

# *PesePese*ga o le mavaega: Singing the farewell in Samoan funerals

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## ABSTRACT

Samoa people have had a death and dying culture from pre-colonisation to the present day, both in Samoa and in their adopted homelands such as Aotearoa, New Zealand. Like all other cultures, song has been part of death rituals in *Fa'asamoa* (Samoa culture) and this is very much the case in contemporary New Zealand society. Funerals continue to bring Samoan *aiga* (Samoa families) together to farewell a loved one. Songs are part of this process, not only in the actual funeral service but also prior to it, when the body is lying in state in the family home, and at the after-function post burial.

This qualitative research project explored songs in Samoan funerals; how they are selected, and their meaning(s) for participants as part of funeral ritual and *Fa'asamoa* in New Zealand. The research framework is based on the *Kakala*: native to Tonga, this is when different natural materials such as flowers and fruits are gathered and woven to make a *Kakala* (garland) for a specific purpose to present to a particular individual as a sign of love and appreciation. The data collection method is *Talanoa*, developed from an ancient practice in the Pacific where conversation is based on sacred relationships.

There was a total of 29 participants, recruited in consultation with a a Samoan funeral director, who was also a participant. Other participants are members of six Samoan *aiga* who have lost an elder in the last five years and who represented different generations from each of the six *aiga*. Three main categories emerged from the data, namely the essence of '*Fa'asamoa*', the importance of 'History in Song' and 'Connection in Song'. The findings of this research will increase our understanding of Samoan cultural practices in New Zealand.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, my dad and first professor Lepo Fatu Lualua Urale who taught me wisdom, humility and service. ‘O *Fanau* a manu felelei e fafaga I fugalaa’u, o *Fanau* a tagata e fafaga I upu’ (The young of birds are fed with tree blossoms, the young of human beings are fed with words). It was you dad that taught me that the fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom. It was because of you I retained my *Gagana Samoa*. I really miss you dad-you will forever be in my heart.

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## GLOSSARY

<i>Aganu'u</i>	Samoan culture, ways of the village
<i>Aiga</i>	Family
<i>Aiga potopoto</i>	Extended family
<i>Alagaupu</i>	Samoan Proverb
<i>Alofa</i>	Love, care
<i>AtuNu'u</i>	Country
<i>Au faiPese</i>	Choir
<i>Au Lotu</i>	Congregation, church
<i>Auala</i>	Road, path, Samoan traditional funeral ritual
<i>Ekalesia</i>	Congregation
<i>Fa'aaloalo</i>	Respect, to be respectful
<i>Fa'afetai</i>	Thank you, thanksgiving
<i>Fa'alavelave</i>	Funeral
<i>Fa'asamoa</i>	Samoan culture
<i>Fa'afaletui</i>	Meeting area
<i>Fa'aMatai</i>	Chiefly system
<i>Fa'asinomaga</i>	Identity
<i>Faife'au</i>	Pastor
<i>Faletua</i>	Pastor's wife
<i>Fanau</i>	Children
<i>Feagaiga</i>	Sacred va/relationship between brother and sister
<i>Fealelausi</i>	Mourning house
<i>Fono</i>	Meeting
<i>Gagana</i>	Language
<i>Ie toga</i>	Fine mats
<i>Ilamutu</i>	Family gods
<i>Itulagi</i>	Side of heaven
<i>Lagona</i>	A feeling, to feel, to sense
<i>Le va / Le Va fealoaloa'i</i>	Sacred relationships / Sacred social relationships
<i>Le Va tapuia</i>	Sacred relationships between all
<i>Lima taumatau</i>	Right hand
<i>Lotu</i>	Church, prayer, congregation
<i>Mafutaga</i>	Close relationship, closeness
<i>Ma'i aitu</i>	Ghost sickness

<i>Maliu</i>	Death, funeral
<i>Malo</i>	Government
<i>Matai</i>	Chief
<i>Muagagana</i>	Idiom, poetic saying
<i>Nu'u</i>	Village
<i>Pese</i>	Song
<i>Pisupo</i>	Can corned beef
<i>Pule</i>	Authority, jurisdiction
<i>Talanoa</i>	Conversation, to converse
<i>Tama'ita'i</i>	Ladies
<i>Tautua</i>	Service, to serve
<i>Tuaoi</i>	Boundary
<i>Tusi pese</i>	Hymn book
<i>Va fealoaloa'i</i>	Sacred social relationships
<i>Va tapuia</i>	Sacred relationship between all things

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

### Introduction

Consistent with the stages of the research process as set out in the *Kakala* methodology (See p. 4-5 later in this chapter and chapter 4), the first chapter in the thesis is the *Teu* (conceptualisation) stage. In reality this stage began with the thinking, reading and discussions with mentors and supervisors as to the what and how of the research. This chapter sets out what the research is about, why it is important and the way it was carried out. This includes background information about the Samoan population in Aotearoa New Zealand as well as a discussion of the researcher's life journey and the connection to this research.

### Background

Pasifika people make up 8.1 % (381,642) of the total New Zealand population (4,699,755) (Statistics New Zealand, 2018), increasing from 7.4 % in the 2013 census. The most numerous ethnic groups under the Pasifika umbrella are Samoans with a population of nearly half of the Pasifika NZ population with 182,000. Samoans are projected to make up 11 % of the workforce in 2038 (Statistics New Zealand, 2018). According to the 2018 census, approximately 66% of Samoans in New Zealand are New Zealand-born (Statistics New Zealand, 2018) and contributing to a very young Pasifika population; over 36 % of Samoans in New Zealand are 14 years old and under.

In the broadest sense, Samoan culture (*Fa'asamoa*) is about connectivity and belonging to *aiga* (extended family) and to the cosmos (Ta'isi, 2009) and 'relationality' (Vaai, 2017). *Fa'asamoa*

is based on *Gagana Samoa* (Samoan language), an essential vehicle for the transmission of Samoan values and knowledge across space and time (Ta'isi, 2008; Tamasese, et al. 2005).

Essential to *Fa'asamoa* are relationships, regarded as sacred (whether in the social realm or with the environment), harmony, connectivity, and embodied knowledge in their *Itulagi* (side of heaven) (Vaai, 2017).

A central part of *Fa'asamoa* is *Muagagana* (proverbs), representing and supporting the importance of values, customs, traditions and protocols (Lauta-Mulitalo, 1998). Some of these values include le *Va fealoaloa'i*—sacred connections between people and social spaces (Ta'isi, 2009; Tuafuti, 2011; Amituana'i Toloa, 2002) and Le *Va tapuia*—sacred connections in relationships between human beings and all things alive or dead (Ta'isi, 2009; Amituanai-Toloa, 2002; Anae, 2010). Customs include traditions and rituals marking celebrations, weddings, death (*Maliu*) and burial (Seiuli, 2015; 2017)/ The use of the Samoan language in a *Fono* (meeting) (Fouvaa, 2011) and the use of music, song and chant to communicate various messages to the community (Ta'isi, 2009) are equally considered important customs for Samoans. Face to face communication is regarded as sacred, as it is a central aspect of le *Va fealoaloa'i* (Fouvaa, 2011). Respect (*Fa'aaloalo*) is an essential part of protocol in any social setting, primarily driven by *Alofa* (love) (Fouvaa, 2011). Moreover, Ta'isi (2009) strongly asserts that Samoan culture privileges metaphor, allusions and allegory, in sharp contrast with the need for “exacting” language often privileged in Western cultures. He argues that this aspect of Samoan culture provides room to save face, respecting the sacred in the *Va fealoaloa'i* and ensures harmony and balance in social relations.

Rituals have always been part of Samoan culture including in their fishing practices, weddings, celebrations, birth, and not least of all, in response to dying, death and burial (Moyle, 1971;

Ta'isi, 2009). Ta'isi (2009) argues that in an oral tradition, these rituals carry Samoan history and culture through time. In other words, rituals help Samoan people remember who they are and where they come from and therefore helps connection to their *tulaga vae* (turangawaewae) (Ta'isi, 2009). When a loved one is dying, funeral and burial have always brought Samoan people together. Ta'isi (2009) argues that Samoan people have always had a death and dying culture. From pre- encounter with western cultures, this ritualised culture facilitated the collective to an “emotional high” where death and life are one and the same. Dance, chants and song have always been part of death, dying and burial rituals in Samoan culture, and they convey and record the footprints of Samoan people from the past to the present and into the future. Meaning, nuance and metaphor have, since pre-colonial times, been expressed through song and chants (Ta'isi, 2009). The purpose and meaning of song and chants are to celebrate life by challenging the power of death and making explicit human beings' capacity to reproduce new life. There is evidence though those funeral rituals are changing through the changed role of the church in Samoan life in Samoa, New Zealand (Anae, 1998; Macpherson, 2011; Seiuli, 2017) and in the US (Ablon, 1970). If ritual through song and chant in death, dying and funeral practices in pre-colonisation Samoan culture carries the past to the present, the question arises about what song in Samoan funeral practices in Aotearoa New Zealand say about the *tulaga vae* (Ta'isi, 2009) of Samoan people in this contemporary and differentiated society?

## **Focus of the study**

In light of having a youthful, and not insignificant, Samoan population in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2018) research into understanding this population is important to the country's future. It will be valuable to understand how *aiga* view themselves as a self-identifying group, how they enact some of their cultural practices, and how such views differ between Samoan born Samoans and those who are New Zealand born.

Ta'isi (2009) urges Samoans to not only hold onto their culture, but also to take part in the challenge of exploring what Samoan culture is, and what it is not. This, Ta'isi (2009) argues, will increase cultural competency and provide Samoan young people with a clearer understanding of who they are and what their future holds.

Funerals in Samoan *aiga* in New Zealand, as a focus for research, will help elucidate the relationships between Samoan culture, death and dying ritual, and song as an expression of Samoan culture in contemporary New Zealand. The choice of funerals for research is also justified purely because they are a phenomenon that is a constant in Samoan (Ta'isi, 2009) and humanity's history. Rappaport (1971) argues that there is a meta-message conveyed in human rituals. Therefore, one of the areas of interest of this thesis is the exploration of whether such a meta-message is present in Samoan funerals in New Zealand and how it is evidenced in song.

The research question is formulated as follows:

What do the songs utilised in the death and dying culture of Samoans tell us about Samoan culture in contemporary New Zealand?

## **Methodology**

The details of the methodology will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4. This qualitative research project design is based on the *Kakala* in the Tongan culture (Thaman, 1993; Fua, 2014) a process whereby natural materials such as flowers, leaves, bark and fruit are gathered to be woven together to form a *Kakala* (garland) to be presented for a specific purpose. The making of the *Kakala* is a metaphor for the research process consisting of the core elements of Teu (conceptualisation), Toli (data collection), Tui (analysis), Luva (reporting of research), Malie (reflecting on relevance and usefulness of research), and Mafana (outcome of research, celebration and transformation).

The choice of the *Kakala* as an overarching guide to the research process is important for several cultural reasons. The *Kakala* (garland) evokes beauty and harmony in relationships when people gather as a community to prepare and make the *Kakala*. Furthermore, the fragrance of the *Kakala* is a metaphor for meaning in the Samoan Indigenous Reference (SIR) (Ta'isi, 2009). The work of (Ta'isi, 2009) and the SIR is considered a seminal work which anchors much of the *Fa'asamoa* context for this research. Additionally, the practices of making the '*ula*' (Samoa), garland or *Kakala* with natural material has ancient connections with Tonga. Of the greatest importance is that the *Kakala* is a constant reminder that participants are people, juxtaposed to people who are participants.

### ***Teu: Participants and Recruitment***

Participants are members of six Samoan *aiga* who have lost an elder in the last five years. Participants across different generations from the different *aiga* were interviewed. Up to 5 participants from each *aiga* consented to participation, resulting in a total of 29 participants, including a key informant (Samoan Funeral director). The Funeral director assisted with the

recruitment of participants. Using a snowball-sampling technique (Bryman, 2012), participants who agreed to participate were asked to refer other family members. Participants ages ranged from 16 years to 76 years

### ***Toli: Data collection***

The method used to collect data in this study is the *Talanoa* (Vaioleti, 2006) or semi-structured interview. Open-ended questions and conversational format enabled participants to discuss freely: which song(s) was/were performed or played at the funerals; who decided on these songs; why the selected song/s were chosen and more importantly, the meanings of these songs and their relationships to *Fa'asamoa*.

### ***Tui: Data analysis***

The researcher translated into English those *Talanoa* or part of the *Talanoa* where participants spoke in Samoan. All *Talanoa* were recorded, transcribed and translated where needed. A latent thematic analysis technique as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was utilised.

### ***Ethics***

The University of Auckland's Ethics Committee granted approval for this research on 23 March 2018 Ref number: 020710. Of great importance was the understanding of appropriate cultural protocols in the *Fa'asamoa* especially in the case of elder participants and *Matai* (chiefs).

### **Researcher positionality**

This research supports the discourse of 'decolonising methodologies' (Smith, 1999) where there is a re-construction of Pasifika ways of knowing in mind as essential to the very survival

of Pasifika people. It is a position that makes explicit a challenge to imperialism, and its continuing reach throughout the globe-most notable being the neo-liberal economic philosophy running rampant all over the globe including *Pacific-Oceania*. This discourse not only challenges the superiority and truthfulness of ‘meaning making’ from a Eurocentric point of view, but more importantly asserts that Pacific people have their own ways of making sense of the world as they had before colonisation, for three thousand years. This is not to say that the ways of understanding the world from the West has no value, rather it is at best inappropriate when researching Pasifika people and at worst a part of colonisation that has cast to the margins the epistemology of indigenous people including those from the Pacific (Vaioliti, 2006). This section of the thesis is then an assertion that the ‘centre’ of research for Pasifika researchers when researching Pasifika people, needs to come out of their *Itulagi*, regarding method, methodology, theoretical perspective, epistemology and ontology.

The discourse on Pasifika methodologies as a fairly recent area of academic interest as part of the landscape in academia, is well documented (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Tunufa’i, 2016). As part of the decolonising project, this has presented challenges for Pasifika researchers in defining what constitutes Pasifika methodologies in a region with similarities between its people and their history, but also differences. Furthermore, there is the matter of differences between Pasifika researchers reflecting where they were born and raised and their proficiency in their mother tongue. This presents some considerable challenges in light of assertions that indigenous language is key to culture and its interpretation (Ta’isi. 2009).

It is the position of this thesis that the researcher can never be removed from any research. In other words, the researcher inevitably brings with them their life experiences and world view. For Pasifika researchers this is informed by their *Itulagi* (life world) (Vaai, 2017). The *Itulagi*

for Pasifika people is a relational one, where the meaningfulness of life springs out of interconnectedness between all things. The self is not an individual self but rather a 'relational self' (Ta'isi, 2009) where the meaning of one's existence is always in relation to all other relationships whether it be with the divine, people, history, the sky and ocean and the cosmos. The individual and the community are seen as being part of a whole; a complementary relationship as they are on a continuum where one cannot exist without the other. The 'given' in the *Itulagi* that is Pasifika is the centrality of harmony in all relationships in the pursuit of peace and meaningful living.

### ***Personal motivation***

My life started in the Samoan village of FagaMalo in the island of Savai'i in 1963. Growing up people would say that I was a particular kind of child. Such a child was a bit like an adult in a child's body. As much as I liked to play with the other children in the villages where I grew up, given the choice, I always preferred to sit and listen to the adults as they conversed about all manner of things. Some of these social settings were formal in nature and some were *Talanoa* in regards to addressing some kind of dispute or conflict within my *aiga* or in relation to the *Nu'u* (village).

A favourite place was when there were formal cultural meetings, such as the council of chiefs or when the women committees would get together. I would often sit on the grass at the back of the *fale* (house) so I could listen to the *Fono a Matai* (The council of chiefs). My father supported this practice where his young daughter was always interested with endless questions about the world, social situations and relationships. Some of these situations were conflict in action where emotions ran high and people would even get hurt. On the way home I would be brimming with questions for my dad. I now understand that it was this relationship that nurtured

my curiosity about the world. In this case, it is the social world and the meaning it had for people and the meaning-making process.

Eleven years later, my family decided to immigrate to New Zealand. By this time, I was firmly rooted in a particular worldview where everything was connected, regardless of whether such things were social, material, or spiritual. The idea of connectivity is central to *Fa'asamoa* (the Samoan way). My father had a special and unique relationship with all his six children. As the eldest, he always told me "*O oe o lo'u Lima taumatau*" (You are my right hand). Looking back, perhaps it was not so surprising when he informed me at the age of twenty-five years that in the future when he passes away, I would officiate at his funeral. There was no discussion. He did not ask me if I was agreeable to the idea. He just gently and firmly told me that this would be the situation when he passed away in the future. I protested and he smiled and said '*E fa'apea ou te avatu ia oe se mea e te le mafai!*' (I wouldn't give you something you could not carry!). He asked me three questions to which I answered in the affirmative. Do you believe in Christ? Do you know how to pray? Can you read the Bible? *Ua lava!* (It is sufficient!). At the time I was well aware that what he was proposing was not the 'done thing' in the Samoan community and even taboo. However, I was not really upset about it, as I thought that by such a time in the distant future, he would have changed his mind. He did not.

Twenty-six years later, I was fifty-one years old and my father was taken home from the hospital to spend his last week with us. Nearly a week later he passed away shortly after his eighty-third birthday. Before he did, I asked him to please change his mind and agree to a *Faife'au* (pastor) officiating at his funeral. He shook his head, smiled and launched into a blessing and gave his last instructions. There was to be one service, not two as is the usual practice. The service was to be no longer than an hour and fifteen minutes. We were all to wear

bright clothing. It was to be a celebration. The coffin was to be a simple plain pine box. Mum, his children and grandchildren were to decorate it with art work. Only one of his brothers (a *Matai* in the family) was to travel from Samoa if he wished as he did not want to burden his family. He had said his farewells four years earlier and had told his family his last wishes. I was to choose the scriptures for the service. I was to look after my siblings, my mother, his *aiga*.

Throughout the funeral preparations, one of my brothers insisted that I sing an original Samoan composition for dad's funeral service. I resisted. I got angry. Wasn't I doing enough? My brother pointed out that 'I sang everywhere else so why wouldn't I do that for dad's funeral'? I relented. I am glad I did. I am grateful my brother insisted. Looking back, it was fitting as it was my relationship with my dad which nurtured my continued use of my *Gagana Samoa* and my love for *Muagagana* or *alagaupu* (Samoan proverbs). This was the beginning of my wondering about how other Samoan families were doing funerals for their fathers in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### ***Reflections***

It is inevitable that challenges will arise in the research process. I have experienced particular challenges in the navigation between and within different spaces. The reconciling of expectations to and from my community is often a process where I have had to accept that 'tension' is a constant. However, the constant guide has been the principles in the Samoan concept of *Le Va fealoaloa'i* and *Le Va tapuia* (sacred relationships) (Ta'isi, 2009; Anae, 1998). *Le va* was a given growing up in my village *Fagamalo* in Savai'i Samoa. It wasn't talked about a lot and certainly not written about. It was an embodied and embedded way of life and

as foundational as mother's milk. It is strange when people talk and write more about the *Va* in New Zealand than in Samoa. Maybe it is because we have to accentuate a point of difference?

One set of expectations comes out of my identity and membership as a Samoan woman researching members of her community in regards to cultural practices. The second is as researcher associated with a tertiary institution and the third as a member of an *aiga* and community participating in Samoan cultural practices. Being part of a community fare-welling a loved one, I reflected on attending funerals. As an insider, I was grieving with loved ones, but as a researcher, also looking at these experiences as an outsider.

The challenges of managing the different expectations and responsibilities required an on-going reflective process and, of course, personal growth to go 'there' and reconcile the contradictions. Not only are such responsibilities different for each space, they carry a different weight. The pressure to perform, deliver and honor all parties concerned including myself and my *aiga* was almost debilitating.

Ta'isi (2008) puts forward a powerful argument in regards to we are as Samoan people "I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share a tofi (inheritance) with my family, my village and my nation". My position as a mature student has been a blessing in regards to having some grounding and knowing of who I am; not as the western lenses would define me, but rather as the self that comes forth of the *Itulagi* (Vaa'i & Casimira, 2017), (side of heaven) that is Te moana nui (the great ocean) now known as the Pacific.

## **Structure of the thesis**

### ***Chapter 1: Introduction***

The introduction chapter has set out the area of research and its justification, including the utilisation of a Pacific methodology in support of the decolonisation project recognising the need to privilege Pacific participants and the way they view the world. The relationship between the life journey of this researcher and the area of interest in thesis has been clearly laid out, making an argument that Samoan funeral ritual and song is on a continuum in an on-going cultural practice and therefore an important area for research. Additionally, research in this area is important as it has very minimal presence in the literature, as it will become evident in the following chapter.

### ***Chapter 2: Literature Review***

The scope of the literature included in the review ranges from the big picture view as can be seen from the first section of the chapter, focused on ‘The western gaze’, to a more focused view in the second part of the chapter on ‘Funerals across cultures’. The review opens with a discussion of the western gaze within the academic disciplines of anthropology and sociology, where the study of music originated. It is the lenses from these disciplines which inform how both ritual and the sociology of music is understood and framed in the literature. Such lenses are not necessarily culturally neutral, requiring a critical awareness of how western thought can be pervasive. The discussion of funerals across cultures includes literature on both funerals in the west, and indigenous funerals.

### ***Chapter 3: Samoan history and culture***

This chapter presents a broad overview of Samoan history as related to how Samoan culture (including funeral ritual and song) has evolved from pre-encounter to post-encounter with the

west. This vantage point is used for a discussion of the Samoan population who began migrating to Aotearoa New Zealand in the 1950s and have made a new home in their adopted land. This chapter is divided into: (i) Samoan history and *Fa'asamoa* (ii) Samoans in New Zealand: Migration and *Fa'asamoa*, and (iii) History, song, funerals and *Fa'asamoa*.

#### ***Chapter 4: Methodology***

This qualitative research project design is based on the *Kakala* in the Tongan culture (Thaman, 1993; Fua, 2014). It refers to a process whereby natural materials such as flowers, leaves, bark and fruit are gathered to be woven together to form a *Kakala* (garland) to be presented for a specific purpose. The making of the *Kakala* is a metaphor for the research process consisting of the following elements in the *Kakala*: teu- (conceptualisation); toli (data collection); tui (analysis); luva (reporting of research); malie (reflecting on relevance and usefulness of research); mafana (outcome of research; celebration, change and transformation). These elements will be discussed in detail in this chapter, alongside a discussion of the data collection method and ethical considerations.

#### ***Chapter 5: Findings: Category 1- Fa'asamoa***

In this chapter, the first of three categories of findings are presented. Under the main category of *Fa'asamoa*, there are four subcategories: *Aiga*; *Gagana Samoa*; Customs and rituals; and *Fa'asamoa* and the church. Several central themes will be discussed under each of these subcategories. Participants have expressed their understanding of *Fa'asamoa* under all of the above and just as important, many have shared *how* and *why* they hold certain views about different aspects of *Fa'asamoa*.

### ***Chapter 6: Findings: Category 2 – History in song***

The second category that emerged from the findings is ‘History in song’ and will be presented in this chapter. It captures how participants explained and perceive song as part of their history, *aiga* and church. Song has been identified as a constant thread, accompanying communities and their families throughout their life journey and in farewelling their loved ones. This thread has carried and repeated a message in a cycle of singing, remembering and interpretation of meaning for different generations in the Samoan community.

### ***Chapter 7: Findings: Category 3 – Connection in Song***

This chapter evidences the many purposes of song in Samoan funerals as a way to amplify spiritual connection in a mana enhancing way that is meaningful to participants and their families. This connection with the spiritual in song is part of a continuum throughout the history of Samoan people to the present day. Song facilitates connection and conveying of emotion for family members in a way to honour and farewell their loved ones. Decision making of the songs selected for the funerals in this research in each family group will be examined to see whether song is a continuum of *Fa’asamoa* especially in the farewelling of their dead. Song for Samoan people continue to be part of their history and culture, marking important events such as funerals and relationships, amplifying connection in temporal and spiritual domains.

### ***Chapter 8: Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusions***

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section will consider all the finding categories as an integrated whole (a song) under the proverb of “*E suisui faiga ae e tasi le fa’avae*’ (The way things are done in the *Fa’asamoa* may change but the foundation remains). This is done in order to explore if there is a foundation to *Fa’asamoa* and if so, what it is. The role of women in the findings and the implications for women in leadership will also be

considered. The second section will discuss ‘Spirituality’ as an overarching thread that emerged from the focus on ‘Connection in song’. The frame of ritual will be used in the third section before the last section on the critical realism gaze will round off the conclusion to the thesis.

## **Conclusion**

The introduction chapter has set out the area of research and its justification, including the utilisation of a Pacific methodology in support of the decolonisation project recognising the need to privilege Pacific participants and the way they view the world. The relationship between the life journey of this researcher and the area of interest in thesis has been clearly laid out, making an argument that Samoan funeral ritual and song is on a continuum in an on-going cultural practice and therefore an important area for research. Additionally, research in this area is important as it has very minimal presence in the literature, as it will become evident in the next chapter; the literature review.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Introduction**

The review of the literature is located within the conceptualisation stage (Teu) of the *Kakala* methodology. Chapters 2 and 3 include literature relevant to the research question namely: What do the songs utilised in the death and dying culture of Samoans tell us about Samoan culture in contemporary New Zealand? The literature review is presented in three main parts: The western gaze; Funerals across cultures; and Samoan history and culture.

### **The western gaze**

The title of this first section of the literature review indicates the hegemonic place of western thought in literature. This intellectual tradition was part of cultural beliefs, with often unstated notions of superiority, within which the colonised other (including Pacific people) were supposed to be situated further back than their colonisers (Ingold, 1994, p. xiv).

Due to its overarching implication and application in the literature in regards to funerals as ritual with the exception of Ta'isi (2009) on traditional Samoan funeral rituals, the anthropological literature, and the sociological literature in the sociology of music preface this review. This positioning by the researcher, consistent with the chosen methodology, signals awareness that, just as there is a western gaze, there must also be other ways to look at the world. In other words, we live in a socially constructed and interpreted world, including the conceptualising of the world in the literature. Still, the literary canon on ritual and the sociological view of music is part of the human story, albeit with roots from elsewhere across the globe.

## ***Ritual***

As pointed out by Bell (1992), ritual as a concept came out of western thought in the nineteenth century where it was perceived to be a "...universal category of human experience..." (p.14). This marked a time where 'the others' culture and religion became a foil for comparative analysis to European culture. Bell (1992) highlighted the centrality of ritual in research for understanding "...culture, society, and religion" (p.3) and challenged the neutrality of ritual as an 'objective analytical tool' (p.14). Geertz (1973) situates the interest in ritual in the post-enlightenment of culture (what that can tell about human beings). Ritual was a concept as part of the western response in understanding and explaining cultural complexity. A conundrum from this post-enlightenment was the non-rhetorical question of whether there is a uniformity of human nature or whether people are fashioned by culture? Much of this interest was around the idea of 'primitive societies' from the work of Durkheim (Besnard, 2005), and 'primitive man' (Jones, 2005) associated with ideas of an evolutionary scale within which different societies were considered to fit into. Alexander (2004) argues that "If there is one cultural quality that marks the earliest forms of human social organization, it is the centrality of rituals... If there is one cultural quality that differentiates more contemporary, large-scale, and complex social organizations from earlier forms, it is that the centrality of such ritual processes has been displaced" (p. 527-528). In other words, ritual may not be so pronounced in contemporary and differentiated societies. He points to the now discredited way of conceptualising this historical shift through the evolutionary scale of "...primitive/advanced or barbarian/civilized..." (p. 528). Along the same vein, Ingold (1994) asserts that the theory which established anthropology's legitimacy as a "... comprehensive science of human kind..." was premised on human beings situated on an evolutionary track from primitive to

advanced, meaning that dissimilarities between societies can be explained by their location on this track. The western gaze was the arbiter of this placement.

The point being made here in the beginning of this section is to situate 'ritual' as representing a way of understanding and organising the world from a particular tradition i.e., the western gaze and in the case of ritual, the interest of anthropology. Note the following statement about British anthropology by Ingold: "Thus British anthropology developed alongside the growth of empire; its preoccupations were fueled by the need of the colonial administration to take the measure of its presumed superiority over administered nations, and to turn a knowledge of their social organizations and cultural traditions to the service of indirect rule..." (1994, p. xiii).

The literature on ritual as a way to understand and explain particular human activity is considerable and, as already identified, much of it from the anthropological tradition. Considering the research question 'What does song utilised in Samoan funerals tell us about *Fa'asamoa* in Aotearoa, New Zealand?', it was necessary to consider funeral as an event identified in the literature as religious ritual, sitting alongside other types of rituals (Durkheim; 1965; Rappaport, 1971; Van Gennep; 2019). Given that ritual is an umbrella term under which funerals are included, it was decided that having it situated at the beginning of the review will provide an important lens through which to look at other parts of the review including 'Funerals across cultures', and Samoan culture which also include rituals.

Due to the vastness of the literature on ritual and although other authors will be referred to, the work of Durkheim (1965) 'The Elementary Forms of Religious Life' and that of Van Gennep (2009) 'The Rites of Passage' will be looked at in closer detail due to what the researcher considers to be useful in light of the research question and what the lens of ritual may elucidate about culture. Alongside this part of the western literary canon is a lone voice, an insider in

*Fa'asamoa* (Samoan culture) and his understanding of ritual in his cultural context, namely Ta'isi (2009) 'Su'esu'e manogi' (In Search of Fragrance). His perspective on ritual in the *Fa'asamoa* (Samoan culture) context will be offered up as part of the review.

Durkheim made an important distinction between times for the sacred (ritual) and that of the profane (the everyday the humdrum of life); the former being a time for the group when they experience a high emotional state or 'collective effervescence' (Bellah, 2005). Shilling provides a straightforward interpretation for this Durkheim concept as "a term he used to capture the idea of social force at its birth" (2005, p.213), out of which individuals are successfully absorbed into the collective alongside its morals and beliefs.

Another important idea of Durkheim is that of 'collective representation' (shared belief) which is inculcated in ritual (Rappaport, 2009). Consider the next translation of what Durkheim says about religion: "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden...beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, and all those who adhere to them" (Bellah, 2005. p.184). The 'practices relative to sacred things' is referring to ritual. According to Collins (2000) and his interpretation of Durkheim's ideas, solidarity is the outcome of ritual as a collective performance as well as solidifying "belief in symbols that represent membership in the group" (p.159).

In his influential work 'The rites of passage' Van Gennep (2019) has presented a way of framing ritual as 'rites of passage', further subdividing them under different types: rites of separation (funerals), transition rites (initiation, betrothal, the liminal, threshold) and rites of incorporation (marriage); all signifying changes in an individual's role in their society. The

focus for Van Gennep is primarily on the individual's transitioning in terms of roles juxtaposed with Durkheim who views ritual through the lens of the social milieu.

What is interesting is that within funeral rituals Van Gennep identifies the presence of all three types of rites. In death there are rites of separation (when a person passes) followed by mourning (transition rites), followed by rites of incorporation or reintegration (when mourning is lifted signified by for example change in dress). Van Gennep identifies that part of funeral rituals involves preparation for a journey for the dead by loved ones depending on different beliefs about the next world and what elements constitutes man (sic.).

Ta'isi (2009), a Samoan cultural elder has written about the important role of song and dance in Samoan funeral rituals saying: "The principal objective of our funeral rites is to lift us into an emotional high in which life is equated with death and life and death become one and equal" (p.66). Furthermore, as an oral culture, song and dance as part of ritual tell the history and genealogies of Samoan people. He points to Samoan dance rituals where the meaning of the dance was only known to knowledge custodians. Some of the many rituals in *Fa'asamoa* are carried out in fishing activities and in others such as cutting down a tree. Ta'isi (2009) refers to rituals as the "core of Samoan spiritual life i.e., the sacred (tapu) relationship between man and his environment" (p.193). The 'emotional high' in Samoan funeral ritual is akin to a Durkheimian term 'collective effervescence' (Bellah, 2005; Collins, 2005). A closer look at Samoan history and culture, and the Samoan diaspora in Aotearoa New Zealand is featured in chapter 3.

Overall, all the above authors share an understanding of religious ritual as a collective response

to a natural occurrence: death. In religious ritual, something of the sacred, the spiritual and transcendent is expressed and experienced as a group.

Ritual has, and continues to be, an enduring feature in human societies (Alexander, 2004; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993; Rappaport, 1971) reflecting culture (Alexander, 2004). Ritual has been defined in many different ways including by Rappaport as "... to be the social act basic to humanity" (Rappaport, 2009, p. 31), by Turner and Turner (1970) as "prescribed formal behaviour for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers" (p. 19) and by Turner and Schechner (1988, p. 5) as "performance of a complex sequence of symbolic acts". Comaroff and Comaroff (1993) argued that historically the west has viewed ritual as "... action addressed to spiritual values and mystical forces" (p. xix).

The power of ritual is its symbolism, which condenses what is meaningful to a group, bringing together beliefs and emotion (Turner, 1967). In his *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Geertz (1973) observed that as man (sic) evolved, ritual—together with language, myth, and art as part of culture—were central ingredients in creating the animal whom he became. A more recent definition from Alexander (2004) identifies ritual as "...episodes of repeated and simplified cultural communication in which the direct partners to a social interaction... share a mutual belief in ... validity of the communication's symbolic contents and accept the authenticity of one another's intentions" (p. 527). Bellah (2005) provides what is a 'famous' definition of ritual posed by Durkheim as something within which the collective experience of 'collective effervescence' takes place. He states, "it is in the effervescence of ritual that the individual concerns of daily life are transcended and society is born" (p. 194). The above definitions of

ritual suggest that it is something people have always done, conveying belief in a condensed form, communicating to others and participants something important. In other words, there is power and potency in the experience of ritual.

In ritual, something is communicated and an understanding is shared; a message or a metamessage (Rappaport, 1971). According to Durkheim (1965) the message to the initiated is that they are a collective, encompassing what the group believe about themselves (collective representations). Rappaport identifies religious ritual as sacred, namely where statements about God or a deity or pronouncement about belief cannot be proven or disproved. Religious ritual is where something is sanctified i.e., the message or metamessage is made sacred. Rappaport makes a compelling argument that religious messages conveyed and received by the collective in religious rituals support adaptation as "... religious activities...primarily part of the informational processes of human societies" (1972, p.25) evoking Ta'isi's view of ritual in the *Fa'asamoa*. Rappaport argues that religious ritual is special for its capacity to transmit a metamessage that is "... a nondiscursive, or emotional, message about that information. The medium is not the message. It is a metamessage" (1972, p.28). This has some similarity with Durkheim's explanation of ritual as a collective messaging itself, affirming and strengthening how the group sees and believes itself to be in terms of religion.

Music, it has been argued, has long been part of such rituals. According to Nettle "...the prevailing ritual use of music...suggests that earliest human music was somehow associated with ritual" (2000, p. 472). Rappaport (1971) and Durkheim (1965) had similar views that music, language, body movement and use of the voice are part of ritual. Rappaport (1971) additionally makes the argument that 'religious activities' and 'sacred beliefs' within a group

which take up 'standard action' (ritual) is essential to adaptation (p.25). Furthermore, he points to the continuing presence of the religious and ritual in human society as an indicator of its utility for human survival. This suggests that music and song has always been part of ritual. Music is another form of language which Brown (2000) refers to as 'musilanguage'. Schechner (1994) sees music as well as dance and theatre as an integrated part of ritual, and that one element of religious ritual across cultures is music. Music universally features in religious ritual and according to Alcorta and Sosis (2005) music provides 'rhythmic drivers' which intensify the structural components of ritual namely: "formality, pattern, sequence and repetition" (p. 336).

All the above authors have been influenced and informed by the seminal work 'The elementary forms of the religious life' of Durkheim (1965) and possibly to a comparable degree 'The rites of passage' by Van Gennep (2019). Durkheim (1965) makes a fundamental argument that religion is "...an eminently social thing" (p.38) or 'collective thought'. Moreover, "Religious representations are collective representations that express collective realities; rites are ways of acting that are born only in the midst of assembled groups and whose purpose is to evoke, maintain, or re-create certain mental states of those groups." (p.38). Foregrounding this argument is Durkheim's view that philosophy and the sciences came out of religious thought in his statement the "...first system of representation that man made of the world and himself were of religious origin" (p.38). In other words, ritual for Durkheim according to Bell (1992), is made up of thought and action (belief and rite). Ritual has always included music (Bellah, 2005). What a society believes or perceives about itself occurs in ritual, and this in essence is a society's religion.

What is of interest from this order is the rites of the margin as being a liminal state and in religious ritual according to Rappaport “Religious rituals always include, in addition to messages of social import, implicit or explicit reference to some idea, doctrine, or supernatural entity” (1971, p. 29). Durkheim makes a very important distinction between what he considers times of the profane (the humdrum and monotonous) and that of the sacred. In his view, times of the sacred is firstly in ritual, and it is in the ritual where the collective experience ‘collective effervescence’. It is in the sacred ritual that Durkheim views a manifestation of the religion and beliefs of a group “...which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim, (1912) 1955: p.44).

Rappaport (1999) argued that religious ritual is similar to ritualized behaviour in non-humans consisting of formality, sequencing, patterning and repetition, providing information about intent and status. Alcorta and Sosis (2005) observed that the difference between non-human and human ritual is the association of emotion with symbols. The use of symbols as part of ritual enacted across different religions must be created, and their abstract, i.e., emotional and behavioural dynamics, must be learned (Alcorta & Sosis, 2005). In any religion, chosen symbols depend on where/when any ritual is utilised.

The role of ritual is to make or transform something to make it sacred, thereby giving it emotional meaning (Alcorta & Sosis, 2005). Rappaport (1999) goes as far as to say that it is ritual that creates the sacred. The juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane is a major discourse in the study of rituals (Alcorta & Sosis, 2005; Rappaport, 1999), where ritual transforms something into the realm of the sacred with an emotional charge attached to it. The symbols used in ritual have a sacredness to them, due to their emotional meaning.

Rappaport (1971) has argued that there is a discourse in human ritual which includes music, body movements and so forth for particular occasions. However, ritual unlike other ways of communication, is partly non-discursive, and it is this aspect of ritual which elicits ecstasy, reverence, and powerful emotional states. What is of interest here, is the view that rituals impart a message/information but it is about the 'non-discursive emotional state' regarding the message that is important. In other words, ritual is the medium through which a distinct, non-discursive metamessage is conveyed. Rappaport (1972) is especially referring to religious ritual where statements about the existence of God is an 'unverifiable proposition' which cannot be proven or unproven.

Turner (2017) connects the rich variation in the symbolism of rituals, not to the cognitive structures in the mind, but to high diversity in cultural experience. Corresponding with this perspective regarding death rituals, Metcalf and Huntington (1991) point to an earlier leaning of the universalising of rituals, perhaps due to the universality of death. However, this has tended to gloss over the uniqueness in the construction of death rituals, reflecting their cultural location. That is, the responses to a universal theme, death, conjures up a myriad of configurations in funeral rituals. Furthermore, Metcalf and Huntington (1991) point to the wisdom gleaned from the ritualising of death in different cultures through song and dance. Wilson (1954), in her study with the Nyakyusa in Africa, argued that it is through ritual that a group's values are revealed. Metcalf and Huntington (1991) echoed this sentiment, that death ritual in any culture makes visible its cultural values and social foundation, whether it be gender roles or political life.

One way of summing up some of the disagreements about ritual is between substance and form, or what ritual is saying versus how it is said (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993). Moreover, most

authors point to a lack of clarity in understanding how “...ritual actually generates the very power it presupposes, how it actually conjures up the presence of absent potential” (p. xx). It is suggested here that it may very well be in the power of belief where such power is derived or as Turner (1967) argued, it is the power of the symbolic. It may be that the answer to this question by Turner is done so more satisfactorily if it is viewed from an ontological vantage point; that there is a reality that we don't know or understand causing what we experience and can observe. In other words, the ‘power’ generated in ritual is felt, and experienced and observed. The empirical evidence suggests that there may be another reality or mechanisms at work beside from the one known to human beings (Danermark, Ekström & Karlsson, 2019).

Except for the lone voice in the literature (Ta'isi, 2009), this part of the literature review has shown the considerable pre-occupation of the west on understanding human experience as-ritual. Moreover, the long shadow cast by the western gaze provides a glimpse of the prominence of this literature on research including that by indigenous people on cultural practices and cultural rituals. Overall, the longest shadow is cast by the work of Durkheim (1965) viewing ritual as an eminently social experience where ‘collective representation’ is shared belief; Van Gennep (2019) whom viewed ritual as signifying a change in roles and Rappaport (1971) whose work posits the idea that in ritual-a message or metamessage is carried through time. More importantly the literature on ritual clearly cite music as being an important part of ritual ( Alcorta and Sosis, 2005; Durkheim, 1965; Nettle, 2001; Rappaport, 1971; Schechner, 1994).

### *Sociology of music*

It was considered appropriate to review the literature on the sociology of music, given the area of interest for this thesis. As with the above section on ritual, a literature review of the sociology

of music is part of the western gaze. Within this vantage point, the sociology of music is situated as an academic discipline rooted in the history of western thought. With its more recent moorings fastened to the concept of reality as a social construction, the sociology of music has its roots in the sociology of knowledge (Berger & Luckman, 1991). As with much of the literature on rituals, there is a conspicuous absence of any mention of smaller ethnic groups such as Samoan people and the social stories told by their music or the place of song in their funerals. This review will focus on how the sociology of music is defined from within the discipline itself, and also in its overlap with musicology.

According to Roy and Dowd “The sociology of music illuminates how sociologists examine a variety of dimensions about social life more generally” (2010, p, 33). That is to say that the object (music) is always perceived and understood through the conventions and culture of a society learned through socialisation and in interaction with others. The perception of music as a reality (and about a myriad of other things like popular music or music genius) is socially constructed. Following this line of thinking, there are no universal considered right or proper in music, or even funeral music, as it is dependent on the social world within which it is practiced. Most, if not all, cultures and societies have song and music for their funeral rituals, but they will not all be the same (Tagg, 1993). According to Shepherd (2003), in positing the social construction perspective, reality is constructed when actors come together and, in the case of music, understand it on a cultural as well as on a social level.

Martin (1995, p.79) asserts that the links or relationship between the “...forms of society and forms of music itself...” is the focus of the sociology of music. Martin (2013) and DeNora (2004) agree that despite tensions, musicologist and sociologist share grounds for collaboration. “The scope of the sociology of music...” according to Martin (1995) “...cannot

be confined to western classical composers and their work, however impressive...but must encompass all sounds that people describe as music and all the things they say and write about such sounds” (p.23). Furthermore, Martin asserts the sociologist’s responsibility as assuming that music is a social construct and what sounds and music is considered natural, and therefore right, is a result of socialisation into the conventions of a particular culture or a society. In other words, music emerges out of the social world within which it is situated.

In agreement with Martin, Dowd (2007) articulates the appropriate focus of the sociology of music as follows: “While many disciplines have much to say about music, sociology’s forte is its ability to elucidate the context in which music is located” (p.5). “The sociologist of music, then, will not be concerned to establish the ‘true’ meaning of a piece, but will be interested in what people believe it to mean, for it is these meanings that will influence their response to it...” (Martin 1995, p. 30.) Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, the meaningfulness of music is in the ear of the hearer and both have been socialised to perceive what they see and hear as reality.

Keeping in mind the area of interest in this research, the inclusion of the literature in this section is due to what Martin (2013, p.41) refers to as ‘turn to the social’ in the study of music. This is posing challenges for musicologists. Identifying the boundaries of the sociology of music as a distinct discipline has been challenging due to “tensions’ juxtaposed to a “smooth coordination” partly as resistance to explaining music in sociological terms (Hennion, 2003, p. 1).

What is clear from the literature is that its point of difference is the privileging of people’s perception and meaning making in regards to their experiences and in this case, music. The focus of the musicologist is more on the object itself (music) as having inherent meaning while

the focus of the sociologist is on the subject and the cultural and social context within which meaning is made.

### **Funerals across cultures**

This section of the review will be in two parts with the first focused on funerals in the west, and the second part on indigenous funerals.

#### ***Funerals in the west***

Considering the size of what is considered ‘the west’, the literature looking at song in funerals is surprisingly sparse. According to Adamson and Holloway “... the academic literature has thus far failed to provide us with a critical analysis of the role and function of music in the funeral...” (2012, p.34). What little there is, inclusive of literature on funerals which do not have music as a focus of interest, is located within several major discourses. These major discourses include: an increasing rise of secularism (Emke, 2002; Holloway, et al. 2013; Morrell and Smith, 2008; Walter, 2003; 2016); personalisation of funerals (Adamson and Holloway, 2013; Caswell, 2011; Emke, 2002; Walter, 2003; 2016); and changes in understanding spirituality as the context within which funerals take place (Adamson and Holloway, 2012, 2013; Carrette, et al. 2005; Walter 2003, 2016). Pargament (1999) cast light on the different directions of movement where the two terms (religion and spirituality) seen previously as almost synonymous are heading, namely spirituality as understood apart from religion, and religion going from previously seen as including the individual and institutional to something that is negative and constricting for the individual and ‘human potential’ (p.3). A seemingly insidious turn in the spirituality discourse is suggested by the indictment levelled at the corporate takeover of spirituality as a commodity divorced of religion as part of the global economy (Carrette, Carrette & King, 2005).

