life made them feel more as New Zealanders than Samoan.

BECCA: . . . sometimes I write down, when I'm writing out a resume and I think, "What nationality are you?" And I think of myself as *pālagi* at times because it's where I have been brought up, but then I have to think, "Aw, I am Samoan as well." It's like I'm a Samoan New Zealander. Actually because I feel like I'm a New Zealander first, then Samoan really. To be honestly speaking. Because I am living the New Zealand way of life now and not the Samoan. The Samoan comes up when I need to get to it.

. . . Like I know that I am Samoan, but not the Samoan that the full-blooded Samoans want me to be.

ROSE: I'm more so proud of what we're all. I wouldn't say I'm better at it or more fluent. I'd say that I'm not the *fa'a Sāmoa* back in the islands. I'm a New Zealander even though I'm Samoan in New Zealand. Sometimes I'm torn, as well, because there's things I don't like in the traditions that that's always been the way.

The majority of the interviewees initially felt belittled and intimidated by what they thought Samoan born Samoans view as "cultural neglect" on their part. Mata recalls a situation in which she felt her identity was characterized by a Samoan born in New Zealand and how "typical" their reaction was to her basic knowledge of the Samoan language and culture. It was a response that she had expected from someone who didn't see her as a Samoan anymore.

Yeah, yeah, I've gotten that a couple of times. I think in my seventh form year which is - how old was I? About seventeen. I was at school and one of my friend's mothers was at school. She asked me a question in Samoan which I didn't understand and I think it was, "What class are you in?" And I asked my dad to translate for me. So I said, "Ah, Dad, what is she saying to me?" My father was shocked that I couldn't understand either. So he told me and then I answered her back in English and she was shocked and she just walked off. I think there's like an expectation that if you're here in New Zealand and your parents are Samoan, then you learn the language from them. But, and people get shocked when you don't know it. And then when you go to Sāmoa, they sort of . . . when they find out that you don't know very much Samoan then they don't - it depends on the age group I guess. The older generation expects the younger people to learn the language, whereas my cousins who are Samoan born Samoans, who are my age, just laugh and just think it's funny. They just think it's normal. They just call you "*pālagi*" or "New Zealander."

Consider the following description of how Dave viewed his cultural and personal identity based on how he felt Samoan born Samoans perceived him:

We couldn't help overhearing these two Samoan guys standing right next to us and they were talking to each other in the Samoan language, not realizing that we

understood what they were saying. What they were saying [about us] was that, “Those Maori guys are looking for some trouble.” I turned around and looked at them and spoke to them in Samoan and said, “Mālō, uso. ‘O ā mai ‘oe?” They looked at me with a shocked look on their faces and said, “Excuse me, are you a Samoan?” And I said, in Samoan, “Yes, I am a Samoan and you better watch out mate!” So he goes, “Oh, sorry, I didn’t know!” And I said, “Well I rest my case buddy.” And my mate and I just laughed and we went back to our conversation. That’s just an example where you can be mistaken for someone else, for a lot of New Zealand born Samoans. They go through the same situation. They probably look at the barrier between the Samoan born and themselves. You have to watch out for that because it can hurt you as well. You just feel like a half caste. You get mistaken for being someone else. Half this and half that. It’s pretty hard I reckon to take that away.

They’ll [parents and Samoan born people] try to put you down in a certain way saying that you don’t respect the island way of life. That’s because we’ve never been there to understand it. We’ve never been in the islands to understand how you live the island way of life. I just felt like because I live here, I see things in a different way and that’s the way I act and that’s the end result. It’s who I am, you know? I can see where they’re coming from, but it doesn’t make any difference. I can never relate to the things they do in the islands unless I was taken back home to the islands and I was taught how to understand their way of living.