Walter (2016) points to the increase in celebrants in England and New Zealand as not being part of any faith community and more secular. The term utilised by this author when talking about funerals where these celebrants work is 'life centred' funerals. The rise of secularism in society is pointed out by Macdonald (2011) as evidenced in 'ritual makers' celebrants in New Zealand being of more secular in their orientation. Schäfer (2007) also echos the increasing secularity in New Zealand where less and less people go to church and a strong discourse of the personalisation of pakeha funerals, although some of this is attributed to the funeral director profession and their increasing role in pastoral care.

It is perhaps then not surprising regarding the overall rise of the 'contemporary funeral' in the west (Holloway et al. 2013; Morrell & Smith, 2008) where what is considered meaningful is on a more individual basis rather than traditional religion. Consequently, contemporary funerals according to Holloway et al (2013), involve "meaning-seeking and creating, which results in meaning-taking" unique to each funeral rather than following a tradition of beliefs or ceremonial arrangements.

The primary focus will be on literature on funerals with a special focus on music and its role in funerals as ritual: In the UK by Adamson & Holloway (2012); Newfoundland by Emke (2002); Scotland by Caswell (2012) and USA (New Orleans) by Bordere (2009); Sakakeeny (2010) and Kein (1992). This literature will be reviewed with an interest on what meaning is made of music as part of funerals. and of particular interest is where these meanings sit in relation to discourses around funerals and death and dying namely: spirituality; relationships between the actors involved in funerals; secularism; traditional beliefs in religion and the role of funeral professionals. As it will become evident, the history of where research on funeral

ritual focuses (Europe compared to New Orleans in the USA) is also an important factor in understanding the meaning of music and other aspects of funerals.

Beginning with the reviewing of research in Europe, a notable aspect of research by Adamson and Holloway (2012); Caswell (2012) and Emke (2002) is the overall make-up of participants being professionals in the funeral industry including funeral directors, celebrants and students in the industry. Research by (Emke, 2002) looks at secularisation and changes in the function of funerals from a professional perspective in the funeral industry perspective, nevertheless, it is included in a closer look due to some interesting parallel in the findings in regards to music as part of funeral ritual.

That is, the majority of participants from all three researches were from the funeral industry, an important consideration when looking at the data. Of importance is the implication on the meaning making of music for the participants, as to whether it can be attributed to their professional involvement or personal relationship to the departed and the bereaved family. Moreover, how much does professional expertise influence the choice of music as part of funeral ritual as well as the translation of meaning?

Also, of importance is that for both Adamson and Holloway (2012) and Caswell (2012), music was considered a very important for the funerals according to all participants. Family generally made the decision on which music and this was generally based on the departed. the theme of the personalisation of music and custom-fit funerals for the individual seem to reflect a move in the literature towards an increasingly secular and individual spirituality moving away from traditional religion. An equally important part of this picture for Caswell (2012) is that there remains in some Scotland communities a shared knowing and understanding of song in funerals as part of worship rather than for the departed individual.

This is evident in some funerals between those who attend church and know the hymns to those who do not. Therefore, collective singing still takes place in Scotland in some communities while it can also be a struggle to find a song that everyone generally knows in some other funerals. This has important implication for funeral mourners to collectively experience emotion and a sense of connection to each other and as a community.

For Adamson and Holloway (2012) those who chose the music in funerals convey something about their spirituality and meaning-making and the relationship they have with the music is more a personal one juxtaposed to a collective. What is missing and glaringly absent in both these researches is the prominence of collective action as in singing by mourners.

There are important parallels between the above two researches in the United Kingdom and that by Emke (2002) in Newfoundland insofar as increasing secularisation evidenced in the personalisation of funerals where the songs and the funeral reflect the departed individual. In turn this does not necessarily indicate a lessening of the interest and importance of spirituality in people's lives, instead it suggests a different conceptualisation of spirituality as apart rather than a part of an established religion. A second parallel is the influence of other actors in funerals, namely the funeral professionals. Two other important parallels include the absence of collective singing as a significant part of funeral rituals, and the increasing inclusion of secular music.

The focus will now turn to literature from funerals in the USA (New Orleans) Bordere (2009); Sakakeeny (2010) and Kein (1992). This literature points to how slavery, different cultures including African, West Indian and European Christianity as part of the history of this place has influenced funerals otherwise known as 'New Orleans Jazz Funeral' (Second liners) (USA) (Kein, 1992, p. 22). Unique features of these funerals include second line parades, brass bands,

dancing, singing expressing funerals as a celebration and the messaging of resistance to segregation (Sakakeeny,2010).

Still, three more features unique to jazz funerals include firstly the prominent role of improvisation in the brass bands valuing spontaneity and second is the identification of this tradition with what is considered the oldest African community in the early 1700s-the Treme neighborhood in the French quarter (Lacho & Fox, 2001; Sakakeeny, 2010). It was from this location where much of the jazz music tradition, African art and culture was established. Lastly, is the characterisation of mobility in the jazz funeral where the sound of the funeral procession signals a message and invitation to the community.

Singing is part of the procession (African influence) to the burial and was the custom for slaves as part of history of parading influenced by military tradition (Kein, 1992.). What is interesting is the historically located interpretation of the meaning of the hymn as part of funeral ritual (Just a closer walk with thee) where it refers to “Lead me, lead me... To that shore, lead me to that shore” (Kein, 1992, p.19) where the ‘shore’ as being in Africa reflecting slave’s conception of the afterlife. Juxtaposed with research by Bordere (2009) on black male teenagers, these participants found that ‘regular funerals’ (indoors at a church or funeral home) represented sadness while second line (Jazz funeral) where the funeral procession moved along outside was more a celebration.

The decorum and tone in the ‘regular funeral’ were more of sadness where participants perceived it as a place where women cry and showing emotion while in the second line funeral there was jazz music, dancing and noisy celebration expressing love for the departed and the men were the principal mourners. Songs in the regular funeral tended to be about heaven and

God while music in the second line funeral, emphasis in the music was to celebrate the life of the departed and good memories.

The vibrancy of the second line funeral (Jazz funeral) has been described from an ethnomusicology perspective by Sakakeeny (2010) as representing the social environment where blacks made their presence known in public spaces expressing freedom. In other words, funeral ritual in New Orleans (USA) came to be a symbol of resistance to segregation justified by Jim Crow laws. The second line funeral (Jazz funeral) has a clear connection to many influences of African, West Indian and slavery which despite the influence of European Christianity, was a voice of resistance to European control and became an African-American celebration that is "... is a unique example of the process of creolization that took place in some parts of the United States... blending of cultures from the old World, Africa and Europe, and from the New World, the West Indies and the Americas" (Kein, 1992, p. 26).

Funerals reviewed in this part of the review evidence marked differences in funeral ritual and the choice of music compared to an earlier time as well as differing understandings of spirituality. To borrow a Durkheimian term, the music as part of funeral ritual provides a window to understand the 'collective representations', or shared beliefs in a collective or society and how it views itself (Bellah, 2005).

The reviewing of the literature on funerals examined from England, Scotland and Newfoundland suggest that beliefs as expressed in funeral ritual may not be so shared but becoming more individualised evidenced in new ways of conceptualising spirituality apart from traditional religion. This suggests the socialisation process as increasingly inculcating society members in viewing spirituality and the farewelling of the dead as more focused on the individual as independent of traditional religion. Nevertheless, Judeo Christian beliefs is still

part of funeral ritual although there seems to be a moving away from this tradition evidenced by less mourners knowing Christian hymns. This suggests changes in relationships and connectivity in these societies least of all due to the role of funeral professionals and diminishing church attendance.

With funeral ritual in New Orleans (USA), European Christianity, African and West Indian culture and a history of slavery have woven a tapestry that is today considered a unique culture; including funeral ritual and music. Whether looking at the literature on funerals in Europe or New Orleans (USA), what is apparent is the connection between songs as part of funeral ritual, history and how different societies construct what is meaningful in the farewelling of the dead. Moreover, there seems to be higher participation and connectivity as a community in the funeral rituals in New Orleans (USA) compared to those from Europe. Seen through the lens of the literature on ritual, funeral as ritual in the west is conveying messages that are more focused on the individual, and the emotion high or ‘effervescence’ posited by Durkheim seems to be more evident in the ‘Jazz funerals’ where there seems higher connectivity between the mourners as a community. An important point of difference between the European and New Orleans funerals is the connection of the Jazz funerals to a history of slavery and black resistance. This forged a particular identity for the communities that practice ‘Jazz funerals’ when farewelling their dead. As it will become apparent, the improvisational element in the creation and performance of song as part of funeral ritual in jazz funerals is similar to the Oka Akoko in Nigeria (Oripeloye, 2016). Whether there is an African connection between these funeral practices is possible, given the impact of slavery on the history of New Orleans and the United States.

The idea that the funeral ritual is a rite of passage (Van Gennep, 2019) signifying changes in the role of the individual from the living to the dead is more applicable to Europe, with an increasing focus on the personalisation of funerals and understanding of spirituality as apart from traditional religion. The focus by Durkheim on ritual as something that is ultimately social, where the collective representations are strengthened and messaged to the group may have more useful application in understanding jazz funerals.

From the funerals discourse reviewed so far it can be argued that funerals take place within differentiated societies in varying degrees with different histories. The following section will examine funerals in indigenous communities where, as in the case of the literature from Africa and Thailand, there is a considerable level of homogeneity in the population. The literature from elsewhere including Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, focus on the view of self-identified indigenous groups living as minorities with a history of being colonised in their own lands.

### *Indigenous funerals*

There is more far-ranging literature on music and funerals in indigenous traditions than that selected for inclusion in this review due to space constraints inherent in a doctoral thesis. The primary aim is to identify some common themes across the literature, and what may be missing, justifying the area for this research. Of further interest is identifying connections between music, and meaning-making with belief and spirituality.

Literature from the African continent in Ghana include (Agawu, 1988; Arko-Achemfuor, 2011; Burns, 2012) and from Nigeria (Oripeloye, 2016), Zimbabwe (Makondo & Makondo, 2011). Further literature from research on indigenous people in Australia (Brown, 2014) and from Thailand (Poprasit, 2015 Wong, 1998). Lastly, literature from (Edge, 2017; Nikora et al. 2010)

provide a view of song and funeral in a bicultural and indigenous context with tangata whenua in Aotearoa.

A notable presence across the above literature from Africa and Australia (with the exception of Aotearoa, New Zealand) is the presence of Christianity evidenced in song as part of funeral ritual. Songs in the Christian tradition such as gospel appear to have been integrated with those of other traditional music and song tradition and funeral dirges, with the majority of the material coming out of ethnic communities' identity and beliefs.

Research by Burns (2012) on Ewe funerals in Ghana and Togo, and by Arko-Achemfuor (2011) on the Akan people in Ghana focus on the role of music in funerals. Both point to the role of music as unifying community and conveying emotions as well as marking stages in the funeral process. In particular, Arko-Achemfuor has argued that funeral songs reveal to the young and old, the inevitability of death, requiring a sense of community to assist at times such as when farewelling the dead. The intended audience includes the community, God, death itself, the deceased and the bereaved. Burns (2012) produced similar findings, with the different genres of music played in Ewe funerals evoking different emotions, expressing cultural pride, humour, bravery and spiritual power. Interestingly, Burns found that song and music for funerals although greatly influenced by Christianity, has always been changing due to influences from other groups.

This author argues that there are three groups represented in the Ewe group: exclusively Christian; inclusively traditional and lastly the majority who somewhat belong to the previous two groups when it comes to worship. The music and songs for funerals reflect this overlapping of membership in funerals with the Ewe. Additionally, much of the music has included incorporation of western influences to make it their own.

Music for funerals honours the beliefs of the departed as well as those expectations from the family. Likewise, just as Burns (2012) points to the influence in funeral music by other groups, Agawu (1988) cites the neighbouring dominant Ewe and Christian as “the most potent influence” (p.98) on the Akpafu culture evidenced in changes in style of singing, song, and the inclusion of Ewe words and dirge in Akpafu funerals.

The inclusion of Christian song alongside other traditional genres in Akan funerals is interesting due to what seems to be an integration of beliefs about God in the Christian faith and traditional beliefs where “... death... suddenly turns a loved one into something scary.

Osaman is a ghost, and there is the belief among the Akan that if you meet a ghost that is a bad omen as you are most likely going to die” (Arko-Achemfuor, 2011, p. 127). As is the case with Burns (2012) with the Ewe, and the rest of the literature from Africa, Christianity has had varying levels of influence evidencing songs as part of the funeral ritual. There seems to be some on-going integration between different influences from; Judeo Christian influence; other ethnic groups and traditional beliefs. A high level of Judeo-Christian influence is evident in Zimbabwe by Makondo and Makondo (2011) where it was found that songs sung at funerals in the Seventh-day Adventist context by Shona speakers were centred on Christian scripture, and understandable given that the group shared a faith based on the Bible. At the time of this study, eleven songs were popularised for funerals which were sung in the Shona language, songs giving hope of an eternal future and destination.

Women play a particularly prominent role in the performance of funeral dirge and song and dance as part of funeral ritual in the funerals for the Akpafu group in Ghana (Agawu; 1988) and in Ako-Akoko in South-Western Nigeria (Oripeloye, 2016). For the Akpafu, there is a belief that death marks the space between the living and the dead which are both “...regulated

by a conceptual hierarchy of Beings who remain active within each community in their various material or spiritual forms.” (Agawu, 1988, p. 85).

Women perform the most important music in the funeral-the dirge which involves utterances and movement (Agawu, 1988; Oripeloye, 2016). The message conveyed is through the metaphor of a river crossing facilitating reflection and speculation about this world and the spiritual world. Identified in the dirge is descriptors of the departed, for example “Father who killed crocodiles” (Agawu, 1988p.86). There is an improvisational element in the performance of dirge for the Akpafu, this is done to a much greater degree for the Oka Akoko in Nigeria (Oripeloye, 2016) where there are no set repertoires for a funeral, rather “...funeral music performance relies on improvisation.” (p.22). Interestingly “Women’s gossip transforms into musical constructs that not only subjects an individual to ridicule, but which are also about the ills in the society” (p.21), where women make social commentary and critique tragedies equally as successes as a response to loss while expressing celebration and freedom. That is, creative improvisation of moral and philosophical meaning is communicated by women in their performance of song, dance and movement as satire.

With the Bininj people who are indigenous to Arnhemland in the Northern Territory of Australia “Songs play a vital role in the deceased spirit’s transition from the living world” (Brown, 2014, p.177). Song, dance and music as part of ritual is where the spirit of the departed is directed toward ‘ancestral Country’ and released from earthly attachment and onwards to be with the ancestors (Brown, 2014).

Singing as part of funeral ritual is directed towards the spirits in the spirit world, and in turn men receive new songs from the spirits in their dreams in a cycle of singing and dreaming. Song marks different stages of the funeral such as when the body is taken from the home.

Relationships with ancestors and other groups were evident when other groups came to a funeral with their song-sets. A very interesting point is the singing of songs that stay the same and in a language that is no longer used, the reason being that it is in a language that the ancestors spoke and could understand. Songs belong to particular song-set or song series rather than individual songs and often accompanied dance and movement.

According to Brown (2014), traditional indigenous performance of song and dance often with didjeridu and clapstick, together with hymns and secular songs about country were all part of the funeral. The hymns were more part of the funeral service while the traditional performances were more when the body was transitioning from place to place and at the burial.

Research by Wong (1998) argues that contemporary funerals for Thais in Bangkok are clearly moving away from traditional Buddhist practices towards foreign music increasingly featuring at funerals, a change driven by a rising middle class. The encroaching music is referred to as Mon—a minority in Thailand whose music has nevertheless successfully infiltrated Thai funerals. This resonates with research by Burns (2012) on the Ewe and Agawu (1988) with the Akpafu in Ghana as the mutually influencing the culture of the other.

Wong (1998) argues that contemporary funerals in Thailand signify status for the deceased and their family, with funerals for the less affluent being of a shorter duration than those for the wealthy. Funeral as a signifier of status in Thailand is agreed upon by Poprasit (2015) although for Poprasit, the focus was more on funerals for royalty from a historical perspective. The status of royalty meant that their funerals were always at the apex of the nobility class.

Changes in funerals include the increasing cost of professionals providing flowers, arts and crafts, coffins and monks offering prayers. While music, dance and performances are a

mainstay of Thai funerals, the musical anchor of Thai culture has been highly influenced by music from another culture. Wong (1998) theorised that performance and music are a rite of passage and a form of offering, while connecting the deceased and mourners to the cosmos.

In a more recent thesis by Poprasit (2015) looking at the role of music in Thai funerals in contemporary Bangkok. He sets out a history of music in Thai funerals focussing on sources about deaths of royalty and those of the nobility.

Influences in the contemporary Thai funeral include: animism; folk culture; Hinduism and Buddhism. Patronage from the Royal family will be reflected in particular music for the funeral of those who have been given the royal seal of approval indicating their relationship with the Royal family. Music is played during the funeral procession and cremation including drums and an instrument called pi chanai imitating human crying.

The most elaborate funerals are also reflected in the music, and are for the elite due to the high cost of funerals in Bangkok. Dating back to as early as the 1700s there have been three separate pieces of music that are part of Thai funeral ritual namely: the bua loy ensemble; the piphat nanghong ensemble and the piphat mon ensemble. However, fewer musicians know how to play all these ensembles as they include different traditional instruments including reed instruments, gongs, and female and male drums. Technology has replaced live musicians in many of the temple funerals where the traditional ensembles are played on a CD. Thai funerals are important events to demonstrate wealth and status of a family.

Tangi (Māori funeral) has deep roots in a story of creation and spiritual beliefs from pre-encounter with the west. Tangi waiata (lament, mourning) and dirge in the Māori language is a central aspect of Māori tangi (Nikora et al, 2010). Waiata (song) also features in those funerals

where the parent who has passed is pakeha and the children are Māori (Edge, 2017). As with other funerals reviewed, (Edge, 2017; Nikora et al, 2010) demonstrate how song as part of an indigenous culture can manifest differently when someone identifies as Māori attends her pakeha father's funeral while there is still a strong spiritual belief from the days of pre-encounter. The colonised history of tangata whenua has had profound impact on tangi ((Māori funeral) for Māori, least of all in their belief that the departed should be laid to rest on ancestor land.

As is made clear from the discussion above, there are several themes on the role of music in funerals emergent out of the literature. These include the rise of secularisation, personalisation, and the custom tailoring of what is incorporated in the funeral, including the music in the west reflected in secular songs.

Research on funerals within indigenous populations—mostly in Africa—seems to focus on the community as a collective, with the role of music as encompassing a more comprehensive gaze of the divine, ancestors, the deceased and the living. There also seems to more singing as a collective and a central role for women in these funerals.

Some populations use bawdy or colourful songs in funerals that facilitate sexual activity and support the importance of the concept of vitality in the face of death. Interestingly, the duration and glamour of a funeral almost universally signifies the wealth of the family. The role of music often seems to connect the deceased and the mourners to the cosmos.

It is not clear how the increasing use of music from another culture affects this connection. For tangata whenua this connection as articulated by Nikora "... tangi relies on the genealogical connectedness of ancestral and living communities..." and in spite of colonisation "...our

rituals of death and mourning, have remained since pre-encounter times...” (2013, p, 2). There is an absence of research on this ‘connectedness’ to pre-encounter funeral practice for Samoan people to the present in Aotearoa in the literature.

As part of the western gaze, the literature on religious ritual provides a lens to see funerals as rites of passage (Van Gennep, 2019) as well as a collective activity that conveys religious beliefs, and the sanctification of something in relation to those beliefs in relation to the spiritual and the transcendent. Additionally, Rappaport suggests the utility of ritual as a conveyer of a particular message begging the question ‘What are the differences or similarities in messages conveyed in religious ritual across cultures? How does this change over time? It has been established from this literature that song/music has always been part of religious ritual and is part of adaptation and survival in the evolution process (Rappaport, 1971). Durkheim (1965) argued that the message in ritual is what a collective believes about itself and this is therefore the religion or church.

The sociology of music as a distinct discipline offers a way of understanding song and music as socially constructed (Dowd, 2007; Martin, 1995), giving a view of the socialisation process from which, the perceptions of the observer (the subject) make meaning of the object (song/music) (Dowd, 2007; Martin, 1995). In other words, song/music as part of religious ritual such as a funeral may be universal across cultures, but the meaning making and beliefs will not be so even in the same culture across time.

This has been evident from the literature on funerals across cultures-song was part of funeral ritual whether it was from Europe, Africa to the indigenous people of Australia. However, the meaning and message conveyed through song as part of the funeral as a ritual evidenced different belief about the spiritual world, God and relationships with the living and the dead.

Although not with all the literature on funerals across cultures, the majority of the funerals had some element of Christian beliefs evidenced in song alongside indigenous beliefs suggesting a reconciling or integration of different influences. However, there were influences from other groups in terms of language and song. To what degree this integration goes insofar as having one dominant over the other is not clear. This was much clearer with the research on funerals in England, Scotland and Newfoundland where there is high agreement of a general move away from formal religion to secularism whilst interest in spirituality continues to increase. Spirituality in this instance is not embedded in any formal religion but rather dependent on the individual.

Samoan people from pre- to post-encounter with the west are no exception in this regard, according to the literature, as they also have and continued to farewell their dead in funeral ritual with song. Pre-encounter with the west, funeral ritual reflected an indigenous religion and a story of creation as part of culture. The self is relational and relationships are considered sacred indicating the need for respect for boundaries for peace and harmony.

Post-encounter, remnants of the pre-encounter world remain for example, the *Fa'aMatai* (chiefly system); the concept of *Le Va fealoaloa'i* and *Le Va tapuia* as a valued concept for respectful relationships; the *aiga potopoto* (extended family); *Fa'aaloalo* (respect); *Gagana Samoa* and more still considered part of *Fa'asamoa*. A profound addition to what is considered to be part of *Fa'asamoa* to this list is the *Lotu* (church) and the status given to the *Faife'au* (pastor) as the *Feagaiga*. Unsurprisingly, funeral rituals for Samoan have become embedded in the church and the singing of hymns.

## **Conclusion**

The review of the literature in this chapter, identified the different influences on ritual and music, including underpinning belief systems. A gap in the research has been identified in regards to the funeral ritual and song as a cultural practice for the Samoan population. Looking through the lens of religious ritual as conceptualised in the literature, it will be interesting to discover what this can reveal about *Fa'asamoa* and the perception of Samoan people of what the choice of songs and the songs themselves reveal about *Fa'asamoa*.

As discussed in chapter 1, the premise for this thesis started from the position that *Fa'asamoa* includes rituals and customs; one being funeral ritual as part of a death and dying culture. Song has always been part of funeral ritual from pre-encounter with the west to the present.

Therefore, song as part of funeral ritual in Aotearoa New Zealand can be seen as an important area for research to elucidate how Samoan people perceive the meaning of song as part of funeral ritual and *Fa'asamoa*.

## CHAPTER 3: SAMOANS IN NEW ZEALAND

### Introduction

This chapter examines Samoan history and *Fa'asamoa*; Samoans in New Zealand; migration and *Fa'asamoa*; history of song, funerals and *Fa'asamoa*, and broadly sets out Samoan history as it relates to *Fa'asamoa* and various influences which have impacted Samoan culture according to the literature. Part of this history includes Samoan people migrating and settling in Aotearoa New Zealand beginning in the 1950's, and how they brought with them their cultural practices including their funeral ritual. The story as told by the literature of this not insignificant part of the New Zealand population, encompasses those who are grandchildren and great grandchildren of those initial Samoan migrants. Samoan funerals (*fa'alavelave*, *Maliu*) still feature as *Fa'asamoa* (Levine, 2003) and are closely associated with Samoan culture and song from historical Samoan to contemporary times in New Zealand (Seiuli, 2015).

### Samoan history and *Fa'asamoa*

The history of Samoa as a continuum to this day include the pre- and post-encounter with the west. *Fa'asamoa* has in many ways changed throughout this continuum while some aspects remain. Funeral ritual, song and *Gagana Samoa* continue to be part of *Fa'asamoa*, albeit reflecting profound and extensive influence from colonisation and Christianity in every area of Samoan life (Macpherson, 2011).

The aim of this chapter is to set out a general overview of Samoan history from the literature beginning with a pre-contact Samoa with an indigenous reference/religion (Samoan indigenous reference/religion (SIR) (Ta'isi, 2009), followed by a focus on post-contact with the west and how this has reflected in *Fa'asamoa* (including funeral ritual) as a changing construct. The SIR (Ta'isi, 2009) is featured in this research due to the status of the author as a living cultural

expert on *Fa'asamoa* and his notable contribution to the scholarship landscape. Significant parts of this history include the arrival of the missionaries, Christianity and the gaining of independence in 1962 (Macpherson, 1999).

Samoans as part of the Polynesia group have been in the Pacific for approximately 3000 years according to Matisoo-Smith and Robins (2004). In Pre-contact times, they developed a culture and an indigenous religion which included different rituals including funeral ritual for farewelling the dead (Ta'isi, 2009).

The Samoan indigenous religion had a creation story that names Tagaloa as the creator according to Meleisea (1987b), or as Fraser puts it 'Tangaloa' (1897), and the 'progenitor', according to Ta'isi (2009). Ta'isi refers to the Samoan indigenous religion (SIR) as having "...the God Tagaloa, progenitor of mankind" (2009, p. 105), who is both male and female and not as a creator to be feared "...but as a paternal progenitor of all things" (p.105). In this view, all things have a kinship or a 'genealogy' whether in the spiritual or temporal needing a complementary balance for harmony and peace.

Therefore, God is family, rather than some far away and distant deity. In the Samoan indigenous reference/religion (SIR), there are many gods, including a male god Lagi (sky) and a female god, Papa (Earth or Rock), both issue of Tagaloa who were separated due to their siblings. Rather than a religion with set doctrine, the SIR is made up of a philosophy conveyed by metaphors and a framework of principles valuing connectivity, balance and harmony "...recognising that all living things are equal" (Ta'isi, 2009, p. 104).

An important concept from pre-contact that underpins *Fa'asamoa* to this day are: *Le Va fealoaloa'i* (Sacred social relationships) and *Le Va tapuia* (Sacred relationships between all

including the animate and inanimate), meaning that respect (*Fa'aaloalo*) for interconnectivity and relationships is sacred as it is essential for peace harmony and balance (Amituanai-Tolua, 2006; Anae, 2019; Ta'isi, 2009). The self therefore is a 'relational self', juxtaposed to the self as an individual as evidenced by the following statement (Vaai, 2017; Ta'isi, 2009).

I am not an individual. I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual because I share a tofi (inheritance) with my family, my village and my nation. I belong to my family...I belong to my village...I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my sense of belonging. (Ta'isi, 2009, p. 157).

According to Fraser (1897), other gods were created or 'fa'atupu' or caused to grow by Tangaloa although they were also known for example as Tangalo-le-fuli (the immovable) and as he puts it, other gods are "...not a separate and independent being, but only a phase as it were, of the supreme Tangaloa-a distinct manifestation of himself in some one or other of his functions" (p. 169).

There are ten levels of heaven in the SIR, Ta'isi (2009) puts forward the view that God (Tagaloa) the absolute lives in the tenth heaven and for man to presume to reach this high would be presumptuous. The essence of what makes life meaningful according to Ta'isi (2009) can be found in the SIR where the continuing search for God is to seek "unity and harmony" (p.114) whether it be between all living things, social relationships or the spiritual and temporal as all have a genealogical relationship. A particularly important social and kinship relationship cited by Ta'isi as being from the SIR and also cited by others (Amituana'i-Tolua, 2011; Meleisea, 1987) is that between the sister and the brother; le *Feagaiga*, which he refers to as "a status and a covenant" (p. 110). In this relationship, the sister (usually the birth right of the

high-born) has a special status due to her ability to have children meaning she shares divinity with the family gods (ancestors). Known as *Ilamutu* (family gods), she has the sacred status as a representative of *Ilamutu* in *aiga* as a broker of peace and bringing family and village together in times of conflict. The *Ilamutu* is the epitome of what is virtuous in the female gender as part of the SIR, complementary to that of the brother. She has the power to curse if there is offence to her dignity in this role (Ta'isi, 2009).

The Samoan language (*Gagana Samoa*) has been a consistent thread throughout Samoan history and in this pre-contact world, there were rituals consisting of song, dance and chants for funerals and salutations to the nine heavens. Such ritual was celebratory, pointing to man's victory over death in his capacity to procreate (Ta'isi, 2009), where the dead were destined for *puLotu*, and the presence of the spirit of the dead alongside the living has been, and in many cases still is, respected as *aitu* (ghosts) who are often identified as the cause for illness (*Ma'i aitu*) (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 2016).

Other concepts carried throughout Samoa's history include: *tuaoi* (boundaries), *Feagaiga* (sacred covenant), and *tapu* (taboo) in the Samoan language conveying the importance of balance/harmony in the pursuit of peace in the SIR. According to Ta'isi (2009), all the above concepts are essential in *Fa'asamoa* in order for people to not trespass in social relations or physical boundaries in the case of land. *tapu* (taboo) included sanctions and prohibitions on expected behaviour and social obligations and the accessing of resources.

According to Meleisea (1987b) the very basis of the Samoan indigenous religion was on belief that high ranking *ali'i* (Chiefs) were believed to have 'supernatural powers' due to 'divine ancestors' and especially in the case if one's ancestors were considered aristocratic. Such ancestors who have passed away can take many forms and become the *aitu* for a family, village

or district.

So far, the literature tells the story of *Fa'asamoa* or Samoan culture pre-contact with the west as being embedded in an indigenous religion with a creation story viewing the spiritual world as consisting of ten heavens, with Ta'isi (2009) arguing that all things have a genealogical relationship. *Matai* (Chiefs) have an important role evidenced by their relationship with the supernatural world and women have sacred roles in their *aiga* (family) and village.

The *Gagana Samoa* in an oral culture was of paramount importance in conveying messages as part of ritual in which included song and dance. As it will become evident, *Gagana Samoa* continued to be the vehicle of conveying meaning and concepts from pre-encounter to post-encounter with the west where consequently, terms such as '*Feagaiga*' became attributed to the pastor in the village in his role as the spiritual leader in the village.

The pre-contact Samoan world changed dramatically after contact with the west and in particular with the arrival of the missionaries and several foreign powers. This in turn contributed to how Samoan people came to view themselves, their culture and the outside world. According to (Crawford, 1977), there was clearly religious and spiritual beliefs in Samoa which 'permeated' everyday life although there were "neither temples nor rites nor ceremonies" (Crawford, 1977, p. 63). Crawford argues that contrary to the vision by missionaries of being agents for change in Samoa, the Christianity they brought was instead transformed by Samoans, echoing what Anae (1998) later referred to as 'Samoanising Christianity' or 'indigenising western Christianity' (p.89).

Meleisea (1987) tells us that before 1820, 'beachcombers' with no theological training and with little success, were already trying to teach what was referred to as the 'Sailor's *Lotu*'

(church). There was also what Meleisea refers to as a ‘Samoa Christian cult’ or the ‘Sio Vili’ movement’, culminating in a prophesy of the coming of a new god (p.52). Meleisea’s interpretation of what was transpiring in the Pacific with the Sio Vili group as well as other cults, is that this evidenced an attempt for people to reconcile what they knew and the new ‘Christianity they were learning. Of greater importance is “...that it showed that Samoan people were seeking new religious explanations” (p. 53).

The arrival of John Williams in Samoa in 1830 was the beginning of the LMS’s (London Missionary Society) considerable presence in Samoa to the extent that it became the “the longest established church in Western Samoa” (Meleisea, 1987, p. 55). The history of the LMS (London Missionary Society) in Samoa is inextricably connected to the political developments including the journey to independence from several imperial powers namely Germany, the US and Britain (Liua’ana, 2001). Part of this included working with as well as tensions between the different missions such as the WMMS (Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society), and the Catholic missionaries in 1845 (Liua’ana, 2001). The LDS or Mormon church came later in the late 1800s (Crawford, 1977; Goman, 2006; Liua’ana, 2001; Macpherson, 2011).

The LMS in Samoa and its development culminated its independence in 1962 with a new name *Ekalesia Fa’apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS) or Congregational Christian in Samoa (Liua’ana, 2001). Consequently, it was no coincidence that 1962 was also the year Samoa gained her independence, as this political struggle was very much connected to the fortunes of the early LMS. This early period was characterised by control by the missionaries of the church which was overturned in 1962 when Samoans were in charge of their own church. (Liua’ana, 2001).

Post-Christianity the *Feagai* reflects the relationship between the *Faife'au* (pastor) and the *Nu'u* (village) where the pastor represents the sacred and the village the secular (Meleisea, 1987; Palenapa, 1993). This reflects the increasing role of the *Faife'au* and *Lotu* (church) in village life in Samoa and in the lives of Samoans in their adopted homelands such as New Zealand. Christianity and the church became embedded into every area of life for Samoans, whether in Samoa or in their adopted homes in the United States, Hawai'i or New Zealand (Anae, 1998; Macpherson, 2011). Macpherson (2011) refers to the centrality of the churches in all areas of Samoan life, including the arena of the political, economic and education. This has manifested in spirituality for Samoans consisting of a mixture of *Fa'asamoa* (the Samoan way) and Christianity (Seiuli, 2017).

Therefore, it is not surprising that values, social structures and death rituals have reflected the central role of Christianity in how Samoans have come to define *Fa'asamoa*. This was also reflected in the general agreement on hymns being the first musical influence from outside of Samoa for Samoan people with the arrival of the missionaries (Pouesi, 2019; Solomona, 2009; Tuiasosopo, 2005). It is unsurprising therefore, that Christian hymns feature significantly in Samoan funerals (Ablon, 1970) as they have taken over from the chanting tradition in a Samoan funeral vigil from the pre-colonisation era (Seiuli, 2017).

The church choir feature greatly in Samoan funeral services in California (Ablon, 1970) with churches taking great pride in their choirs, including the role of visiting choirs in funeral services—a practice also featuring in Samoan funerals in Hawai'i (Braginsky, 2003). A striking feature in these funerals is the central featuring of collective singing, a stark contrast from the western funerals (Adamson & Holloway, 2012; Caswell, 2012; Emke, 2002).

*Fa'asamoa* (The Samoan way) or Samoan culture changed in profound ways post-encounter with the west moving away from a belief system consisting of a Samoan indigenous religion where the covenant and sacred relationship of the *Feagaiiga* (Ta'isi, 2009) became attributed to the *Faiife'au* as part of the church and the village (Meleisea, 1987; Palenapa, 1993). As put forward by Macpherson “This national commitment to Christian religion has been a significant factor in the social and social and political stability that has characterized Samoa...” (2011, p. 306).

This commitment to the church continued in other places where the Samoan diaspora ventured including Aotearoa New Zealand, where Samoan community enclaves formed around churches becoming substitute villages where its members shared similar backgrounds and beliefs (Macpherson, 2002). Consequently, Samoan hymns not only became a given in Samoan funeral ritual, Christianity, the church and hymns are not closely associated with *Fa'asamoa* or Samoan culture. In other words, *Fa'asamoa* pre-encounter with the west and *Fa'asamoa* post-encounter can be fairly presented as before and after the arrival of the church.

### **Samoans in NZ: Migration and *Fa'asamoa***

Samoans began migrating to New Zealand in the 1950's incentivized by opportunities in employment and education (Bond & Soli, 2011; Macpherson, 1985; Macpherson et al. 2000). From the beginning of this migration, Samoans found employment in a country needing cheap labour doing various jobs many New Zealand citizens were not willing to do. By 2018, the census data shows that 8.1 % (381, 642) of the New Zealand population are of Pacific heritage, an increase from 7.4 % in 2013. Nearly half the Pasifika population (182, 721) are Samoans and nearly 67% are New Zealand born (Statistics New Zealand, 2018).

Many of those migrating from Samoa in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970's to New Zealand did so as a result of family group decisions, in consideration of collective needs of *aiga*, rather than as individuals leaving an island home to search for future and fortune (Anae, 1998; Macpherson, 1999). Macpherson (2002) has referred to Samoans in New Zealand as belonging to a "moral community" due to the control exerted over who migrated, and based on expectations that once they were settled and working, financial resources were to be sent home to help the *aiga*.

Such expectations were thought to be better met by choosing young single men and women, with a preference for young single women who were perceived as more reliable, with a higher commitment to *aiga* (Macpherson, 2002). Therefore, such individuals "...were more likely to be more committed to other Samoan values and practices and provided a solid platform from which a moral community might emerge" (Macpherson, 2002, p. 80). These individuals tended to live in Samoan enclaves, coalescing around church and shared Samoan values and Christian beliefs practiced and reconstituted in *fa'alavelave* (funerals) (Anae, 1998).

A constellation of meanings defining *Fa'asamoa* shared amongst Samoan migrants include the *aiga* as a social unit or *aiga potopoto* (extended family); the *Fa'aMatai* (chiefly system); *Fa'aaloalo* (respect), *Tautua* (service) and *Alofa* (love). In *Fa'asamoa*, or more broadly Samoan culture, several social structures and roles are central: *Nu'u* (village), *Fono a Matai* (council of chiefs), *aiga*, *aiga potopoto* (family and kinship), *Lotu* (church), and the *Faife'au* (pastor) (Faleolo, 2014; Lautamulitalo, 1998, Lima, 2004; Macpherson, 1999); *fa'alavelave* (funeral) (Levine, 2003). The definition of *aiga*, according to Siauane (2006), is changing, depending on emotional ties between family members, and can even include those who attend

the same church or come from the same village. Macpherson (1999) attributed the fluidity in the way

Samoans viewed being Samoan to changing circumstances, and new freedom to construct varying identities. Siauane (2006) has pointed to the fluidity of “*Fa’asamoa*”, which then also influences how certain values and rituals are practiced.

In relation to Samoan funerals Seiuli (2015) explains *Fa’asamoa* as a process consisting of: a family gathering (*Fono*) to situate resources; a memorial service in a church; bringing the body home; and receiving and reciprocating support in a way that demonstrates *Fa’aaloalo* (appropriate respect). Part of the decision making includes arranging the family home to be a *falelausi* (mourning house) where the deceased will lie in state, with the backyard set up as a place for cooking to nourish and sustain visitors and mourners, and the garage usually set up as a meeting area (*Fa’afaletui*). This is usually done under leadership of a *Matai* who ensures collective cohesion within the *aiga*. Seiuli (2015) also pointed to the importance of a death notice for Samoan families and how such a task has been heavily influenced by technology and social media, presenting challenges as to what is appropriate to share via these new media of communication. Secular song and hymns were part of funeral ritual as a response to grief and loss (Seiuli, 2015, 2017).

Some boundaries in Samoan death rituals in New Zealand include the clear demarcation between where the body lies in state (the living room), where no food is to be consumed, and the kitchen. Family members and visitors all have a turn at sitting in the living room and conversing with each other, sharing, laughing and crying, all part of the mourning process of a collective loss. This space manifests *Le Va tapuia*, or the manifestations of the sacred connections between all things (Seiuli, 2015). Preparation of the body, including washing and

dressing, is always carried out by close relatives who perform this task with some light banter and humour amidst deep sorrow. Another boundary is the value of demonstrating respect and care for those who come to support and mourn with the family of the deceased, as not doing so is considered disrespectful. Offering them respect and care is communicated by acknowledging them, and, showing hospitality as part of *Fa'aaloalo* (respect), often in formal protocol, especially when they are a *Matai* (chief) or an elder.

### **History, song, funerals and *Fa'asamoa***

From pre-encounter to post-encounter with the west, song/music like *Gagana Samoa*, has always been one of the constant threads in *Fa'asamoa* or Samoan culture as part of their rituals including funeral ritual. This has continued in the lives of Samoan people, whether in their home of origin or adopted in places such as Aotearoa New Zealand and most of all as part of funeral ritual when farewelling of the dead. However, the songs and perception of the meaningfulness of song in relation to an underpinning religious or philosophical position about spirituality and relationships, has continued to evolve reflecting different influences throughout Samoan people and their history. This section will look at the literature to map how song as part of funeral ritual has reflected that history.

From pre-encounter with the west, Samoan people had an oral culture where information was passed on through chants, rituals, song and dance (Ta'isi, 2009; Tuiasosopo, 2005). Prior to the influence of Christianity, chants were part of ritual related to death and dying, marriage and house building (Ta'isi, 2008). Fraser (1897) put forth the view that in Samoa there was an essential relationship between song and myth and a creation story. The songs reported by Moyle (1971) generally predate contact with Europeans, but that is not to understate the subsequent influence of traditional Christian hymns brought by the missionaries, which were

embraced and assimilated by the Samoan converts (Ta'isi, 2009; Turner, 1884)). According to Moyle (1971), the Samoan *Auala* (funeral ceremonies meaning a path or road) included the performance of song as the singers walked through the village or as they walked around the house where the body of the deceased lay. This was part of funeral ritual when a person of importance died and of interest is the performance of song only by *Matai*, with each village having its own distinct songs. It was considered a great affront to perform songs belonging to another village and it was expected that such performances needed to be accurate and correctly carried out. The consequences for not doing so could meet with severe punishment and humiliation. The *Auala* according to Moyle (1971) differs according to respective families and villages reflecting their history, often including re-enactment of significant events. One such example demonstrates for a certain group their ancestors' seafaring prowess. Some of these practices have been lost due to their deemed inappropriateness according to the church, although part of the old religion.

There is general agreement on hymns being the first musical influence from outside of Samoa for Samoan people with the arrival of the missionaries (Pouesi, 2019; Solomona, 2009; Tuiasosopo, 2005), evidenced by what Tuiasosopo refers to as his interest in the "indigenization and localization of church music in Samoa" (p. 23). Additionally, the outside musical influence that came later speaks of the presence of individuals from abroad who taught and formed brass bands; advancement in technology such as the synthesiser keyboard; the availability of recordings for young and keen musicians; the influence of the marines in sharing jazz and very importantly, the camaraderie that came with being in a music group.

Samoan classics such as 'Samoa e lo'u *AtuNu'u*' and Lo'u sei e lo'u pale auro e' and many other songs were composed by these musicians who cut their teeth in the music scene in the

1940's to 1980's in Samoa and American Samoa (Pouesi, 2015). The topic of songs according to Pouesi (2015) consisted of love songs, songs of protest about the high cost of living, religious songs and songs about love of home and country. A consistent theme in the documentary is the lament with regard to the ubiquitous influence of technology, replacing live musicians through the synthesizer keyboard leading to the loss of 'feel' that is only possible when instruments are all played in real time. In addition, there is the concern that this has led to the loss of various musical skills.

What is interesting about these musicians who range from the age of sixty to eighty years of age is firstly, the powerful testimonies given about the musical influence they had from their mothers, although their fathers were also influential. Secondly, many had the skill of writing and reading musical scores in the western tradition. Lastly, all cited the church as a place where they learned and participated in music and song and many came from a tradition of preachers and composers of hymns. To add to this history of musical influence from the outside of Samoa, the popularity of brass bands in Samoa according to Solomona & Bendrups (2019), started with German colonial rule in the early 1900s, this interest waned until a resurgence after independence in 1962.

Although somewhat younger than the aforementioned musicians, the following musician represent the continuance in the same vein where musicians who strongly identify as Samoans learn and perform other styles of music while maintaining connection to Samoan music. Opeloge Ah Sam, a Samoan composer and musician who works out of Samoa describes his work as 'fusion' and continues the tradition of older musicians who remain connected to Samoan song while being widely influenced by various genres such as jazz (Ah Sam, 2019). Part of his musical experience and influence was also similar to those musicians in the

documentary which included brass bands, hymns and traditional Samoan songs. Like many of the above Samoan male musicians he comes from a family of composers with a history of composing for the church. He points to the new knowledge he gains from working with groups such as Auckland Wind Orchestra, as something that he takes to Tonga, Samoa and other places and influencing others and vice versa.

### **Conclusion**

This last section of the literature review has broadly set out the relationship between Samoan history from pre-encounter to post-encounter with the west and Christianity and song/music. Pre-encounter, Samoans had song and chants as part of ritual including funeral ritual connected to an indigenous religion and a creation story. Post-encounter, there have been different musical influences beginning with church hymns followed by other factors such as the arrival of the marines, brass instrument, technology along with different genres such as jazz music. Samoan musicians have not been passive recipients of this influence as they in turn have interpreted and created their own compositions whether in the church or in secular music. This has continued with the diaspora including in Aotearoa New Zealand where Samoan people continue to contribute and participate in music where there is mutual influence between them and their adopted home.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

There is a rising tide of Pacific scholarly voices, articulating the need for Pacific people to reclaim and return to Pacific ways of seeing the world. These ‘ways’ are based on embodied knowledge from the Pacific lifeworld (side of heaven) or *Itulagi*. Vaai (2017) defines *Itulagi* as: “...itu is about getting in touch with ‘one’s context’, while lagi is about getting in touch ‘with all’. Itu reinforces our potentialities and distinct qualities, lagi reveals our limits and boundaries” (p. 6). Another way of looking at it is itu is what makes the Pacific distinct and lagi (heaven, sky) is what connects Pasifika people to other parts of the world.

Some of the voices that are part of this discourse who have made an impact within the academy two and a half decades ago are Thaman (1993), Hau’ofa (1993) and Smith (1999). Thaman offered a distinctly Tongan methodology named *Kakala*, while Hau’ofa challenged the notion constructed by the West that the Pacific islands are small isolated places in a vast ocean. Instead, he argued that the Pacific are a ‘Sea of islands’ in an ocean that is also their home and a highway connecting the Pacific islands to each other. The Pacific Ocean provides physical and spiritual sustenance for the people. It is also what has connected its Pacific people throughout their history (Hauofa, 1993). Smith (1999) is a Māori scholar who clearly and passionately articulates the need for the decolonising of methodologies in research, pointing out that research has been implicated in some of the worst excesses of colonisation. In particular, the defining and telling of stories about Māori and other indigenous groups by others, often paint an unfavourable picture, supporting the dominant discourse that paint indigenous people in a negative light.

Some more recent Pacific scholarly voices as part of this rising tide include the following: Vaai (2017) who argue that a ‘relational renaissance’ consisting of returning to relationality as a crucial lens for interpreting life is essential for the survival of Pacific people; Koya-Vakauta (2017) who posits that there needs to be a re-thinking of research through relationships; Anae (2010 & 2019) who has offered *Teu le va* (Nurturing relationships) as a Pacific paradigm for research; and Nikora (2017) who offers ways for Indigenous Psychology to contribute to the reshaping of the Pacific. In support of this tide, the art of poetry has also been utilised by Koya-Vaka-uta (2017), Figiel (2017) and Thaman (2017), joining the chorus of voices from the Pacific, insisting on Pacific people deciding for themselves what is best for their people and their *Itulagi*. Many of the aforementioned Pacific scholars can be found in *Relational Hermeneutics* (Vaai & Casimira, 2017) and *Decolonising Personhood* (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017). In the ‘Introduction’ for the latter Vaai (2017) argues for the centrality of ‘personhood’ as ‘relationship’ where the duality of individual and community is unhelpful and works against holistic thinking. In other words, our understanding of personhood as Pasifika people has been dictated from outside where one or the other takes primacy rather than both the individual and community being part of a whole.

If Hermes was the messenger of the gods in Greek methodology, the above Pacific scholars and others can be said to be messengers who herald the need for Pasifika people to return and reclaim their *Itulagi*, as embodying the primary legitimate source for Pasifika ways of knowing. Furthermore, this need to return is a response rejecting the neo-liberal culture of extraction and exploitation of the Pacific as expressed in the foreword by Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta’isi Efi (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017). This is contrary to the interests of the people of the Pasifika *Itulagi*. The rising tide of Pacific scholarly voices has been referred to as “...a series of

disturbances which have shaken the academy from within” (Sanga & Reynolds, 2017, p. 199). Perhaps this is not surprising given that scholars such as Thaman when speaking about her experience at a New Zealand university wrote “I learned that in order to be modern and successful at university I had to hang my cultural orientation and identification on the trees at Albert Park and forget who I was for a while” (2003, p. 11).

This thesis, and specifically its methodology, contribute to this tide so that no more Pasifika scholars in the academy feel the need to make who they are invisible in order to succeed. If anything, this research supports the ‘remembering’ for people of Pasifika in order to reclaim what has been taken away in the name of ‘growth’ that gives no credence to the sacred in human relationships and connectedness between all things (Vaai, 2017). The centrality of ‘relationality-le va’ and decolonising of the mind individually and on a collective level is shared by many Pacific scholars. This embodied knowledge and the valuing of relationships is evidenced in the increasing presence of Pasifika research methodologies (PRM) in the academy (Anae, 2019). Anae (2019) refers to a ‘crisis’ where Pacific research has been continually defined and determined by research methods and theories from the west, she states: “In reality, the crisis in Pacific research is the continuing adherence to traditional Western theories and research methods that undermine and overshadow the va—the sacred, spiritual...” (p.1). This point of reference (the west) is inappropriate when considering the centrality of the Va and its sacred and spiritual nature in research, including the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Anae (2019) goes so far as to assert that research methods and theories are ‘meaningless’ when human relationships are not at the front and centre of research (p.1). Therefore, research of Pacific people by Pacific researchers utilising Pacific methodologies and

Pacific Relational Ethics (PRE), will provide evidence for policy makers to move away from a one size fits all approach (Aanae, 2019).

Some perspectives agreed upon by these scholars include: the Pacific is not made up of small isolated islands; the Pacific not only refers to the 'South' as decided by 'powerful nations' outside the Pacific, but includes Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia; Pacific is not Asia-Pacific; the commercialised imaging of the Pacific as 'romantic' with smiling submissive faces is unacceptable (Vaai & Casimira, 2017, p.7-8).

An important aim in this methodology is to attempt to ground all parts of the methodology section in the *Itulagi* (lifeworld or this side of heaven) (Vaai, 2017) that is the Pacific. This reflects Pacific identities of both researcher and participants and represents an additional voice to other Pacific scholars in pushing back against outside voices dominating the Pacific region. In other words, the ways of understanding and viewing the world from the perspective of Pacific people is front and centre in this research, not least of all due to participants and the researcher being Samoan.

One of the challenges of forming a methodology is navigating and implementing the appropriate cultural protocols, and in this case, Samoan protocols, when exploring participants' perceptions and beliefs. This is especially true given the sensitive subject matter around the passing of a loved one. A suggestion, given by Amituanai-Toloa (2006), is to mentally walk through the research process, along the way identifying challenges that may arise so that such challenges may be known before the actual fieldwork begins. In her words "What and how one does research, specifically for Samoans and Pasifika in general, is normally reinforced by 'tu, savali ma tautala' that is, the way one holds oneself, walks and talks (Amituanai-Toloa, 2006,

p. 203). For example, the age of the participants needs to be considered as this determines how one approaches participants and how one talks (tautala) in conversations with participants.

This chapter sets out the framework for the philosophical underpinnings and methodological decisions underpinning this framework, the research process, including the methods of data collection and analysis, participants and ethical challenges. To be true to the relational nature of this research, the chapter starts with a reflection on the researcher's journey to the methodological decisions.

### **Journey to a methodology**

The journey to this methodology began with my master's research, where western methodologies were considered, but ultimately ruled out as ill-fitted to investigating the lived experiences and perceptions of Samoan participants. The focus of this research was on the experiences of Samoan male youth offenders in the Pasifika Youth Court environment.

This is especially true in this case, given that this research is specifically concerned with Samoan individuals' perceptions of Samoan culture itself and Samoan funerals as a cultural practice. Put simply, it did not make sense to investigate Samoan's perceptions of Samoan culture through a western lens. This doctoral thesis is no different in this regard: here I am interested in Samoans' own lived-experiences, perceptions, and understandings of their own culture. And just as with the prior research for the master's degree, this thesis will utilise Pasifika methodologies instead of western methodologies. This is because, as Bryman (2012) explains, methods in social research are not culturally neutral, but bring their own influence to bear on the topic of research. It is especially relevant to colonised people that such research is not a detached and impartial academic exercise, but is an activity that is itself a stakeholder, and which occurs in a socio-political landscape (Smith, 1999). My decision to use Pasifika

methodologies is intended to contribute to the wider aims of decolonising methodologies (Anae, 2019; Amituanai-Toloa, 2009; Smith, 1999; Suaalii-Suani & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014), which broadly aim to put the participants' own voices and interpretation at front-and-centre of the research process.

The decision to use these methodologies, which are described in more detail below, honours the *Fa'asinomaga* (identity or divine designation) of the participants while also valuing how the Pasifika people view the world and their future (Ta'isi, 2009; Thaman, 2003). Consider how in the past, Western methodologies investigating the lives of colonised people have overlooked the subjects' own beliefs and interpretations of their own lives, including epistemological and ontological beliefs (Smith, 1999). Thus, the selection of Pasifika methodologies and concepts honours the Pasifika tradition of knowledge and "ways of being" that "...originated from the nga wairua (spirits) and whenua (land) of Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Tuvalu, or the other Pacific nations" (Vaiotele, 2006, p. 23).

### **Philosophical Underpinnings**

Relationality is the key to understanding the world where the subject and the world relate in creating meaning. It is this relationship or *va* which is core when understanding Pacific people and how they see the world. The 'interpretivist' western paradigm best describes this theoretical perspective. The idea of 'intentionality' (Crotty, 1998), where the mind extends to the world (especially relationships in the social and otherwise) is also part of this view.

The theoretical perspective for this research overall is interpretivist (Crotty, 1998) insofar as the meaning of what is reality can only be interpreted by those who have been co-constructors of such a reality, namely Pacific people and their world.

## *Ontology*

All of the above signals a world where relationships and the relational are key to understanding Pacific people's understanding of their world (Ta'isi, 2009). The researcher's ontological position is set out before the epistemological due to the order that Grix (2002) argues is best. In his words "Ontology is the starting point of all research, after which one's epistemological and methodological positions logically follows "(p.177). This position on reality can best be described as that of 'critical realism' whereby it is acknowledged that there is an objective reality "...independent of our thoughts or impressions and that it can be differentiated into three levels: the empirical level consisting of experienced events; the actual level...experienced or not... lastly, the causal level embracing the 'mechanisms' which generate events." (Houston, 2001, p. 850). Moreover, such mechanisms a part of different open systems include the psychological and the social, making it unlikely to ascertain cause and effect, leaving the best that can be understood as 'tendencies'. This researcher takes the position that the mechanisms and open systems manifest the omniscient observer (i.e., God). Non-omniscient observers (human beings) can never know this objective reality as their perspective of reality is always bound up in a historical and cultural context.

Based on the work of Roy Bhaskar (Bhaskar, 2016) and interpreted by Danermark, Ekström and Karlsson (2019) and Houston (2001), the 'what is out there to know' in this research is one which is constructed and co-constructed by the individual with the self (the subject) and their world. This is a continual process of interpretation in a world where reality is limited by what human beings can perceive (Danermark et al. 2019). Consequently, this knowledge of reality is not total, but partial. These authors interpret and argue that critical realism as articulated by Bhaskar views reality as consisting of structures and mechanisms as part of many open systems

which causes reality to happen. The transcendental element in Bhaskar's work and his view of reality as consisting open systems (Houston, 2001; Steinmetz, 1998) is interpreted here as that of the spiritual realm and an omniscient God. From an ontological view, I hold the position that not everything can be empirically researched and verified as human understanding is finite and limited. In other words, whether it is about the social world or the nature of being and existence, there is a limitation to human understanding.

There are contributing factors to what we know on an epistemological and ontological plane; causal factors that are unobservable by human beings and causal factors of such a complexity that they may as well be unobservable. Whatever knowing human beings can grasp, is always in some ways, partial or incomplete. I take the position that this total understanding of the world and existence is the prerogative of an omniscient God. The position taken therefore in this thesis is to take from participants what it is that is real for them without assuming that it is total reality. However, it is the world of meaning as they make it. As interpreted by Steinmetz, (1998) on the work by Roy Bhaskar, "...multicausal, contingency-based approaches are the most appropriate ones for capturing the ontological specificity of social reality (my emphasis) (p.174). Therefore, the reality searched for in this research is admittedly always constrained by the human capacity to perceive and understand. As much as human beings have the ability to comprehend reality, there is always what is beyond reach.

### ***Epistemology (Constructionism)***

One of the assumptions in this thesis is that Samoan culture or *Fa'asamoa* has a shared meaning for many in this group, giving its members a unique identity. Despite the use of constructionism, it is possible that participants may demonstrate individual understanding of *Fa'asamoa*. This view privileges the place of individuality and community in harmony (rather

than in competition) and therefore challenge the dualistic thinking that is represented in the 'either/or' way of understanding the world (Vaai, 2017).

If one assumes that an individual or individuals is/are born into 'a world of meaning' (Crotty, 1998), providing a world of understanding created by a world already there, this thesis looks at such meanings as created by others. In other words, we are looking at a culture which existed before the participants but which are also contributed to and constructed by them in relation to the world. Samoan culture has and is being constructed and interpreted and will continue to be so into the future. The interest here is constructionism whereby the collective meaning, shared meaning collectively generated in social interaction is assumed to be part of the Samoan community. Although through the interpretivist lenses meaning is made (not found), meaning is nevertheless found in the sense that there is a social and communal reality already created.

### **Methodological Framework**

The methodology consists of different elements woven together. These are *Kakala*, *Fa'asinomaga*, *Va fealoaloa'i*, *Va tapuia*, and *Muagagana*. *Kakala* as a concept in research (incorporating Toli, Tui, and Luva) has originally been developed by Professor Konai Helu Thaman, (Thaman, 1993) with later additions in collaboration with Dr Ana Taufē'ulungaki, Dr Seu'ula Johansson Fua and Dr Linita Manu'atu (Fua, 2014) (incorporating Teu, Malie and

Mafana). *Fa'asinomaga*, *Va fealoaloa'i*, *Va tapuia*, and *Muagagana* (translated as Identity, The Va-sacred social relationships, and The Va-sacred relationships between all things) (Ta'isi, 2009) are presented as the concepts underpinning the *Kakala* in the methodological framework. The following discussion will provide an overview of what these terms mean, with reference

to two Samoan proverbs. All of the above elements are then presented as an integrated approach to the methodology used in this research.

### ***Kakala***

*Kakala* is the methodological framework to be used in this project (Thaman, 1993; Johansson Fua, 2014). The *Kakala* is a framework for conducting research that takes inspiration from the process of creating the literal *Kakala* (garland) native to Tonga. The traditional *Kakala* garland is a carefully crafted traditional decoration presented to specific people to honour them on special occasions. This cultural artefact is referred to in ancient Tongan dance as well as poetry, and symbolises respect and love (Thaman, 1993). *Kakala* as a framework works off the figurative process of collecting the materials, weaving, and presenting a *Kakala* garland as well as the social aspects surrounding these tasks. How this metaphor is applied directly to these tasks is given below:

- *Teu* lies at the genesis of the research process under *Kakala*, where the idea of what the **research intends to be is formed – the conceptualisation**. This is a preparatory stage, and corresponds to collecting the flowers and materials to create the garland (Fua, 2014). At this stage the researcher would ask of themselves, “What would I like to know more about?”, “What research techniques do I use, and do I have them at my disposal?” and other preliminary and practical questions. It is at this stage that the researcher would consider possible obstacles, and take steps to avoid them (e.g. out of respect for the participants, the researcher studying funerals may decide not to attend funerals, but instead ask attendees about their recollections of their experiences of the funeral). In the case of this research, the researcher spoke with participants regarding a particular funeral in their *aiga* (of an elder within the last five years of the research)

- *Toli* is **when data is collected**. Techniques such as surveys, interviews, or in the case of the current research *Talanoa* was utilised to gather the data. This stage is analogous to choosing materials for the *Kakala* that are appropriate for the person and for the occasion for which they are given the garland (Thaman, 1993; Fua, 2014)).
- *Tui* is **where analysis takes place**. This is conceptualised as like the process of weaving materials for the garland. Just as the garland is a product not only of its materials but also the skill put into combining those materials, good research requires not only good data, but skilful analysis (Thaman, 1993; Fua, 2014). This stage signifies the importance of appropriate thought and care when doing analyses. For instance, a researcher interviewing a group of interviewees who are in a vulnerable social position may choose to carefully consider the consequences of the analysis and the conclusions drawn on these people. In the case of this research, there was some sensitive material that was omitted from the analysis due to firstly, it had no relevance to the research question. Secondly, the researcher made the decision that particular personal information provided by some participants about another family member was best left from the analysis out of respect for the family. Lastly, the researcher recognised that certain information was shared out of anger and grief where participants trusted the researcher, and therefore, this trust needs to be reciprocated and honoured with discernment from the researcher.
- *Luva* is the **reporting phase**. In the literal process of making and presenting the *Kakala*, there comes a time after the garland itself is created, when it is presented to the intended recipient. Importantly, the intended recipient may offer the *Kakala* to someone else, showing the central importance of collectivism in Pasifika people (Fua, 2014; Thaman,

1992). In research, this is analogous to presenting the finished research report to benefit a community.

- *Malie* is the stage that **reflects the usefulness and relevance of the research**. In the literal sense this is when the weavers, recipients, and observers gather around the *Kakala* and share in its fragrance and collectively observe its presentation to the recipients(s) (Fua, 2014)
- *Mafana* represents when the outcomes of the research are applied to bring about **change and transformation** (Chu et al, 2013). In other words, this is when, after the research has been completed and presented, all stakeholders can reflect on what was achieved through the research. In making the literal *Kakala*, this stage is the time for coming together for celebration, and when the *Kakala* may be presented to someone else as a sign of respect and gratitude (Fua, 2014).

### ***Concepts Underpinning the methodological framework***

There are three concepts from the researcher's upbringing as a Samoan that informs the proposed research. They include the *Va tapuia*—sacred connections between spaces and things (Amituanai-Toloa, 2006; Meleisea, 1987; Palenapa, 1993; Ta'isi, 2009). This refers to the sacred (*tapu ia*) in the relationships (*Va*) and connections between human beings and all things alive or dead.

The second concept is *Va fealoa'i* or *Va fealoaloa'i*—connections between people and social spaces (Ta'isi, 2009; Tuafuti, 2011). This concept is made up of the *va* (space) and *fealoaloa'i* (face to face) (Fouvaa, 2011). This is important to Samoans as it signifies the value of

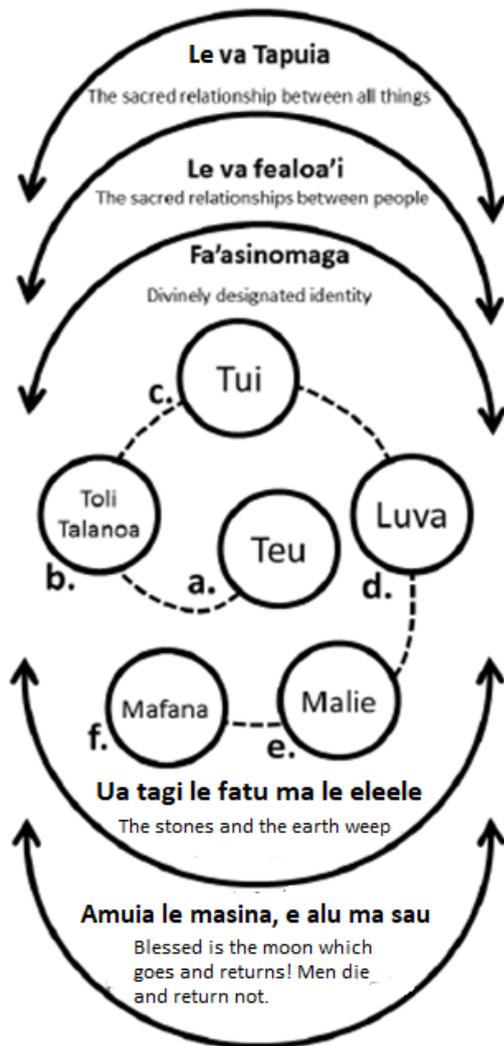
relationships and reciprocity (Fouvaa, 2011), including the sacred relationships, and the connections between social spaces and people (Ta'isi, 2009).

Finally, there is *Fa'asinomaga*—identity, and divine designation (Amituanai-Toloa, 2009; Fouvaa, 2011; Ta'isi, 2009), which refers to a sense of belonging and identity founded for Samoan people on *Fa'asamoa* (Le Tagaloa, 1997; Ta'isi, 2009).

Building upon these concepts is the practice of *Muagagana* (Samoan proverbs), which is a method used for passing on knowledge in *Fa'asamoa*. The two specific *Muagagana* (proverbs), which derive from the researcher's own experience, giving further context to the overall methodology, are:

1) *Ua tagi le fatu ma le eleele* (The stones and the earth weep). This is a proverb referring to the death of a beloved chief. For the researcher, this proverb is particularly befitting to the current topic of research (funerals, and particularly that of Samoan elders), because it denotes the significance of their status and *mana* (dignity, respect, prestige, leadership, and influence).

2) *Amuia le masina, e alu ma sau* (Blessed is the moon which goes and returns. Men die and do not return). The meaning of this proverb for the researcher is the finality of death and the temporary nature of life.



**Figure 1.** The overarching methodological framework for this research (Kakala)

### The Research Process

#### *Toli: Data collection Method - Talanoa*

*Talanoa* is the data collection method for this research. It is rooted in ancient practices in Oceania (Vaiolati, 2006). This method was chosen due to its origins, representing epistemologies from *whenua* (lands in Oceania) and acknowledging the spiritual aspect of life

reflecting participants and the researcher (Vaiotele, 2006.) Such practices reflect ‘reality’ in the social and natural world as being relational between people and people and the natural world.

*Talanoa* has its roots in precolonial Pasifika culture, but its formalisation into a data collection technique is attributed to Vaiotele (2006) and Halapua (2008; 2013). According to Vaiotele (2006), *Talanoa* is a qualitative and phenomenological technique. The technique focuses on understanding participants in a way hinted at in the name: *tala* meaning to tell, and *noa* meaning nothing in particular, a vacuum, or diffuse nothingness and common (Vaiotele, 2006; Halapua, 2008). Thus, *Talanoa* means “...talking about nothing in particular, and interacting without a rigid framework” (Vaiotele, 2006, p. 23). From a non-Pasifika perspective, this can be seen as a method less-directed than semi-structured interviews, such that tangents and off-topic sub-conversations are common, and the “interviewees” feel comfortable enough in a reciprocal conversation to ask questions of the interviewer, if they wish. Usually, and in the case of this research, *Talanoa* is conducted face-to-face (Vaiotele, 2006), and is not just about people talking, but also about *how* they talk (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014).

In many ways the ‘*Talanoa*’ in this relational way of being in the world, began the moment the ‘key person’ (Samoa funeral director) communicated with Samoa people who were potential participants, about this research before they were actual participants. The funeral director (key person) approached potential participants not only as a funeral director but more importantly as a *Samoa* funeral director. Upon this connection, potential participants would learn about the research as well as the identity of the researcher as being Samoa. Their relationship with the Samoa Funeral Director and the identity of the researcher as a middle-aged Samoa woman would have been part of the potential participant’s schema when deciding on whether to participate or not in the research. This was an important prelude for the *Talanoa*, where

participants and researcher brought a relational situatedness in the *Va fealoaloa'i*; preparing the social space for the sharing that took place.

*Talanoa* is an open conversation that can be structured, loosely structured or totally open in the sense that it unfolds in the moment. In this research, the *Talanoa* was open in the sense that participants were free to ask questions and discuss their thoughts and interpretations regarding anything that they wished to talk about. Nevertheless, as participants had been provided a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) that was given to them before the *Talanoa* informing them on what the research was about, and the Key person and earlier participants had recruited and shared about the research to other *aiga* members, most participants had some idea of the general topic of the research; song in funerals. The point here is that within *Talanoa* as a data collection method the 'relational' is a given. Therefore, building rapport and situating where the participants and the researcher connect as 'Samoans' in a conversational manner is a strong characteristic of *Talanoa*.

In the Samoan context (as in Tongan) *Talanoa* as a process has expectations of respect and reciprocity as an essential part of the context and acknowledging balance in the *Va fealoaloa'i* (relationship between people and social spaces). More importantly, the relationship inherent in the participants and researcher being Samoan is suggested here as being a factor in *how* the research process is perceived by both parties and also there is a *spirit* which comes out of this relationship. This is consistent with viewing the world in terms of how one is related to it. In this case the sharing of a Samoan identity will inevitably generate different questions, conversations and questions compared to another researcher from the same ethnic group (Samoan) or an outsider.

The *Talanoa* began with greeting the participant appropriately according to their age and status afforded to them in the Samoan community. Participants were encouraged to converse in the language they wished to whether it was English or *Gagana Samoa* or both as long as they were comfortable. This included the appropriate use of language with congruent body language and appropriate tone of voice reflecting the age, status and gender of participants. In the case of elders, many of them were more comfortable speaking in *Gagana Samoa* requiring this researcher to be sensitive in the way I spoke to them with matching body language, for instance, to stoop down as a sign of deference rather than standing upright when standing in their presence and say ‘*tulou*’ (pardon me) when walking by them if they are sitting. To put it in another way, the way I conversed with the youngest participants was different to those who are middle-aged and different again to those who are elders. Generally, the youngest participants tended to treat me like an aunty and were very respectful; the middle-aged participants treated me like family or as a cousin or sibling and the elders treated me like I was like one of their children or nieces. It was important to pay attention to social signals from participants to inform my approach. For example, one elderly male participant was very informal at the beginning of the *Talanoa* in light of him learning that we come from the same village. The same occurred with an elderly female participant upon her learning at the beginning of the *Talanoa* that my uncle is married to her cousin. In this instance, this elder would reach out and hold my hand during the *Talanoa* after learning of our connection through marriage. For every *Talanoa*, the researcher made the decision to connect with the participant in a cultural sense before informing them that the recording was about to proceed to make sure they were comfortable. In other words, *Fa’aaloalo* (respect) required that I greet the participants and made sure that they were ready to proceed, and mindful that for some of them being recorded was a new experience. Often, the beginning of the *Talanoa* would begin with participants

asking me about my family, my parents, village and whether I was born in New Zealand or Samoa. In the case of the middle-age participants and even more so with the elders, they would share that they know my parents, my siblings or some of my relatives. In some cases, they would ask me about how I knew the key person (Funeral Director) who approached them to be a participant. Although recording had not commenced, the *Talanoa* really began from the first moment I was in the same space as and face to face (*Va fealoaloa'i*) with these elders, before a word was spoken and the same can be said for all the participants. In the case where the meeting place was in a public space (half of the *Talanoa* sessions), all participants were receptive to the invitation for me to order them a coffee or meal. Sharing a coffee or meal with them before and even when the recorder was turned on was very helpful in bonding with participants and helped them feel at ease and relaxed. When the *Talanoa* was at the participant's home, participants would offer something to drink or some food and I would respond depending on how I sensed the moment. For example, some participants would immediately after meeting start preparing a hot drink for both of us in which case, I respectfully accepted the invitation. This 'connecting time' at the beginning of the *Talanoa* was very important as the participants often had questions or needed time to get comfortable. More often than not, the questions were of a social nature where participants and this researcher were engaged in situating where we stood in relation to each other. Participant's questions about the research itself tended to come after the questions about who I was in the Samoan community in regards to for example, the church that I attend or my village in Samoa and how long have I been in New Zealand.

*Talanoa* as a data collection method can be challenging due to its discursive nature where it can be about a particular topic or nothing in particular. Therefore, it was posited that other data

collection methods such as semi-structured interviews may be more suitable. Due to it being ubiquitous in some parts of the Pacific, the word *Talanoa* is both a ‘research data collection method’ (Vaiotele, 2006) and a cultural practice, where Samoan people conversate about all manner of things in a range of settings from the formal to informal, between two or more people or between groups, it was decided that ‘*Talanoa*’ was more suitable for exploring in conversation and sharing of realities. This way of collecting data was familiar and therefore comfortable for participants, as it is a cultural practice and a way of normative social interaction for all of them as individuals as part of *aiga* Samoa. The comfort for participants is due to privileging the appropriate cultural relationships in the Va, setting the tone of the *Talanoa* juxtaposed to primarily seeing the *Talanoa* as between researcher and participant. The participants and the researcher being from the same ethnic group-Samoan is part of the research insofar as *the only reality that we can discover is that which is being constructed*.

Participants were made aware of the research with an Information Sheet through a key person who initially approached them. Open-ended questions enabled participants to discuss freely what music was performed or played at the funerals, who decided on this music, and why the selected music was chosen. Individual *Talanoa* were conducted, where *Talanoa* was were with one participant at a time and part of this process included suggestions by the participant in regards to other members of their *aiga* may be available as a participant. The researcher would also ask if they could recommend other family members.

### ***Participants***

Please see Table 1 for demographic information and designations for all participants included in this study. It was intended that three females and three males will be interviewed from each *aiga* to achieve a gender balance and in order to obtain data across multiple generations for

comparative analysis. Although this was not possible, there were still enough participants to collect rich data that enabled a comparative analysis across three generations and gender.

Thirty participants across seven *aiga* participated in *Talanoa*. The seventh *aiga* was excluded due to only one *aiga* member being available due to unforeseen circumstances. This left twenty-eight participants across six *aiga* plus the key person (Samoan funeral director) bringing the total number of participants to twenty-nine.

The sampling began with a Samoan funeral director who agreed to be a key person to be interviewed, but also to assist in recruiting potential participants and *aiga*/families. He was a participant due to his broad experience (thirty years) in the funeral industry as well as being a respected member of the Samoan community. Families included were eligible if they have farewelled a female/male Samoan elder (within their family network) no sooner than 1 year in the past, and no later than 5 years. This timeframe was chosen so that the funeral is recent enough to be remembered, but also far enough in the past to allow some time for reflection. All participants had to self-identify as Samoan, be over 18 years of age and a member of an *aiga* who attended a particular funeral in their *aiga* in the last five years. Participants from eligible families were identified using a snowball-sampling technique (Bryman, 2012), whereby one participant contacts other potential recruits from within their family, who are known to have attended the funeral of interest. The focus of the *Talanoa* was on one particular funeral in that *aiga*. Unsurprisingly, due to the conversational nature of the *Talanoa*, a particular funeral was oftentimes compared to other *aiga* funerals and funerals in general.

**Table 1.** Designations and demographic information about participants

Family	Designation*	Age	Gender	NZ/Samoan born	First Language	Other languages	# returns to Samoa
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N/A	Key person	49	Male	NZ Born	English	Samoan	15
Family 1							
	M1/F1	73	Male	Samoan	Samoan	Fijian/ English	30
	F2/F1	51	Female	NZ born	English	Samoan	10
	M2/F1	48	Male	NZ born	English	Samoan	5
	F3/F1	48	Female	NZ born	English	Samoan	4
Family 2							
	F1/F2	61	Female	Samoan born Came to NZ at age 5	Samoan	English	100
	M1/F2	54	Male	Samoa born Came to NZ at age 18	Samoan	English	15
	F2/F2	55	Female	NZ born	English	Samoan	100
	F3/F2	29	Female	NZ born but spent 4years in Samoa in High school	English	Samoan	6
	M3/F2	28	Male	NZ	Samoan	English	27
Family 3							
	F1/F3	67	Female	Samoan bor. Came to NZ at age 14	English	Samoan; also proficient in English	3
	F2/F3	44	Female	NZ born	English	Samoan	3
	M2/F3	38	Male	NZ born	English	Samoan	5
	F3/F3	23	Female	NZ born	English	None	2
	M3/F3	16	Male	NZ born	English	None	3
Family 4							
	F1/F4	71	Female	Samoan born	Samoan	English	15
	F2/F4	37	Female	NZ born	English	Samoan	4
	M2/F4	49	Male	Samoan born	Samoan	English	9
	F3/F4	49	Female	Samoan born	Samoan	English	12
Family 5							
	M1/F5	62	Male	Samoan born	Samoan	English	5

	F2/F5	44	Female	NZ born	English	Samoan	2
	M2/F5	48	Male	NZ born	English	None	10
	F3/F5	42	Female	NZ born	English and Samoan		3
Family 6							
	F1/F6	76	Female	Samoan born Moved to NZ 54 years ago	Samoan	English	20
	M1/F6	55	Male	Samoan born Moved to NZ 10 years ago	Samoan	English	0
	F2/F6	40	Female	Samoan born Moved to NZ at age 2	English	Samoan	2
	M2/F6	42	Male	NZ born	English	Samoan	8
	F3/F6	21	Female	Samoan born Moved to NZ 5 years ago	Samoan	English	1
<p>Other than for the key person (designated as “Key Person”), the designations* represent the participants are as follows:  The first letter denotes gender (M = Male, F = Female).  The following number denotes seniority in the family, (1 = elder, 2 = middle-aged, 3 = youngest adult generation).  The second group of alphanumeric symbols after the slash denote the family that the individual belongs to (e.g., F1 = family 1, F2 = family 2, etc.).</p>							

### ***Tui: Data analysis***

*Talanoa* were recorded and transcribed, and participants were given the initial transcript to read over and correct if they wished. The researcher transcribed all recorded interviews whether participants spoke English or *Gagana Samoa*. This was also the case with translating transcribed recordings in *Gagana Samoa*. A latent thematic analysis technique as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used. Thematic analysis is a popular technique used in qualitative research, partly due to its independence from any epistemological or theoretical framework. Broadly, the following guidelines as set out by Braun and Clarke were implemented in this study. Firstly, there was a familiarisation with data, starting with transcribing the *Talanoa* and reading the transcription several times, generating initial codes

relating to the research question. These codes were modified as needed for further analysis, and a process followed where the researcher was identifying codes belonging to categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes and categories were determined mostly inductively (taken from codes and themes from the data). The main themes and categories that resulted from this process are summarised in Table 2. These themes and categories will be discussed in more detail in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

**Table 2.** Summary of themes and categories resulting from analysis of the data

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Themes / subcategories</b>	<b>Main codes / sub-themes</b>
<b><i>Fa'asamoa</i></b>	<i>Aiga</i>	The nature of <i>aiga</i> Core Values: Le Va, <i>Fa'aaloalo, Alofa, Tautua</i> Change in <i>aiga</i>
	<i>Gagana Samoa</i>	The Importance of <i>Gagana</i> <i>Pese</i> and <i>Gagana Samoa</i>
	Customs and Rituals	Changed Funeral practices Changes in song for Samoan funerals <i>Pese/Song</i> and <i>Fa'asamoa</i>
	<i>Fa'asamoa</i> and the church	
<b>History in song</b>	Denomination	Samoan hymns English hymns <i>Tusi pese</i>
	Au Talavou (youth group)	Influencers Singing the farewell The Māori connection
	Family Practices	Favourites Connection to other family funerals
<b>Connection in song</b>	Purpose	Spiritual experience/connection Le Fea'u (The message) Mana Unbroken chain Emotion

		Honouring the dead
	Who decides?	<i>Aiga</i> <i>Tama'ita'i Lima taumatau</i> Elders
	Who sings?	NZ born <i>Aiga</i> Congregation In the moment

### **Ethical considerations**

The University of Auckland's Ethics Committee granted approval for this research on 23 March 2018 (Appendix A) prior to beginning the data collection. Several ethical challenges had to be navigated. The topic of a loved one passing and the ceremonies that follow is a sensitive one for many prospective interviewees. To support participants experiencing any distress, a list of a range of culturally-suitable wellbeing and counselling resources were available for participants to access. It was important to fully inform participants of the nature of the study before they agreed to take part. The key person (a Samoan funeral director) shared this with potential participants as well as providing them with a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) prepared by the researcher. It was made clear to them that they will be asked to talk at length about the funeral of a loved one, and that many of the questions asked by the researcher will be centred on this funeral and the passing of a family member.

It was also important to protect the identity of individuals and families. All details and data from will remain anonymous and all participants were given pseudonyms. The researcher was also careful with writing the report, so that individual family members are not easily

identifiable. This meant in some instances that quotes were rather not used when it risked identification or a bridge of privacy.

I approached all participants appropriately as governed by the Va. Whether it was regarding speaking or acting, the way I comported myself was in the *Fa'asamoa* way. I addressed those with *Matai* titles accordingly and those elders who did not have *Matai* titles, I addressed with reverence and respect. For example, at times it was appropriate to call them 'tina' (mother) or 'aunty' or 'uncle'. This was in many ways a nuanced dance requiring humility, respect and patience as the 'moment' informed what was appropriate. As often the case, some elders will be very clear on how they want to be addressed and some are more formal than others at the beginning of the *Talanoa*. This always warmed up and shifted as participants got more comfortable. Competency in *Gagana Samoa* was especially useful in the *Talanoa*, especially with elders and a few participants who recently migrated to New Zealand.

Moreover, as stated previously, I was aware that the body language, demeanor and tone of voice demonstrated an attitude, which is just as important as addressing participants according to their titles. With all the mature participants, they signaled to me with their tone of voice and body of language when it was time to relax as they share humour and even offered a cup of coffee (although I protested that I would make it). Although all participants received a \$30 gift voucher and my CD, I decided that this did not have the cultural weight symbolised by particular food in the *Fa'asamoa*. I had made the decision that I would take taro, pork and fish as a gift (*meaAlofa*) for the elders. The food for the elders is something that is a normal practice in the Samoan community. It is argued here that the elders seeing me bring this for them is also a cultural way of greeting them appropriately. This was influenced by my own experience with Samoan elders and my reflection on what would signal '*Fa'aaloalo*' if someone came to our

family home to have a *Talanoa* with my parents for their research. Although monetary wise, this was a costly decision, the cultural meaningfulness of it was brought home to me when after telling my mother what I had done she said: ‘That’s right. So, you should’. O le mea e tatau! (It’s what’s appropriate)”. What transpired in the *Talanoa* especially in regards to those participants of elder and *Matai* status, was very much what those elders expected of a mature Samoan woman who was a researcher; juxtaposed to a researcher who happened to be a Samoan woman.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has set out the methodology for this thesis i.e., *Kakala* and the data collection method as *Talanoa* including additional Samoan concepts underpinning the methodological framework. The justification for the choice in the methodology has been provided, namely to support the decolonising of methodologies in Pacific research and therefore honouring to Samoan/Pasifika participants. The ontological and epistemological underpinnings, congruent with the methodology have also been provided as well as the criteria for participants and the recruiting process. How the data was analysed has been explained culminating in the findings as set out in Table 2.

Most importantly, approval from the University of Auckland’s Ethics committee was given for this research to go ahead providing those measures were put in place in consideration for the well-being of participants. Of equal importance is the setting out of the appropriate cultural process as it happened, whereby the *way* the researcher approached and behaved in the *Talanoa* included the appropriate way to express gratitude (as with elders).

The next three chapters will set out each of the three findings categories beginning with '*Fa'asamoa/Aganu'u*' followed by 'History in song' and 'Connection in song'.

## CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS CATEGORY 1 – ‘FA’ASAMOA / AGANU’U’

### Introduction

Of great importance is the connection between all three findings chapters (Chapters 4, 5 & 6) to the *Luva* stage (Reporting research stage). The *Kakala* (garland) (Thaman, 1993) is developed with the intention to present it to intended recipients i.e., examiners, participants, their *aiga*, the research and Pasifika communities. Another way to understand this is viewing the findings as a song, or musical notes carrying a message that is ‘reporting’ the views of the participants and their *aiga*.

‘*Fa’asamoa*’ is one of the three main categories resulting from the analysis of the data. The other categories are ‘History in Song’ and ‘Connection in Song’, as outlined in the methodology chapter. A summary of the three categories was presented in Table 2. This chapter will focus on the first category as highlighted in Table 2 and present the views of participants in response to two core questions addressed during the *Talanoa*: What is *Fa’asamoa*? and What does *Fa’asamoa* mean? Responses to these questions include views on any changes to any aspect of ‘*Fa’asamoa*’. These views are presented under four subcategories and themes. Central to this first category of *Fa’asamoa* is a proverb: “*E suisui faiga ae tasi le fa’avae*”, which reflect views from several participants pertaining to ‘*Fa’asamoa*’. The meaning of this proverb is: The ways in which *Fa’asamoa* is done may change, but the foundation remains. Note that the word ‘*Aganu’u* (the ways of the village) and the term ‘*Fa’asamoa*’ are used interchangeably by participants. The researcher will utilise the term ‘*Fa’asamoa*’ throughout this thesis.

A female elder who was adamant about the foundation of *Fa’asamoa*, and what that means, talked about this as follows:

To me and my own understanding, *Aganu'u* is like something that was gifted from God for Samoan people. It grew from that. Our ancestors and parents you know? They laid the foundation in all kinds of ways. It's like this thing of respect. You know? The respect. You know how to stand, you know how to talk, you know how to walk, and (use) your language. All those things, are things said to be *Aganu'u Fa'asamoa*. Because if you don't know how to stand, you will have no clue as to what to do! You know? It is your culture, that is where this stuff comes from... You are a real Samoan!... The way you stand, the way you talk and your language... These things, it's your behaviour! You know? The respect. That you know how to be respectful. That you know how to honour that *Va* with other people... Yes. The sacred social relationships! Because if you don't know the *Va fealoaloa'i*, you don't know your country! You don't know the culture of *Fa'asamoa*. It is a big thing. It is a big thing! This word *Aganu'u*, there are many, many, things that come with it. (F1F4)

There are four subcategories under the main '*Fa'asamoa*' category, as presented in Table 3, namely *Aiga*, *Gagana Samoa*, Customs and Rituals, and *Fa'asamoa* and the church, with several sub-themes under each of these subcategories. These will now be discussed in detail.

**Table 3.** *Fa'asamoa* as a category emerging from the data

<b>Category 1: <i>Fa'asamoa</i></b>	<i>Aiga</i>	The nature of <i>aiga</i> Core Values: Le Va, <i>Fa'aaloalo</i> , <i>Alofa</i> , <i>Tautua</i> Change in <i>aiga</i>
	<i>Gagana Samoa</i>	The Importance of <i>Gagana Pese</i> and <i>Gagana Samoa</i>
	Customs and Rituals	Changed funeral practices Changes in song for Samoan funerals <i>Pese/Song</i> and <i>Fa'asamoa</i>

	<i>Fa'asamoa</i> and the church	
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***Aiga* (Family)**

'*Aiga*' was the response mostly used by participants when they were asked 'What is *Fa'asamoa*?' What does *Fa'asamoa* mean? Responses included a discussion of who is part of their *aiga* and how they connect as kin, and as a group, for family gatherings or for farewelling a loved one as well as about the relationships which they have identified as highly influential in their learning of *Fa'asamoa*. *Aiga* is seen as the social place where participants belong and learn *Fa'asamoa* and what it is to be Samoan. All participants in this research belong to families with some connection to church, with some participants having looser connections to *aiga* and church than others in the same family. Nevertheless, all included '*aiga*' in their conversation about all manner of things related to *Fa'asamoa*.

***The nature of aiga***

The *aiga* for participants goes beyond the nuclear family members, but also include extended family members such as aunties, uncles and cousins. In the words of one participant "...we belong to a *aiga*...". Many participants connected *Fa'asamoa* as being part of a 'group', a 'collective' and one participant stated that *Fa'asamoa* is 'communal' where 'togetherness' and interacting with each other in your family is *Fa'asamoa*.

Overall, participants learned about *Fa'asamoa* and 'how to be Samoan', from being a member of their *aiga*, watching and learning in their *aiga*. Although events such as weddings and hosting families featured when participants talked about *Fa'asamoa* and *aiga*, *fa'alavelave* (funerals) is most mentioned as being *Fa'asamoa*. Elders, parents, and cousins all play a role

in teaching *Fa'asamoa* for participants. The following quote from a NZ born middle age female participant demonstrates the role her father played in teaching her *Fa'asamoa*; how to behave, how to work as a collective.

Well, I guess *Fa'asamoa* to me what I've seen how dad wanted us to behave umm that we had to dress appropriately. We have to umm do feaus (chores). We have to work collectively, we had to make sure the others are hosted... We were taught that stuff you know, ... You know we were taught these things, obviously you were taught them and then you did them... (F2F3)

The learning about *Fa'asamoa* and particularly how an *aiga* imparts *Fa'asamoa*, is often done by the older generation to the younger generation. However, it also takes place within a generation, from older to younger cousins. Family three (F3) and Family six (F6) belong to one great collective *aiga*. Belonging to this collective, is a young 24-year-old female participant whose family had come to New Zealand in her late teens. She often explains the meaning behind certain Samoan rituals and customs to her NZ born cousins and uncles in *Fa'asamoa*, and most of them are older than her. She is well versed in *Fa'asamoa* due to her father's diligent lessons on Samoan customs and rituals as he is the orator for the family.

That's the thing, there are many things I learned from my dad about funerals. That's why he likes to take me to family funerals. Because I know Samoan things and I can help with my cousins who were born here and don't understand... (F3F6)

Another young female participant from family two (F2) shared her experience of the funeral for her grandfather as being very challenging, and that she was not clear on how to do things. However, she was clear that all the grandchildren including herself had "...to be present at all

times” “to do chores and learn”, and this was a way for them to honour their grandfather and her family. In her words, it was “sink or swim”. Despite the challenges and tiredness in working and serving for days with little sleep during a funeral that took well over a week, this participant and other young family members were supported by their older cousins. This was a powerful bonding experience with her family which she emphasised in the *Talanoa*. She described *Fa’asamoa* as ‘connectivity’. She felt that it was important for her family to come together in unity, to farewell their grandfather. It was a very big funeral, and the young generation had to learn whether people belonged to their grandfather’s or grandmother’s family.

We had a lot of older cousins that came in and showed us how to do things... So, it was kind of like my older cousins, they were kind of trying to tell us which side they’re from, you know like in terms of which side was Pa’s family, which was Ma’s family that they were representing. (F3F2)

The role of elders in the teaching of the young, was nevertheless present in every *aiga* in this research. Male and female participants in the youngest age bracket from every *aiga* shared about a close bond with their grandparents, and more importantly about the *role* these elders played in their learning about many things including ‘*Fa’asamoa*’ and song. Several middle age and elder participants also shared about powerful relationships with their grandparents.