I get nervous and I get embarrassed because you’re trying to understand what your relatives are trying to say to you and because you don’t understand how to speak Samoan you’re afraid to upset them. Because they look at you as someone who is not Samoan. You feel kind of sad about it because you feel you’re Samoan through your parents. You’ve kind of lost the other half of being a Samoan because you do not understand how to speak the language. There’s a barrier between you and your family who comes from the islands and trying to relate to them. You have to overcome what they’re saying to - “You should learn how to speak the Samoan language.” I try to avoid talking to my relatives because I don’t want to embarrass them.

Dave’s responses and feelings to the conceptions of family members and other Samoan borns remind me of a saying by Carl W. Buehner, “They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.” These intra-group stereotypes do affect the acquisition and connection a New Zealand born will have with the Samoan culture and will also influence their relation to others. The emotions that come with cultural pride and identity run deep and, for some, the opposition becomes a test of cultural integrity. Ultimately, these feelings can highly influence the construction of cultural identity and overall sense of self. Dave goes on to say,

. . . When I was really young and I was living in Onehunga, my family and my brothers and sisters - it was like here we are, us kids, speaking English and we used to look at our

uncles and aunties talking in Samoan, wondering, “What language is that? Why do they talk like that?” And some of the things they did, “Why do they do that? Why do they do what they were doing?” Why is it they can’t talk English? Why don’t they speak the way we speak?” A lot of questions pop in your mind. Sometimes you go, “Where is Sāmoa? Where is the island? What is the island? Am I an islander? I’m sure I’m a Kiwi!” . . . We have a typical New Zealand slang language and adapting to it and you can relate to it. But when you look at your relations, your uncles and aunties, and they come around and talk in a different language, sometimes we want to join in because we can see the atmosphere is so pumped up. They’re all laughing and giggling, but the only difference is the language difference. It’s pretty hard to speak it and understand it. I know it can be done.

Yeah, I kind of get confused. Even now I look at life a different way. Not the way a Samoan would look at life. I tend to look at life the way a normal Kiwi would look at life. I get confused because I don’t hang out a lot with Samoans, especially Samoan born. When I do, I feel kind of left out. It’s like I can’t relate to what they relate to. I can only go to a certain point in the conversation. Whereas, I can relate to a New Zealand born Samoan because we can relate to the conversation and relate to what we can say to each other. I have a sense of humor and we can laugh and joke the way Kiwi’s do. I kind of get confused about where I should be going as a Samoan, but I think the only thing I can do is go back to the islands and find out for myself what it is really like. To really get along with the Samoan born and learn something from it and get positive results.

The fact that Dave believes that he would need to travel to the islands in order for him to know the Samoan culture and what being Samoan really is, shows how “non-Samoan” he really feels due to his past interactions with other Samoans from the islands. For him, you cannot truly understand what it is to be Samoan until you visit and experience the islands. Some reactions that individuals can have toward opposition are complete avoidance of the people and the cultural aspects that challenge their identity. As he stated above, Dave hopes that by going back to Sāmoa, he might be able “to really get along with the Samoan born.” While Dave felt confused about how to move between cultural identities, Rina saw that it was advantageous for her to shift between identities - a kind of “best of both worlds” mentality.

RINA: Like, I’m suppose to be a Samoan in a *pālagi* society. Everyone looks at me and goes, “Okay, she’s Samoan. She’s an islander.” But then my, our side, like the Samoan side are like, “Aw, yeah? She’s *fia pālagi!*” I think I’m doing all right. I’m getting there. It’s not hard . . . But, at the same time it’s an advantage because you’ve got two different sides.

Conclusion

Losa's poem:

Ode to Mum & Dad

My parents . . .
Eager to give their offspring
the best,
Moved to another land
'Aiga wooing them to
a paradise of money,
Better education & promises of
opportunity, without
the drudgery of sitting by the kerosene stove
doing the *saka*,
Life in New Zealand is
easy, they say . . .
Everyone has a fridge
and a T V
Freedom from the countless
fa'alavelave's
Why does my stomach
ache for Taro, *Palusami*
in a country where
you can have anything you want?
Why does my heart yearn
for, a view of our *malae*
in Poutasi.
Why do I feel like I don't
belong, in a country that I grew up in . . .
Why do I want to escape
all the time?
There's nowhere to run away to,
I've been sentenced to one thing
and there's a yearning to be
Somewhere else.
Dissatisfied, everything is tainted
by the feeling . . .
What is the feeling?
Not belonging, yet part of
Belonging but rejected
Some say I'm *Fia - Palagi*
Some say I'm *Fia - Maui*
I've been remade & all
my parts don't slot together,

my parts slot in sometimes,
and pop out at the slightest
interference,
it doesn't have to be anything
Major!!
A word, a nod, an attitude
I am shattered
It takes a long time to be me again
As normal as I can be,
. . . Under the circumstances.

- Fa'amoana John Luafutu (1994:65)

As the poem above reflects, many Samoans raised within New Zealand search for a sense of belonging, for a wholeness of self that is deeply rooted in their cultural identity. Yet, just as complex as individuals are, so is the concept of cultural identity that shapes how they see themselves. Depending on the social context in which they lived and the way each interviewee looked at culture, whether unchanging or flexible in nature, determined their outlook on their own cultural and self identity. Home environment, church involvement and social interaction affect the level of knowledge and perceptions of the Samoan culture by young Samoans, which can then influence their self-identification and adaptation to the world around them.

Most expressed a deeply rooted and emotional identification with being Samoan even though their fluency in the language and knowledge of the culture would reflect otherwise to the island born Samoan. The benefit of having this interethnic opposition is that it provides an opportunity in which the individual can evaluate who they are and evolve their cultural and personal identity to fit their goals and beliefs in life. The drawback is that they may become embittered by this discrimination and then abandon a rich and full heritage because of others' misconceptions. Yet, as the title of this paper indicates, perceptions of your own cultural identity

can be very complicated indeed and is not as set and even explainable as some would like to have it.

Growing up far from their parents' homeland and living in a non-Samoan environment has created a new Samoan and in turn a new *fa'a Sāmoa* that with each generation will continue to transform. As the population of non-island born Polynesians grows, it becomes increasingly important to understand the changing nature of cultural identity because of the impact they will have on the New Zealand community and also in other parts of the world that have growing Pacific Island networks. It is also pertinent and enlightening to hear the testimonies and stories from New Zealand born Samoans on how they perceive themselves and their relations to others, since there is still so little of this in current literature. It was my hope in this paper for their voices and opinions to be heard.

“Our quest should not be for a revival of our past cultures but for the creation of new cultures which are free of the taint of colonialism and based firmly on our own pasts. The quest should be for a new Oceania . . . The only valid culture worth having is the one being lived out now, unless of course we attain immortality or invent a time machine that would enable us to live in the past or future. Knowledge of our past cultures is a precious source of inspiration for living our the present” (76). - Albert Wendt

Appendix

Interviewees' Profiles

Pseudo Name	Gender M/F	Age	Birthplace	Marital Status	Completed Educational Level	Occupation F/T, P/T
Becca	F	30	Auckland, NZ	Single	High School	Bank Teller - F/T
Sue	F	21	Auckland, NZ	Single	High School	Telecommunications - F/T
Ti'e	M	22	Auckland, NZ	Married - 2 children	High School	Construction - F/T
Pule	F	21	Auckland, NZ	Single	High School	Receptionist - F/T
Rose	F	25	Auckland, NZ	Married - 2 children	High School	Homemaker - F/T
Mata	F	23	Auckland, NZ	Single	High School	College Student
Rina	F	19	Auckland, NZ	Single	High School	College Student
Dave	M	30	Auckland, NZ	Single	High School	Cook - F/T
Bev	F	27	Auckland, NZ	Married - 1 child	High School	Health Insurance Representative - F/T
Reina	F	24	Auckland, NZ	Single	High School	College Student
Lise	F	27	Auckland, NZ	Single	High School	College Student
Vai	F	26	Auckland, NZ	Single	High School	College Student

TOTAL INTERVIEWED: 12

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