One participant was very close to his grandmother who is his Samoan father’s mother. His non-Samoan mother was proactive in making sure her two children stayed close to their Samoan family as well as her own. He is very close to his *aiga* and although he does not speak Samoan, his love for his *aiga* came across very powerfully in the *Talanoa*. He spoke of learning from his grandparents about Samoan food and how to prepare it. Despite not speaking Samoan he

spoke very passionately about how he feels a strong connection with Samoan music. The following is his response to the question ‘What does *Fa’asamoa* mean to you?’

... our culture is our family. We are so rooted within our family and we will do anything for them and that’s, that’s how I like to think of it and it really hits home because especially what my nana told me, because my nana taught me a lot! (M3F3)

The female cousin (F3F3) of the previous participant, also shared about the close relationship between herself and her Nana and the role she played in her granddaughter’s knowledge of Samoan hymns: “I grew up doing *Peses* (hymns, songs) with Nana and all that so I have those memories. But then also I learned the words so I knew them myself” (F3F3). This participant was born in New Zealand and is in her early twenties; both her parents are Samoan. She was the most forthcoming in her cohort, in regards to her feelings of alienation from *Fa’asamoa*. She shared about her great discomfort whenever the *aiga* got together to prepare for a funeral, and the young ladies of her age group were asked to get up and display the *Ie toga* and serve the minister. She would always try to wash the dishes, so she wouldn’t have to carry out a task where everyone could see her. She came to view these occasions not so much as a learning opportunity, but as something she had to endure and where those who were New Zealand born, were seen as different:

But when it comes to funerals, I feel like it’s like, it really does separate those you know, that elderly family members use that as an opportunity to kind of like weed out those that you know grew up with *Fa’asamoa* (laughing) and those that are New Zealand born yeah. (F3F3)

When asked about her reasons for still participating in *Fa'asamoa* in her *aiga*, she replied it was for her mum.

Another participant explained how the learning of *Fa'asamoa* and the practice of *Fa'asamoa* takes place in family gatherings. Although she is the eldest child, and she was a mature woman at the time, she listened respectfully to the aunties, uncles and the *Matai* in her *aiga* during family gatherings. *Aiga* for this participant included cousins who were raised together with her siblings, as siblings. She also shared that one of her aunties and uncle were another set of parents for her and her siblings. Although she grew up in Aotearoa, she is fluent in *Gagana Samoa* and has stayed very close to her *aiga* in Samoa. Something she learned in her *aiga* and of the utmost importance is expressed as follows: “*I think the most important for me and Fa'asamoa is that Va! And that Va to me is respect (Fa'aaloalo); you know how to walk; you know your ways and your behaviour.*” (F1F2). This notion of ‘Va’ will be discussed in more detail in the theme below, but what is clear, is that *Fa'asamoa* is primarily learned in the *aiga*. This participant and her sister (another participant) emphasised a particular lesson taught by their departed father; to not let the lack of money stop you from showing your face to family, especially when there is a funeral. You can always go to the kitchen and do chores; the important thing is for your family to see your face. To this participant and many other participants ‘showing face’ to your *aiga* is very important and part of *Fa'asamoa*.

But you know, like we say that or our parents say that to us, but we know we belong to a *aiga*, so whether we die, and we haven't been you know faithful contributors to our wider family, or even within our own immediate family... *O le Alofa. O le agaga* (It's the love, it's the spirit), you know you walk down humble and you've got love even if you're makiva (poor) and you've got nothing but your family sees your face (F1F2)

... it was a big funeral, it was kind of, in many ways kind of out of our, you know the *Fa'asamoa*, the *Matais* of your families take ownership of, but because of the way he (dad) structured our extended family and within our own family you know, us his children, ... we had a voice... so when he went, we kind of knew we had a *Va* to keep with our uncles and our aunties, the *Matais* of our families. (F1F2)

According to participants, *aiga* is an integral part of *Fa'asamoa* and being Samoan. *Aiga*, is where they belong and learn *Fa'asamoa* whether it is from someone in their cohort or an elder. It is in their *aiga* that participants interact, bond, make and strengthen connections with other family members. It is also in the *aiga* that members are supported, learn what is expected of them as well as a site for struggle in reconciling belonging and feelings of alienation.

Expectations include knowing how to behave respectfully (*Fa'aaloalo*), and to understand the values underpinning such expectations such as the *Va* for order and harmony in family relationships. This behaviour demonstrates your love and respect for your *aiga* as a place you belong to and cherish. Of great importance considering the research question, the *aiga* and in particular the positive and intimate relationships such as with elders facilitate the learning of *Fa'asamoa* and *Pese* (song).

The next section will focus on the values underpinning expected behaviours that align and evidence '*Fa'asamoa*' as discussed by the participants.

#### ***Core Values: Le Va, Fa'aaloalo, Alofa, Tautua***

This theme consists of the four most mentioned values in *Fa'asamoa* discussed by the participants and learned in their *aiga*. They have been placed together here, due to participants presentation of them as values that belong together as '*Fa'asamoa*'. Therefore, it is easier to

present them as part of a world view, or a cultural philosophy, than as separate themes. A translation of the meaning of these values are, *Le Va* (The relational as sacred), *Fa'aaloalo* (Respect, being respectful), *Alofa* (Love and care) and *Tautua* (Service, to serve). There are different kinds of *Va* (Space, relationships), in this case it is *Le Va fealoaloa'i* (Social relationships), but for the sake of brevity will be referred to as '*Le Va*', or *Va*. The use of the capital 'L' and capital 'V' in *Le Va* is to purposefully signal the central place of this concept as a fundamental underpinning of Samoan values in *Fa'asamoa*.

According to an elder female participant, a Samoan child grows up learning and knowing these values in *Fa'asamoa* in their *aiga*. "*E ola a'e le tamaititi na te iloa!*" (F1F3). This is reflected in participant's *Talanoa* in how they say such things as 'You know?' Or, it's what we all 'grew up with' and what 'we all know'. However, as it will become evident in the rest of this section, although there is some agreement on these values in *Fa'asamoa*, there are also differences and tensions in *how* they are interpreted and understood and *how* they are practiced within *aiga*.

The term '*Le Va*' is an overarching frame of reference for Samoans which governs and guides behaviour and attitudes due to the valuing of the relational, as sacred. The sacred nature of this relationship, as demonstrated by the first quote in the beginning of this chapter (under the *Fa'asamoa* category) from a female elder (F1F4), is due to the importance of relationship with others and a connection to God. One female elder suggested that *Le Va* and *Fa'asamoa* are one and the same. "But this thing of the *Va* in *Fa'asamoa*, that is the essence of the *Va*, the *Fa'asamoa* is the *Va*" (F1F3).

She furthermore suggested that *Le Va* for Samoan people was always there as they have always had a relationship with God. This participant also shared that the God of the bible was in Samoa before the arrival of the missionaries.

“That’s where the ‘*Va*’ comes from, the ‘*Va*’ for the Samoan person, with their God. The God they are afraid of! That they fear! That they respect!” (F1F3)

Remember that the *Va* is your respect for the other person! Your space is sacred! That’s why we say ‘When you walk near another person’ *Tulou*! Pardon me! Because that’s sacred! Don’t violate the *Va*, and the space of that person! You know? That’s how it is. So, the way you speak is respectful! It’s so ingrained in our society! This thing, in our Samoan culture, the *Va*! That is what I am talking about, the *Va* is synonymous with Christianity! The values for Christian living are all found in the *Va*! How you put the other the other one first, the other person first than yourself! (F1F3)

As mentioned at the beginning of this theme, *Le Va* and the other three values often overlap, and are often used interchangeably by participants when they talked about ‘*Fa’asamoa*’. In other words, participants would cite them one by one and connecting them, or, cite them all together when they were describing or explaining how according to them, this is *Fa’asamoa*. For example, *Fa’aaloalo*, *Alofa* and *Tautua* are all governed by *Le Va*, signaling mutuality and reciprocity as central to *Fa’asamoa*. Another way of understanding this is the expectation that if you know the *Va*, you know how to be respectful. If you know the *Va*, you know how to *Alofa* (love) and *Tautua*. Of great importance is the expectation that if you know the *Va*, your behaviour and attitude should reflect this understanding as a Samoan. This was a recurrent theme across the dataset.

Eleven of the thirty participants of different gender and age, talked specifically about the *Va* as part of *Fa’asamoa*. For those who did not specifically talk about the *Va*, they talked about different relationships in their *aiga*. Of greater importance, they talked about the importance of

good and respectful relationships within their *aiga* and others. *Fa'aaloalo* (being respectful) as understood by these participants is an essential part of the *Va* facilitating harmonious living and nurturing in their *aiga*. The elder participants were the most comprehensive in their views of *Le Va* as a fundamental underpinning of *Fa'asamoa*, juxtaposed with the younger participants. However, there are four middle aged participants who also spoke about it in some depth. Two are males and two females, all are fluent Samoan speakers and all except for one female grew up in Samoa. The youngest cohort talked about the *Va* although overall, they did not talk about it at length like the two older cohorts.

The relationship between the *Va* and *Fa'asamoa* is often explained by participants as being respectful, in the context of their relationships with other family members. One middle age female participant emphasised the importance of the *Va* in her relationship with her siblings. This is something that was taught to them by their parents in their *aiga*. Within this relationship with her parents, she and her siblings have always understood that there is a responsibility for the older siblings to teach the younger ones. Furthermore, this participant expressed similar views to that of other participants, that the *Va* is being respectful in the *Fa'asamoa*, and evidenced by:

... how you stand, how you walk, how you sit, how you talk. ... (some say) they are Samoan, but they don't know the *Fa'aaloalo* side of it, e le iloa le *Va* o le makua i le laiki. (They don't understand the *Va* between the older to the younger). ... the *Fa'asamoa* that we were brought up ... to respect le ulumakua (Eldest), ... like you are eldest you are the one that teaches. (F3F4)

Two young participants, a male and female cousin from the same family also explained what the *Va* meant for them. The male explained it as being respectful first of all, beginning with his

relationship with his parents and his family. Nevertheless, he recognises that looking back, he often identifies moments in his youth where he was not so respectful to his parents. He cites the bible scripture about honouring his parents, while admitting that "...sometimes I answer them back but sometimes I just answer them the wrong a? That's the Va! "(M3F2).

On the other hand, his female cousin shared that it was a common practice in her family where two aunties often talked to her about the *Va*. The emphasis of these conversations or teaching moments, was the importance of nurturing relationships across generations on different sides of her family:

But aunty ... and aunty ... are always talking about that; the Va where relationships need to be nurtured. You know like especially through generations and having different sides of your family, it's been like, you can't burn your bridges! That's what they told me. (Laughing) (F3F2)

*Alofa* and *Tautua* are two values that participants often put together as being part of *Fa'asamoa*, learned in their *aiga*. Participants also positioned the term 'reciprocity' as part of *Tautua* and *Alofa*. The meaning of these terms for participants, related to the support they gave to or received from their *aiga*. This includes people who have helped an *aiga* in the past even though they may not be closely related or related at all. In many cases these individuals or groups become part of *aiga*. The value of contributing to a collective, whether as an *aiga* or a church has been an important lesson for one participant. She points out that when you need help, you can't expect help when you did not contribute. Furthermore, she posits this position in the situation where if one of her aunties, uncles or parents passed away, who would help? She points to the great support received by her family when her dad passed away as evidence of this principle. Many people, family and non-family gave support for her dad's funeral,

reciprocating what her father had done when he helped other people. In the following statement, this participant speaks about the importance of contributing to the collective as part of reciprocity.

Actually, and I learned at a very early age, based on reciprocity, if we aren't part of, contributing to this collective, why should we expect for anyone to contribute to something that, when our parents die or our aunties or uncles? (F2F2)

In many instances, some of the people came who came to support the funeral, were assisted and supported by her father and mother decades ago. She shared that it was at her father's funeral that she heard of story after story where her father helped people, and she herself did not know who they were. Experiencing this support confirmed the wisdom of what her father had taught her and her siblings. This reciprocity principle was taught to her and her siblings by her parents, and it was normal practice for her generation, to contribute to the *aiga* and many other people connected to her *aiga*. Participants saw this as *Fa'aaloalo, Alofa and Tautua* as part of *Le Va*.

You know that saying about *Fa'asamoa*, ... the philosophy's the same, but the way in which we practice *Fa'asamoa* is different right? So, if we're to say the basis of a lot of *Fa'asamoa* is around reciprocity, around *Alofa*, around all those things, well in the old days, or in what I understand how it's been practiced, (is different); we practice it in other ways too! Big lesson! But I learned! And like dad used to, from a very young age, we were contributing to *fa'alavelave* (funerals, weddings etc) no matter what kind of *fa'alavelave*, it just became everyday life. (F2F2)

Another way of understanding *Fa'aaloalo*, *Alofa*, *Tautua*, and reciprocity as part of *Le Va*, is when there is tension in regards to the appropriate cultural protocol. For one *aiga* in this research, there was a very different understanding of *Fa'asamoa* and what *Fa'aaloalo*, *Alofa* and *Tautua* is supposed to look like. Moreover, there is a strong suggestion from some of participants in this *aiga* that *Le Va* was not understood by some, leading to a difficult and awkward situation for all concerned. In the situation where there is a formal group visit to support a family having a funeral, (whether kin to the departed or friends of the children of the departed) the formal *Fa'asamoa* protocol is to receive them formally. If these supporters come with *Ie toga*, which usually means that at least one *Matai* will be amongst them, the *Fa'asamoa* warrants that a *Matai* of the family having the funeral will formally welcome and receive them. Ideally, a *Matai* with the visitors will talk on the visitor's behalf and they talk reciprocally back and forth. If the connection to the family is due to the visitors being friends or colleagues with one of the departed's children, it is normative practice for someone else, a *Matai* in the family to welcome them, on behalf of their family member and the *aiga*. Whatever the visitors contribute to the funeral, something is given back and something is kept to help the grieving family.

In this same family, the departed father left instruction that there was to be no formal *Fa'asamoa* protocol when he passed away, resulting in the son of the departed receiving the visitors himself, (colleagues and friends) although he is not a *Matai* and there was a *Matai* with the visitors. Furthermore, all the resources brought by the visitors (consisting of money, *Ie toga*, and sometimes even boxes of corned beef or chicken) to support the funeral was given back, which was very difficult to accept for family members versed with *Fa'asamoa* protocol in funerals. Normative practice would have eventuated in keeping some of what was brought,

and the family giving some of the resources back, be it money or *Ie toga* or other items that were brought by the supporters of the funeral.

The following quote demonstrates the resulting tension when there are different understandings of *Fa'aaloalo*, *Alofa*, *Tautua* and reciprocity in an *aiga*:

...he didn't want any *Fa'asamoa*! In his funeral, whatever people or family donated, we've got to give back... So, if people come with fine mats, *ie koga*, money whatever was given, we've got to give everything back! But ... you know what the *Fa'asamoa* is like, you can't give everything back! Whatever comes, for example they give a donation, we keep something at least and give half of it back... When they come with something, we've got to give back *koga*, *Pisupo*, *moa*, money, you know? *Kali*, *ka'i le sua* you know? (Receive and reciprocate the *Fa'aaloalo*) (F3F4)

Participants shared other ways of understanding *Alofa* and *Tautua* as part of *Fa'asamoa*. *Si'i Alofa* (carrying love, literal translation) is a Samoan term for financial support for a funeral. It is usually not given as part of a formal process, but more like when friends, colleagues and even family groups or an individual related to the family bring an envelope with money to support the funeral. Some participants refer to 'gift giving' and money as being part of showing support for your family in regards to the funeral. Another participant regarded *Fa'asamoa* as *Alofa*, and that you wouldn't be going to a funeral if you didn't have any love. She stated "It's like somebody, a stranger just comes in but doesn't know anything-there's no connection!" (F2F5)

One NZ born male participant in his late thirties who is relatively fluent in *Gagana Samoa* coined the phrase '*gaioi Fa'asamoa*' (move like a Samoan) to describe what *Fa'asamoa* is to

him. He further explains about *Fa'asamoa* as having 'the heart to serve' his family and how not speaking Samoan doesn't mean that you don't know *Fa'asamoa*; as long as you care and therefore serve your family.

So, I would say if you can't speak the language but you have the heart and you know *gaioi Fa'asamoa*, (move like a Samoan) that's still *Fa'asamoa*. Like you have the heart to serve. You know this serve your family, serve your people and the heart to learn, it will come ... you would do it. So, you know I was saying at the beginning when my dad said to me growing up, ... if you don't have your language, you use your identity.  
(M2F3)

For participants, *Fa'asamoa* is a set of values which all work together to inform appropriate behaviour, expectations, and responsibilities for Samoan people. *Le Va* (social relationships) is a way of understanding the sacred nature of relationships, therefore, *Fa'aaloalo*, *Alofa* and *Tautua* are not only values, they are values that are embodied and in-action as part of a worldview that is *Fa'asamoa*. These values are learned, enacted and practiced in the *aiga* of participants. Nevertheless, there are some tensions due to different understanding of these values in some instances such as with (F4).

In addition to discussing the nature and values of *aiga* (*Le Va*, *Fa'aaloalo*, *Alofa* and *Tautua*) as part of their views of *Fa'asamoa*, participants also commented on the changes in *aiga* when considering *Fa'asamoa*. This will be the focus of the next theme.

### ***Changes in aiga***

*Aiga* and what that looks like, is changing, according to some participants. This change includes composition of *aiga* and how and to what degree participants participate in *Fa'asamoa* in their

*aiga*, and how they understand and enact the core values in *Fa'asamoa* (or not), and who is enacting such practices. This theme will highlight views from participants who strongly commented on change in *aiga* as part of their life experiences.

I think that, ... there's a core baseline around the values (of *Fa'asamoa*), ... you know family is very important, our faith is very important but to what extent, is the question. And that's where people you know (consider) ... practicality ... families have a choice around you know the practice of *Fa'asamoa* (Key Person)

One participant (*key person*) attributes the changing composition of *aiga*, as well as the social sanctions supporting social cohesion within *aiga* and with the Samoan community in Auckland, to what he calls '*a disconnect*'. In some Samoan families there is little or no '*Mafutaga*' (close relationship) and less '*participation*' within families, to the point that when they meet at funerals, they don't know each other, although they know they are related as cousins. The composition of *aiga* and the relationships within *aiga* is influenced by several factors. Often, for employment, children in a family live overseas or in another city in New Zealand, more Samoan people marrying someone who is not Samoan and first and second-generation Samoans are not attending the same church as their parents and grandparents. There are also cultural shifts, with an increase in Samoans viewing themselves more as an individual, rather than as a part of a collective. The next quote from the key person presents some of the implications resulting from family members being divided by distance, and the increase in elders being in rest homes.

The kids are living overseas, ... dynamics where that elderly person's siblings are all gone, ... grandmother in a rest home. We see other Pacific people in those rest homes,

some of the, because they need that twenty-four seven care that, you know others won't be able to umm provide (Key Person)

The changing face of *aiga* overall, is evidenced by more Samoan people being in old people's homes, changing funeral practices, including smaller funerals and more individual responsibility for finances in funerals, and the rise of funeral insurance (discussed in Subcategory 3 below). This, according to the key informant, is related to lower participation in the family as a collective, less connectivity and the weakening of the connections to the *aiga* for some family members.

People coming together, people participating ... Oh yeah! Oh absolutely. But I think there's also a number of people who are not participating, now. Yeah absolutely! Again, that's around the how big is the village? ... again, that gentrification and people living further out from the church (Key Person)

This participant makes further connections between the changes in the make-up of families, the '*loss of language*' (covered in Subcategory 2) and the connection between '*Mafutaga*' in families and the capacity for families to impart Samoan hymns to the next generation.

Sustainability of music or what is the sustainability of the hymns, you know is it, yeah, is it, it's the mafukaga (Close relationships) is key! (Chuckling) Because if we're not singing it to the next generation, we're going to be taking it to our graves! (Key Person)

The disconnect is echoed by other participants in different families, commenting that this change in the family dynamics has influenced how and what Samoan *aiga* look like, how *Fa'asamoa* is re-enacted in *aiga*, all in turn connected to less participation by some family members. One participant is the second eldest in her family, with an older brother, two younger

brothers, a sister and a female cousin who grew up with them as a sibling. She is s the person who always organises her siblings and keeps the connections with the wider family. Her two sisters are the siblings that are active in their support of the *aiga* (Higher participation for female participants in *aiga* is covered under the theme '*Lima taumatau*' in the third category of the findings 'Connection in song'). She takes this responsibility very seriously and is mindful of the words and admonitions left by her father. She stills attends church with her sisters. In contrast, her three brothers in her words, are very different: "...we're siblings but almost like different lives in different worlds". She partly attributes their minimal involvement in the *aiga* to the fact that they all have palagi partners and wives. She expressed her love for her brothers, while sharing her frustration with their resistance in having *Fa'asamoa* at their father's funeral.

That's how, umm like (with) my brothers, ... they were just like 'no, no let's not have *Fa'asamoa*'. Well, what you do, you know IS *Fa'asamoa* that we're not gonna have? Which part of it do you even understand, to not be a part of dad, and then, it's not even a question, because dad was a Samoan! He's not palagi. So, he will be buried that way! The way that we know, the way how we buried our other, we-that's how it is! (F2F1)

She makes the connection between her struggles in the family and her experience at church as a Sunday school teacher, where there are also more 'inter-marriages' and a practice where parents drop their children off at church to attend with their grandparents, while not attending themselves. Several participants commented how people dropping their children would never have happened, when they were growing up in the church.

And that's like a common thing now. We have a lot of intermarriages at church. I teach the intermediary primary age (children). So, the parents ... if you have one of them a Samoan, they know the importance, they want their kids to grow up in Sunday school,

so they'll just drop them off... it's not a two-way thing. You know like cause they're married to (someone from) another (culture), so, cause their partners weren't raised in church, I don't know... (F2F1)

The lessening of the ties between some individuals and their *aiga* is also raised by participants from families three, four and six (F3, F4, F6). Even though the contexts are different for each of these individuals and their families, they also reflect a degree of 'disconnection' from their families. A male participant talked about himself as someone who hasn't been 'in touch' with *Fa'asamoa* and his *aiga* as maybe he should. He shared that his son with a palagi mother has not been raised with any *Fa'asamoa*, a situation which causes considerable struggle and a lot of guilt as he looks back at his own up-bringing. His father raised him and his siblings in the church and the *Au talavou*.

... in the most basic sense, it (*Fa'asamoa*) is my identity, so I still come back to it and still think about it a lot. Even though I've kind of been, haven't been in touch with it. Unless I come back to family things and funerals and things like that. But umm yeah for me, I'm happy I went through it, even though I ... haven't seen much of it right now, lately, and only when I come to see my family in times of trouble and you know like a death in the family. (M2F6)

A similar story of struggling with *Fa'asamoa* and the changing face of *aiga*, is shared by a NZ born participant in his late forties. He grew up in the PIC (Pacific Island Presbyterian Church) Newton where his parents were very active. He is a musician like his sister (a participant also) and his father. He attends mass because his palagi wife is Catholic, and his sons attends Catholic school. However, although he got married in a Catholic church, he wants his funeral

to be at PIC if something should happen to him. His two brothers also have palagi partners. This was a challenge for his parents who wanted the sons to marry “*Samoan girls*”. This participant and the one before shared about the difficulty in growing up with parental expectations to contribute to *Fa’asamoa* and *fa’alavelave*. An additional challenge was watching their parents struggle with obligations in the church and *Fa’asamoa*. These experiences contributed to making different choices when they became adults although they still kept in touch with their *aiga*.

Although this participant is still very much about family, he places a different emphasis on the experience and definition of family and how it has changed for him:

I would have loved to have ... stayed on the positive side of things, but like anything else there’s always a dark side to it (family). And that was the side that I saw and it wasn’t nice to see and I wasn’t the only one that experienced it. I mean I spoke to other guys my age; they were there (growing up). Even now when I catch up with them you know they say oh you know those times when mum and dad were struggling back then, no money ... we had little to eat, because they were giving most of the money... (to pay rent). Oh yeah well you know that’s the culture. (M2F1)

I don’t want to live that sort of lifestyle. Which is not the reason why I married a palagi. I married the palagi because I fell in love with her. But I know that if I do get married (to a Samoan) and have a family, that they would depend on us to give them a better life in a way. So that’s where I’m coming from in the *Fa’asamoa* side. (M2F1)

Another participant came to Aotearoa as an adult and is in his late forties. The funeral was for his uncle, who left instructions that there was to be no *Fa’asamoa* for his funeral. The uncle’s

children are NZ born and do not speak Samoan. The challenges faced by this *aiga* arises out of different cultural understandings and changed family dynamics and cohesion. The eldest son of the departed, who had been given the task to organise the funeral by his father, did what he was supposed to do, namely have no *Fa'asamoa* at the funeral. Even though the differences in understanding lead to non-existent communication with the older sister of the departed, they came to understand the wishes of the departed eventually. However, before this understanding eventuated, there was much tension and awkwardness due to how the eldest son went about carrying out his father's wishes.

The purpose for the following quote is to demonstrate *how* changes in *aiga* is occurring due to changes in the attitudes of some family members regarding core values of *Le Va* and *Fa'aaloalo* (See Theme b. Core values: *Le Va*, *Fa'aaloalo*, *Alofa*, *Tautua*). The young man organising his father's funeral failed to exercise the principle of *Fa'aaloalo* in recognising the sacred *Va* between himself and his aunty by respectfully talking with her about the funeral arrangements. In other words, when the eldest son of the departed did not communicate respectfully with his departed father's older sister about the funeral arrangement, the *Va* was disrupted leading to tension and hurt feelings. His failure to talk with his aunty represents a shift in the *Va* where respecting your elders is very important. In this demonstrating of respect, *Alofa* is also conveyed.

Especially our mother it was the communication such as that to us. No matter what at least he has talked to us and then we know there is no *Fa'asamoa*! At least let us know. And we will respond with some calming and peaceful words. We will go with what you want if you have talked to your dad, then we just come to support the funeral and to offer comfort. And we will not be changing any of your plans you know? (M2F4)

Further evidence in the changes in core values in (F4) is the differences in understanding cultural protocol when receiving groups when they come to bring support (money, fine mats). The tensions arise out of an elder who has left instruction with his eldest son for there to be no *Fa'asamoa* in his funeral. This young man does not speak Samoan and understands very little about *Fa'asamoa*. In carrying out his father's wishes, he does not respectfully communicate this which resulted in several tension filled instances. One of these particular instances occurred when supporters who were his work colleagues, arrived at the family house. Other family members (including two who are participants) found it contrary to cultural protocol for the eldest son to receive his own work colleagues. Secondly, family members found it disrespectful to return all the money the visitors had brought to support the funeral. Several other participants in the same family agreed that in spite of the situation where there was to be no *Fa'asamoa*, there had to be some semblance of cultural protocol to receive these supporters, especially when several *Matai* was amongst the visiting group. This family dynamic lead to individuals who either grew up or were born in Aotearoa making decisions for the funeral, without any consultation with elders or *Matai*. The decision-making process and the level of communication was very different from all the other funerals in this research.

In summary, the themes under the subcategory '*aiga*' has identified this social structure as an important part of '*Fa'asamoa*', according to participants. Of importance, *aiga* is a place where *Fa'asamoa* is learned and nurtured by supportive relationships whether they are with the same generation or elders. Part of this learning is knowing who is in your *aiga* and the expectations and responsibilities that come with being a member of *aiga*. Nurturing and close relationships with elders have been identified as particularly powerful for the younger generations, in regards to a sense of identity, what *Fa'asamoa* looks like and learning *Pese*. The core values of

*Fa'asamoa* learned in *aiga* are namely: Le Va; *Fa'aaloalo*; *Alofa* and *Tautua*. Change in *Fa'asamoa* consist of changes in *aiga* and changes in how the core values are enacted in the Va during the funeral for some *aiga*. These changes have been attributed to several different reasons. Firstly, the lessening of participation in *aiga* by some members due to their dispersal as a result of employment and intermarriage evidences a loosening of *aiga* cohesion. Lastly, the differences in the emphasis of core values and cultural protocol in a funeral between different generations and those who adhere to respecting elders as part of the Va has been presented.

### ***Gagana Samoa***

When participants were asked to explain the meaning of *Fa'asamoa*, *Gagana Samoa* or the Samoan language was a response shared by all participants. This subcategory will present what participants have to say about *Gagana Samoa* as it relates to *Fa'asamoa*, and more importantly, the varying emphasis given to the importance or centrality of the Samoan language to *Fa'asamoa*. The second theme under this subcategory is the importance of *Pese Samoa* (mostly Samoan hymns but including non-hymns in *Gagana Samoa*) in the retention of *Gagana Samoa*.

### ***The importance of Gagana***

There are varying positions in regards to the importance of the *Gagana Samoa* in *Fa'asamoa* across participants. All participants agreed that *Gagana Samoa* is an important part of *Fa'asamoa*. However, there is some differences in the views of how 'essential' the *Gagana Samoa* is for *Fa'asamoa*. In other words, the emphasis given to the central importance of *Gagana Samoa* to *Fa'asamoa* is evidenced by for example one participant (M2F5) citing the respecting of elders is important also for *Fa'asamoa* even if you don't know *Gagana Samoa*. Over half of the participants were emphatic in their position that the *Gagana Samoa* is essential

for *Fa'asamoa*. Some of these participants describe the *Gagana* as the 'core' of *Fa'asamoa* and the Samoan language '*keeps the culture alive*'.

One participant made the connection between the Samoan language, *Fa'asamoa* and identity: "My dad's always been hard on us, umm not hard but always would say ... without culture there's no identity! With no language there's no identity!" (M2F3)

This participant is in his late thirties, born and raised in Aotearoa and the son of a minister. He speaks Samoan and is very active in church with close connections to his immediate family and extended *aiga*. He spoke very positively about how his parents always took the time to explain *Fa'asamoa* to him and his siblings. These conversations served as a helpful connection to his culture and helped him understand *why* things were done in a particular way. Nevertheless, he expressed that it was also just as important to '*gai oi Fa'asamoa*' meaning to work in *Fa'asamoa* and to serve with your heart. Nevertheless, he emphasised that it was never too late to learn *Gagana Samoa* by telling a story about his cousin who learned to speak Samoa as an adult. He spoke about how he was shocked and impressed when he attended his cousin's wedding after not seeing him for five years, when the groom made a speech in *Gagana Samoa*. He found this this experience encouraging and cited it as evidence that it was never too late to learn your language: "So, in those five years, ...he had learned (Samoan) fluently and his *Fa'asamoa* is better than any of us on my mum's side!" (M2F3)

The *Gagana Samoa* as an 'underpinning' for *Fa'asamoa* is a perspective of another participant. This participant grew up in Samoa. He is an elder, an academic, and a brother to one of the departed.

Well, the *Fa'asamoa*, the *Gagana* underpins all. Because *Gagana* is the window of the culture the *Fa'asamoa*. The two go together. You know the reason why ...the *Fa'asamoa* is weak, is due to the lack of the language! (M1F5)

Even though he attributes the weakness of *Fa'asamoa* to the '*the lack of language*' he also pointed out that in his family, the elders have passed on the language and their legacy continues: "... you know the language have slowly diluted but, it's still there!" (M1F5)

Two female middle age participants also hold strong views on the essential relationship between *Gagana* Samoa and *Fa'asamoa*. Both participants came to Aotearoa at a young age, are fluent Samoan speakers and both are proud and confident in their *Fa'asamoa*. The first participant (F1F2) utilises a Samoan proverb likening the absence of *Gagana* Samoa as 'darkness' in the village. The second participant (F3F4) strongly asserts that in order to 'know the *Fa'asamoa*', knowing the *Gagana* is essential.

*Aua a leai se Gagana a ea? E pogisa Nu'u a ea?* (You know if there is no Samoan language the village is in darkness?) *E leai se Aganu'u!* (There is no cluture) We're in the dark if we don't have communication as a culture. (F1F2)

I think *e kua le i ai, e kua lou iloa o lou Gagana*, (It's important that it's there, it's important that you know your language) you know to have a *Fa'asamoa*. Because if you don't know your *Gagana*, then you don't know the *Fa'asamoa*! (F3F4)

A softer stance is taken by two middle age male participants although both agree that *Gagana* Samoa is important for *Fa'asamoa*. The first (M2F5) is a medical doctor who speaks fluent Samoan. He acknowledges that *Gagana* is important to *Fa'asamoa*, however, the way you understand *Fa'asamoa* by respecting your elders is important also. The other (M2F1), is also

a middle-aged male, born and raised in Aotearoa. He speaks Samoan, no longer attends a Samoan church although he worships with his wife and family at her Catholic church. This participant points out that it is the *Gagana Samoa* that differentiates Samoan people as a group from other groups.

I mean a lot of people can say it's the language and I totally agree, but ... you don't necessarily have to speak the language, if you know and understand I suppose your own *Fa'asamoa* because of how you grew up in the Samoan family. So (it is) unfortunate that you might not speak the language but, if you (can still) hold yourself in the way that is (*Fa'asamoa*) practice and to respect your elders (M2F5)

I speak to them in Samoan; it keeps the culture alive you know. I would say it's the language; ...it's the only way that you can differentiate *Fa'asamoa* to the Tongans, or the Indians - is the way they speak. (M2F1)

Several participants identified oratory or the language of *Matai* (chiefs) as *Fa'asamoa*. One *Matai* in his late forties who came to Aotearoa as an adult said that *Fa'asamoa* for him is '*upu Fa'aaloalo*' (respectful words): "*Because it's like those are the most important words that our parents remind us about*" (M2F4). A female participant of a similar age who is fluent in Samoan although she was born and raised in Aotearoa, professed her 'love' of *Fa'asamoa* in particular when a *Matai* speaks in *Matai* language at funerals: "*I love the fa'alavelaves! (funerals) Especially when you see the makais (Chiefs) standing up and doing their laugas (oratory) and everyone is running with the gifts...*" (F3F5). This participant and her siblings (F5) were not allowed to speak English at home, hence their fluency in Samoan. This is a

contrast to her many cousins who came from Samoa as grown children and, in her words, *'forgot how to speak Gagana Samoan'*.

Two other participants from (F2) in their late twenties, a male and female, agreed that *Gagana Samoa* is important to *Fa'asamoa*. Both were born and raised in Aotearoa; the female speaks Samoan competently while her cousin speaks Samoan exceptionally well. Both grew up living with their grandparents; the male cousin had very close mentoring by the departed grandfather. The male has strong views about the essential relationship between *Gagana Samoa* and *Fa'asamoa*, in his words *'they both go together'* (M3F2). His female cousin agreed that *Gagana Samoa* is important to *Fa'asamoa*. However, she was emphatic about the importance of understanding that what *Fa'asamoa* is, is all subjective. In spite of this position, like other participants, she associates *Fa'asamoa* with the formal oratory language spoken by *Matai* such as at a funeral. In the following quote she associates *Fa'asamoa* as something that takes place after a funeral, when the *Matai* come together to converse in *Gagana Samoa* utilising traditional oratory.

So, I feel like when someone says is there going to be a lot of *Fa'asamoa*, ...it's spoken in the terms of like things that happen afterwards; like kogas, pusa *Pisupos* (fine mats, boxes of corned beef). Things like that when they say is there going to be much *Fa'asamoa*? Are there going to be makais (chiefs) there that are going to do their talks (oratory) afterwards? Are there going to be u....mm that's what I think *Fa'asamoa* is... (F3F2)

Three participants have perspectives with a different emphasis on the relationship between *Gagana Samoa* and *Fa'asamoa*, although all agree that *Gagana Samoa* is very important in *Fa'asamoa*. One female participant grew up in Dunedin, where her father took his family so

that his children will get “*a better life, a better education*”. She grew up with no *Fa’asamoa* and not speaking *Gagana Samoa*. This changed when she moved to Auckland to live with family in her twenties, which is when she started her journey to speak *Gagana Samoa* and learn and practice *Fa’asamoa*. She expressed some of the angst she has experienced, with learning *Gagana Samoa*, including confronting her father about the reasons he did not teach his children *Fa’asamoa*.

I always believed that my parents, they had, they’ve got the *Fa’asamoa*. But they didn’t want to instil that in us, because they wanted us to have the palagi up-bringing of a good education...and then we didn’t know any better, until I moved here. I said dad! I have to ask you this. Why did you not teach us the language? You can have all those things dad but the one thing that I missed out on? And it’s hard for me, I’m trying to pick it up! (F3F1)

Another participant in her early twenties who is a second-generation Samoan expressed the importance of *Gagana Samoa* as follows:

The way I see it in my head it’s like a pie chart, I feel like language makes up like a third of *Fa’asamoa* but I would say with things that I’ve heard over the years, you’re not a true Samoan if you don’t know how to speak the language and all that! (F3F3)

A male participant in his mid-fifties, and a key informant for this research as a funeral director, speaks Samoan. He provided some insight from his personal and professional experience, connecting how the practice of *Fa’asamoa* relates to the *Gagana Samoa*: “*If I go back thirty years ago, (compared to) nowadays, yep ...they’re trying to downscale things, because I think ..., as time’s progressed, (there is) the loss of language*” (Key person)

In summary, the centrality of *Gagana Samoa* in *Fa'asamoa* is agreed upon by all participants. The importance of the Samoan language in *Fa'asamoa* is evidenced by participants viewing it as 'underpinning' *Fa'asamoa*; 'the window of the culture'; and essential for identity and the view that *Gagana Samoa* keeps *Fa'asamoa* 'alive'. Reflecting the great importance of *Gagana Samoa* for *Fa'asamoa*, are participants who strive to retain or learn their mother tongue in the belief that it is an essential part of *Fa'asamoa* culture. Although there are voices who recognise that someone may not speak *Gagana Samoa*, can still behave in ways that are considered *Fa'asamoa*, the overall position of participants is the view that *Gagana Samoa* and *Fa'asamoa* go together. Nevertheless, in spite of all participants agreeing that *Gagana Samoa* is important to *Fa'asamoa*, there are some differences in the emphasis on *how* essential or important *Gagana Samoa* is to *Fa'asamoa* across participants.

### ***Pese and Gagana Samoa***

The focus of this theme will be on *Pese*/song in the Samoan language. There is a consensus amongst the participants on the important role of Samoan *Pese* in keeping the language alive; and to impart and teach *Gagana Samoa*. This is particularly the case with those participants who belong to the first or second generation in Aotearoa New Zealand. Many participants from this group identified this for themselves as well as for those who grew up in Samoa. Participants also shared the role of singing Samoan songs together as a family or a group, as something that connected and brought people together as *aiga*, or church. One fluent Samoan speaker participant who grew up in Aotearoa expressed her positive feelings about her children and nieces and nephews singing in *Gagana Samoa* although they do not speak Samoan.

You know with that song it's the language. That's all I can see in the song... I would say it was song that our uncle taught the other kids. They don't speak Samoan at all,

but when they sing that song man! It's like they speak Samoan fluently! (F3F5)

A second-generation female participant who speaks Samoan identified the connecting of different generations through Samoan song as part of *Fa'asamoa*. She is one of a handful of her cohort who recognised and explicitly shared the struggle in her generation to speak *Gagana Samoa*. She shared her gratitude in regards to opportunities to sing and learn Samoan songs and Samoan hymns through her family, who are composers and musicians. In her view *Fa'asamoa*, *Gagana* and song go 'hand in hand'.

...it's really nice when you think about it, that they (songs) have been passed down from generation to generation and even though some of my cousins don't know how to speak Samoan, they still know those songs! Yeah, and it's that important that if they don't know anything else, they know these songs! That's why I think songs are really important in terms of teaching also our children how to speak Samoan. Like there are songs that you sing at school or at church that you will remember for the rest of your life even if you don't speak Samoan! And that's why I think *Fa'asamoa* and songs, that's just, it, they go hand in hand and they're really important to each other (F3F2)

A middle-aged male who was born and grew up in Aotearoa and struggles to speak *Gagana Samoa* poses a similar perspective. In regards to his father's funeral, he makes the connection between *Fa'asamoa*, Samoan hymns and *Gagana* and what he learned growing up in church.

... in the services for dad, ... it was oh hang on. Because these are songs we've learned as church hymns with the kids, with our young people's music! And I guess if you'd ask me whether I would still call it *Fa'asamoa* I never thought to not! Because our words, it's a hymn, its Samoan hymns...Language... (F2F3)

Two other participants brought their own perspective to the relationship between *Gagana Samoa* and *Pese* in *Gagana Samoa*. Both are female, with one in her early sixties who is fluent in Samoan, and the other is in her early twenties. She is not fluent in *Gagana Samoa* and stated that “*I’ve never really felt empowered by Fa’asamoa!*”. The older female points out that Samoan song, is something she appreciates very differently from when she was younger. This appreciation connected her learning of *Gagana Samoa* and understanding of the message in these songs, namely the history of certain villages.

Yeah, but those are things that we grew up as, seeing, hearing, and then you know we became part of it... As we got older, but as kids oh yeah, another song. But until you understand the lyrics of those... *fa’aulufalega* songs (Songs for opening a church or important building) ... you’re thinking oh taeao na sau mana le upu like tumua, (giving an example of Samoan words that were new to her when she was learning this at a young age) I’m going, and now when you hear the oratory –and *fa’alupega* (matai titles and their history) something, got you! But I learned that through a song! The thing is about Samoan songs, all the villages...But all of those songs, actually talk about the history of those villages. (F1F2)

Most participants view Samoan *Pese* as a powerful vehicle to keep and impart *Gagana Samoa*, as an integral part of *Fa’asamoa*.

This subcategory has presented how participants view *Gagana Samoa* as part of *Fa’asamoa* and secondly, how Samoan songs is not only part of *Fa’asamoa* but also an important way of learning, imparting and retaining the Samoan language. Furthermore, knowing *Gagana Samoa* avails participants to have a deeper understanding of Samoan history while some participants recognise that even if some young members of their *aiga* do not speak the Samoan language,

their knowing of Samoan songs is at least a start in the right direction. There is a strong subtext from many of the participants that *Gagana Samoa* is essential to *Fa'asamoa* evidenced by one participant referring the Samoan language as a 'window' for the culture and one participant pointing out that this an important point of difference differentiating Samoans as a group from other groups. There is also a note of hope for the future where some participants hope to move forward and increase their competency in their mother tongue.

### **Customs and rituals**

The third subcategory under the '*Fa'asamoa*' category encapsulates one of the responses by participants when asked the question: What is *Fa'asamoa*? What does *Fa'asamoa* mean? Across most of the dataset, a recurrent theme is that *Fa'asamoa* has customs and rituals. This was in response to the following questions: 'What is *Fa'asamoa*?' What does *Fa'asamoa* mean?

Participants identified many customs and rituals as *Fa'asamoa*; including those that are not part of funeral practice. Sometimes participants will use the word 'custom' and sometimes the word 'ritual' when explaining what is *Fa'asamoa*. And often they would use both words, or use the words interchangeably. The researcher made the decision to use the term 'customs and ritual' as an umbrella term to hold all of these together. Some of the customs and rituals identified by participants referred to funeral practices such as the *faleosilagi* or *auosilagi*. This is a cultural practice where a group of elderly women are assigned in the village to accompany the grieving family and the dead in a vigil, singing throughout the night.

There are in the village where they do things. The auosilagi, are people that look after and watch over the dead and the funeral (M1F6)

A similar practice is the *leo* involving different groups keeping a vigil, singing throughout the night to accompany the dead and support the family. Often, different groups from different churches take turns to sing and lead the vigil.

Because it's part of the *leo*'s. So PIC and Cook Islands, there's Niuean's and then Samoans. And then you had this kind of Sunday school an English-speaking group. So, you had the Sunday school. So, you had different one's kind of... Yeah for the *Leo* that's what umm, so the *Leo*'s, but it didn't only like only in the *Leos* because we have cousins and so different *Au Lotus* (congregations) also came and participated in wanting to sing songs for him eh? (F2F1)

A few participants talked about the cultural protocols in the gathering after the burial, where there is oratory by *Matai* and the family of the departed honours (*teu*) those who have come to support the funeral. The role of the *Matai* as an orator was referred to by many participants as being a big part of *Fa'asamoa* in funerals. In this case the *tulafale* (Talking chief) rather than the *ali'i* (high chief) was the main focus for participants. Some participants connected the role of *Matai* with the *ka'i le sua*, when a young woman runs out to present a gift (as instructed my *Matai* and elders in her *aiga*) to an honoured guest, a minister or another *Matai*. The following quote is from a young female participant who is well versed in *Fa'asamoa* due to her close relationship with her father.

So, they way and order of them bringing the food/gifts, I ask 'Why is that thing first and the other thing is second? I ask my dad. Even with the names of the fine mats used for funerals. I also ask my dad about that, what is the meaning why those and these fine mats were named their names? What does this sort of thing mean? (F3F6)

Many participants referred to *Ie toga* as not only a symbol for a funeral, but also as something that is an integral to the ritual of the *si'i*, when there is a formal presentation of *Ie toga*, money and other resources in support of a *fa'alavelave* (funeral). Other customs and rituals identified by participants as *Fa'asamoa* include the *ifoga* (cultural apology), the *ava* ceremony (a cultural ceremonial drink), the traditional tattoo (*tatau*) and tattooing for men (*pe'a*) and for women (*malu*). One elder male participant shared about showing his *pe'a* when he danced at the end of the burial. The following quote is from this participant.

As we put...the body in the earth, we were entertaining! His life and you know I was showing my and *pe'a* (Samoan traditional tattoo for males) dancing and you know everybody started to 'Choo, choo, choo!' So, we really switched from somber you know if you like to very cheerful and you know vibrant atmosphere at the burial. (M1F5)

Before my mum passed way, before she passed away, she really wanted me to get the *malu!* Yeah, and just things like that. I love the culture. I wear my *malu* with so much pride! Umm because I have my mum with me. Not only that but also the tradition, it's my mum! And I've got my brothers behind my legs as well, just some of the patterns (F3F5)

One participant described the heaviness of the *ifoga*, where people cover themselves with a mat and sit in front of the home of the *aiga* or person, they have transgressed against and await their forgiveness. This elderly male participant had the following to say:

I've seen a lot of things in Samoa, one of the lowest, the lowest thing that is done that I've seen is when they cover themselves with fine mats in front of somebody's house.

It's very bad, it's like killing your own family when that happens to your family because you committed an offence! (M1F1)

The *ava* ceremony was also mentioned by a few participants as being part of *Fa'asamoa* although they did not elaborate on it. The Samoan *siva* and Samoan songs telling the history of villages or church was also considered *Fa'asamoa*.

### ***Changed funeral practices***

The majority of participants spoke about changes in *Fa'asamoa*, and *how* customs and rituals in Samoan funerals need to change. More importantly, they often identified the reason/s *why* change is needed or, why a change is not positive. A common critique from most participants is how much money is spent on funeral costs as part of *Fa'asamoa*.

The first focus will be upon the general cost in Samoan funerals. This is a recurrent theme around funerals for most of the participants. This involves the cost of burial compared to cremation and funeral insurance. Another cost is connected to the location of the funeral whether it is at home, a church, or a funeral home. Catering and food cost whether it's a cup of tea, a meal for an after function at a function centre or at home are all part of cost for the family. A big after function for a funeral can involve numerous fine mats, boxes of chicken and corned beef and money as part of *Fa'asamoa*, formally presented and gifted to individuals and families deemed worthy of this gratitude and respect by the family of the departed.

The role of *si'i Alofa* (money envelopes given to support a funeral) as part of *Fa'asamoa* according to participants will also be presented. Lastly, evidence in how the *aiga* in Samoan funerals are spending more time with loved ones juxtaposed with doing certain chores and tasks will be provided. The first participant speaks about the general cost of Samoan funerals. He

compares *Fa'asamoa* in Samoan funerals in Aotearoa to that in Samoa. He is a middle age *Matai* who came to Aotearoa as a young adult. Furthermore, this participant identifies the high cost of funerals in Aotearoa as a leading cause of debt left for some families after the wider family 'disperses'. He provides an emphatic critique of Samoan funeral practice in Aotearoa as having changed in a negative direction compared to Samoa.

The following statement by this middle age participant, is followed by a quote from a young female from another family, where she talks about *fa'alavelave* (funerals). She shares a similar perspective to that of the male *Matai*.

The *Fa'asamoa*, there are a lot of changes inside New Zealand now, to my understanding. When I look at the way they do it in Samoa, there is more *Fa'asamoa* here than there. It's over the top. The *Fa'asamoa* that is done here is too much. Than Samoa. Because the thing that I see here, it's like a competition. Like a competition. And it's funerals! Look it's these funerals. When you compare things to these funerals, it's become a competition. You know? The way it is done. Then the extended family disperses and this family suffers! Then it happens that they have to try to pay the debt. That's what I was trying to say, it's too much the *Fa'asamoa* here! (M1F2)

I would say I think, there's a time I would say last year for, I think I really resented *Fa'asamoa*! Not so much the obligation, oh obligation it was definitely, but just the expectation, unrealistic expectations that have kind of put a lot of families into debt. I think at 'Instant Finance' they have a *fa'alavelave* section, like smack bang on the board! (F3F3)

The key person interviewed for this research has worked in the funeral service for thirty years. He highlights some changes in burial practices in Samoan funerals as well as changes in the location where they take place. Furthermore, funerals are not always at church and there are more funerals done in people's homes. Several participants from family three (F3) talked about their departed loved one, having made sure that he had insurance. Furthermore, these participants recognised how much help the departed had put in place for his family. The sister of the departed stressed the difference in her experience with her father's funeral, where there was no insurance, compared to that of her brother's.

Three out of the six funerals (F4, F5, F6) in this research utilised a space from a particular funeral service to have the funeral service for one of the services. In regards to cremation, one of the six families (F4) chose cremation rather than burial. This was a challenge for some participants in this family due to their Catholic faith, however, they honoured what the departed wanted.

But in saying that you know some things haven't changed umm you know probably one thing where there's still a majority, in terms of the preference how we umm, cremate or bury our people... the majority still bury, but in saying that, there certainly have been some shifts with a lot more, looking towards cremation, as an option umm we're probably seeing some shifts around where the funeral services now take place, that's not always at a church, umm some people are now opting to have the service at the family home, or it could be held at the umm, at the cemetery chapels (Key Person)

And you know ... funeral was a good eye opener in terms of, you know how talking about having to adapt or else we risk losing our culture here, things like life insurance,

funeral coverage... So as soon as he told me, as soon as he found out it was terminal... He said, I already umm called on my life insurance... Organised everything (M2F3)

Oh, that was good experience for uncle..., really relaxed. No take the box of corn beef, take the fine mats. It was envelope. (laughing) Envelope, here's your envelope, here's your envelope! I said 'Oh we should have funerals like this all the time.' (laughing) (F3F4)

One significant cost in Samoan funerals is food. This is served and consumed at the funeral reception and hosting visitors when they pay their respects at the family home. It is also food that used in the giving and receiving as part of *Fa'asamoa*, which usually takes place at a reception or after the burial.

In the first instance, the food and venue cost of what is referred to as the 'after function' or 'reception' at the end of a Samoan funeral can be challenging for a family. This includes providing food and refreshments for people paying their respects when they visit the family home. One of the families (F5) had a party and get together at the family homestead after the burial, an alternative to a more formal reception after the burial. They also had a cup of tea at the funeral service at *Tipene Funeral Services*. Another family (F4) who also had a funeral service at *Tipene* had an after function at a hall in Papatoetoe. Both families cited cost as a factor in these decisions, although (F5) had a get together after the burial so they could spend time as a family, including those that came from overseas. Additionally, this is what the departed would have wanted.

One elder participant points to one of the ways funeral practices is changing, insofar as having refreshments rather than a big meal.

The ritual of our Samoan funeral is changing. One of the major changes that I've seen is the having sandwiches and a cup of tea after, you know? Which is I applaud that. That is, that is very, very good! Rather than going to the Manhattan, (A well-known venue for functions owned by Samoans), eat then prepare for plates of food to take home, what for? But you know sandwiches and cup of tea is ample. It's more than enough. (M1F1)

The role of boxes of chicken and corned beef in *Fa'asamoa* in Samoan funerals was talked about by over half of the participants. Participants talked about the need for change in this practice, due to not only cost but in the amount of work that goes into the transportation of these goods

The following participant in her early twenties has been in Aotearoa for five years. She compares the differences in funeral practices in Samoa and Aotearoa New Zealand.

The reason why that is with some families is because they say it leads to a lot of things to do and cost. Another thing that you see in the difference between the way they do things in Samoa and here is what is given. Gifts are in money. It's always money! But in Samoa, its cattle, pigs, but here it's always money. Not like Samoa where they give box of canned goods, cattle, pigs, box of chickens. It's good in Samoa because you can sell the box of canned goods. But you can't do that here (F3F6)

However, many participants talked about these boxes of foodstuff as being part of *Fa'asamoa* in Aotearoa, that is still occurring although it may be changing. This participant is a middle-aged female who found this change as new. Nevertheless, she saw the upside of it when she

reflected on the work needed to physically move boxes of corned beef juxtaposed with just giving envelopes of money:

Oh, that was good experience for uncle..., really relaxed! No take the box of corn beef, take the fine mats. It was envelope. (laughing) Envelope, here's your envelope, here's your envelope. I said 'Oh we should have funerals like this all the time'. (laughing)  
(F3F4)

The following two quotes are from two NZ born participants. One is in her late twenties and the other is a male in his late thirties. They both refer to cost as a factor when considering the place of boxes of foodstuff in Samoan funerals. The second quote reveals the difficulty for some family members in accepting changes where boxes of chicken and corn beef will not be part of funerals. An interesting context to this statement is that this participant's father is an elder and an established pastor in the PIC church. Regardless of his status as an elder and a pastor, there was still strong resistance from some family members to his pointing out that such practices were expensive and impractical.

So, I think that was a big conversation around my grandma's funeral was that a lot of people who just wanted to give money and didn't want to do the round of corned beef and boxes of chicken because they were like, the cost was really high, yeah and also it was kind of is it needed? (F3F2)

But I feel like in New Zealand we're at a Cross road where I feel like if we don't adapt to certain things, I'm not saying change or I'm not saying like umm stop doing things in certain way, but if we don't kind of oh here's an example. So, when my, when ... 's dad passed away, my dad made a decision, no box of corn beef or chicken, everything

is in money. And a lot of my family, extended family, they didn't like it. They didn't like it! (M2F3)

At least a third of participants talked about *si'i Alofa* (money envelope) as being a way to express support for a Samoan funeral as part of *Fa'asamoa*. This was the case for all the funerals in this research. As above, where there is a change in giving money in funerals rather than boxes of corned beef and chicken, there is evidence across the data set that this is increasing in the way people give support. The formal practice of a *si'i*, is when people bring resources such as money, boxes of foodstuff always accompanied by *Ie toga* and a *Matai*, in the preparation phase of a funeral. The formality of this process is evidenced by the formal presentation brought by the supporters, and *Matai* on both sides conversing in oratory and cultural protocol. Giving a *si'i Alofa* is a less formal process, where the usual practice is giving an envelope of money, oftentimes to someone in the family in the kitchen, behind the scene. A typical scenario would be when the friends of the children of the departed, or friends of the grandchildren of the departed, give a money envelope to support the funeral.

The next three quotes from three different participants are provided to present this perspective. The first participant is responding to the question 'Were there any *si'i*? The second participant is talking about the *si'i Alofa* that contributed to the funeral. The last participant expands on the previous two participants as she locates *si'i Alofa* as something that is different from what they used to do; a formal *si'i*.

Ga o *si'i Alofa* (It was only envelopes with money (F3F5)

He said everything is taken care of, still our family came with what they had, we use it for the galue (working) account, the *si'i Alofa* (F2F3)

Yeah, we, we've changed now too. Umm my siblings, my brothers and sisters, we were strongly *Fa'asamoa* when mum was alive. Mum and dad because you just give give give? *Maliu mai lea* (this person dies), you just give, give, give. You know that's the thing but now, we're like...all we do is we put it in the keukusi (envelope), give it to the family and my older brother says 'No, we don't want anything back in return, you know that's why we came like this. E avaku le keukusi (to give you an envelope) so you don't keu (reciprocate) us. (F3F4)

The last focal point for this theme is due to family four (F4) and Family five (F5) and the key person. In particular, the changes in how some funerals are focusing more on immediate family on another level, and the dynamics in 'who knows' about the funeral. This quote has already been presented under the theme 'Changes in song for Samoan funerals. However, it is presented here also, to demonstrate some changes in funeral practice, where the focus is more on the immediate family.

There was no singing of songs. Because there was like nobody came. ...I think because they kept that really quiet and the fact that you know, the extended side of the family probably think it's their night. So, it's the kids' night with their dad. We all stayed, we all stayed the night umm, me our kids and...mum; we all stayed the night over there with the kids. Yeah, so we didn't really stay up all night and sing songs (Giggling) Only at the time that he was brought home, then you know us kids around him. Just talking), yeah there was no singing all night like what you usually do. Poor uncle... body was there and our kids were still running around (laughing) and us still talking away. (F3F4)

Additionally, although talking about a recent funeral and not the one included in this research, a middle-age female participant from (F5) painted a powerful alternate picture on how funerals could look like. This picture presents a stronger emphasis on those close to the departed spending time together, rather than being caught up with chores and tasks for a big funeral.

See that was like o lo'u (my) niece a? That's like my niece because we've had, when my niece was still alive, she'll always talk about 'Auntie!' I go 'Yes' and she goes 'Look. why are our cousins doing all these *fe'aus*, (Chores) they should be with their brother! But you know they shouldn't be doing this!' And I was going 'Oh that's what we, what we normally do...before she passed away, she goes, she said, told her husband 'I don't want any *Fa'asamoa*! I want my family any of my aunties or uncles and all that, I want them to come and talk, I want them to come and enjoy the time with family. And be with each other. Not busy *faiga o fe'au* ma *faiga o mea Fa'asamoa*, (Not busy doing all the chores and the *Fa'asamoa*) you know when someone comes with a *si'i* (Formal presenting of people's support for the funeral with fine mats, money and goods) and you're busy rushing around and so that's, she changed. She said 'I just want to be cremated and I just want my father to come and have a good time, all my aunties and my uncles and so forth I just want them to come and just you know, talk about memories. (F2F5)

The key person somewhat echoes this shift when he shares that "*there's probably some private funerals being held. Not everyone has a family service*". He also shares that more funerals are being held at home. The most compelling quote from this participant is in regards to a funeral for a minister. His wife really just wanted space and to spend time with her children, and with a grandson who came from overseas.

... and so is his wife and I think umm year around the practicalities, you now "...she really wanted her own space, which is almost unheard of! Yeah, she really did, she wanted her own space. There were lots of things that would, that would be seen as the norm to do for a faife'aus's (minister) funeral, which she didn't do. And think umm yeah, she's lived life, she's seen a lot of things... And I think the dynamics when you've got children arriving from all other parts of the world, you want to make use of that time before they go, because very soon they're going to go on a plane and gone! Umm So there's and I think at her age, it was managing her you know, getting rest, was very important. Spending time with her children and her grandchildren. Again, those things would be unheard of you know, and to think, you know when people live lives, of long service, (whispers) they are tired. (Key person)

Much of the change in funeral practice according to participants, is around the cost factor in funerals. Whether it is in regards to burial, location for the funeral service/s, the after function where supporters and ministers are honoured with gifts, the consideration of expenses according to participants, is influencing how funerals are done. More families and individual members are looking into funeral insurance and cremation as a viable option. More families are expressing their support through *si'i Alofa* juxtaposed to taking a formal *si'i* involving *Ie toga, money, Matai and oratory*. Changes also include how families are rearranging boundaries around how they spend their time during the funeral, who is notified about the funeral, and wanting more privacy to grieve.

### ***Changes in song for Samoan funerals***

Changes in customs and ritual in *Fa'asamoa* in funerals is something every participant identified. Part of this change include song in Samoan funerals. This theme will present the

participant's perspectives on what these changes look like. One funeral (F4) in this research is unique to the other five funerals, due to there being no singing as part of a night vigil when the body of the departed was at home. This was a sharp contrast with the other five funerals where there were night vigils with singing by family members and visiting mourners. In this exception, there was a prayer and song when the departed came home. The departed had expressed his wishes to his children; which was no *Fa'asamoa* at his funeral. Overall, there was no *Fa'asamoa*. However, there was *Fa'asamoa* according to one participant, which took place when the only paolo (in-law) came to the house on a formal visit bringing *Ie toga* and resources to support the family. The other part that was *Fa'asamoa* was when gifts were presented to the priest and ministers at the reception. According to one participant in this family, a *Matai*, this was the only *Fa'asamoa* in the funeral. The following quote is from the wife of this participant talking about what happened when the body of their elder came home.

There was no singing of songs. Because there was like nobody came. ...I think because they kept that really quiet and the fact that you know, the extended side of the family probably think it's their night. So, it's the kids' night with their dad. We all stayed, we all stayed the night umm, me our kids and...mum; we all stayed the night over there with the kids. Yeah, so we didn't really stay up all night and sing songs (Giggling) Only at the time that he was brought home, then you know us kids around him. Just talking), yeah there was no singing all night like what you usually do. Poor uncle... body was there and our kids were still running around (laughing) and us still talking away. (F3F4)

One participant highlighted how a Samoan song that is not a hymn has become part of Samoan funerals. The reason for highlighting this here, is the history of this song according to this elder participant, namely, it is a song that people used to dance to. This participant is in his early

sixties, he grew up in Samoa and well versed in the *Gagana* and *Fa'asamoa*. He remembers the song 'Mo'omo'oga' as a song the taupou danced to when villages got together for the independence celebrations. Furthermore, he shared that upon reflection, he understood why this was the case. According to him, it's because "The taupou is the one who afi the Lord! Presents to the Lord what our people you know. Give thanks!" (M1M5)

And then, the rest of the songs that we sing when we want to remember, we remember in our memories the dears and loved one like Mo'omooga' (Singing together with researcher) sa molia i talosaga'... That's a song that people danced to! But now it's beginning to become a funeral song! (M1F5)

Over half of the participants shared about the changes in songs for Samoan funerals. The next participant highlighted here is due to his many experiences in funerals in Samoa and Samoan funerals in Aotearoa. He is in mid-fifties and grew up in Samoa and well versed in oratory as a *Matai*. He references his experiences from when he was young and remembers the role of elderly women as the *faleosilagi*, where their task and role was to sing and comfort the family in all-night vigils. He shared about the changes in these practices in Samoa where the *faleosilagi* changed to include the women dancing, as well as the inclusion of different songs. He points out that the mixing of songs in funerals where all different songs are now sung in funerals, is occurring just as much in Samoa as well as in Aotearoa New Zealand.

One participant talks about the inclusion of Māori waiata in his grandfather's funeral although, they were not sung at the funeral services. They were sung when the body of the departed lay in state at the family home and in a church hall. (M3F2)

The thing is these times, when it's done, that saying is true that 'The foundation remains but the ways it's done changes (E suisui *faiga* ae tasi le fa'avae). There are now worldly songs as funeral songs! Those are songs that in those days you hardly ever hear it in a funeral. But these days, it's a song like 'My dove is lost' when someone dies... Yes, all those songs are mixed. Also, the choir can sing those worldly songs at the time of the family service, like a when the sea's get rough... Those worldly songs, you didn't hear them in those days. But these days, they sing it at the family service, at the funeral even at the church in the service e they sing it! And it's not like the minister says 'No please those songs are worldly songs' (M1F6)

Yeah, there was Māori songs because of aunty ... friends. They all came over and did and paid their respects to the old man, aunty... too. It was full, and we didn't get any rest. (M3F2)

The need to accommodate young members of an *aiga* in song, recognising that they don't speak *Gagana Samoa* has also been highlighted by some participants. This is somewhat reflected in what one participant shared as song becoming more 'modernised', while the words stay the same and "... they're slowly changing the rhythm of it" (F3F5)

Consider what the next participant is saying about how songs in a funeral are chosen. This participant is an elder and is a *Faletua* (Minister's wife). She has a lot of experience in working with the church choir and identifies a need for song to connect to different groups whether in church or in a funeral: "The Samoan songs were chosen for the older people; the English songs were chosen for the young people. When they don't have a high understanding of Samoan songs a?" (F1F3)

A participant who is a middle-aged male from another family, also shared that young people bring their own tastes and musical influences to what songs they want for the funeral. According to him, when the children and grandchildren don't speak Samoa, it is even harder for them to learn a Samoan song in a short time for the funeral. Therefore, they will sing in the language that they are comfortable with-English: "*But it was songs in English that was sung but there was no song that was connected to uncle!... They the grandchildren prefer English songs, that's how they express themselves. I know e (It's) easy for them to sing*"

This last theme under the subcategory of 'Customs and rituals' as part of *Fa'asamoa*, has looked at what participants have to say about the changes in songs, for Samoan funerals. Changes range from no singing night vigil, to songs that were not previously considered a funeral song to its inclusion in funerals. Other changes are the normalizing of having 'worldly songs' in the funeral process and the singing of Māori waiata when the body is laying in state. Lastly, the increasing use of English songs in funerals to accommodate the younger generation who may not be fluent or know *Gagana Samoa*.

### ***Pese/Song and Fa'asamoa***

Participants were asked the question: Is song part of *Fa'asamoa*? Is singing part of *Fa'asamoa*? Every participant answered 'yes' to these questions. This theme will set out that song in and of itself, whether in *Gagana Samoa* or English or otherwise, is part of *Fa'asamoa*. *Gagana Samoa* is part of *Fa'asamoa* and also supportive of *Fa'asamoa* with the retention of *Gagana Samoa*.

So, I believe music and the songs they played at my dad's funeral they umm, I would, they're not, well they are sort of like a ritual they have at funerals but then it's also a language as well isn't it? (M2F1)

Several participants referred to *Pese* as a way of learning history, about genealogy, villages or church in *Fa'asamoa*. One participant shared about songs at her 'spiritual father's' funeral, indicating the connection with his different villages.

I think it's Sapapali'i (village) and there's Lufilufi (village); there's a mix. Like his songs, anyone that attended if they're from those villages, will know. And then they'll, I think, also (see) "Ahh and then you know just, but yeah and then at the end cause when he was buried. And a few, well, all the kids that we grew up with umm just sang while the, while he was getting covered so we just sang all the songs that we grew up on and it was Maoli (Māori), Cook Island, Samoan the teaching of him, to his daughter! (F3F1)

One participant questioned hymns as part of *Fa'asamoa*: "I still feel like *Pese* in the hymn's tradition, wasn't necessarily *Fa'asamoa* in the beginning but singing and songs have always been." (M2F3). This participant identified the primacy of the human voice in song, as something that have always been part of *Fa'asamoa* though: "always been there yeah. It's always been there; I feel like it's always been there! (M2F3)

This level of emphasis about song in *Fa'asamoa* differed across participants. One participant situated singing and song as something that Samoans from the past, have used as a form of communication. The majority of participants shared the view that for the most part, singing in *Fa'asamoa* is something that is done with others. Singing is a collective activity by a family when they come together. "*Because all the family come, they're singing with one spirit, so, that's what I'm trying to say...So, when you sing a song, you sing one-hearted aye? With one heart aye?*" (F2F5)

Several participants reflected on whether singing songs that are not in the Samoan language at a Samoan funeral is still *Fa'asamoa*. Most stated that it is, because it is a Samoan funeral. One participant was emphatic in his support of this. This participant is in his fifties and he came to Aotearoa as a young adult. *Gagana Samoa* is his first language and he is from a family of well-known composers of music and Samoan songs, hymns and songs for cultural events: “*It’s a Samoan funeral! Because the praise, ... it’s to express sadness, happiness you know? It also shows someone’s work and what they have done, that is Fa’asamoa you know?*” (M1F2)

The next female participant looks to the future and theorised on changes to *Fa'asamoa* and the songs associated with it, meaning that there will be a marked difference in how her generation will interpret the meaning of *Fa'asamoa* and song in days to come. She also views that these changes will continue into the future:

I think what it does tell me about *Fa'asamoa*, the songs that are used in Samoan funerals, is that in the next ten or twenty years, *Fa'asamoa* is going to mean something different to our generation. And the songs will be perceived differently, songs will mean something different. It’s fixed now because of the times that we’re in. But it’s going to continue, it’s going to be, it’s going to change a lot, you know the meanings that we umm attribute to songs! (F3F3)

The view of the key informant is that *Mafutaga* (close relationships) has implication in Samoan people knowing and singing Samoan songs, Samoan hymns. He poses that in his professional experience, *aiga* that is close and interact with each other are more likely to know the Samoan hymns and therefore sing these hymns. In other words, when the *Mafutaga* within *aiga* is not so strong, families in Samoan are less likely to know the songs as a collective.

Sustainability of music or what is the sustainability of the hymns, you know, yeah, the mafukaga (Close relationships) is key! (Chuckling) Because if we're not singing it to the next generation, we're going to be taking it to our graves! (Key Person)

Most participants view Samoan *Pese* as a powerful vehicle to keep and impart *Gagana Samoa*, as an integral part of *Fa'asamoa*.

In summary of the subcategory 'Customs and Rituals' participants identified different customs and rituals, including funerals, as part of *Fa'asamoa*. They also identified areas where there has been changes in regards to funeral rituals including; the lessening of the utilisation of foodstuff such as boxes of chicken and corn beef in honouring notable people that came to support a funeral and an increase in solely gifting money. This change has also been met with some resistance. There also seems to be a decrease in the size of funerals with more families utilising a funeral home as a location for the funeral and more families farewelling their loved one in a family home. Much of this change is driven by concerns over funeral cost with more families considering cremation and having funeral insurance. Singing, especially as a collective exercise is considered by participants as being part of *Fa'asamoa* and even more so for hymns and songs in Samoan language. However, change in what songs is considered appropriate to be part of a Samoan funeral, also seems to be changing. Additionally, there is evidence of song becoming acceptable and regarded as a funeral song where previously, this was not the case. There is no evidence in the data, that a change in regards to what song is considered appropriate for Samoan funerals is met by any resistance including from the clergy. Nevertheless, Samoan hymns is still a major feature in many of the funerals according to participants.

### ***Fa'asamoa* and the church**

The presence of the church in the life experiences of participants is considerable. Their understanding of *Fa'asamoa* is inextricably linked to the church through their *aiga* whether in Samoa or in Aotearoa New Zealand. This category will present the nuanced responses of participants to the question: *Does Fa'asamoa and the church/Christianity go together (fists side by side) or are they intertwined (fingers intertwined)?* From hereafter, the church and Christianity will be referred to as the church. This decision was made due to participant's using these two words interchangeably, as if they are synonymous. Of importance is the use of the term '*Lotu*' which Samoan people use to refer to church and Christianity.

Very early on in the data collection, in the second *Talanoa* for this research a middle-aged female participant (F2F2) talked about her confusion and struggle to reconcile *Fa'asamoa* and the church as she was growing up. The reconciling for this participant came about when she had a particular conversation with her father.

You know, why is there only one God which, so *Fa'asamoa* and Christianity mate, I don't get it. I just don't get it! Because he was in, he was in the hospital this time and he's like look at me, it's not like that, it's like this. ('That' is when her fingers are intertwined, 'this' is when she puts her fists side by side) And I went, why didn't you tell me that when I was like ten! (laughing). You know? Because then I understood it! Because I was thinking actually it is quite contradictory ey? It's contradictory. And that's how it's always looks. And I've always been confused! (F2F2)

The story this participant recounts about her father, and her understanding of two fists together signifying *Fa'asamoa* and the church as being side by side or going together, juxtaposed to two hands together with fingers intertwined signifying a more blurred or enmeshed

relationship, gave the researcher an idea on how to frame the question for the rest of the participants.

The framing of the relationship between *Fa'asamoa* and the church, in this way, became significant in interpreting views in this regard by the majority of the participants. Therefore, when participants were asked about the relationship between *Fa'asamoa* and the church, they were given a choice of whether they saw this relationship as being side by side (two fists side by side) or as intertwined (fingers of both hands intertwined). All participants chose one of these two symbols to signify how they saw the relationship between *Fa'asamoa* and the church. The one exception is a young female participant who came up with her own symbol utilising the hands to demonstrate how she saw the relationship between *Fa'asamoa* and the church.

She put her hands together on her lap, one on top of the other to demonstrate how she view's the relationship between *Fa'asamoa* and the church and commented:

When I think of the ladies that sit in church their hands are like this (hands together on her lap over each other). Calm dignified pose you know? I think of that, when I think if *Fa'asamoa* and how a woman would sit in church. The first thing that would pop into mind is this (Hands together one on top of the other on the lap) Images of piety or something. (Laughing) Like a virtuous woman, how she would sit that's kind of how, I don't know (I see the church and) *Fa'asamoa*. (F3F3)

Although responses coalesced around agreement that *Fa'asamoa* and the church 'sit side by side', or 'they are intertwined' these positions do not tell the whole story of the nuances behind these views, as they are complex and varied. The most emphatic voices are those that state that their position is supported by an argument, for why the relationship between *Fa'asamoa* and

the church should or should not be a certain way. One middle aged male experienced a marked change in the relationship between church and *Fa'asamoa* when he recently attended two Samoan funerals, with the family service ending in the church. This participant is referring to oratory (*Matai*) taking place inside the church rather than the usual practice of this taking place in another location such as a hall next door.

Well, I did start off thinking that they were side by side. Side by side, but I've seen evidence that it's not, it's changed. But then you go to a funeral sometimes and you see, and I've seen it. And I'm, actually quite shocked in the last two funerals that we had. That as soon as the last hymn is sung at the end of the service, bang! Someone's up there already yelling out stuff, then all of a sudden, *Fa'asamoa* is being done right in the church!... I'm like 'Hang on! This never used to happen before! And you're sitting there like 'Oh aren't we supposed to walk out? Like it's meant to be a hymn and that stuff is supposed to be done at the hall next door! (M2F6)

A middle age female participant shared very similar experiences with *Fa'asamoa* and the church as something very different from what they have become accustomed to. Where the above participant felt more of a 'shock', this participant expressed annoyance and consternation at what she perceived to be the wrong time and place to have *Fa'asamoa*. In her view, a lot of young men are becoming *Matai*; something she supports wholeheartedly. However, too many of them do not have enough understanding, but they think they do. Some of these individuals show their lack of knowledge when they start into oratory at times and location that are inappropriate.

I think the *Fa'asamoa* is the *Fa'asamoa*. With churches now, what I've seen in the last probably twenty years? Yeah, side by side. Because you know they're doing it the

*Fa'asamoa* way - any church stuff, even after any *aiga* (Feast) or a funeral or wedding. All the ministers will be honoured with gifts. In church! Which is something that was never allowed back in the days. I was at an unveiling at St Pious because all our friends and that are all from St Pious or St Therese Mangere. The service has just finished...he's not doing a formal speech he's just telling us where the reception is going to be and the next thing you know, one stands up, one stands up and they start going back and forth. Like, he's only announcing where the reception is after the unveiling and I'm thinking 'There's a time and place for everything! Do it at the hall or don't do it at all!' (F3F5)

Another middle-aged participant was adamant that there needs to be a way to combine *Fa'asamoa* and the church': "... you can't give away your *Fa'asamoa*, ... it's like Christianity and being Samoan walk together, you have to find, it has to walk together" (F1F2)

Two females from cohort one and two from the same family (F4) share similar views with the previous participant, that *Fa'asamoa* and the church go together and that's the way it should be. The critique from the older female is that those who have a *Matai* in their *aiga*, are increasingly encroaching into the church. To this participant, this leads to a lot of confusion, as someone with the title of 'deacon' in the church, that is his *Matai* title in the church. However, the *Matai* title conferred by *aiga*, belongs in that social space, not in the church. She shared a story where she scolded some male elders in her church for telling her husband to do this and that with his two *Matai* titles, one from her family and one from her husband's family. The minister was present when she hailed forth with her point of view that it really wasn't any of their 'business', to talk about things that belong to her and husband and secondly, to bring this into the church. In her view, this leads to trouble and confusion pertaining to boundaries

between *Fa'asamoa* and the church: “Don't let it happen that the *Fa'asamoa* takes over Christianity. They should go together! Because at this time with some congregations, it's like they have taken the *Fa'asamoa*, it's like what they have done with the chiefs” (F1F4).

A younger female participant voiced her strong disapproval of the mixing of *Fa'asamoa* and the church, due to her expectation that going to church is a time for worship. In her view *Fa'asamoa* and Christianity have become ‘molded together’ when they should go ‘hand in hand’. She clearly identifies that the *Fa'asamoa* should be done after worship.

My argument was when I go to church, I want to go to church to praise God and do my worshipping and get out! That's what. Oh, none of this *Mafutaga* (fellowship). None of this mixture *mafukaga*, I mean do the *mafukaga* after. There's one hour dedicated to church only to God worship, that's it! I don't like it how they mix in between where they do the *akiga'e* (project), they do this in the middle, they do this and that!... I hate it! I hate it! It's just like what's the point! It's playing with my emotions! Yeah, it plays with my emotions where I am here to give everything that I can to for my faith and you know have that one hour. (F2F4)

The following middle-aged male participant views *Fa'asamoa* as having taken over the church (Christianity) in his experience. He expressed this view by using the term ‘over grossed’, and although this term is not grammatically correct, given the overall context of the *Talanoa* with this participant, the researcher interpreted this statement as *Fa'asamoa* having taking over the church (Christianity) evolving into *Fa'asamoa* presently:

I think the way I view it now, they sit side by side, but I think that the *Fa'asamoa* has been umm slightly over grossed from the Christianity. And that's what's ... evolved

the Samoan culture into what it is now, a lot of it is based on the Christianity side.  
(M2F1)

Other participants view *Fa'asamoa* and the church as enmeshed and in their opinion, they should be, as one helps the other survive. One points to the role of the church in facilitating learning *Gagana Samoa* for pre-schoolers:

Well, that's, the way it should be! Enmeshed. Yeah, umm. Because one helps the other, the other helps the survival of the other. In fact, the church is facilitating programs on language, language it was, but the church was the first institution that provided the 'A'oga amata' (Samoan preschool). (M1F5)

Another male, in his early sixties commented:

I think over time umm like with the spirituality thing how it's, it's kind of interwoven now. Like I think the *Fa'asamoa* kind of grew with Christianity and kind of strengthened both sides to be honest. (M2F3)

The most emphatic opposing positions taken by participants are that (a) *Fa'asamoa* and the church are becoming intertwined and they should not be; (b) that *Fa'asamoa* and the church go together 'side-by-side; and (c) *Fa'asamoa* and the church are enmeshed and they should be.

When the responses to the above question under this subcategory are compared within each family and between families, some notable findings emerged. Across the six families, five families (F1, F3, F4, F5, F6) had varying degrees in differences in their positioning as a family. One family (F2) had the highest similarities in how family members saw the relationship between *Fa'asamoa* and the church (*Fa'asamoa* and the church walk side by side) . The

following will present participant's responses to the above question, under each of the six families.

Family one (F1) had three participants respond to the question of whether *Fa'asamoa* and the church are side by side or intertwined? The elder male was emphatic in his position that in his view they are intertwined, although they should not be. He argued that this leads to competition in the church in regards to how much people give to the minister: *"I think they're inter-twined, and I, my personal view, it shouldn't be! There is time for the church and there is time for the Fa'asamoa! At the moment it's one and the same ey?" (M1F1)*

Two other participants in this family are a male and female who are both middle age and NZ born. The male views *Fa'asamoa* and the church as being side by side, although *Fa'asamoa* has taken over Christianity to a small degree leading to *Fa'asamoa* evolving, influenced by Christianity. (See quote in subcategory above). The female participant holds a different position from her other family members as evidenced from the following quote.

But I think and that's for me, it's God is the centre of my world and what I do and how I behave is supposed to be the image of him! And if you're, you see I used to be a grumpy person doing the *fe'aus* (Chores) and all that? I'll avoid it! But I think when I gave my life back to Jesus and served with an open heart, serve, you just give unconditionally, is the *Fa'asamoa* way! (F3F1)

Family two (F2) has four participants who responded to the above question, two middle age females, a young female and male elder. This family has the highest agreement across its members compared to other families. All view *Fa'asamoa* and the church as sitting side by side or 'they go together' except the young female who concedes that her position is because

she was raised in a 'Christian family'. Furthermore, she recognises that in some aspects, *Fa'asamoa* and the church are intertwined. The following quote provides further context for the elder male as to why *Fa'asamoa* and the church go together.

My understanding with this thing with the *Fa'asamoa* and the church, they're done together. They go together! It's like there are two things that go together, these two things. When there is a funeral... Because it's the church and the *Fa'asamoa*. Because here, there are no villages like in Samoan there are villages! Here, it's like the villages are the churches! So, it's like the churches are taken as villages. (M1F2)

Family three (F3) has three participants who responded to the question. There is an elder female, a male in his late thirties and a young female. The first two participants view *Fa'asamoa* and the church as being complimentary to each other. The elder female participant agreed when the researcher posited the view that *Fa'asamoa* and Christianity are synonymous. The young female (F3F3) differed in that she expressed her own view with a different symbol of this relationship between the church and *Fa'asamoa*. The symbol is that of pious ladies sitting in church with their hands together on their laps, one hand over the other (See quote under theme '*Fa'asamoa* and the church'). The following quote is from the elder female who makes the connections between the *Va*, *Fa'asamoa* and Christianity: "*This thing, in our Samoan culture, the Va! That is what I am talking about, the Va is synonymous with Christianity! The values for Christian living are all found in the Va!*" (F1F3)

Family four (F4) has three participants, an elder and middle age female (F1F4, F2F4). Quotes from these two participants are under the above subcategory '*Fa'asamoa* and the church'. Both see *Fa'asamoa* and the church as sitting side by side, and both strongly expressed concern that *Fa'asamoa* is encroaching too much into the church. The male participant has a somewhat

different view as he also spoke about the beauty of including *Fa'asamoa* in worship in his Catholic faith. For example, the role of the taupou when there is an offering for church.

To my belief these things should be put together. Because in Samoa at that time, the good news had not arrived but there was a culture already there... That's something with the Miss Catholic you might have seen where the taupou (A formal cultural role held by women akin to a princess from a particular district or village) dances when the offering is given in church. (M2F4)

Family five (F5) has four participants who responded to the question, one male elder, two middle age males and one middle age female. This family has a greater degree of differences in their positions in regard to each other, from the other families. The male elder (M1F5) and his views has been presented under the above theme '*Fa'asamoa* and the church'. In a nutshell, he views *Fa'asamoa* and the church as enmeshed and totally supports this. One middle age male participant strongly believes that *Fa'asamoa* and the church should be 'side by side'. However, there has been an imbalance in his opinion, due to the 'malpractices in the church' for 'a very long time', resulting in a 'beautiful culture' not being practiced the way it's supposed to be. In his words: "... *that's what I say about the church. The church now it's, it's a lot of take and no giving*" (M2F5). Another middle age male see's *Fa'asamoa* and the church as intertwined due to having to speak in a 'respectful language'.

But when the faife'aus (Minister) up there or, they talk in a different like umm respectful language! Yeah, *Fa'aaloalo!* Yeah, yeah so that's, you know you can't really just go in, but then again, you know how they say 'the Samoan and the church' you know it's like they go like this (Inter-twined hands) all the time! You know... That's what I think because ever since we've grown in the church, it's, it's been like that the

whole time! You know the real *Fa'aaloalo* stuff, you know you can't just go in there you know and just say you know 'What's up bro?' You know, you can't do that! That's so disrespectful. (M3F5)

The views of the middle age female (F3F5) have been set out under the above subcategory '*Fa'asamoa* and the church'. In a nutshell, she sees *Fa'asamoa* and the church as sitting side by side. However, she has some strong critique in some of the changes she has experienced, where *Fa'asamoa* is encroaching into the church, and cites young inexperienced *Matai* as being culpable in this negative change.

The last family (F6) had three participants who responded to the questions; a middle-aged male, middle-aged female and a young female. The views of the male participant (M2F6) have been presented under the subcategory '*Fa'asamoa* and the church'. In a nutshell, he sees *Fa'asamoa* and the church as sitting side by side. However, his recent experiences in Samoan funerals has left him in 'shock' due to *Fa'asamoa* being done in church, something that is very different from what he expects when he goes to a Samoan funeral. The middle age female participant sees this relationship as intertwined, without offering any particular opinion about it. The young female participant sees the relationship as 'side by side', something which she agrees with. Her thoughts about why this is preferable is expressed in the following quote.

I think when it's mixed up there is not so much mana, it's not honouring, so the church is not so respected. So, the worship to God is not respectful when its mixed up. They should go together because I think the *Fa'asamoa* should be in the church. The church has more nobility and prestige when there is *Fa'asamoa* in it. You know there is gravitas in the church when here is *Fa'asamoa*. (F3F6)

There are not only differences across individual participants within each family, these also exist between families. One family (F2) has the strongest consensus amongst its members. Overall, individuals and families generally view *Fa'asamoa* and the church as existing side by side, or going together. Within this position, the view that *Fa'asamoa* and the church are becoming more intertwined is viewed as something negative and of concern to participants. Much of this concern is due to the ensuing 'confusion' in the church, and the challenges that this poses for some participants, when they compare previous experiences with more recent ones. Although in the minority, there is also the view that the intertwining of *Fa'asamoa* and the church is a good thing.

## **Conclusion**

The four subcategories linked to the main category of *Fa'asamoa* as discussed in this chapter are: *Aiga*; *Gagana Samoa*; Customs and rituals; and *Fa'asamoa* and the church. Several central sub-themes were discussed under each of these subcategories. Participants have expressed their understanding of *Fa'asamoa* under all of the above and just as important, many have shared *how* and *why* they hold certain views about different aspects of *Fa'asamoa*.

*Aiga*, as part of how participants define and understand *Fa'asamoa* is agreed upon by all participants. There is also high agreement across the dataset on values that participants consider as the philosophical underpinning of *Fa'asamoa* namely: *Le Va*, *Fa'aaloalo*, *Alofa* and *Tautua*. Accompanying these agreements is the theme of 'change' in the composition of *aiga* and levels of participation by some of its members as well how such values are interpreted. There is also clear agreement on the importance of *Gagana Samoa* to *Fa'asamoa* although, there appears to be some differences in the *emphasis* and *weight* given to its centrality across participants. In other words, some participants consider *Gagana Samoa* to be essential to *Fa'asamoa* or the

*window* to the Samoan culture, while others consider a heart for serving your *aiga* (*Tautua*) as equally important. There is evidence that some participants hope to improve their proficiency in their mother tongue and strive to impart and learn the *Gagana* in song. Song has been identified as an important avenue to keep young Samoans connected to their mother tongue.

Overall, *Fa'asamoa* is still considered, according to participants to be defined by *aiga*, *Gagana Samoa* and Customs and Rituals and *Pese Samoa*. Part of this picture include changes in several areas especially in regards to *aiga* cohesion; funeral practices and song in funerals. One possible future scenario is one offered up by a young female participant. This quote has been featured before, however, due to it coming from a member of the youngest cohort of the participants, her vision on what *Fa'asamoa* and song may look like in the future may very well provide a guide to what is needed to strengthen *Fa'asamoa* in the present:

I think what it does tell me about *Fa'asamoa*, the songs that are used in Samoan funerals, is that in the next ten or twenty years, *Fa'asamoa* is going to mean something different to our generation. And the songs will be perceived differently, songs will mean something different. It's fixed now because of the times that we're in. But it's going to continue, it's going to be, it's going to change a lot, you know the meanings that we umm attribute to songs! (F3F3)

The last subcategory '*Fa'asamoa* and the church' came out of the researcher asking participants to explain the relationship between *Fa'asamoa* and the church. This was due to the researchers view that *Fa'asamoa* and the church often seem to be synonymous and therefore, considering the research question, seeking more clarity in this area from the participants point of view may be useful.

To assist participants, they were offered two possible ways of explaining this relationship. These two options were demonstrated by the bringing of two hands and intertwining the fingers and the second was bringing to fists together and putting them side by side. The first option symbolised *Fa'asamoa* and the church as being intertwined suggesting an enmeshed relationship. The second option symbolised this relationship as having both the *Fa'asamoa* and the church walking side by side while being distinct.

The findings suggest that there are very strong positions in regards to how participants see the appropriateness of either position. The loudest voices in the data are those that believe that *Fa'asamoa* has encroached too far into the church, as they need to be kept separate. Equally adamant are those voices who insist that *Fa'asamoa* and church should be intertwined as this is something good and positive.

An interesting finding is that for most of the *aiga* in this research, there are different positions taken amongst family members. Except for (F2) who have the highest consensus as a family, where there is a general agreement on *Fa'asamoa* and the church walking side by side, there are varying positions between family members. In other words, there are similarities and differences across *aiga* and within *aiga* members. The most passionate voices are about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of either position leaving an unclear answer to the researcher's question about this relationship.

## CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS CATEGORY 2 – HISTORY IN SONG

### Introduction

The second category that emerged from the data is ‘History in song’ and captures how participants explained and perceived song as part of their history, *aiga* and church. Song has been identified by participants as a constant thread, accompanying them and their *aiga* throughout their life journey and farewelling their loved ones. This thread has carried and repeated a message in a cycle of singing, remembering and interpretation of meaning for different generations in the Samoan community.

Some compelling reasons for the title for this second category (History in song) include the description given by participants of song as a ‘memory’ as well as their making connections between song and history. When participants were asked the question: What song/s do you remember from the funeral of your loved one? Participant’s responses would identify a song or songs in the context of other experiences in their lives, such as important events, church, *aiga*, significant relationships and the departed and other funerals. They would remember a song or songs followed by making connections with other funerals where they sang the same songs. They would recount stories featuring relationships within their church and with other denominations, between their own and other families. Remembering song would trigger other memories of the many people in their lives and for many participants, these memories were particularly nostalgic. Often, participants would remember a song from their loved one’s funeral and recount how the same song or songs was/were part of their gathering and worship as a family. For example, middle age participants would very often connect a song they remembered from the funeral, to a memory of learning that song in the *Au talavou* (youth group) in their church several decades ago. Additionally, participants would remember events

and people in their church and family associated with particular song/s. The following quotes evidence the connection made by participants between song, memory and history.

Yeah, it's a memory! I think it's in all of us! (M1F1)

... the song that you sing is memory! Memory of how you were raised, you know how you were sent to church. We shared that part of life together (F2F3)

But you know that, those hymns, it's not just a connection to our culture, that's kind of like, living history, you know? (M2F3)

**Table 4.** History in Song as a category emerging from the data

<b>Category 2: History in song</b>	Denomination	Samoan hymns English hymns <i>Tusi pese</i>
	Au Talavou (youth group)	Influencers Singing the farewell The Māori connection
	Family Practices	Favourites Connection to other family funerals

What participants have to say about their history in song will be presented under three subcategories: Denominations, Au talavou (Youth group) and Family practices (see Table 4), with different themes presented under each of these. The first subcategory will look at the denominations represented across the dataset and how this is reflected in song and the history of participants and their *aiga*.

## Denomination

The story of song for all the funerals in this research is also the story of different Samoan churches and their histories and how they are interconnected. This interconnectivity was evidenced in the data in regards to song for all the funerals.

Three church denominations are present in the data in regards to the source from where hymns are attributed by participants. These are: PIC church (F1, F2, F3 & F6); Congregational church (F5) and the Catholic church (F4). According to the data, a majority of the Samoan hymns are attributed to the *Tusi pese* (Hymn Book). In two funerals in the PIC church, hymns and songs from other Pacific Islands such as Cook Island, Niuean and Tokelauan were sung. However, participants did not provide any titles for these songs. This was also the case for the Congregational church family (F5) where they sang Tuvaluan songs to farewell their loved one, although no title was provided. When participants for (F4) referred to a ‘Catholic hymn’, these were in the *Gagana Samoa* but no title was provided also. All participants from (F4) knew many of the Samoan hymns on this list despite not providing song title for the Samoan Catholic hymns lead by a small choir in their elder’s funeral.

The six *aiga* in this research generally belong to three different denominations/churches, namely PIC Newton (F1, F2, & F6), PIC Glen Eden (F6), The Samoan Congregational church (F5) and The Grey Lynn Catholic church (F4). PIC Newton and PIC Glen Eden are counted as one church denomination. However, this is not the whole story as participants from several families (F3, F4, F5 & F6) shared that some *aiga* members belonged to different church denominations from the ones already mentioned. Additionally, the involvement of different churches in the funerals was also due to connecting relationships whether from church to church, an *aiga* connecting to a particular church due to family members belonging to that

church, or both. This section will present how these church memberships and affiliations between churches and *aiga* was brought to bear on the songs for the funerals. The interaction within the churches mentioned at the beginning of this section, and the relationship between them and other churches and denominations constituted the history of participants and their families and song.

Participants did not provide the title of any of the songs sung by different choirs for any of the funerals as evidenced by the following quote.

Yes, we had different *Au Lotus* (churches) ... you had different *au fai Pese* (church choirs) from the different *Ekalesia's* (Congregations) that came and sang and given turns, yes that was part of his (Dad's) thing (F1F2)

These choirs sang at the family home when the body lay in state and as part of some of the funeral services (F1, F2, F3 & F6). One participant shared that ten different choirs visited the family home in one evening as part of an all-night vigil. When asked whether other choirs sang at the funeral in his family, an elder male participant had the following to say.

The connection is though family..., and also friends and people that know the family, so people from the Catholic Church, the Tongan Church and the Mormons all came that day! (M1F1)

For (F2), the funeral was for a well-known minister in the PIC Newton church with far reaching ties with the other PIC churches and other church denominations. Ministers and leaders from these churches including the Catholic church, Methodist and other PIC churches throughout Aotearoa attended the funeral. Reflecting the status of this minister, numerous different choirs from other PIC churches, other Pacific groups/churches and different church denominations sang for the funeral when the body lay in state and at the many funeral services. The numerous

funeral services for this elder minister were at different locations including PIC churches in Ranui, Otara, Mangere, Newton and at the Tokelauan church in Ponsonby. The following quote is from one of the participants who remembered how her father worked with other church denominations.

That's another thing ..., he actually brought the different denominations together. Even though he was a PIC minister... his whole thing was actually about people, and community. Yeah! And he was like a social worker! Honestly! He was the social worker I mean if you look back at the, the Methodist history. He (nurtured) a lot of that and encouraged from Pitt Street to St Johns, and so we had a good bond, attachment to that Ponsonby Methodist (F2F2)

Overall, songs and in particular hymns, reflected the church denomination to which participants and *aiga* belonged. The hymns that were part of the formal program for the funeral generally reflected the 'usual' *Pese Lotu* (church hymns) for the PIC church, and the Samoan congregational church. The exception was (F3) where one participant shared that although all the hymns for the funeral were from the PIC hymn book, Samoan hymns from The Christian Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS), Samoan name, *Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS) were sung at home when the body lay in state and it was just the family. She shared that there had been a family ordinance where all her family had to worship in the EFKS church in Samoa. This had changed in Aotearoa, some of her family is PIC, and her and her parents go to the Assembly of God church. Although this participant was a participant for (F6), this family is part of a big *aiga* including (F3), she talked about this funeral and has the following to say.

It was only when we came to the house, then my family start to sing the EFKS songs for...when we came to the house and he was here (referring to the body of the departed) (F3F6)

In the case of the Catholic family (F4) participants did not identify any of the Catholic hymns by title and the funeral was not held at a church but at Tipene funeral service. The Samoan Catholic hymns were sung by a small choir of three brought by the priest who officiated and chose the hymns. Mourners followed the singing lead by this small choir. Neither the church choir nor the church congregation attended the funeral as the departed wished to have no *Fa'asamoa* and his funeral was not held at the Catholic church. The Catholic congregation to which the departed for this family (F4) belonged, were not formally notified of his passing. The priest who conducted the service was a personal friend of the departed. The following participant from this family points out that the PIC church has a hymn book that people can follow in contrast with the Catholic church. This was also the general view of the other three participants from this family

... because it's not like the, I've been to (PIC Presbyterian) funerals... and you have a book and then you go there and then once they start the song, and you know you follow that a? You know o le *Pese* a la (that's the song), everywhere you go (F3F4).

... on the day we had to go with the tune, the girls are starting the *Pese* you know... the girls that came with the priest... everywhere he goes to do a funeral like for example especially a funeral where there is no choir. Like it was with us, so he takes his own little choir. (F3F4)

As Congregationalists from their village in Samoa, (F5) held the funeral for their uncle at the Tipene funeral home. Although the departed did not attend a church and other family members did not attend a Congregational church in Aotearoa, they nevertheless returned to singing Congregational hymns for their uncle's funeral. The male elder from this family also shared, that the females in his family who had been part of the Congregational choir in their village in Samoa sang those hymns for this funeral. As discussed in the introduction, a participant (M2F5) from this family shared that in their family services, they always sing the 'old hymn' from 'the very beginning' namely, the Congregational church in Samoa. Furthermore, a male elder from this family connected the hymns his family knew and their village (Fa'atoia) in Samoa. This village all worshipped at a Congregational church.

It's a collective sort of effort! Especially from the older siblings. They said the girls were there and they were all you know members of the church choir back in *Fa'atoi'a* (family village in Samoa). So, they know a lot of these songs... All the *Fa'atoi'a* people go to this church, Congregational Christian church of Samoa!... So, we know all these songs by heart .... (M1F5)

This section has so far set out the role of different denominational affiliations on the choice of song for the funerals in this research. Although the six families generally identified themselves as part of a particular church, there was some overlapping where song from different church traditions and denominations were part of the funerals. There were also many songs (no song titles provided by participants) sang by other ethnic groups (Tokelau, Cook Island & Niue) within the PIC Newton church as part of the funerals for (F1 & F2). This was also the same for the Catholic family (F4).

The next sections will consider in more detail the subcategory of ‘Denomination’ by focusing on the themes of ‘Samoan hymns’, ‘English hymns’ and ‘*Tusi pese*’.

### ***Samoan Hymns***

Twelve Samoan hymns were identified by title by respondents as summarised in Table 5. The numbers accompanying some of the hymns were provided by participants as the number of the song in the hymn book (*Tusi pese*) followed by the family/families who sang that hymn. The first three hymns were the most prominent and will be discussed in more detail.

**Table 5.** List of Samoan Hymns

<b>HYMN NAME</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>
<b><i>FA’AFETAII LE ATUA (NO 92)</i></b>	(F1, F2, F3, F5 & F6)
<b>E LO’U TAMA E</b>	(F1, F2 & F3)
<b>TOFA TOFA TOFA (NO 268)</b>	(F2, F3, F5)
<b>AVE LO’U OLA (NO 157)</b>	(F2, F3)
<b>UA SO’ONA OLIOLI AI LO’U</b>	(F2)
<b>LOTO IA IESU</b>	
<b>IEOVA LE ATUA (NO 235)</b>	(F3)
<b>O LOU ALOFA LE ATUA (NO 139)</b>	(F3)
<b>AVE LO’U OLA</b>	(F3)
<b>A SOSOU LE VASA</b>	(F5)
<b>IOVAE FOA’I MAI LE LOTO FOU</b>	(F2)
<b>UA FA’AFETAII ALOFA (NO 125)</b>	(F6)
<b>LOU PALE LEA</b>	(F5)
<b>SAMOAN CATHOLIC HYMNS</b>	(F1, F2 & F4)

### ***Fa'afetai i le Atua (No 92)***

Nearly half of the participants across five families (F1, F2, F3, F5 & F6) remembered this Samoan hymn as part of the funeral of their loved one. Some of the terms used by participants when talking about this hymn include 'traditional', and 'it's been around for years' and 'it's a song we grew up with'. One participant assumed it was a Samoan hymn 'that everyone knows'. All the above families except for (F5) (Congregational church) belonged to a PIC church (Newton and Glen Eden). Nevertheless, although this hymn was not sung in the funeral for (F4), all four participants in this family also shared that they knew this hymn. Two of these participants are associated with PIC Manukau and the other two have been members of the Catholic all their lives. For the PIC families, this hymn represents their history in the church and how it was part of their worship in church and in their family devotions. '

...we grew up with, it's like *Fa'afetai*, (92 in the hymn book) you know like it's a song that everyone knows! And so those songs, they're like, the base, like anywhere we go, those are the Samoan hymns we will sing! (F2F2)

You know and like the kids will go what about *Fa'afetai*, what about 92, they go? And we go oh yeah everyone knows what 92 is! (F2F2)

It's not as if it's any sort of song! But there are songs of thanksgiving. *Fa'afetai i le Atua* (Thanks be to God) because it's appropriate to thank God (F1F3)

Although (F5) identified themselves as being from the Congregational Church of Samoa, many of the Samoan hymns they learned are also in the hymn book for PIC Church. As is evidenced in the next quote, the Samoan hymn '*Fa'afetai i le Atua*' was one of the hymns they sang to farewell the departed from their family.

You have a funeral umm, you just congregate in the, because he laid in the sitting room, se we just congregate around him and they just about different hymns and whoever can remember the words of the hymns and... *'Fa 'afetai i Le Atua'* (M2F5)

Participants also remembered this hymn as part of their experiences with the *Au talavou* (This will be the focus of the next subcategory), the church choir and hearing it in other funerals. This hymn and the following two focused upon in this section seem to be emblematic in the views of many of the participants. This is perhaps not surprising considering that four of the families (F1, F2, F3 & F6) have been long time members of PIC Newton: *"Because umm it's a trademark for the PIC kids!"* (M1F1). Many participants cited this hymn and the next one as being firm favourite of their church minister as quoted by an elder female participant: *"All those songs. Those are the songs the old man liked (a well-known PIC Newton minister) ... PIC also use songs from EFKS (Congregational)"*. (F1F6)

### **E lo'u tama e**

This Samoan hymn was cited by a third of all the participants across five families (F1, F2, F3, F5 & F6). This hymn was often cited together with the hymn above, and many participants identified it as the utmost favourite song of their minister (F1, F2, F3 & F6). Again, like the hymn before, this hymn is a well utilised hymn within the PIC Newton church in their worship and funerals.

You now like E lo'u tama e. Not just for dad's funeral but lots, most of our, E lo'u tama e is a major kind of hymn that we would sing, ...it's something that we grew up with (F2F2)

... some of those old tunes we're still singing (Singing) E lo'u tama e, and that's something they sang forty, fifty years ago, so that is still like a long-standing tune that is still used! ((F2F3)

As seen from the following quote, this hymn like the one before was sung in many other funeral's participants had attended. As one participant put it, "*You could have a list of the main songs that you could go into any Samoan context, sing it and a lot of people would know it!*" (F2F3)

### **Tofa, tofa, tofa! (No 268)**

Over a third of all participants across all of the families spoke about this hymn as a 'burial song' in many of the Samoan funerals they have attended. This was the case for three of the funerals in this research, two of these families are from PIC Newton (F2 & F3) and from the Congregational church (F5). In the words of one participant '*It's kind of an anthem!*'.

As soon as it went down, that was at the burial. As soon as the coffin was put down, and I didn't expect anything less! I always heard that song at the end and I wouldn't associate it just for ... funeral but every Samoan funeral I've been to, you're going to hear that song! (M2F3)

I think 'Tofa' is becoming very umm, very common with funerals umm, especially when the actual service at the grave side has finished and when everyone is saying their good-byes, that seems to be the song that gets sung as everyone is saying their good-byes. (M3F5)

Like I feel that that song that they sing at the burial? You know (singing) Tofa (good bye) ... That song feels like it's something all Samoans like I don't know, but it would

have been like yeah, the other funerals that I've been to like my aunties and they've sung it and that song always connects me to Samoans! (F2F4)

And because that's the last song at every single funeral that I've been to that is sung when they're putting them into the ground, so it's a haunting feeling but that's like songs have so much power! (F3F2)

Twelve Samoan hymns were identified by title by participants. According to participants, these Samoan hymns were known to them through their growing up in church; the PIC and the Samoan Congregational church. Some participants provided the corresponding number of a Samoan hymn from the *Tusi pese* (Hymn book). Although there were Catholic hymns for (F4), they were not identified by title.

### ***English hymns***

Participants did not provide as much context for the English hymns overall compared to the Samoan hymns. Nevertheless, this theme is included as several English hymns were cited by participants by title as being part of the funeral for their loved one and favoured by many including their minister. As summarised in Table 6, five English hymns were identified by title, four were translated into *Gagana Samoa* and one of these was in English for one funeral. The fifth hymn was only in English for one funeral. The song 'Because he lives' was in English and sang by an aunty for the departed in (F3) as he was leaving. This was the only song identified by title that an individual sang by themselves. However, many family members gathered around their loved one when this took place. The individual was an aunty to the soon to be departed and a *Faletua* (ministers' wife), she and her husband were elders in this *aiga* (F3).

**Table 6.** English Hymns

<b>Hymn name</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Amazing grace (in samoan also)	(f1 & f2)
All is well (a pei se vaitafe)	(f2, f3 & f4)
The lord is my shephard (in samoan also)	(f1)
How great thou art (in samoan also)	(f1, f2, f3)
Because he lives	(f3)

The musically gifted church leaders played key roles in participants learning these hymns as well as being highly involved in recording projects for PIC Newton. These individuals were instrumental in the translation of these hymns to *Gagana Samoa*, as well as for the musical arrangement. Participants spoke about how this was done especially in regards to innovative vocal arrangements.

...you know Tagaloa Su'a? So, we sang one of the songs we recorded back in nineteen eighty-two 'How great thou art' and the words were written by Reverend Sio, so all that because it was in the time that that was part of the choir (F2F1)

Yeah, he had this song how, I don't know if mum told you, is how great thou art... The songs the old man did... But he'd translate it to Samoan words (M3F2)

I can say that the hymns are Samoan hymns, the tune, umm I think one of them is how great thou art (F2F3)

Hymn number (5) was sung by an aunty of the departed, who is a *Faletua* (minister's wife) while many of the family were present. The youngest participant in this research shared about

his powerful experience when this took place. The participant who sang this hymn for her nephew was very articulate in her reflection that in singing the hymns, there is a joy and celebration due to faith in God, a change from the past where people wailed and cried in a way that emphasised loss and grief more than comfort and hope. She further added that this is a welcomed shift in Samoan funerals. As a woman of faith, this participant's view is that "the main significance of songs is to lighten the burden of sorrow": "There is an understanding of the good news, that there is a hope beyond death. There is life for people in death" (F1F3).

English hymns featured in four of the funerals, with most of them being translated into *Gagana Samoa*. Musically gifted leaders and teachers were identified by participants as being central to learning these hymns, and preparing for recording projects for the PIC Newton Church. The importance of hymn in giving people hope in time of sorrow, was articulated by one of the female elders in this research.

### ***Tusi pese (Hymn book)***

When talking about song for funerals, a recurrent theme is the *Tusi pese* across most of the participant's *Talanoa*. According to participants from the PIC families (F1, F2, F3 & F6), the *Tusi pese* (hymn book) has been a powerful part of their history with song, evidenced by the hymns they remembered as part of their funerals as well as their family practices. The *Tusi pese* (and its hymns) is the thread that bounds together much of the experiences of participants with song and funerals. Nearly all of the Samoan hymns were from the *Tusi pese* and mostly from the PIC families (F1, F2, F3 & F6), there were two hymns in the funeral for (F5 Congregational). Most of the participants from (F5 & F4) either talked about the *Tusi pese* as something that was a part of their history with song, or they knew about it.

The associating of these hymns by participants with the past, to other funerals, elders, church and *aiga* echoed again and again in the data. Stories of the *Tusi pese* and Samoan hymns carried stories of faith, comfort and collective remembering in a continuing interpretation of meaning by different generations of Samoan people. In the words of one participant when talking about hymns, “*It is a sermon itself!*” (F1F3). The ubiquitous presence of the *Tusi pese* and Samoan hymns in the data extends to its being seen as part of *Fa’asamoa* by many of the participants. When participants referred to these hymns, they would often use words such as ‘traditional hymns’, ‘the *Tusi pese*’, ‘those hymns’, ‘that hymn book’, ‘we heard growing up’, and ‘family favourites’

These are the hymns I grew up with, these are the hymns you hear it being sung at funerals yeah (M2F6)

it all goes back to those old hymns when we all started at church, the Congregational church! I mean there are specific hymns that you hear over and over in funerals umm, and I can only go back to the *Tusi pese*... so you hear just about the same, if it is a PIC or Congregational service, you do hear those hymns repeated in most funerals. (M2F5)

Because a lot of those hymns like for us or for me here, being in New Zealand you know I sing those hymns, my parents sing those hymns other generations sang the same hymns you know. But you know that, those hymns, it’s not just a connection to our culture, that’s kind of like, living history, you know? (M2F3)

The connection of *Tusi pese* and Samoan hymns to faith, comfort and healing is made by many participants. Participants surmised that a funeral without hymns would be ‘strange’ and ‘weird’ and one participant stated that if there is no hymn at a funeral, you would feel ‘different’ and

‘very hardened’. He went on to say that because you are part of the departed, singing hymns in a funeral shows your love for the departed as well as your connection to each other and to God. What becomes apparent as evidenced from the above statement by (M2M5), is that participants are generally talking about the same hymn book.

Many participants spoke about the *Tusi pese* as part of their life; such as the following participant who spoke at length about the power of his experience from when he was young to the present. When he was young, he remembers drawing on the back of the *Tusi pese* while sitting in church. He now has the same *Tusi pese* as a treasure and hopes his children would also come to appreciate it like he does.

When I open the *Tusi pese* like, when I was a kid that *Pese* was umm I draw pictures on it at the back, but when I see that *Pese* on my shelf now, sometimes I have to cry you know... and I still have the same hymn book, and I open it up and I see my scribbling in there and I see my mum’s name (M2F3)

The focus so far in this section has been more on the views from those participants who are middle age and older. The rest of this theme will look at the views of the some of the youngest participants. Although all talked about the hymns in the *Tusi pese*, there are some interesting variations in their meaning making. All these participants had a very high regard for hymns, and stressed their importance in their lives. All were very close to their grandparents, and three of them (two females and a male) (F1 & F3) associated their love of Samoan hymns with these elders whom also took them to church. Each one of these young people were all under the age of thirty with the ages of 16-29 years old and were all born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand. The older male (28 years old) was the only fluent Samoan speaker. Out of this group of three, this male was the most emphatic in his profession in regards to his Christian faith. He spoke

extensively about the power of Samoan hymns in conveying and expressing faith and hope in the message of the Gospel.

One of the females spoke about song being the ‘epitome’ of importance for a funeral and how song had a Christian focus for her grandfather’s funeral. However, for her, spirituality is part of *Fa’asamoa*, and when asked if she was talking about spirituality in terms of the Christian God, she replied “Not necessarily religion, umm more about umm because spirituality transcends religion” (F3F2). Nevertheless, she spoke about her love for the hymns and the wonderful ‘feeling’ she felt when singing them with her family and grandparents. She felt that it was fitting and good that the many favourite hymns of her grandfather, “were the ones that we were sending him off with”. This tribute was reflected in her keeping a scrapbook of all his songs since she was a little girl.

The other female echoed the capacity of hymns to make her experience “*this deep feeling like of nostalgia*”. She further added that there are no other songs that evoke the kinds of emotion she feels when she sings Samoan hymns.

Yeah, I was just saying that because I look at songs and I think, well I’d say I love some of the hymns because it has emotion, like it has feeling I would say both! Like because I grew up doing *Peses* with Nana and all that so I have those memories (F3F3)

An additional young male (F3) who has also enjoyed a close relationship with his grandparents, shared having a powerful experience when people were singing hymns at several different locations during the funeral. Out of the four young people, he spoke the least *Gagana Samoa*. He described something akin to an out of body experience where the sound of the singing together with the instruments made him feel a ‘spiritual vibe’. This participant did not express

any particular belief system; however, he described his experience when hearing the hymns as ‘calming and relaxing’ and feeling like he was ‘with the waves’ and ‘part of the ocean’ and ‘something bigger’.

... the sound of the lyrics matches so like complements the actual sounds of the instrumental so well that it all just sounds like one big instrumental to me! But, and that’s why it gives me the spiritual vibe to it... But you have to like, it was like umm, you have to actually hear it to like feel it!... But it just the way it all sounds together? Like coherently? It kind of reminds me of the family bonds! (M3F3)

Like the older participants, these young participants had many memories of the Samoan hymns from the *Tusi pese* as part of their life experiences. These memories consist of shared experiences where many of the same hymns are heard and sung across different funerals through time. Hymns are part of history and a way of re-remembering of different farewells and important moments. It is a shared thread through which the past is understood and interpreted. The meaning making of these interpretations according to participants, reflect a continuing in both the faith and hope in the message brought by hymns and a connection between participants in their funerals. This continuance is carried also by the young, with different as well as similar understanding of the meaning of hymns in matters of faith and the spiritual.

In summary, the themes under the subcategory ‘Denomination’, has set out the relationship between Samoan hymns, English hymns and the *Tusi pese* as relating to song for the funerals in this research. With a few exceptions, most of the Samoan hymns’ participants identified by title were from the *Tusi pese* utilised by the PIC Church and also the Samoan Congregational Church. Except for one song (Because he lives) all the other English hymns were also sung in

*Gagana Samoa*. The next subcategory ‘Au Talavou’ will present what participants have pinpointed as a powerful influence on their knowledge of song, namely the *Au talavou*.

### **Au talavou (Youth)**

There are three themes under this subcategory, namely: Influencers, Singing the farewell and The Māori connection. When talking about song in their loved one’s funeral, the most cited social structure by participants besides their church and *aiga* is the *Au talavou*. The second subcategory will present what nearly all participants across four families (F1, F2, F3 & F6) identified as a definable aspect of their experience within the PIC church and their relationship with song. The presence of the *Au talavou* as part of different churches is so common that all participants were either aware of it or belonged to it at some time in their life. Many participants were still part of the *Au talavou* at the time of the data collection. All the participants who spoke of their direct experiences as part of the *Au talavou*, were between the ages of 38 and 61 years. Participants spoke of the meaningful relationships formed in the *Au talavou* with different people, including those of the same generation and leaders who mentored and taught them in choir and music.

So, it took me back and the good thing I remember about dad’s funeral is that when we were in church and the songs were being sung, those were the songs that we all knew in the *Au talavou* and they sang those same songs and you know it took me back... And the songs we’d sing are the old songs that we learned from church because all the *Au talavou* kids were there! (M2F1)

The embeddedness of participant’s experience in the church youth choir, in relation to the songs in the funerals for this research is considerable. This experience was brought to bear on participant’s understanding of song; the meaning they attached to song; their participation in

the funeral process in song; their positive attachment to a time in their life remembered in song and *Fa'asamoa*.

Membership in the *Au talavou* is evidenced in the many direct references made by participants between a song in the funeral, and a time in their life spent in the youth choir. The site for learning hymns, Samoan songs, Māori songs, which were part of funerals in this research lead back to this membership. These are the songs the *Au talavou* sang to farewell people who they learned these songs from, and the people they learned these songs with.

As a group, past and present *Au talavou* members were active participators in singing songs with family, the congregation or as a group. Many participants also point to this membership as a place where they learned *Fa'asamoa* and *Gagana Samoa*. Furthermore, the *Au talavou* is a group identity where they 'all know' certain songs and shared memories.

Therefore, the songs in the funerals were attached to their memories of youth, to each other and to their teachers and mentors, the minister, an elder and an influential musician and composer. These influential figures are the focus of the next section.

### ***Influencers***

Participants identified three individuals who were highly influential in their lives namely the PIC Newton church minister Leuatea Iusitini Sio, Peter Tagaloa Su'a and Ulu Manase. The reason for choosing to highlight these individuals is their presence in the data, where they featured in the story of participants concerning their time in the *Au talavou* and their learning of song. All these individuals were part of the leadership in the PIC Newton Church, the minister, a well-known choir master and musician and a deacon who was also a musician. All were composers who were a significant influence on the *Au talavou*. According to participants,

these leaders taught and prepared them to perform for various events whether it was for the church, funerals, singing competitions with other churches or recordings. Decades later, the work by these individuals in the *Au talavou* is evidenced in the data for this research where songs taught by these elders were sung by their mentees at Samoan funerals.

The first individual is the PIC Newton Rev Leuatea Iusitini Sio, otherwise known as the father of Pacific communities. This well-known elder was the first Pacific minister for PIC Newton from 1957 and served for many decades. According to many participants, their minister had a very keen interest in the youth to the extent that he actively sought out scholarships to further their education. He was instrumental in recruiting and nurturing musical talents for the church and youth choirs and a stickler for making sure that the youth pronounced the Samoan words in songs correctly. He was a prolific composer of Samoan *Pese* for cultural events such as *falelufalega*, opening of a new church, and translated well known English hymns into *Gagana Samoa*. He came from a long line of musicians and composers, with a heart for Pacific people who invested much of his energies and time in supporting the youth. He worked across church denominations with a passion for supporting young people in connecting with their culture, and the Samoan language. Two of his original compositions were performed for his funeral which is one of the funerals included as part of this research,

Much of Leua's energy went on the young people! The young people's *Fa'asamoa* was developed here and those who came later learned English (M1F1)

So, we sang one of the songs we recorded back in nineteen eighty-two 'How great thou art' and the words were written by Reverend Sio, ... (F2F1)

Peter Tagaloa Su'a was an established musician, choir master and music arranger who worked with many different choirs for different performances or recording projects. He also had a musical pedigree belonging to a musical family. Nearly half of all the participants cited Peter Tagaloa Su'a as someone who impacted and inspired their learning of song. He was instrumental in the recording projects for PIC Newton as well as many other congregations and the most cited individual by over a third of the participants and in the words of one participant *'because he was a really important part when we think of the Au faiPese' (choir)*. Some participants had Su'a as their piano teacher and many of these individuals have gone on to be musicians themselves. Tagaloa was supported by the PIC Newton church minister Rev Leuatea Iusitini Sio to work with the *Au talavou* where he was innovative and challenged some of the thinking about what song in church should look like. The first of following three quotes evidence the influence of Peter Tagaloa in the *Au talavou*. The last two participants share their admiration for Tagaloa's talent and recognise his skill as a musician and as an innovator in changing the style of song in his work with the *Au talavou* and the church overall.

The *Au talavou* people. I mean their age group, (Names of people) and they came and they sang. Do you remember Tagaloa Peter Su'a? Yeah, so, all his songs (M2F3)

Yeah, Peter Tagaloa he was. He was an established musician! Very gifted! And umm he, he changed the tempo in the church! He jazzed up the songs in church. But the old people, they're against changes! You know? And Peter is a guy that would change anything! Fiapoko ia! (He's a know it all!) (Laughing). So, Peter also introduced umm him playing the organ, so it will be a piano and there will be a guitar (Laughing) And I tell you what! It feels like we're in heaven..." (M1F1)

Peter Su'a was a genius!... Yeah so, he changed it to that, but then he put two umm soloists singing the first part and then we all join in during the verse and at the end there was this great crescendo of sound. It was brilliant! (M2F1)

Ulu Manase was a deacon, an elder at the PIC Newton church and a musician composer. Several participants spoke about his influence on them in the *Au talavou*. He was described as a hard taskmaster and a stickler for young people pronouncing Samoan words properly and people giving their all when performing song. Three of his children are participants for this research, and one of his daughters described how her dad would stop them in the midst of the song if he was hearing that something was not sounding right. One of this elder's composition was performed for his funeral which is also part of this research.

... when I was sitting there, I said this is one of dad's songs that he was composing and she said yeah it is! And he was really good at it and everybody remembered him for his songs and his little ukulele he used to play to give him his tempo and his tune (M2F1)

Much of the positive experiences and learning of song in the *Au talavou* has been attributed to the above three individuals. They shared a history with many participants leaving a legacy where those who were mentored are now taking those songs forward to share when fare-welling their loved ones. Several of the participants in this research have become musicians themselves, citing the above three influencers as playing a part in their history and the learning of song. There were original compositions by two of the influences that were part of their funerals namely; Leuatea Iusitini Sio and Ulu Manase. The next theme will take a closer look at the *Au talavou* when they sang for the funerals in this research.

### *Singing the farewell*

According to participants, the *Au talavou* farewelled the departed with song (F1, F2, F3 & F6). This mostly took place where the body lay in state at the family home for all the families, except for F2, where this was at two locations the family home and a hall at the Tokelauan church in Grey Lynn Ponsonby.

A recurrent theme when the *Au talavou* sang for any of the above funerals, was the remembering of where they had learned these songs and the sharing of their experiences. Often, the term ‘kids’ was used to describe the group as they were young when they were part of the group evidenced by the following comment “*the songs we’d sing are all the old songs that we learned from church because all the Au talavou kids were there*”. When describing the scene, former *Au talavou* members would share that they would ‘sit around and sing’ or ‘jam’ late into the night as part of the vigil for a funeral. A big part of the singing was the retelling of stories around a certain song and what happened at the time they were learning it, often with humorous stories resulting with much laughter. Many of the stories would involve the loved one they are fare-welling and reminding each other of when they were scolded or reprimanded by an elder. This was especially true for the three individuals focused upon in the previous theme. These occasions were also an opportunity for former *Au talavou* members to catch up with each other while supporting their families, church and friends.

The singing for the *Au talavou* as part of an all-night vigil was an arduous task, although this was buoyed by the encouragement of the group and others present. As well as singing, group members were often multi-tasking with rounds of making cups of tea, serving food and serving the family or elders. This was a normal expectation when there was a funeral in the church, everyone helped to support the family. Many members were also instrumentalists playing

guitar or the piano. All took part in reminding each other of the songs they knew including hymns, ‘worldly song’ in English and Māori waiata (covered in an upcoming section).

The considerable role of the *Au talavou* in the PIC church is evidenced by their great contribution in four of the funerals in this research for (F1, F2, F3 & F6). The first quote is from a male elder participant (M1F1). His observations are that of an elder from the family (F1) who noticed how hard the youth choir (*Au talavou*) worked through the night for the funeral.

And the songs! They were great! The songs that night! At the house. And ..., all night the poor girl stood there with her guitar! Yeah, and the *Au talavou* they worked and suffered that night! The talking, the cooking, all the stuff was done by the PIC Church! You know the *Au talavou*. (M1F1)

The next quote two quotes are from two sisters in (F1). Both are middle age and members of the *Au talavou*. The elder sister (F2F1) had a leadership role in the *Au talavou* as she is also a musician. They are sharing here about the support they received from the *Au talavou* at home when their father’s body lay in state. Note how the elder sister talks about their departed father having being part of the *Au talavou*-he was also a musician and one of the ‘influencers’ in the previous theme. The younger sister (F3F1) makes the connection between her departed father and the songs the *Au talavou* were singing and remembering-songs they learned for the departed.

... we had like we had different groups, we had our *Au talavou*, our Sunday school, we had like family just sharing some memories... trying to stick to traditional umm you

know? One three eight (138 number of songs in PIC hymn book), ninety-two umm and ones that our *Au talavou* recorded, that dad was part of (F2F1)

Yeah, when they (*Au talavou*) come and he lay in state at home. They would all come and sing, they'd jam and they'd go oh do you remember when he taught us this?... the history of that song came out and there would, they'd be jamming but it was hearing the history through song" (F3F1)

The following quote from (F1F2) provides a glimpse of the history and connections between different choirs and another church as in her words 'this music thing has been generational'. The *Au talavou* played a significant role in this participant's father's funeral.

Out of that you know combining like working together came a choir called the Lyric choir umm so that belonged to Newton and St John the members. We had our own youth choir at the time with ... but so, this music thing has been generational! (F1F2)

In the next quote, a sister of the departed for (F3) is sharing about the *Au talavou* singing and supporting her family when her brother passed away. Although he had stopped attending PIC Newton church when he passed away, he had had nevertheless spent much of his youth and young adulthood as a member of the *Au talavou*.

Because the *Au talavou* (Youth choir) former *Au talavou* members came when they found out about (brother), because (brother) would know this is the singing we did from, we all went to *Au talavou* (F2F3)

Although the next participant was attending PIC Glen Eden at the time of her mother's funeral, her family had previously worshipped at PIC Newton for many decades. In the following, she

talks about the *Au talavou* from PIC Newton coming to sing for her mother's funeral and acknowledging the history and connection between her family and PIC Newton. She and her siblings were former members of the PIC Newton *Au talavou* also.

All Samoan hymns umm aunty... picked and I think the only English song that was there was umm the one that was sung by the Newton old *Au talavou* older people, because they came on behalf of me and my siblings because of how we were there (F2F6)

As part of the church, the *Au talavou* or the youth group had a considerable presence in singing the farewell for four of the funerals in this research (F1, F2, F3 & F6). Although the majority of participants who identified the *Au talavou* as a significant influence on their learning of song were over the age of forty at the time of this research, they nevertheless identified a time in their youth of learning song, powerfully connecting them to their past, to singing for the funerals here. It was an experience that bonded them with other individuals in the same generation including elders who taught them. Years later, they continue to carry this identity, coming together to sing and farewell members of their community, re-affirming relationships and reminiscing in a shared history.

### ***The Māori connection***

The participants who talked about 'Māori songs' as being part of the funeral for their loved one, were from four of the families (F1, F2, F3 & F5). None of the waiata were identified by title. The first three families were from the PIC church and (F5) were members of the Congregational Christian song in Samoa. However, some of this family did not maintain this congregational membership in Aotearoa as some members worshipped at the Assembly of God

and the departed uncle did not go to any church. This family sang waiata as part of on-going singing when their dearly departed uncle lay in state at home.

As mentioned above, participants remembered these songs as ‘Māori songs’ without identifying their song title. These songs were not part of any of the formal funeral program, rather they were sung by the *Au talavou* when the body lay in state. For (F2), Māori friends of one of the daughters of the departed were present for much of the over a week-long funeral where they sang waiata to honour their friend’s father and his family. Included were original waiata written for these friends and their whanau from Ngati Whatua.

... for me it was like an honour, to sit there, listen to a waiata, and feel it, heartfelt, because a lot of the times, we did the singing umm with our aunties, our uncles, but actually when they (Sister’s Māori whanau) came it was really beautiful. And I thought that just brought another dimension to him being honoured... That tangata whenua had come. And you know, it wasn’t like that they just came for one day (F1F2)

Māori cultural practices are part of some Samoan funerals. The singing of waiata was done by *tangata whenua* at two locations, when the body lay in state in church and when the body lay in state at the family home. Some of the waiata were original compositions written for whanau and sung by Māori friends of one of the participants for her father’s funeral. Together they sang waiata, to farewell a dad, a grandfather, a minister referred to as the ‘Father of the Pacific community’.

The *Au talavou* sang Māori songs when honouring a fellow member in another funeral at his family home. These were songs they had learned together in the church youth choir decades before. The coming together of Māori culture in the work place to offer a salute as a farewell

gesture in a Samoan funeral is an interesting finding in this research. The work place of the departed (F3) honoured their friend and colleague during the last phase of his funeral. On the way to the burial, the funeral procession stopped at two locations where he worked where hundreds of colleagues gathered for a final farewell. A haka was performed by his work mates, and ‘they lifted up the hoist forklifts up high’ for the funeral procession to pass under, painting a powerful picture of a tribute to a friend and colleague.

The presence of *tangata whenua* and the inclusion of waiata occurred with four of the funerals.

In summary, the subcategory ‘Au Talavou’ has presented the considerable role of this group in song for four of the funerals (F1, F2, F3 & F6). Three influential figures have been identified by participants as significant in their experiences of song and learning as part of this group. These three individuals were all accomplished musicians and composers who had leadership roles in PIC Newton with high competence in *Gagana Samoa*. Participants have also identified the *Au talavou* as a group who sang waiata, not as a formal part of a funeral service, but when they took part in a vigil when the body of a loved one lay in state at the family home. Although (F5) did not have the *Au talavou* or any choir come to sing at the family home when their loved one lay in state at home, the family nevertheless held a night vigil where they sang songs including waiata. Of additional importance is the belonging to the *Au talavou* as an identity marker shared by many of the participants. When singing to farewell a loved family member or a member of their community, participants sang under the group identity of the *Au talavou*.

### **Family practices**

The third subcategory under ‘History in song’ will look at the way song is part of family practices. Participants identified song as part of family activity including family gatherings, song practice, funerals, with roots going back to Samoa. These practices include the composing

of song to farewell a family member; the family gathering for devotion; the singing of the same songs from previous funerals and events and the preparation of song/s as a family for a funeral. In these family gatherings, participants have pointed to certain songs that the family have become accustomed to singing, passing on song from generation to generation. These songs are often sung for other family funerals, as well as recognising the same songs in other funerals in the Samoan community. Some of these songs are hymns which are presented under the first subcategory 'Denomination'.

A contrasting perspective from the key person will be included towards the end of this section, suggesting that such family practices may be on the decrease in Samoan families in Aotearoa. The following statement is referring to the practice of a family preparing for a funeral by singing together at the end of the day. This family has continued this practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

... and that's what my dad's family does in Samoa, they would always have this big massive choir practice ...and we always look forward to that cause you're busy during the day and like at the end of the day just have a sing along and start learning the songs for the family service (F2F1)

The two themes under this subcategory are 'Favourites' and 'Connection to other family funerals'.

Family practice involving song was the case for five of the six families in this research (except F4). According to the data, some of the families (F1 & F2) had a stronger tradition in terms of regular meetings and gatherings to learn song as part of family devotion or to prepare for a funeral. Nevertheless, there is evidence in the data that (F3, F5 & F6) also practice the same as

the above two families, although maybe to a lesser degree. To remind the reader (F1, F2, & F3) are from PIC Newton and (F6) are former members of the Newton mother church but at the time of this research they were PIC Glen Eden and (F5) are from the Congregational church.

... we had a practice; we called all the cousins to come the night after. Because uncle passed away on Sunday, Tuesday before his body came out, I just told everyone to come and we'll have practice. Because all my first cousins...There's heaps! There are fifty or sixty of us (F3F5)

Two of the families (F1 & F2) were led by elders who were accomplished musicians and composers with deep knowledge of *Gagana* Samoa. They also come from a tradition of composing song beginning with their families in Samoa, one was the church minister, and the other a deacon were both highly active in the mentoring and teaching of song in the church, with a strong focus on the church youth. Original composition by both of these elders were included in their farewells. Like the other three families, all practice family devotion accompanied by song.

...it started with our uncle called ... umm he started for that particular family service, he had written a song, umm for us to sing or farewell our aunty and umm you know, I look back now and I think 'Oh my gosh' it just carried on, even to this day, every time we have a close aunty and aunty, a sister, a brother or, a song is always written for that occasion (F1F2)

The gathering of family to learn song and pray together in preparation for the farewelling of a loved one took place for all the five families mentioned at the beginning of this section. However, the loudest voices on this theme were participants from (F1, F2 & F5). In the case

of (F2) where the funeral duration was well over a week, the family regrouped in the evenings to pray and sing and gather their strength for the next day.

So, before he died because he was close, he wanted to meet with us and he told us. He had us learning songs (F2F2)

... we'd kind of do song practice then finish with a loku (prayer) and then everyone can just go home, and kind of like be happy and finish the day on a good note. (F3F2)

The picture presented thus far of Samoan families coming together to pray and sing in preparation for a funeral, is a contrast to some of the professional experiences of the key person for this research. This participant reports that his experience in funerals, indicate that there are more Samoan people who do not know the Samoan hymns. This is particularly the case with the younger generation. His role as a funeral director provides a vantage point where he has noticed family having less connection and *Mafutaga* (close relationship), and at times asking him to suggest a Samoan hymn for funerals.

Sustainability of music or what is the sustainability of the hymns, you know, yeah, the mafukaga (Close relationships) is key. Because if we're not singing it to the next generation, we're going to be taking it to our graves! (Key Person)

Coming together as a family practice to pray and prepare in song for a funeral has been presented as being evidenced in the data. For most of the families, song has accompanied the preparation and farewelling of their loved one as part of their history. In these gatherings, family members strengthen bonds and continue singing songs they have carried with them, and imparting them to the younger generation. Although there is a perspective contrasting this finding, the data nevertheless suggest that with many Samoan families, this practice continues

Following will be a closer look at songs that are ‘favourites’ for families that are not hymns.

These songs are Samoan songs, English pop songs and original compositions.

### *Favourites*

This theme will focus firstly on what participants have identified as popular Samoan songs (see Table 7), followed by the English pop songs and original compositions that were sung for the funerals. Song favoured by families were sometimes shared across some families, while some songs are particular to one or two families

**Table 7.** Favourite songs

<b>Samoan songs</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>English pop songs</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Mo’omo’oga	(F2 & F5)	Crying in the rain (AHA)	(F3)
Lota <i>Nu’u</i>	(F1, F2 & F3)	Whisky Lullaby	(F4)
Samoae lo’u <i>AtuNu’u</i>	(F1, F2 & F3)	Are you lonesome tonight (Elvis)	(F5)
Falealili uma	(F2)	Mama (Boyz to men)	(F6)
Pei o se lamepa susulu	(F5)	Blue bay you (Linda Ronstadt)	(F5)
Filemu pei o le lupe	(F2)	Three little birds (Bob Marley)	(F5)
Lo’u seie lo’u pale auro	(F2)	Red red wine (UB40)	(F5)
O lau lupe ua lele	(F6)	After the loving (Humperdinck)	(F5)
E oso a’e pea le la (laoso band)	(F5)		
Liliu le taimi (vaniah tola)	(F3 & F5)		
Two original samoan songs by ulu manase and one by his nephew (no title)	(F1)		
Two samoan song originals by rev leua sio	(F2)		
o iesu ua valaa’u mai’ Samoa lagi ia sau vi’i			

There were twelve popular Samoan songs and eight pop songs in English. Over half of these English pop songs were from (F5) and one a piece for (F3, F4 & F6). The Samoan songs were from all five families except (F4), with one Samoan song identified as a village song for (F2). One song (favoured by F1, F2 & F3) is '*Samoa lo'u Atunu'u*' (Samoa my country), an old Samoan song written in the 1950s. An interesting connection is (F2) with six of the ten Samoan songs and three of them were identified as only being sung for this family funeral. This family also had the strongest presence in the data in regards to having a longstanding consistent 'family practice' of gathering and singing together. Of additional interest is the inclusion by (F5) of the songs (9 & 10) under the 'Samoan songs' list. Of all the Samoan songs, these are the latest to be composed, both are releases in popular music in Aotearoa New Zealand. Half of the other eight songs were written in the 1950s and 1960s, and it is not clear when the original compositions (11 & 12 & 13) were written. An interesting finding is the only village song in the data (5) is for (F2). Original compositions in *Gagana Samoa* (11, 12 & 13) were written by two of the 'great influencers', the minister Leua Iusitini Sio, and an elder deacon Ulu Manase. Their original compositions were performed for their final farewell them (F1 & F2). Two original compositions (13) were not identified by title and it is unclear which language they were written in. Both were written for (F1), one by a nephew of the departed and the other by a female member of the *Au talavou* and the daughter of the minister.

There were a lot of songs that were used, that we were able to, starting with the hymns. In Samoan. They were all Samoan songs. There are those songs that we're used to like 'Lo'u sei e', 'Lo'u sei e, lou pale auroe' (Both singing). These are the songs and many others have done so it's 'Mo'omo'oga' (Both singing). There are also songs composed

by the old man, that people were able to sing along with and there was an original song that Tagaloa Peter Su'a did a solo in (M1F2)

The song *Lota Nu'u* (2) was sung for three funerals (F1, F2 & F3) and at the burial for (F1 & F3). Many participants referred to this song as one that 'all Samoans know'. The popularity and appeal of this song is evidenced by the male elder for (F1) pointing out that different choirs and groups sang this song four times in one evening. The emotion evoked by this song is indicated by this elder's words when he said '*It takes people's breath away*'. *Lota Nu'u* (Our village) was also identified as song which is sung at the closing of a gathering. The meaning of this song as an identity marker for participants, is evidenced by their strong emotion when talking about this song: "*I always heard that song at the end and I wouldn't associate it just for ... funeral but every Samoan funeral I've been to, you're going to hear that song*" (M2F3).

Under the 'English pop songs' list, five of these songs were from one family (F5). The funeral for this family was only a few weeks before data collection. All these songs were favourites of the departed according to participants who were very close to their departed uncle, hence why all the nephews and nieces knew his favourite 'party songs'. The proximity of the time of this funeral to the data-collection plus this close relationship may explain why family members knew so many songs from the funeral by title. The location where these songs were sung was at the family homestead when the body lay in state, and as a tribute to their uncle his nieces and nephews had a vigil where they sang all the songs they could remember.

And all those songs we played like um UB40 'Red red wine' ... so they did a playlist of all the songs that he liked when he was drinking and stuff and when he was hanging out with the family. So, there's a lot of party go to songs! Reggae songs, Elvis songs. Yeah, Bob Marley was in there, Three little birds... (M2F5)

Songs (1 & 3) for (F3 & F6) were the only two English pop songs chosen by one individual, a brother and a son as a personal tribute. Both songs accompanied a power point presentation with photos representing the life of the departed. The song ‘Crying in the rain’ was a favourite of the departed for (F3), chosen by his brother. The other song ‘Mama’ was chosen by a son as a tribute to his mother (F6). The departed did not know or was familiar with this song. There is no evidence in the data that there was any singing of these two songs in the funeral. However, they were identified by participants as being part of the farewell.

### *Connection to other family funerals*

Participants often referred to songs in the funerals as having a connection to other family funerals. This was also the case for other Samoan funerals in general. In regards to other family funerals, this was the case for (F1, F2, F5 & F6). Participants often referred to songs that are Samoan songs, Samoan hymns, and original Samoan compositions in other family funerals as having being sung in the funerals for this research. With original Samoan composition, (F1), a song writing family tradition include the substituting of key words in the same song for different family funerals. Two participants from this family are musicians nurtured through the PIC Newton church where their father was an influential elder and musician, who was also a composer. A strong tradition of song writing in (F2) also evidences a history of crafting song for family funerals. Both of these families have had strong leadership in *Gagana Samoa*, song and *Fa’asamoa* reflected in their history beginning in Samoa.

because he was a musician too... we have this umm, song that we sing at mostly all our, dad’s family funerals. So, they just switch the names and change the words a little bit, but that everyone is, familiar with... I think we first song, sang it, maybe twenty years ago? Over yeah, at our other auntie’s funeral, one in Kukuila (Pago Pago) (F2F1)

...it started with our uncle called ... umm he started for that particular family service, he had written a song, umm for us to sing or farewell our aunty and umm you know, I look back now and I think 'Oh my gosh' it just carried on, even to this day, every time we have a close aunty and aunty, a sister, a brother or, a song is always written for that occasion (F1F2)

The following quote evidence the choice of a contemporary popular Samoan song due to a connection-it was a song that had been used for a prior funeral of an elder for this family (F6 & F3).

The presentation only had two songs. I chose the first one and umm we decided to choose a song that we used for dad's presentation. It was 'Liliu le taimi' (Turn or change of the time) ... Yeah so, we rolled that song straight after 'Crying in the rain' (M2F6)

In summary, the subcategory 'Family Practices' has presented the connections made by participants between songs they know and favourites for their family funerals as part of their history in song. These songs consist of Samoan and English hymns, Samoan songs, English pop songs and original compositions in Samoan. In general, song reflected and were part of family practice sometimes connected to its beginning in Samoa and continued in Aotearoa New Zealand. Song as a family practice whether in devotions or as part of preparation for a funeral was also connected to church denominations and reflected the taste in song for the departed. Although it did not occur often, there were two instances (F3, F6) where an English pop song was chosen by one individual. In the case of (F3), the song was a favourite of the departed, and with (F6), the song was a personal tribute from a son of the departed although the departed did not know this song. Although the evidence here suggests that there is a continuance of family practices involving coming together to sing and strengthen family bonds, there is a suggestion

from the key person that these bonds may be weakening evidenced in his professional experience where some Samoan *aiga* are not familiar with a Samoan hymn when they farewell a loved one.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has set out a broad look at what the second category 'History in song' entails, and what participants have shared about how song evoked memories of where they have come from and the relationships they associated with these memories. Song, for these participants represent a remembering of their past, bringing them to the present day as they continue to sing many of these songs as part of a continuum of their history.

Most participants identified the PIC Newton church as being their home church. For some, this is no longer the case as they presently attend another PIC church or another denomination such as the Catholic church. However, they still identify with their former home church and continue to have family and social relationships connecting them, eventuating in their coming together with others to sing the farewell for the funerals of loved ones whether family or community members. One family had clear ties to the Samoan Congregational church in their village in Samoa. Church denominations identified by participants generally correspond with the Samoan hymns identified by participants, including songs that were not identified by title. Except for one English hymn which was sung by an individual, four well known English hymns were translated in to *Gagana Samoa* and were part of four of the funerals.

According to participants from the PIC families (F1, F2, F3 & F6), the *Tusi pese* (Hymn Book) has been a powerful part of their history with song, evidenced by the hymns they remembered as part of their funerals as well as their family practice. This remembering is a recurrent theme where participants identified people of their own age group as an important part of their history

with song, due to shared experiences in the church and in particular being part of the *Au talavou* (youth group) or other church groups such as choir.

When participants remembered a song, they would locate this song with events and people in a time and place. There is some variation in regards to where participants located the learning of song depending on whether it was a hymn, original Samoan composition, Samoan song or English pop song. The most clearly identified location in the data by participants are: their church; a group within their church such as the *Au talavou* (youth) and their *aiga*. The extent of the influence of the *Tusi pese* is evidenced by participants across all the families knowing or being familiar with certain hymns, including those who identified as Catholic and Congregational.

Part of this history included individuals recognised by participants as being highly influential in their mentoring, and teaching of song. This was especially the case with those families (F1, F2, F3 & F6) who were part of the PIC Newton church. These individuals were part the church leadership hierarchy who taught not only Samoan hymns, but also original compositions in Samoan. Māori and English songs were included in their repertoire as well as ‘traditional’ Samoan song. Participants spoke of the work these mentors and elders carried out, preparing the *Au talavou* for competitions in song performance and recording projects. An underpinning philosophy by the minister of the PIC Newton church was to ensure that young people were nurtured in their *Gagana Samoa* and *Fa’asamoa* through song.

The Samoan songs identified by participants were songs they learned from their church, *aiga* and from recordings from Samoan music groups as they were growing up. The data tells us that the composing of Samoan songs was a normative practice in the PIC Newton church, where there were several well-known composers, many musical *aiga* including a long serving

minister who also came from a long line of composers and musicians. Funerals for (F1 & F2) included original Samoan compositions as part of the funeral although only songs for (F2) were identified by song titles. The English pop songs (or western songs) are not as prevalent across the dataset, but feature strongly in the funeral for (F5) with one song apiece for (F3, F4 & F6). For (F5), these songs were largely due to the departed and his strong relationships with his family hence their knowing of his favourite 'party songs'. The English pop song for (F3) was also due to the siblings and cousins of the departed being well aware of some his favourite songs and in this case, a rock song in the English language. For (F6) the choice of a ballad in English was solely due to the choice of an individual, a son of the departed making a personal tribute to his mother.

Participants identified thirty-six songs by title, as being part of the funeral for their loved one. Twelve of these songs were Samoan hymns with four well known English hymns that were translated into *Gagana Samoa*, and one additional hymn sung by an individual in English. There were four original Samoan composition with two being identified by title, ten Samoan songs, and eight pop songs in English. Participants from four families (F1, F2, F3 & F5) remembered that 'Māori songs' were sung at the funeral for their loved one, (no titles) with a haka performed by work colleagues of the departed for one of these funerals (F3) on the way to the burial. There were also no song titles provided by participants from two families (F1 & F2) who remembered that choirs sang Niuean, Tokelauan and Cook Island songs and for (F1 & F4), Catholic hymns. This was also the case for (F5) where participants shared that they were part Tuvaluan and therefore Tuvaluan songs were sung, no song titles were provided here also.

What is evident from this category in the findings, is the interconnections between song, participant's history and their relationships, with their *aiga*, church, the *Au talavou* and each

other. The songs identified by participants as being part of their loved one's funeral is also part of their memories and history with people, places and events such as other funerals. The story of song and farewelling their dead is also the story of their history.

## CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS CATEGORY 3 – CONNECTION IN SONG

### Introduction

This is the third main category emerging from the data. Building on the discussion of the characteristics and dynamics of *Fa'asamoa* and a discussion of historical context of song, this section will focus on participants' articulation of the connection in song. In the funeral of their loved one, they experienced this connection on an individual and collective level with each other, the departed, their history and their God. The story of this connection is told in this chapter evidenced with quotes from participants.

The articulation by the participants on the 'connection in song' will be presented under three subcategories as highlighted in Table 7.1, namely 'Purpose', 'Who decides?' and 'Who sings?' These headings were chosen as umbrella terms to house the breadth and nuances emerging from the data:

That singing is very important! It actually calms the people. It makes people close to the person that just passed... and each other and to God (M1F1)

Yeah, you know before Christianity because you know when people usually ask why do you sing? Why do you sing those songs? It's because of a feeling it creates in here, in here (Pointing to head and heart) and a lot of people want to connect it to somewhere (M2F3)

**Table 7.1: 'Connection in song' as a category emerging from the data**

<b>Category 3: Connection in song</b>	Purpose	Spiritual experience/connection Le Fe'au (The message) Mana Unbroken chain Emotion
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		Honouring the dead
	Who decides?	<i>Aiga</i> <i>Tama 'ita 'i Lima taumatau</i> Elders
	Who sings?	NZ born <i>Aiga</i> Congregation In the moment

Following is the first subcategory titled ‘Purpose’, reflecting some of the participants’ *Talanoa* about the ‘usefulness’ of song in a funeral as well as in other challenging situations experienced in life. “To lighten the feeling! In whatever you’re doing in whatever situation, whatever the context! O ina e galue ai le *Pese!* That is where the song does its work!” (F1F3)

### **Purpose**

Song is an integral part of the *sauniga* (preparation) when a loved one is farewelled and prepared for the journey beyond in a Samoan funeral. Singing the farewell in Samoan funerals is a practice, a ritual, that has continued to be part of *Fa’asamoa* throughout history. Song facilitates a continuing relationship, a communing between Samoan people with the spiritual, God, ancestors, and who they are today-in Aotearoa in the sacred *Va*.

Across the dataset, the purpose of the songs was identified by participants as facilitating several different connections, namely at a spiritual level, to enable collective comfort, healing, praise and thanksgiving to God, to express and convey emotion and honouring the dead. Song conveys and facilitates with *mana* all of the above, whereby the *Lagona* (feeling) is amplified leading to a powerfully intense experience of connectivity with the spiritual and emotions.

In other words, song is a pathway through which the depth and breadth of connection to the spiritual and emotions, as a community and as individuals is realised. *This realisation is the*

*main purpose for song.* It is a portal through which communication is powerfully conveyed and experienced, giving and making meaning in the lives of participants, their *aiga*, *mourners*, *friends and congregation*.

The medium accessed and realised through song is the spiritual. What is experienced in the spiritual is connectivity facilitating positive outcomes. The *mana* of song as a conveyor and facilitator is honouring to all. What is conveyed is a message (*fe'au*) of affirmation, *Alofa*, belonging and unity. All this has been a continuum of a shared experience for Samoan people. It must be stated that as much as all of the above connections have been presented in arbitrary 'parts' as in categories, subcategories, themes and so forth, these connections from the participant's perspective belong in a constellation of meaning and a world view. Therefore, the inevitability in the overlapping of these connections in their presentation, is a given challenge in any attempt to keep them discreet.

The following quote from a young female participant highlights the idea of connectivity in song, where people experience connectivity and unity in a Samoan funeral.

I think it shows umm like a spiritual connection to each other, to being part of something also like umm like something about people feeling connected with music. And I think that's a part, a lot of what *Fa'asamoa* is, it's about connectivity! And umm using things that's been passed down like songs, and using them to kind of like umm get to know, to use practice to get to know each other to sing together as a family to and to unite and sing one *Pese* that not everyone even knows all the words to it's you know, It' a feeling of unity, I feel. I feel like song, that's what song is, that's *Fa'asamoa* and song have in common (F3F2)

All that is experienced by participants in song as a spiritual connection is often expressed as a constellation of meanings. In other words, participants often include several things such as, comfort, thanksgiving, healing and more in one statement, making it challenging to present their experiences as discrete, separate from other aspects of their understanding. Any ‘overlapping’ in the presentation of these experiences is more a reflection of participants world view, within the limitations of the written word as a medium. This will become evident in some of the quotes presented. Therefore, in the interest of staying true to the voices of participants, the overlapping is inevitable as their view of different aspects of their experiences is that of; they are part of a whole.

The themes represented under this subcategory of ‘Purpose’ are six-fold: Spiritual, Le feu (the message), Mana, Unbroken chain, ‘Emotion’ and ‘Honouring the dead’. These themes signal that the purpose of song in Samoan funerals is to a) connect with the spiritual, to b) amplify the spiritual experience through conveying a particular message with mana, c) as part of a continuing cycle (unbroken chain) of shared connection from the past to the present, to d) connect and facilitate emotion and to e) honouring the dead.

### ***Spiritual experience/connection***

In the discussion of the *Fa’asamoa* category (Category 1) the value of *le va*, was presented, where social relationships are considered sacred. This sacred quality inherent in the relational began from a spiritual belief system pre-colonisation, to the present day reconciled with Christianity. Although spirituality was not included in that category as a theme, it is provided here to give context to ‘spiritual’, as something participants experienced in song in the funeral of their loved one, and as something they view as having always been there, in Samoa. In other words, the genesis of ‘spiritual’ or ‘spirituality’ is identified by participants as having existed

and experienced in Samoa by Samoan people before the arrival of the missionaries, and has continued to the present. Except for one participant, all identified as being of the Christian faith.

This spirituality from pre-missionaries is evidenced in the following quote from an elder female indicating that song as in chants, is a spiritual practice where blessing is sought for a positive outcome in games in Samoa. Other participants also echoed the point made by this elder in regards to song being part of the fabric of life in Samoan life pre-colonisation to the present. There were songs for fishing, work, planting, farewelling the dead and different tasks as part of the spiritual life for Samoan people.

That's what I'm talking about, those things that are chants, it's like all these villages/islands, they have them, you find them, the chants, because they're very similar... The (tapua'iga) worship and prayers...there is the group of old men who are praying and asking for a blessing for the game, and also the group (The batting team) who are praying and encouraging their team! (F1F3)

The words '*Lagona*' (To feel, to sense, to experience), and 'feeling' was often used by participants to describe the spiritual connection they experienced in song in the funeral. Many of them also shared that they had experienced this in other funerals. In other words, this was not a new experience for any of the participants; it was an experience they were familiar with.

I think it's the spirituality and song it's about that feeling of, how should I, it's a feeling!... Yeah! It's a *Lagona*! That's exactly what it is... (F3F2)

I think people underestimate the role of a song, in a funeral like people take it for granted, not people, I'm just saying sometimes we take it for granted because we do it all the time you know? (M2F3)

The above participants point to a practice where song is part of funerals and part of life for Samoan people. In other words, it is woven in as part of the very fabric of Samoan life where it is a given, to the extent that this participant is suggesting that it is taken for granted. According to one participant, song continues to be something that '*sparks the nineth heaven*', referring to Samoan spiritual beliefs before colonisation where there are ten heavens.

Except for one participant, all identified themselves as Christians. Participants saw no contradiction between their Christian beliefs and ancient Samoan beliefs, insofar as spirituality has always been part of *Fa'asamoa* and being a Samoan. Although a Christian, the following participant articulates the spiritual as being part of being Samoan. Like many other participants, she has the view that individuals have a spirit which can *Lagona* (feel) the spirit and makes connection with the spirit in others. The spiritual realm as a connection point in *or* through song for all participants, is woven throughout their *Talanoa*.

It's not just a physical thing, it's very much spiritual! It's that connection! So, it's that connection, not so much Christianity, but you know in our own, being Samoan that our spirit feels their spirit and they're moving and that's why we become emotive (F1F2)

The same participant talked about the difference in *Lagona* between reading the words of a song and singing the song. When the words are sung according to her, "*It's like things are awakened...awakening yeah, yeah a spiritual thing*" (F1F2). This spiritual experience as

activated or opened up in song is a recurrent theme when participants talked about the ‘purpose’ for song and the ‘connection’ made in song.

To highlight some of the differences in the understanding of ‘spiritual’ across the participants, a young male offers his perspective. He shared about the difference between Kanye West doing music for a church service which is like a ‘giant performance’ juxtaposed to his experience at his uncle’s funeral. There, he found a ‘simplicity’ culminating in his experiencing a ‘spiritual vibe’. This participant is 16 years old with a Samoan father, and although he has been around Samoan speakers all his life and is familiar with the sound, he does not speak Samoan. Nevertheless, he shared about his powerful experience of a ‘spiritual vibe’ when listening to Samoan song at his uncle’s funeral.

And I think for me personally like because I don’t understand the words, it’s kind of just all mixes together likes its inter-twined! Because the sound of the lyrics matches so like complements the actual sounds of the instrumental so well that it all just sounds like one big instrumental to me! But, and that’s why it gives me the spiritual vibe to it!  
(M3F3)

Another participant talks about song as a way of feeling their loved one who has passed away, despite not being able to see them. This participant is a Christian who also sees spirituality as part of her Samoan identity.

It’s like you, the feeling of love, and then that’s how you embrace the loved one that has passed on! It’s because their body is no longer here, you know even though spiritually you can’t see them, but you can feel them! So, in words, in ways of feeling them, it’s through song! You know that’s how I present that. (F2F5)

When participants identified ‘spirituality’ or the ‘spiritual’ in song within their Christian faith, a recurrent theme is the giving of praise and thanksgiving to God. In the following quote, this participant connects the hearing of Samoan songs with thanking God, healing, thanksgiving and hope.

Giving praise!... Giving praise! ...But also, at the same time I guess for me hearing Samoan songs is healing! It’s healing and just hearing the words, it just makes you think and umm and also umm I don’t know, makes you think and also to appreciate!... Yep! Just appreciate you know what the Lord has done in your life and also in the lives of those that have passed on!... A unifying thing, a spiritual thing!... yeah it is, it’s umm just yeah, I mean for me yeah, a funeral, a funeral is hard but hearing songs being sung especially the old school songs and stuff, it really lifts your spirit! (F2F6)

The recurrent theme of song being a connection for mourners and family to the spiritual realm is connected to another theme from participants, namely song being something that lightens what people are facing and feeling. In one elderly female’s words “*That is where the song does it’s work!*” The following quote is from the same participant who talks about songs being chosen to ‘*bring that spirit of comfort*’ in the funeral.

To comfort the family! It’s not just songs to comfort, but songs that bring that spirit of comfort to anyone even if they worship somewhere else, we are one in this spirit, it is as one that we are comforted. That is how the songs were chosen to be used. (F1F3)

This theme has looked at what participants have to say about their experiences of spiritual connection in song in their loved one’s funeral. An interesting point made by the above participant is that song not only comforts but *brings that spirit of comfort*. Although almost all

participants identified as Christian, ‘spiritual’ or ‘spirituality’ for them is a continuum from before the missionaries arrived in Samoa to the present. In other words, participants did not express any angst about reconciling a before and post-colonisation spirituality, or made any distinction between an indigenous and Christian spirituality. Instead, they viewed spirituality as one uninterrupted and continuing reality in their lives which became awakened or amplified in song. This leads to the next section where we will look at what participants have to say about *what* is the meaningfulness of this spiritual connection in song.

### ***Le Fe’au (The message)***

In the above theme, participants identified the spiritual connection they experienced in song for their loved one’s funeral. Within that, there is a recurrent theme of this connection conveying a (*fe’au*) message. This theme will present what participants considered this message/s to be: *The music actually sends out the message! In the Fa’asamoa! (MIF1)*

To provide some useful context, participants identified the role of song in conveying a message as part of spirituality in *Fa’asamoa* before and after colonisation. In other words, this practice has been part of different rituals in the lives of Samoan people, including their funerals.

The meta-message identified by participants is a positive one. It is a message of affirmation, hope, comfort and connectivity in the sacred *Va*. As much as this *Lagona* (sense or feeling) is on an individual level, what is highlighted here for these participants across the dataset, is a shared spiritual experience in song when farewelling their loved one as a community. In the words of one participant when referring to this “*This is us*”. Furthermore, connectivity in the spiritual in song in and of itself, to something beyond the individual has a therapeutic value for participants. In other words, this kind of ‘connectivity’ and its importance, is a message, and part of a greater message. This a fundamental belief in Samoan people; that what gives life

meaningfulness is the sacred *va*, the *relational*. Furthermore, song connects participants in the spiritual to each other, the past, the present in a *unifying* experience. Part of this is a recurrent theme for participants where they relive, recall memories and in song, one of the messages is the importance of *remembering* to support participants, *aiga* and their community in situating who they are within the ‘ocean’ of life; as part of ‘something bigger’.

These therapeutic outcomes for participants include the feelings of comfort, healing, calming the emotions and awakening a sense of gratitude for life’s blessings. All of these positive aspects of connection restore calm and a sense of balance and equilibrium in the sacred *va*.

The following quotes are from two male elder participants. They speak to much of what has been presented above, in their understanding of the meaningfulness of their experiences of *what* song as part of spiritual connection does for Samoan people in their funerals. An important subtext to the following two quotes is the capacity of song to calm and *soften* the self-making it possible for opening up to connection and belonging beyond the self as an individual. This opening up of the spirit or heart avails experiencing gratitude, graciousness and hope giving life meaning.

So, I think the singing it’s a, it’s a number one kind of calming element to the Samoans! E a fo’i, it makes you feel connected to people... It makes you part of life! You know, it makes you part of the family... No matter how angry you are at someone, the song will heal that thing a? So, I think umm songs which is hymns really, it’s very, very important to our, to our funeral which is to our spirituality yeah. I think if you go to any funeral and there’s no hymns sung there, you feel, you feel different! And you also feel very hardened! (M1F1)

Song comforts and diminishes anger and brings out the memories. You know it provides thought provoking sort of ideas, it triggers a lot of graciousness in us, the gratitude, the thanksgiving and you know, life, and the blessings that we have, are only through our own relatives and through other people, but you know through the mana of the way that you are communicating to them, because I love Samoan words, there's a *fe'au*, there's a message in one, two words, there's always a message! (M1F5)

Continuing on the theme of connectivity in song through a message, the following participant voices how he finds meaning in his experience. In his *Talanoa*, he used the words 'spiritual vibe' to describe what he experienced in song in his uncle's funeral. Furthermore, his understanding of the message in song is interesting as he perceives it to be from the living to the departed, to assure him that all is well with those who are left behind. The next quote continues in part to this idea of a message from the departed. Therefore, the message is from the living to the departed and from the departed to the living. In the rest of this quote, he used a beautiful metaphor of the waves and the oceans to expressed how he felt connected to something 'greater'. In the next quote, this participant is describing an experience when the family gathered to sing and pray as his uncle was leaving.

..., during Uncle... funeral! And because there was only a handful of like ladies, like maybe like five or six of them with one person on the guitar. Yeah, it just, it sounded, it didn't sound like someone's trying to get you to listen to it! It's something to be like 'we're okay my man!' You can rest easy! (M3F3)

It was almost as if someone was like playing the music so that as if Uncle ...was like telling you 'it's okay! He's happy now!' And it was a really beautiful scene happened

that like when the music like started playing the sun started shining through the window!!! Yeah! It was almost like, it was surreal!! How beautiful like that entire scene was!! I almost wish there was a camera! And that's the energy that it gave off it was so calming and relaxing that everyone just kind of was just, it was as if you were with the waves. Like as if you were part of the ocean, just part of something bigger!! (M3F3)

The understanding of song as a connection in the spiritual is expressed by one participant as '*the process of itself of singing*' is therapeutic. As is evident in the following quote, the singing brings 'calmness' and moreover, this is done *together* with others which again presents the importance value of connection to feeling good and well-being. The underlying message is, the coming together and singing together in a sense of unity for a particular person is in and of itself therapeutic.

I definitely feel that the process of singing the song is therapeutic but also the fact that we're all singing it together. If you look around, we're all singing it together! And you feel good in the sense that you. We're all bannin together to honour him just through singing this song! (M2F6)

This theme has presented what participants consider as the message/s conveyed through song as a connection to the spiritual, in the funeral for their loved one. The overall message or metamessage is that this spiritual connection in song is something positive for Samoan people, namely in the area of healing, comfort and thanksgiving as experienced as a community. Of even greater importance is the meta-message of *remembering that there is a greater connectivity to connect to and song is a key way to awaken this connectivity*. Constantly returning to this connectivity as part of life, is life sustenance for Samoan people. This is

supported by the evidence, where all participants had overwhelmingly positive and therapeutic experiences when singing to farewell their loved one. Additionally, this connection as a conveyor of a message has been accessed by Samoan people in a continuum from the past to the present.

The next theme will look at how a few participants spoke of 'mana' as relating to song, the spiritual, *Gagana Samoa*, and death ritual in *Fa'asamoa*.

### ***Mana***

This short section will present what only three participants mentioned specifically, namely the term 'mana', although this was alluded to by many participants indirectly. The reason for this small subtheme is 'mana' as a concept in Polynesia is part of the spiritual world.

Generally, when participants talked about a spiritual connection in song in the funeral for their loved one, it is interpreted here as they are talking about a sense of 'mana' in an occasion with a particular gravitas-a Samoan funeral. This connection to the spiritual, amplified by song is on a continuum for Samoan people in their spiritual life.

Of particular interest are the three participants who talked about 'mana'. One referred to a particular Samoan funeral ritual the *faleosilagi* as being of great significance in Samoa. Another participant referred to the 'mana' that can only come from *Gagana Samoa* where the depth of meaning is weightier compared to English in his perception, where in his view, saying the Lord's prayer or a prayer in *Gagana Samoa* facilitates a 'real heart connection'.

The last participant points to song as a facilitator of many different ways of feeling, and connections, and more importantly it is a 'mana' way of communicating something-a message.

He also talked about song as navigating and decorating of the *Va* between us and God, and therefore enhancing relationships and the mana of all.

Song comforts and diminishes anger and brings out the memories. You know it provides thought provoking sort of ideas, it triggers a lot of graciousness in us, the gratitude, the thanksgiving and you know, life, and the blessings that we have, are only through our own relatives and through other people, but you know through the mana of the way that you are communicating to them (M1M5)

### ***Unbroken chain***

Participants referred to the cultural practice of not leaving the body of the departed unattended when it lay in state. Accompanying the dead as part of a vigil or *leo* by the family or members of the church with friends of the family, is something most participants talked about. Some participants spoke about singing throughout the evening, being part of an all-night vigil where there were often different groups who took part in the singing, or brought their own songs to sing for the family and the departed. At times family members took turns in shifts where some rested, while others kept the vigil. Choirs from the same church as the departed or different denominations also supported in keeping the singing going and supporting the family.

For some participants, the prodding of each other's memory in order to keep the singing going became like a fun game, where mourners strengthened and supported each other to stay awake and continue the connection. In the words of one participant when describing a scene when his uncle was laying in state at the family home 'One starts off and then you know as the other one forgets the next words, somebody else picks it up and the 'Oh yeah!' And then continuing on singing'. (M2F5)

Often, people came to support and be part of the vigil as listeners not as singers. One participant shared that the songs could be secular or Christian, it didn't matter as long as a song was going. This participant also shared that she felt that her dad was 'somewhere there' singing along with them. The theme of continuation in song as part of a spiritual connection for comfort and unity in a Samoan funeral, as part of a continuum in the spiritual for Samoan people is somewhat echoed in the following quote.

Because we try and sing and don't break the chain? Like someone has to keep umm you know starting up another song. Yep at the house and even at the burial and then yeah at the house and then it's like someone will try and like 'don't break the chain, keep singing, bring another song and then so and that's a really umm it's a good to end the night? It's through song and... (F2F1)

The idea of an 'unbroken chain' is a powerful metaphor echoing the idea of the spiritual for Samoan people as a continuum. It is further interpreted here that this connectivity is evidenced in the Samoan conceptualisation of meaningfulness due to the sacred *Va*. Furthermore, this connectivity not only applies to a continuing connection between the departed and the living. It is indicative of the Samoan view that the world *is* interconnectivity and relational.

The next theme will present the views of participants pertaining to song as a facilitator of emotion. Although some of this was touched upon under the theme 'Spiritual' and subtheme 'Message/Fe'au', it was decided that considering the 'overlapping' of some of these concepts as discussed previously, the dedication of a small section to further tease out what these emotions are, and how participants see the connection between song and emotion will be helpful for deeper understanding.

## ***Emotion***

As covered under ‘Spiritual experience/connection’, song in a funeral facilitates the *Lagona* and expression of different emotions. The focus here is the further highlighting of what participants have to say about the emotions they experienced, as facilitated by song in a Samoan funeral. Furthermore, this theme will present quotes from participants which indicate the intensity of the feeling of various emotions in song when they farewelled their loved one. Of comparable importance is identifying the context of this intensity of experience, where often different feelings are experienced simultaneously.

In song for the funeral of their loved one, participants talked about experiencing different emotions including peace, grief, dread and heaviness alongside feelings of gratitude and joy and sadness. Accompanying these heightened emotions are associated memories and past experiences with the loved one who is farewelled, bringing participants into sharp focus of the particular and the general in a comprehensive connection, communing with all.

The most often expressed emotion by participants when in song was a deep gratitude for life’s blessings, and a sense of unity and belonging to something greater than themselves.

The following quote from the key person demonstrates the intensity of feeling when song ‘floods the emotions’ evoking memories and thanksgiving to God for life itself. The following two quote represents many other participants in regards to experiencing a powerful sense of connectivity when in song.

It’s amazing ey with song, how it can flood the emotions! You know because sometimes I find the louder, I sing is because of the yeah, of le *Lagona*, because you’re

either taken back to a time, or you are really thanking God! You know for this, for this life! (Key person)

It's the connection of everyone doing it together, the voices (M2F3)

If you look around, we're all singing it together! And you feel good in the sense that you. We're all bannng together to honour him just through singing this song! (M2F6)

The burial was a site for particularly intense emotions for participants ranging from; feeling 'horrible'; awe at the finality of the moment; change of consciousness, humour and celebration. One young female participant shared about a particular song she had heard many times at funerals at the burial. This song was also the last song at her grandfather's burial where she burst out crying. She described how she has always associated this song with 'death' and the 'undertaker' and it gave her a 'haunting feeling' to the extent that for a while she didn't remember anything. However, all she can remember is this song which she describes as a 'big big song' with the final words being 'Tofa, tofa tofa!' (Farewell, farewell, farewell!) signifying the finality of a long funeral whereby her grandfather was finally laid to rest. The finality represented in the burial for all the funerals is a recurrent theme across participants. Alongside negative feelings, this participant also had very positive emotions when other songs were sung during her grandfather's funeral.

... so, it gives me goose bumps! It makes me think of the undertaker like it's horrible! It gives me the most horrible feeling and I feel like that's when like I like burst out crying! I don't know it's just this thing maybe it's...And because that's the last song at every single funeral that I've been to that is sung when they're putting them into the ground, so it's a haunting feeling but that's like songs have so much power! Like I can

hear that song anywhere and I can think of death! So, like in terms of the burial there was a short, maybe a short I don't know ten minutes that the minister was talking, I don't remember any of that! I just remember this song! Yeah, and it's crazy! Because, so I don't know why that song is sung, I think it's because of the words, the last words are tofa, tofa, tofa, like you know goodbye but it's crazy I just don't have good feelings with that song! It is so BIG, BIG! ... Yeah, it's done! It's done! (F3F2)

A different perspective from the above quote is from an elder male, an uncle to the above participant. The intensity of different emotions from feeling negative, to honouring a grandfather in song is presented from the quote above and the one below. He provides a poignant picture where he talked about all the young people in his family singing all the songs they had sung and learned from their grandfather, they were fare-welling. After the burial, many of these youngsters stayed back for a while and kept singing instead of leaving with everyone else for the reception.

Because another thing is when we had buried the old man in Mangere, the kids kept singing! They sing ALL the songs, to again remind with all the songs that they had sung with the old man, and what they used to do a? (sic) And it was beautiful to listen to them. You know? It also there that you see those of our kids that... was talking about a? (sic) You see and they just sing and go for it! (M1F2)

A similar experience to that of the above female participant whom couldn't remember when the minister was talking at the burial of her grandfather, is that of another young male at his uncle's burial. The intensity of feeling for this young man was so great that for a while, he couldn't hear the music as he was crying and shoveling dirt. However, when he did hear, he

described it as ‘it kind of faded into me’ and described it as a ‘send-off’ where it was as if a ‘giant thing’ was lifting his uncle’s body ‘into the air’. Both of these young people had very close relationships with the departed, and both had intense experiences in song in other stages of the funeral.

I won’t necessarily listening at the time because I was like Ugh crying! I was in distress and crying while I was shovelling yeah! And umm and so when, when I actually kind of heard the music, it kind of like faded into me Like it was probably been playing for ages but it just kind of faded within like how I heard things. Because there was point and time where I just heard nothing! Yeah, my consciousness like... it was kind of a send-off! Like it was, it was almost as if there was this giant thing just lifting uncle’s corpse into the air while we were... **But you have to like, it was like umm, you have to actually hear it to like feel it!** Yeah, and I understand umm like why they did this because, because a lot of the music was kind of like very very moody and subtle...

(M3F3)

The burial site was also a site for humour and celebration in the midst of song for several participants. While this may seem out of place, many participants saw humour and grief as belonging together rather than arbitrarily being apart. As one participant put it, *‘tears are not necessarily sadness, it’s tears of remembrance’*. She goes on further to share that the good and not so good is remembered and one can *‘have a laugh because that’s our Samoan humour’*. Participants would often share humorous stories when remembering the departed in relation to a particular song or songs. An elder participant shared how he disliked the burial as it was like ‘going to the airport and saying farewell’. At the burial of his brother, he and his siblings sang, and he danced to entertain his sisters and celebrate their loved one. At the time of the *Talanoa*,

he sang this song and this researcher joined in. He laughed and conveyed the humour and the tears as he was remembering and sharing his experience at the burial.

The involvement of young people in another funeral burial also evidenced a mixture of sadness and humour, as they sang and shared memories. These young people sang all the songs they thought their elder would like as a final tribute to him. He was a strict choir master who was insistent on 'getting the song right'. Two participants who are the children of this elder both shared about their father's tendency to stop a prayer session when he heard a wrong note in the singing, or tell someone '*nofo lelei!*' (Sit properly!) in the middle of a choir practice. These were the memories shared by these young people as they sang for this elder at the burial.

...at the end when the boys were burying him just keep singing until the last bit of dirt was on then we all left together in the end, but that just it's a soul kind of like gives peace and just restores you know the sadness and then you know afterwards if we sing it wrong and we start laughing cause Dad is the one that if you don't get the, if you don't get your part right, he'll stop the loku and goes, who's wrong? Who's singing the wrong part? And like (she taps the table several time to demonstrate how her dad was on it about getting the song right) okay, so you know, then we'll start laughing... he would have said 'umm someone's flat! (F2F1)

This theme has set out a range of intense experiences in song as part of funerals for participants. These experiences consisted of different emotions ranging from a sense of unity to very negative emotions, to positive ones where there is celebration and humour. What has also been presented here is the mixture of different emotions in song for participants when remembering and farewelling their loved one. In the words of one participant 'The sad is always there and there is a time for sadness and a time for joy'. (M3F2)

The next section is the last theme under the subcategory of ‘Purpose’. Song as a way to honour the departed, has been identified across the dataset as one of the main impetus for its prevalence across all six funerals in this research. ‘Honouring the departed’ will take a closer look at what participants have to say about songs in their loved one’s funeral which were not hymns in Samoan or otherwise; a funeral set apart from other funerals due to a high number of pop western songs cited by family members, and two funerals where there were original compositions in *Gagana Samoa*.

### ***Honouring the dead***

According to participants, song was a way to honour the departed. The most cited reason for a particular song being sung at a funeral was that it was a ‘favourite’ of the departed.

Across the dataset, hymns were sung at all the funeral because they were Samoan Christian funerals, and more often than not, they were hymns from the church of the departed and their *aiga*. Often, hymns were the songs that the departed loved and was very familiar with, moreover, those close to and around the departed knew of this close relationship between their loved one and certain hymns. Additionally, hymns made up the majority of the songs sung across all stages of the funerals, from the vigil, funeral services to the burial.

However, this theme will take a closer look at those songs that were chosen to honour the departed although the departed did not know the song, or did not have any relationship to the song, and they were also not hymns. These songs were chosen by one individual more as a personal tribute, rather than a song known to a collective whether it be *aiga*, church or a choir. Furthermore, these songs were not sung live, rather they were played from a recording and the major majority of the mourners (except maybe some young people) were not familiar with the song.

Following will be a focus on one family that identified many songs that could be considered as pop or rock songs. These were chosen due to the elderly departed having them as his favourite party songs. Lastly, the focus will be on those songs that were sung in the funeral which were original compositions by the departed or others. Two English pop songs were played in the PowerPoint for two separate funerals, which was in the first case chosen by a son of the departed. The second song was chosen by the brother of the departed. Both individuals who chose these songs are males, one was raised in Aotearoa from a young age and the other is Aotearoa born.

In the first instance, a song was chosen arbitrarily by a son (middle child), one of the three children of the departed, despite strong objections from the only female sibling who took care of both elderly parents. The grounds for her objection was that it was not a song their departed mother would have chosen, as she loved her Samoan hymns. Furthermore, the middle child wanted all the songs in the funeral to be 'English songs. Despite efforts by the daughter to find the CD with Samoan hymns for the PowerPoint, the choice of an English pop song by the middle child won out in the end. The song titled '*Mama*' was a personal tribute from the middle child to his mother. To the sister's relief, the other song for the PowerPoint, although not known to her mother, was a Samoan song '*Liliu o le taimi* (Turning time).

...so, the songs I wanted to put on there was umm there was one particular song that mum used to like listening to, me and my brother actually had an argument over it! (Laughing) He wanted, he wanted his songs Yeah, he wanted the palagi songs, he didn't want any other songs but just his songs! (F2F6)

The second instance is similar insofar as one individual made the decision to have an English pop song in the PowerPoint, however, the similarity stops there. Of interest here is that the

second song for the PowerPoint in this funeral is the same song that was the second song '*Liliu o le taimi*' in the previous funeral. The reason for this song choice was because this Samoan song was also used in this participant's father's funeral. In this case, a brother of the departed chose a particular song '*Crying in the rain*' because it was one of his brother's favourite songs by his favourite band. This participant is talking about the funeral in family three (F3) although he was a participant for Family six (F6). However, he wanted to talk about both funerals as these two funerals are in one big *aiga*. He wanted to honour his brother as those very close to him knew '*He loved his palagi stuff! He loved his rock alternative stuff!*' Moreover, this participant inherited his departed brother's vehicle and he found it humorous that when he got into this vehicle, he noticed that his brother also had Samoan CDs to 'cater' to the music taste of his passengers, namely their mother. Although the departed liked Samoan music, his 'go to music' was the alternative white rock music which set him apart from his cousins, something they all knew very well.

Yeah, and so those two things, he loved 'A-ha' and 'Crying in the rain' was the most fitting song because it's his song, his band but it's my message (very emotional) ...  
Yep! It's about umm hiding your tears! (Crying) When you're crying in the rain! And that song is so powerful! Umm it starts off with thunder rolling and then the singing starts but it starts off really sombre and the melody's, it just carries through with the singing. Umm and then it just builds up and then the photos come along then it starts from when he was a baby with my sister when they were born. The presentation had only two songs. I chose the first one and umm we decided to choose a song that we used for dad's presentation. Wow! It was a 'Te Vaka' song Umm (Singing) '*Liliu le taimi*' (Turn or change of the time) (M2F6)

The funeral for Family six (F5) stood out as being quite different for one main reason, namely the number of English songs cited by family members as being part of the funeral. Furthermore, these songs belong to different artists in the west in what can be loosely labelled as the ‘pop genre’ from the 1960s to the 1990s. At the time of his passing, the departed was in his late seventies which locates these songs at a time when he was considerably younger. All the participants in this family shared about their uncle and brother’s love for ‘party songs’ as he ‘loved his beer’. There were hymns in all three funeral services including the burial. Nevertheless, the nieces and nephews paid tribute to their uncle with an Elvis Presley song as he was a fan of his music.

Of additional interest is the focus on all the pop songs the departed loved, when they were sung when he lay in state, and after the burial at the family homestead. Numerous songs by five different artists including Elvis Presley were cited by this family.

Yeah, he quite liked Elvis you know so, that’s ‘Oh!’ Everyone reminiscing ‘Oh uncle used to LOVE this song!’ And so, everyone will start it off and then everyone will start singing Elvis, umm make fun of how he doesn’t know any other words than the chorus and he makes up whatever it is that he makes up what the words are! Umm, but yeah it was just a mixture! (M2F5)

Two families (F1 & F2) cited original compositions as being part of the funeral for their loved one. Both funerals were for two elderly male who were both experienced and seasoned musicians and composers of Samoan *Pese* and hymns from PIC Newton. Some of the compositions were written by these elders, while some were composed by other family members or close friends. As far as the data reveals, all these compositions were in the *Gagana Samoa* (Samoan language).

Because with some, as they compose songs, it's like the songs written by the old man that are worldly a? As they compose, they start with thanking God, then as it goes it speaks to the multitudes. Then the praise God is done followed by the topic aimed for when writing the song. Which means when you look at it, there is also the acknowledgement of the spiritual. In that music when it's written. (M1F2)

This sub-category has looked at how participants perceive, interpret and understand the purpose of song as part of funerals. This purpose included the facilitating of spiritual connection/experience for participants, their *aiga* and community when farewelling their dead. Part of this spiritual connection/experience include the receiving and conveying of a message of hope, thanksgiving, acknowledgement of connectivity and the relational as being essential to meaningfulness for *aiga* and Samoan community.

The conveying of love in song in farewelling the dead is mana enhancing for the departed and all who are connected to the funeral. Song as part of funerals is emblematic of a continuing chain evidenced in the accompanying of the dead with song in funeral ritual, which in turn reflect the continuum of spiritual connection for Samoan people through time. Song was recognised and purposefully chosen to facilitate the expression of emotion, conveying thanksgiving to God for life itself alongside feelings of hope, well-being as well as sadness and grief. Lastly, song was a way to honour the departed, reflecting their life and the *Alofa* felt by their family and community.

### **Who decides?**

The second subcategory under the main category of 'Connection in song' will present participant's views on who made the decisions in regards to what songs were part of the funeral. However, it must be clarified that although songs were formalised in the sense that they were

in a program for the funeral services and burial services, there were a considerable number of songs that were not formally included, rather, they happened spontaneously in a more informal setting. What participants have to say about the songs that were sung spontaneously and were unplanned will be covered under the last theme in the next subcategory 'Who sings?' titled 'In the moment' (3.3.d.). This mostly occurred when the body of the departed lay in state where songs were brought and sung by family members, visiting groups, friends or choirs. This was also the case towards the end part of the burial stage and when family gathered after the burial.

Overall, the decision regarding what songs would be included in the formal program for any of the funeral services was made by the family in consultation and collaboration with the minister, priest, the church and close friends of the *aiga*. The involvement of choirs was evident in the data for five of the families (F1, 2, 3, 4 & 6). There is no evidence in the data on the formal or informal involvement of a choir in any part of the funeral for Family five (F5). For Family four (F4), the decision was made by the children of the departed and the priest. For this family, a small choir of three was brought by the priest and all the songs they sang were decided by him.

Songs sung by the choir were part of a formal program when it was part of a funeral service. Family two (F2) had many different Samoan choirs sing at the many funeral services, some of these choirs were from other Pacific Island groups such as Tokelau, Cook Island and Niuean, where they sang in their native language. This was due to stature of the departed who was a former minister of the PIC church within which several different Pacific Island ethnic groups worship. Samoan choirs were also formally included in the funeral service for four of the families (Family 1, 2, 3, & 6).

The formal inclusion of songs sung by choirs changed when they were visiting the family when the body lay in state at home or at a hall, as there was no formal program. Choirs brought and sang their own songs when the body lay in state for four of the families (F1, 2, 3, & 6). All these families belong to PIC Newton and PIC Glen Eden.

The following quote evidences the collaborative nature of the decision-making process for family two (F2), a process that was reflected across the other five families in varying degrees. The following participant identifies the trust her and her family gave to others in collaboration on decision-making in regards to the music and songs for her father's funeral. This family has many musicians, however, they entrusted some of the music to others who were close to the family which they were happy to do considering the many other tasks they had to do, as it was a very big funeral.

He was one of my dad's umm, first and yeah you know dad also fostered and nurtured Tagaloa Peter Su'a and his talents... and then we had our sister's son. So, we had musicians even our own sisters... are organist and pianists and you know vocalists (sister) on the guitar, so in within our own family, we have the talents within immediate family as in siblings to provide the music but it's honouring, so we honoured, you know (nephew) to do you know what he wanted but they always consulted with us but, we were easy at that time, we were, we had other things to do and it's that trust. We trusted that they knew what Dad wanted (F1F2)

The exception was family four (F4) whereby many of the songs for the formal service were chosen by a Catholic priest along with the children of the departed, with less degree of consultation from the children with the rest of the family. Overall, all of the families gave the greatest consideration to the wishes of the children, something which the children gladly took

on board. Nevertheless, the children overall reciprocated in kind by listening and considering other voices from family, ministers and even close friends who were musicians known to the departed, when making these decisions. Overall, the decision on song for all six funerals was a collaborative effort.

### *Aiga*

This theme will take a closer look at who in the family made the decisions in regards to the songs included in the program for the funeral. In general terms, these decisions were made by family members closest to the departed. In funeral number one, the elderly mother, the wife of the departed left the decision on what songs would be in the funeral to her children. The eldest daughter, a musician like her father made the decision in consultation with the minister and the pianist. This daughter is well versed in *Fa'asamoa* and very involved in the PIC Newton church and is also a Sunday school teacher. In funeral number two at the PIC Newton church, the decision on what songs will be included in the funeral, was made by a wider collective. This included the children of the departed, uncles and aunties and other musicians who were close to the family and the PIC Newton church. This family were also musicians, like the dearly departed who comes from a long line of composers. In two of the PIC funerals (three and six), the decision on the songs for the funerals was decided by the children and an uncle who is a PIC minister who officiated in both funerals. Both of these funerals belong to one big family. The wife of this minister had close relationships with her husband's family, nieces and nephews, and taught the choir in their church. She played a significant role in supporting and advising on many aspects of the funeral including song as a *Faletua* (minister's wife), as well as being an aunty.

The decision for song in the Catholic funeral, funeral number four was decided by the children of the departed and priest who brought a choir of three people. In funeral number five, a Congregational funeral, the decision was made by a niece and nephews (siblings) and a brother of the departed, as he did not have a spouse or children. Moreover, the aforementioned nieces who was particularly close to the uncle took the reins in the decision making with the blessing of the family and well supported by her siblings. Still, the taking of the 'reins' by this participant included respectful consideration and respectful of the views of other family members. In this *aiga*, she inhabited a leadership role even when she was the youngest sibling and the only female with older brothers.

The decision making in regards to songs that were part of the funerals have been identified as in overall, a family decision. Nevertheless, although this a recurrent theme, there are some varying dynamics across the six families. The females were well represented in the decision making on what songs will be included in the funeral. Many of them are musicians. The songs were chosen due to their appropriateness for the family or burial service, and also due to the familiarity of the song to the family, the departed and the rest of the mourners. Songs were also chosen because they were favourite songs of the departed, or the family associated the song with him/her. In two of the funerals, some of the songs were composed by the departed themselves (F1 & F2).

### ***Tama'ita'i Lima taumatau***

This theme highlights six female participants, one from each family. F2F1, F1F2, F2F3, F2F4, F3F5, and F2F6. The ages of these Samoan females range from 37 to 61 years of age.

All the above female participants are the focus of this section due to several criteria. Firstly, they were either born or grew up in Aotearoa from a very young age. Secondly, they all have

competence in their Samoan mother tongue and well versed in Samoan hymns; three are musicians. Thirdly, they are all involved in contributing to *fa'alavelave* in their *aiga*. Fourthly, they all played a role in the organisation and decision making in the funeral for their loved one, including the choice of songs. Lastly, they had a close relationship with the departed, as a daughter, a daughter in-law and a sister to the loved one who has passed away. All played a significant role in looking after elders in their *aiga*. Also, of importance is the on-going involvement of all these participants in church and their receptive attitude to learning *Fa'asamoa* from their elders. As a group, these female participants are in stark contrast with their male counterparts. This is due to two males from two families who were born and raised in Aotearoa being non-active in *fa'alavelave* in their *aiga*, and not attending a Samoan church. As a group, these males do not have the competence in their *Gagana Samoa* like their sisters. The following quote is from one of these brothers who felt sorry for his sister, who had to go to represent her parents and siblings at a family funeral after she had just returned from another funeral. This is also the sister who went everywhere with her father to learn about *Fa'asamoa*, although she is not the eldest. She is a Sunday school teacher at PIC Newton, a musician and took the lead in the organising of their father's funeral.

Yeah, but she was the only choice because my older brother, he can't speak Samoan, he doesn't really understand the *Fa'asamoa* way. But ... can speak Samoan, she's, she can speak on behalf of dad and that's why she had to go! (M2F1)

Higher competence in *Gagana Samoa* in this female group also related to their understanding of the Samoan words when singing Samoan hymns in the funeral. In contrast, a male participant who was born and raised in Aotearoa had the following to say about his experience when singing Samoan hymns in the funeral for his loved one. He points out that although he does not

really understand the Samoan lyrics in the hymns, he nevertheless experiences a sense of calm from the singing.

For myself I didn't really understand; I didn't really study the Samoan lyrics and go 'What does this mean? What does this mean? What does this mean?' But the actual process of singing it in honour of someone that is therapeutic in itself? And then that that just calms, just calms you... (M2F6)

The exception with the male participants is a second generation 28-year-old who is exceptionally fluent in Samoa. Compared to other Samoan male participants who were born in Aotearoa, this participant spoke Samoan exceptionally well. This is attributed to his very close relationship with one of the departed, his grandfather. All the participants from his family (F2), spoke about how it was normal practice for this young man to accompany his grandfather to many different meetings and events. This participant has great interest in *Gagana Samoa*, *Fa'asamoa*, and knew many Samoan hymns and Samoan songs by heart. He knew the words to all the Samoan hymns as well as many other Samoan songs.

Additionally, he was well versed on the discourse of *Matai* titles and land in Samoa as he has travelled to Samoa every year of his twenty-eight years of age. His mother who belongs to the female group focused upon here, facilitated and supported the relationship between her son and her father. She has also been highly influential on her son's learning of *Gagana Samoa* and *Fa'asamoa*. Although this participant was not part of the decision making in regards to song for his grandfather's funeral, he had the following to say about what is appropriate in song for a funeral.

All those songs are chosen so they are appropriate a funeral. To have a new heart that is yearned for, you know? Those are all the songs that are done, chose the songs that are appropriate for a funeral. If it's any old song, it's not appropriate! For a funeral. To comfort, yes! To comfort the family and all the people that are sad. (M3F2)

The honouring and taking care of elders has been identified as *Fa'asamoa* in the first category '*Fa'asamoa*'. There is evidence here that this role fall's more on Samoan females than on their brothers or male relatives. The daughter in-law from (F4) and the daughter in (F6) are examples of walking this principle. The daughter in-law is a musician and looked after her father in-law for the last year of his life. She is fluent in *Gagana Samoa* and well versed in *fa'alavelave* and the presenting of fine mats at formal Samoan gatherings. She is also very familiar with Samoan hymns from the PIC church, although she converted to Catholicism when she married her husband. Her mother was a very strong influence in her knowing how to speak Samoan, and also very much supported her daughter to look after her father-in-law as if he was her own biological father. The role of the 'Samoan daughter' fell on her partly because she was married to the eldest son of the departed, and partly because her sister in-laws were not versed in *Gagana Samoa* and *Fa'asamoa*. She also played a part in teaching her husband on how to appropriately dress for Samoan gatherings and all things *Fa'asamoa*. Three of the other participants for (F4) all emphasised her role in the funeral.

This funeral (F4) is interesting because the dearly departed father and grandfather left clear instructions that there was to be no *Fa'asamoa*. Despite this, there was some tension in how to enact this last will and testament of an elder, as this was interpreted in different ways by the family and the children of the departed were not versed in *Gagana Samoa* and *Fa'asamoa*. Although the songs for the funeral were for the most part chosen by the Catholic priest and

lead by a very small choir, this participant played a big part in the organisation of the funeral and took part in the choosing of songs. The following quote from a female participant from the same family demonstrates the role and responsibility carried by this participant.

I think it was much easier for the family, especially with that side of the family, it's only four of them, the kids, two boys and two girls. And they're not umm, I think you know (daughter in-law) knows very well, they're not into the *Fa'asamoa* side. Not like (daughter in-law). (She) you know she's New Zealand born but her parents... So, poor (daughter in-law) was stuck! The poor girl... did everything because she understands more about the Samoan way than anybody else. (F3F4)

Another female participant who took care of her parents, is still looking after her dad after her mother passed away. She described how her mother was a great influence on her in regards to church and attending gatherings and meetings in their *aiga*. This relationship facilitated her retaining of *Gagana Samoa* and keeping her commitment to look after her elderly father, although she is the youngest child with two older brothers. In the preparations for her mother's funeral, she asserted herself in regards to the choice of songs to be included in the funeral. Although she gave way to one choice of song by the second eldest brother, she nevertheless made it clear that she was not pleased with the choice. The following quote provides a picture of the relationship with her mother who raised her to be mindful of taking care of her dad.

And so during that time mum made sure that, even though the boys played up and stuff, she made sure she held on to me to make sure that I was learning what was happening (Starting to tear up and voice shaking) and in a way she taught me to you know to be independent for myself and also to be able to do what I needed to do especially looking after my dad! (Crying) (F2F6)

All the other female participants in this age group as identified at the beginning of this theme, shared certain characteristics with the female participants highlighted here. As a group, they carried more responsibilities than their brothers and were more involved in their *aiga*. Overall, the first-generation female participants as a group have a higher competence in *Gagana Samoa*, *Fa'asamoa* and Samoan hymns and songs, in contrast to their brothers. As a group, they are also more proactive in keeping *Fa'asamoa* practices, *Gagana Samoa* and have higher participation in their *aiga* and the church. Their strong representation in choosing songs for the funeral reflected their marked presence with other aspects of funeral, from the preparation stage throughout the rest of the funeral.

### ***Elders***

There are eight participants who qualify as elders in this research. The only criteria for this research are that they are recognised as elders in their *aiga* and are fluent speakers in *Gagana Samoa*. All the elders were born in Samoa except one who was born in Fiji. There are four males and four females. There is a male elder in Family (F1, 2, 5 & 6), and a female elder in Family (2, 3, 4, & 6). All the elder participants have a strong familiarity with Samoan hymns and Samoan songs. Overall, they gave their blessing for the younger middle age generation to make decisions on the songs in the funeral, while they provided advice and guidance. Nevertheless, two of these elders did play some part in the decision making in regards to song for their loved one's funeral.

This section will look at the perspectives from these elders in regards to the younger generation and their knowledge of Samoan hymn/songs, *Gagana Samoa* and *Fa'asamoa*.

An elder male in Family two (F2) stressed the importance of a close relationship between the younger and older generation in order for knowledge of *Fa'asamoa* and song to be passed on.

He talked about the strong *Va* between his uncle and the younger people who he taught many things including song. He also recognised that there was a great deal of difference in the understanding of the younger generation, in regards to the meaning of the Samoan words in song, although they can still feel and sing the song.

Because another thing is when we had buried the old man in Mangere, the kids kept singing! They sing ALL the songs, to again remind with all the songs that they had sung with the old man, and what they used to do a? And it was beautiful to listen to them. You know? It's also there that you see those of our kids that ... was talking about a? You see and they just sing and go for it! And yet someone was going to give them the words a? Because they walked on the same road in life with the old man! (M1F2)

The following participant, a female elder from Family 3 (F3) takes a very strong position on the role of parents in teaching their children on how to behave, and also in retaining their *Gagana Samoa* and the importance of song in carrying a message that is felt by those who hear it. She is the wife of a minister, she teaches the choir and of the view that when choosing song for a funeral, one needs to be aware of the make-up of the congregation or mourners so that there is something for everyone.

So, I say, 'Can you please sing me your song?' Usually I listen and then I say. What is the message that is brought in that? Don't just write words and they mean nothing! You know there should be a message that you are trying to bring! And then when you sing from your heart, we can feel it too! We the listeners, we can feel it! I oe! (Yes!) That's the transmission! That is the message that is brought. If it is brought properly, we can feel it too! (F1F3)

This male elder (M1F5) reiterates the point made by participant (F1F3). They are both elders who are both fluent in Samoan and also qualified in post-graduate scholarship in tertiary institutions in Aotearoa. Both profess belief in the Christian tradition while acknowledging that the total experience of being Samoan in things spiritual and song, is on one continuum from pre-colonisation to the present. The following quote has been presented earlier on under this category; however, it is also relevant here.

Song comforts and diminishes anger and brings out the memories. You know it provides thought provoking sort of ideas, it triggers a lot of graciousness in us, the gratitude, the thanksgiving and you know, life, and the blessings that we have, are only through our own relatives and through other people, but you know through the mana of the way that you are communicating to them, because I love Samoan words, there's a *fe'au*, there's a message in one, two words, there's always a message! (M1F5)

The next male elder shared that as someone who had only left Samoa five years ago, the songs for funerals have changed here and in Samoa. Due to being a recent migrant to Aotearoa, he brings a perspective on songs in Samoan funerals which is very much anchored in Samoa. He is the orator for his family and often travels to Wellington and other places to carry out this role for his *aiga*. His daughter is also a participant and has been schooled by her father in Samoan ritual and protocol. He shares that the foundation of *Fa'asamoa* remains the same, but the way things such as funerals are done is changing and continuing to change. In his experience, this is not only occurring in Aotearoa, but in Samoa also.

The thing is these times, when it's done, that saying is true that 'The foundation remains but the ways it's done changes'. There are now worldly songs as funeral songs! Those are songs that in those days you hardly ever hear it in a funeral. But these days, it's a

song like ‘My dove is lost’ when someone dies... Yes, all those songs are mixed. Also, the choir can sing those worldly songs at the time of the family service, like a when the sea’s get rough... Those worldly songs, you didn’t hear them in those days. But these days, they sing it at the family service, at the funeral even at the church in the service e they sing it! And it’s not like the minister says ‘No please those songs are worldly songs’ (M1F6)

All the elder participants, in varying degrees advocate for the retention and growing of *Gagana Samoa* in the younger generation. They make the connection between this position and the role of Samoan hymn/song in helping young people connect with *Fa’asamoa*. This includes the understanding that there is a ‘*fe’au*’ (message) in song which young people need to understand, so that when they are singing, they can convey and feel the *Pese* as part of their *Fa’asinomaga* (Identity). Although two elders were part of the decision making about song, as a group they played more of an oversight and guidance role in the decision making. Due to the children of the departed in this research being middle age, the advisory role taken by these elders is presented here as being part of leadership in the *Fa’asamoa*, where a gradual transition occurs as the middle age group move into more active roles in leadership, with the blessing of the elders.

This subcategory (Who decides?) has evidenced decision-making on songs for all six funerals as overall a collective exercise. Generally, it was the *aiga* that made these decisions and often others were entrusted to be part of this process. A stand out finding evidenced in this subcategory is the strong role of the middle-aged New Zealand born or raised females who were either sisters, daughters or daughter in law to the departed. In comparison to their male counterparts, they were more involved in the decision-making process in regards to song for

the funerals alongside being more proficient in *Gagana Samoa* and higher involvement in their *aiga* and taking care of elders. Overall, they were also more involved in the church with a deeper understanding of *Fa'asamoa* and *fa'alavelave* (funerals).

### **Who sings?**

Under the last of the third main category 'Connection in song', this subcategory builds on the two previous subcategories of 'Purpose' and Who decides? This subcategory will set out in general terms who sang the songs for the funerals. This comprises four themes under this subcategory namely NZ born; *Aiga*; Congregation and 'In the moment'.

The singing for all the funerals in regards to Samoan hymns, was generally done by the collective consisting of the family of the departed, the congregation and mourners. For the PIC funerals (F1, 2, 3 & 6), hymns led by the church choir were familiar to the participants from these families as they were members of the PIC church. All these participants had attended or still attend choir practice (*Pese*) as part of their family and church commitments. According to one participant, there was a culture in the PIC where singing as a collective was greatly encouraged, rather than this role being left solely to the choir

Yeah... so we sang and we tried not to, because Presbyterian is very congregational. You know so that everyone is included in the song, we don't do a special hit, but it's about you know congregational singing that's what we were raised on to include the whole congregation rather were going to a church and the choir is singing all the songs and were just standing there going... (F2F1)

In other words, across the dataset, those participants who sang the Samoan hymns in all of the funerals, learned these songs as members of a particular group. Those who sang the Samoan

hymns and Samoan songs learned these songs from their *aiga* and their church. Māori songs were also sung in the funerals for Families one and two (F1, F2, F3 & F5) when the body lay in state. Although not shared across the dataset, three middle age NZ born participants, two females and a male, shared about singing Māori song at *Au talavou* and as something ‘they grew up on’. The following participant is referring to the spontaneous singing which took place at her father’s burial.

And a few, well, all the kids that we grew up with umm just sang while the, while he was getting covered so we just sang all the songs that we grew up on and it was Maoli (Māori), Cook Island, Samoan... (F2F1)

The singing of songs/hymns in another Pacific Island language by other Pacific groups in the many funeral services, was the case for funerals number one and two (F1 & F2). This reflected the status of the departed (F2) as a long serving minister at PIC Newton, and his relationship with other PIC churches and other denominations. The departed was taken to many different locations for six or more funeral services. This was also the case for Family one (F1) where although the funeral was not as big as for Family two, it was still a big funeral as it for a long serving elder who was a deacon and choir teacher for the PIC Newton. As evidenced in the following quote, the different island groups all paid tribute through song for the PIC minister’s funeral for the second funeral in this research (F2).

Umm so, well at the service, you have the Niuean’s do their thing, the Cook Islanders doing the, because he was the minister and the PIC church is made of Niue, Cook Island, and Samoans, so very clearly those three groups will get up and do their own thing! (F2F2)

There were many other songs sung by family members and supporters at most of the funerals (except Family four), which were not part of any formal decision making. This was mostly due to the often-spontaneous nature of singing at a Samoan funeral, especially when the body lay in state rather than at a funeral service. Secondly, choirs, the youth (*Au talavou*) and other mourners would bring and sing their own songs. It was at this stage of the funeral when visitors and supporters for the family would gather to pray, sing together and fellowship in a more informal manner with cups of tea, connecting people together throughout the night in a vigil. This was the case for (F1, 2, 3, 5 & 6). Spontaneous singing also occurred at the end of the burial for the funerals for Family one and two (F1 & F2), by family members and those of the same generation as is evidenced from the second quote in this section from participant (F2F1).

This subcategory has generally set out the groups to which participants identified as being involved in the singing for their loved one's funeral. These groups are the families of the departed, the choirs, the congregations and supporters of the family. The next two themes under this subcategory will take a closer look at what the participants who were born or raised in Aotearoa have to say about who sang in the funeral for their loved one. Following, will be participants perspectives on who sang those songs that were not part of a formal program for the funeral, but rather in a more informal setting when the body lay in state and at the end of the final farewell, the burial.

### ***NZ born***

This theme presents those participants who were born or grew up in Aotearoa, and what the data tells us about where they stand in regards to the singing of the songs in the funerals. It needs stating that the data is very clear on singing being a something that is done with others, as a collective across all the funerals. No participant shared about any particular song that was

sung as a solo by an individual in any of the six funerals with one exception. This occurred with (F3) when the family gathered around their loved one for a final farewell and an elder aunty (F1F3) sang a song (*Because he lives*). There are nineteen participants who fit the above criteria. Eleven are female with nine being middle age and two under thirty years of age. Eight are males with six being middle age and two are under thirty years old.

Overall, across the dataset this group were familiar with and therefore knew the Samoan hymns in the funeral for their loved one. Only one participant, a young male in Family three did not know the words to these hymns although he was familiar with the tunes. However, despite this general finding, there is some variation between participants on how well they knew the hymns and therefore the extent to which they could take part in the singing.

When comparing the females to the males, the female group knew more Samoan hymns overall. This is consistent with what was presented under the theme '*Tama'ita'i Lima taumatau* (3.2.b.) where the middle age females tend to be more competent in the *Gagana Samoa* and more connected to service in their *aiga* and the church. The following quote is from a middle age male participant who also shared about his desire to go to live in Samoa after high school so he could learn his native tongue.

Umm myself and my brother and I don't know, we really didn't pick up on the language, as fast as the girls did! Dad spoke Samoan yeah sure so we understand it, but we never actively went and practiced it and picked it up as quick as the girls did... For myself I didn't really understand; I didn't really study the Samoan lyrics and go 'What does this mean? What does this mean? ... it's probably rare that I remember any Samoan lyrics for any hymn songs, but the one's I do you know? (M2F6)

This theme was also apparent in Family one (F1), where one participant shared about his sister having more competency in *Gagana Samoa* and *Fa'asamoa* compared to himself and his two brothers. However, this does not tell the whole story about this group of male participants. All of the eight male participants spoke Samoan to some degree except a young male participant from Family three (F3). Two of these participants are fluent Samoan speakers, one is a middle age medical professional and the other is only in his late twenties. This last participant was a standout insofar as he is a second-generation Samoan and is not only a fluent Samoan speaker, he is also well versed in oratory and has a deep knowledge of Samoan hymns.

What is clear in the data is the relationship between how well these participants know and therefore sing Samoan hymns, competency in *Gagana Samoa*, family practice of singing together and connection to the church. Whatever degree these participants could sing Samoan hymns can be attributed to the strength of the above connections. Several of these participants across four of the families (1, 2, 3, & 6) explicitly made this connection. For example, participants shared about the learning of Samoan hymns as a family being a tradition when they have 'song practice'. One participant talked about keeping a scrapbook of the hymns her grandfather loved as being the ones they sang for his funeral. This family had a practice of having devotion together where the grandfather always started the singing. For a family funeral, it was usual practice for the family to gather and sing in preparation for farewelling a loved one.

I have a scrapbook of Pa's songs because I've kept them all these years... it just holds a really dear place in my heart to be able to sing songs at a funeral, so my grandpa had a lot of favourite hymns and they were kind of the ones that were sung on his last day and it was just like, it was quite fitting that you know the songs that he would sing all

the time were the ones that we were sending him off, it was like, it was really nice, it was a good feeling! (F3F2)

There are three other participants who belong to the second the generation Samoans as does the above participant. These participants are from Family two and three (F2 & F3), two are males and one female. All but one knew and sang the Samoan hymns.

A counter story to the connectivity between participants, their *aiga* and the church supporting the singing and knowing of Samoan hymns, is the lessening of that connectivity. Due to his professional experience in many Samoan funerals in the last thirty years, the key person for this research shared about noticing a certain trend that is moving away from close connections within families and between families and the church. He is also noticing that more families ask him to suggest a hymn which is a major shift from twenty years ago. Overall, this participant is noticing that more and more young people do not know Samoan hymns, something which he attributes to several causes including the loss of *Gagana Samoa* and not growing up in a Samoan church.

Because sometimes, they don't know what the hymns are! They want a hymn... they oh we'd like to have a Samoan hymn but umm do you know one?... but that's the reality. You know our dad loved these hymns but umm do you know one? ... But then there's also the thought of okay, well if we sing this hymn, who's going to sing it?... And we look at that example of where the kids are dropping off their children to the grandparents, (to church) ... So, I think we've got a lot more who can't sing... and I see it in funerals where you've got these grandchildren, greatgrandchildren, who aren't participating in it because they can't sing! Don't know the words! Because we're not

all going to church. We're not all going to choir practice once twice a week! (Key Person)

Overall, the participants who were either born or grew up in Aotearoa sang the Samoan hymns as part of a collective in the funeral for their loved one, because they learned them in their *aiga* and church. Some of the of the participants had a better grasp of these hymns than others. The female group compared to the male one had a better grasp of the hymns and the *Gagana Samoa*. However, two participants in the male group spoke Samoan very well although the participant who is the key person suggest that there is a trend moving towards less Samoan young people singing Samoan hymns. From his professional experience he attributes much of this situation to a disconnect from *aiga*, the church and the loss of *Gagana Samoa*. The next theme will look at those groups who sang the songs in the funeral which were not part of a formal program.

### ***Aiga***

Whether in the funeral service/s or when the body of the dearly departed was at home, the family overall took part in the singing. This is consistent with the finding under the subcategory 'Who decides' where the '*Aiga*' played a central role in the decision making on what songs were included in the formal funeral program for the funeral service/s. The exception was family four (F4) where the priest decided the songs for a Catholic service. Except for Family four (F4), all the families had a culture of singing together in their family devotions, family gatherings and as members of their church. This was reflected in their participation in the singing as a family in the funeral for their loved one. When talking about singing for her grandfather's funeral, the following participant shared that song is something that has been 'passed down' and unifying in her family when they practice and sing together. This was the case when her family came together to farewell her grandfather.

And umm using things that's been passed down like songs, and using them to kind of like umm get to know, to use practice to get to know each other to sing together as a family (F3F2)

The following participant echoes what the above participant shared about her family singing for her grandfather's funeral; as a continuing family practice. In the following quote, this male participant is talking about the hymns and songs his family sang for his uncle's funeral as being brought 'through the generation'. His family also gathered to practice song which they sung for their uncle's funeral.

Yeah that our, but that's, you know that, that's a really good thing! You know they brought it through the generations and still use it even till now! You know that's like the one thing that everyone connects with! (M3F5)

Singing as a family in the funeral of a loved one for three of the families (F1, F2, F3) also include the singing of original Samoan songs written for the funerals in this research, or an original composition/s that was written for a loved one in the past. In the case of these three families, original compositions by the family were sung for the funerals in this research. The following participant is talking about how her family compose songs to honour and farewell family members. The funeral for her father as part of this research was no exception.

Yeah, cause umm I know it's like we find peace though song? You know...we need to like they; we need to write an anthem for this person because they mean so much to us. There's a lot to write about, you know the journey, their life journey they can put in, we you know sometimes we can't talk about it, but you can...Portray it through song, it's like an anthem or a vi'i'(song honouring someone) for them? Yeah, so umm so and

that's what my dad's family does in Samoa; they would always have this big massive choir practice cause...(F2F1)

Families (F3, F6) are closely related. For the two funerals in this extended *aiga*, there was high participation in the singing by the family. An elder in this *aiga* is a minister who with his wife and a close friend (Funeral director) decided the songs for the funeral for (F3). In the case of (F6), the wife of the minister in their family selected the songs. This ensured that the songs for both funerals for (F3 and F6) were known to the family who all took part in the singing-as a family.

The songs for dad I reckon was just chosen through our family it might have been uncle ... and auntie ..., who I was suggesting for... yeah with because Sarah, John's sister was there so she's very experienced with songs and *Peses* (songs) and I'd say that they had selected the songs I think (F2F3)

I think it was ..., uncle ... I think made the decision on, chose the songs for the funeral yeah (M2F6)

All Samoan hymns umm aunty... picked and I think the only English song that was there was umm the one that was sung by the Newton old au kalavou older people, because they came on behalf of me and my siblings because of how we were there (F2F6)

### ***Congregation***

Except for family four and five (F4 & F5), there was high participation in the singing from the church congregation across the other four families (F1, F2, F3 & F6). The funerals for these four families were centred around their church, with close ties between the departed, their

family and the church. These churches were PIC Newton and PIC Glen Eden. Whether the singing was done by the congregation as a whole, or by for example the youth choir (*Au talavou*) or any other group such as the various Pacific groups, they all belonged to a church-a congregation.

The high participation of the congregation in the singing for funerals for (F1, F2, F3 & F6) is evidenced by a previously used quote-however it is also useful here. In this quote, this participant refers to the congregational culture in the Presbyterian churches, where ‘congregational singing’ is the norm.

Yeah, but yeah no umm so we sang and we tried not to, because Presbyterian is very congregational. You know so that everyone is included in the song, we don’t do a special hit, but it’s about you know congregational singing that’s what we were raised on umm to include the whole congregation rather were going to a church and the choir is singing all the songs and were just standing there going...(F2F1)

### ***In the moment***

The singing of songs that were not in a formal funeral program took place in the funeral for families (1, 2, 3, 5 & 6). This took place when the body lay in state for all of these families and at the end of the burial for families (1 & 2). Different choirs and groups visited and sang songs in the evening for all of the above families except Family five (F4 & F5). The clearest data on this part of the funeral was from the participants for four of the above families (F1, F2 F3 & F6). On the whole, choirs sang Samoan hymns and Samoan songs. A male elder participant from Family one (F1) shared that it was just beautiful, how four different choirs and groups sang the same song-a well know Samoan song with their own interpretation throughout that evening at the family home. The *Au talavou* featured significantly in the singing throughout

the night into the morning. Many of these individuals were vocalists and instrumentalists, and part of a group of young people who grew up together in the same church. Throughout the night, they encouraged and reminded each other about the songs they all knew, to keep the singing going. Included in the many songs they sang were also Māori songs and what several of them referred to as ‘worldly’ songs.

...all night the poor girl stood there with her guitar! Yes, and the youth choir worked and suffered that night! The talking, the cooking, all the stuff was done by the PIC Church! All those things so the traffic around there was pretty heavy! And of course, some don't get any sleep! (M1F1)

Five of the six funerals in this research (F1, F2, F3, F5 & F6) had some spontaneous singing in the funeral of their loved one whether at the family home, at the burial or both. The following quotes evidences the idea that in these funerals, there was a purposeful effort to keep the singing going. This was referred to by (F2F1) as ‘don't break the chain’. The following two quotes by (M2F5 and F1F2) echo this theme where mourners and family spontaneously start singing another song and another song, all the while encouraging each other to keep singing and to remember other songs.

Umm probably eighty, eighty-five yeah umm cause the non-religious will probably be just us mucking around and just trying to like because we try and sing and don't break the chain? Like someone has to keep umm you know starting up another song. Yep, at the house and even at the burial and then yeah at the house and then it's like someone will try and like ‘don't break the chain, keep singing, bring another song (F2F1)

Yeah, it was a mixture umm, I wasn't there the whole time when he was lying at home umm but it was a real mixture of just harmonising, just singing, you know off the cuff, whatever anyone can remember umm, what you don't remember the next person next to you remembers and then you just sort of 'Oh yeah that's' you know and it just carries on! And then you know, and then it just becomes like that. One starts off and then you know as the other one forgets the next words, somebody else picks it up and the 'Oh yeah!' And then continuing on singing (M2F5)

Oh, I think umm I think music and hymns, I mean you know the big groups brought hymns, like us, when it was our time, our family, we were on guitars, singing you know what we knew and whether they be secular songs, or whether they be Christian songs, as a long as a song was going (F1F2)

At the end of the burial for Families one and two (F1 & F2), the data evidences that it was also the *Au talavou* that kept the singing going at the end of the burial for (F1), and this was carried out by the grandchildren of the departed elder in Family two (F2). The first group were middle aged at the time of these funerals; however, their bonding began at a young age in the PIC Newton church when they were all part of the youth choir the *Au talavou*.

Ahh and then you know just, but yeah and then at the end cause when he was buried. And a few, well, all the kids that we grew up with umm just sang while the, while he was getting covered so we just sang all the songs that we grew up on and it was Maoli (Māori), Cook Island, Samoan... (F2F1)

For family two (F2), the children in the family took part in all the singing throughout their grandfather's funeral. At the burial, they continued to sing even after the burial and most of the

family and mourners had left for the after function. The first of the following two quotes is by one of the grandchildren who stayed back at the cemetery after the burial, where they lingered to say their final farewell and continue to sing with her cousins. The second quote is from one of her uncles who is referring to how the children kept singing at the cemetery even after the burial.

Yeah so, I was sitting. My cousin was in front of me and I was just like crying and then when I was over it was like, everyone left to go to the *aiga* (meal) and we just stayed there, we just stayed there it was my cousins at the cemetery (F3F2)

Because another thing is when we had buried the old man in Mangere, the kids kept singing! They sing ALL the songs, to again remind with all the songs that they had sung with the old man, and what they used to do a? (M1F2)

Family four and family five (F4, F5) were different from the other four families in several aspects namely, there were no visiting choirs(F5) when the body lay in state at the family home because their loved one did not belong to a church, although there was a devotion when the body of their loved one was brought to the family home. However, this family kept an all-night vigil singing all their uncle's favourite songs, many of which were English pop songs. At times they accompanied themselves with the piano and other times they sang along to a CD, all the while sharing humorous stories of their memories of their uncle. Most of these songs were what they referred to as 'party songs', which they had heard growing up around their uncle. At the burial for their uncle, there was some spontaneous singing and dancing by a brother of the departed. The following quote is referring to a family get together after the burial.

There was a reception after at night and a party. Everybody was drunk because... is a, likes his drink! Yeah, and people were sort of celebrating and crying because they were really drunk and talk about him, yes... (M1F5)

Family four (F4) was unique for two reasons. There was no all-night vigil of song when the departed came home although there was a devotion when his body first came home. Secondly, there was a cremation rather a burial and the singing was led by a small choir with the songs being chosen by the priest. The identifying of the groups who sang those songs in the funerals which were not part of a formal funeral program has been presented, under the last of the two themes under the subcategory of 'Who sings?'. The 'In the moment' songs were overall sung by the youth, and those participants who were either born or raised in Aotearoa. This tended to occur when the body of their loved one lay in state as part of an all-night vigil and at the end of the burial.

## **Conclusion**

In the previous first theme 'NZ born', under the subcategory 'Who sings?', evidence was presented from the data indicating that over half of the participants have grown up in Aotearoa, and the female participants have a deeper knowledge in regards to *Gagana Samoa* and to Samoan hymns. Therefore, as a group, more of them sang these hymns as there were eleven females compared to seven males. Nevertheless, there is also evidence that some of the males in the male group were highly proficient in *Gagana Samoa* alongside knowing these hymns very well. The singing overall whether as part of a formal funeral program or occurring spontaneously was done by family, mourners and the congregation. However, the spontaneous singing tended to occur when the body lay in state and at the burial. The data shows that this

tended to be done by the New Zealand born (middle-aged generation) who belonged to the *Au talavou*, the grandchildren (F1) and nieces and nephews of the departed for (F5).

In summary, the third findings category 'Connection in song' evidences the many purposes of song in Samoan funerals as a way to amplify spiritual connection in a mana enhancing way that is meaningful to participants and their families. This connection with the spiritual in song is part of a continuum throughout the history of Samoan people to the present day. Song facilitates connection and conveying of emotion for family members in a way to honour and farewell their loved ones. Overall, the decision making on the songs selected for the funerals in this research were decided by the family (except for F4). In particular, the middle age women who are daughters or sisters of the departed were well represented in the decision making. Although males in the families contributed to the decision making, the females featured more significantly than their male counterpart.

The elders in *aiga* took part in the decision making of song for the funerals. However, they gave their blessing and delegated much of this responsibility to the middle-age group as if ushering a new regime and the changing of the guard. Nevertheless, this did not mean that elders became disinterested bystanders as they were always keeping a watchful eye on the funeral. In the case of the funeral for (F2), instructions and plans were put in place by the departing elder in regards to different aspects of the funeral including song.

Those who sang in the funerals have been identified as those participants who were NZ born or grew up in Aotearoa. This group were well represented in the singing in the funerals for this research. Families (1, 2, 3, 5 & 6) all participated in the singing for the funeral of their loved one. This was done as a family and as members of a church which for the most part was the norm for PIC churches, whereby singing is done as a congregation whether in a Sunday church

service or for a funeral service. Across all five funerals (except F4), there was evidence of middle age and younger participants spearheading and taking part in spontaneous continuous singing at two funeral locations-the family home and at the burial site.

## CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

### Introduction

The findings for this research are of continuity as part of a bigger story, one of a people and their continuing journey through time and place, travelling from their homeland of origin to make a new home in the land of Aotearoa New Zealand situated in their ancestral ocean, Te Moana Nui a Kiwa. In turn, the story of Samoan people sits within the greater story of humanity which is at least in part told in the literature (Anae, 1998; Macpherson, 1999; Ta'isi, 2009).

From the first wave of migration in the 1950s to the second and third generation, Samoan people have made Aotearoa New Zealand their adopted home. They brought with them their *Fa'asamoa* (Samoan culture) including *Gagana Samoa* (Samoan language) and other cultural practices such as experiencing death and dying and burial, originating from pre-colonisation in Samoa followed by contact with European colonisers where the indigenous people and colonisers mutually influenced each other to the present day. In their new home, they have continued to farewell their loved ones in their funerals with song. The focus of this research has looked at song in Samoan funerals and what this aspect of their death and dying ritual can tell us about *Fa'asamoa* in Aotearoa New Zealand. The findings from this project indicate that song is a continuum of *Fa'asamoa* (Samoan culture) in the farewell of their dead. Song for Samoan people continues to be part of their history and culture, marking important events such as funerals and relationships, amplifying connection in temporal and spiritual domains.

This discussion chapter fits under '*Luva*' (Reporting and Findings phase) according to the *Kakala* methodology (Refer to Chapter 4). In this stage, the findings of the research and the reporting on what was found is likened to the completion of a *Kakala* (fragrant garland made of flowers and other natural material). In the reporting and discussion on what was found, it is

presented to intended recipients; in this case the examiners and those who are interested in this research.

The literature on the core concepts connected to the research question, wrestle to define many things Samoan. This wrestling includes the defining of '*Fa'asamoa*', where there is some lack of agreement (Anae, 1998; Meleisea, 1987). The quest in the west for the need to define so that something is knowable, and a shared uniformity in the knowing is impossible through an interpretive lens. Nevertheless, in the interest of scholarship and as part of a quest to 'know' the world, in this case the place of song in Samoan funerals, we must look at the findings in light of a partial and interpretive understanding of the literature to glean a deeper understanding.

The discussion in this chapter begins with revisiting the positionality of the researcher as set out in Chapter 1 and in the methodology. Of great importance is recognising the continuum of a particular history through the lives of participants to the present day, where in Aotearoa, Samoan people continue their journey reflected in song. In spite of a history of colonisation, Samoan people as Pasifika people continue to strive and thrive in their adopted home with resilience, fortitude and hope for future generations and this thesis is both a contribution and acknowledgement of that journey over time and place.

The methodology i.e., the *Kakala* (Thaman, 1992) is consistent with this discourse and the decolonising focus (Smith, 1999) whereby social justice requires that Pasifika methodologies are most appropriate to explore Pasifika people, challenging a colonial history of being defined by others. This research pushes back against that history with the voices and meaning making of the participants and their *aiga* as interpreted from their *Itulagi* (side of heaven) (Vaai & Casimira, 2017). It is the position of this researcher that all of the findings, in part or as an

integrated whole, reveal what *Fa'asamoa* is today and in the future. More importantly, it is the interconnectedness of all three findings categories, sub-categories and themes, sub-themes which represent the essence of *Fa'asamoa* as *connectivity* for those *aiga* in this research. How participants make meaning of these connections provides a unique view connected to a particular group (Samoan in Aotearoa) with a particular history (Samoan history, colonisation and migration) at a particular period concerning an important event, namely farewelling a beloved elder in the sacred *Va*.

The findings across all three categories: *Fa'asamoa*, History in song, and Connection in song, is taken here to represent a whole as the worldview of participants. Reflecting Ta'isi's (2009) view that the self is a relational self, participants are understood in relation to one's village, *aiga* and the world at large. The three categories are relational to each other. However, different aspects of the findings will be teased out for a closer look as part of the discussion depending on an overall structure as provided shortly. The presentation of the findings in the medium of the written word, including their presentation in a table may imply they are neatly discreet and compartmentalised. However, this is due to the limitation of the medium at hand. It would be closer to the participant's reality to view all the findings as being inter-related as part of a constellation of inter-related meaning.

This inter-connected constellation of meaning is presented here in four sections, with reflections on the critical realism (CR) gaze rounding off the chapter. The first section will focus on *Fa'asamoa* and will be looked at under the proverb of "*E suisui faiga ae e tasi le fa'avae*" (The way things are done in the *Fa'asamoa* may change but the foundation remains). This is done in order to explore whether there is something of *Fa'asamoa* that has remained and if there is a foundation to *Fa'asamoa*; what would it be? This section includes a focus on

*Fa'asamoa* and *Lima taumatau* where I will discuss the role of women in the findings and implications for women in leadership. Although there is a valid critique in regards to the under-representation of Samoan women in leadership in such spaces such as *Matai* positions, women have historically been held in high esteem in Samoan society.

The next section will focus on 'spirituality' as it emerged across the three categories of findings. The reason for highlighting this aspect of the findings is due to its powerful presence throughout the findings where spirituality is part of Le Va (sacred relationships) and Customs and Rituals (Category 1); Au Talavou as part of church and Family practices as *aiga* when they gather to pray and prepare song to farewell a loved one (Category 2) and Purpose of song chosen for spiritual connection (Category 3). The spiritual or spirituality permeates the findings whether it is to the past remembered in song, the present and those at the funerals, and also to the departed and those who have gone before. In other words, spirituality is not only one of the ties that binds all the findings together, song and the act of singing together as a collective facilitate the amplification of connection. The three categories connected the spiritual and temporal, the liminal (Van Gennep, 2019), the past, the present and future across time. From the perspective of Ta'isi (2009) spirituality and ritual has always been part of a death and dying culture in *Fa'asamoa* from pre-encounter when an oral tradition carried history to the present providing Samoan people *tulaga vae* (a place to stand). The holistic view of the findings is reflective of harmony as it applies to the view of the individual as part of the collective and the collective as made up of individuals, where both are seen as belonging together as embodied beings, embodying relationships, history and lifeworld (Vaai & Casimira, 2017). It is important to understand how participants define spirituality as part of a belief system and the 'spiritual' as an experience or connection in song as part of funerals. An additional reason for including

spirituality as a focus for discussion is the comparison in how spirituality is defined and perceived in the findings compared to the literature.

The lenses of ritual will be discussed in the third section due to its close relationship to spirituality in the findings. Consequently, the findings suggest that in *Fa'asamoa*, ritual and spirituality go together including in the farewelling of the dead. Like spirituality, ritual also has a strong constant presence the findings where one of the definitions of *Fa'asamoa* is Customs and Rituals (Category 1); Singing the farewell by young people as part of an all-night vigil is a ritual as Connection to other family funerals (Category 2) and (Category 3) demonstrate the power of Samoan funeral ritual evidenced by the spiritual experience/connection and emotion facilitated by song as part of the funerals.

Of equal importance is the connectivity between spirituality and ritual as part of *aiga* (Category 1) in *Fa'asamoa* where there are shared beliefs about the nature of existence enacted in Samoan funeral ritual. As can be seen from the literature review in chapter 3 (Samoans in New Zealand), spirituality and ritual have been part of a death and dying culture in *Fa'asamoa* from pre-encounter with the west to the present, as is evidenced by the findings. The connections between all the findings including spirituality and ritual as part of *Fa'asamoa* is important to keep in mind in order to appreciate the depth of the findings. Nevertheless, *Fa'asamoa* is not static as evidenced in Change in *aiga*; Changed funeral practices and Changes in song for Samoan funerals (Category 1) and by implication this may be reflected in spirituality and ritual and also influenced by a differentiated society such as New Zealand.

This leads the discussion into '*Fa'asamoa*' and the possible ways it is changing while an essence of it may stay the same according to the findings.

### ***Fa'asamoa***

E suisui *faiga* ae tasi le fa'avae (M1F6) (The way *Fa'asamoa* is done changes but the foundation remains)

The thing is these times, when it's done, that saying is true that 'The foundation remains but the ways it's done changes (**E suisui *faiga* ae tasi le fa'avae**). There are now worldly songs as funeral songs! Those are songs that in those days you hardly ever hear it in a funeral. But these days, it's a song like 'My dove is lost' when someone dies... Yes, all those songs are mixed... And it's not like the minister says 'No please those songs are worldly songs' (M1F6)

This proverb from an elder participant will provide a guiding theme in this part of the discussion. Although there is yet to be any definition or codification of '*Fa'asamoa*' (Anae, 1998; Meleisea, 1987b), there is nevertheless some general agreement on what *is Fa'asamoa* according to the findings and the literature, such as; *aiga* and *Gagana Samoa, custom and ritual including song, and the church* (Anae, 1998; Faleolo, 2014; Lautamulitalo, 1998, Lima, 2004; Macpherson, 1999), although as evidenced in the findings there are changes in some of these aspects of *Fa'asamoa* according to participants. These changes are in Findings Category 1 namely: Change in *aiga*; Changed funeral practices and Changes in song for Samoan funerals.

The reasons for grounding this part of the discussion on the above proverb, is firstly, it signals the centrality of *Gagana Samoa* in *Fa'asamoa* (Findings Category 1; *Gagana Samoa*) secondly, *alagaupu* or *fa'aupuga* (proverbs) is an ancient Samoan cultural practice (Ta'isi,

2009), thirdly, it signals the importance of drawing out possible implications on *Fa'asamoa* when considering what the findings reveal about how *Fa'asamoa* is defined and understood, how song is part of *Fa'asamoa* as well as those areas of change. Overall, change to *Fa'asamoa* is in regards to *aiga*, funeral practices and in song for Samoan funerals.

Notwithstanding the changes set out above, a clear finding is the central role of the *aiga* as the primary social structure within which participants are nurtured and learn *Fa'asamoa* and *Gagana Samoa* including *Pese* and of equal importance is clear evidence that *aiga* is how all participants defined *Fa'asamoa*. Of maybe of even more importance is the *role* of the *aiga* as place to learn the values participants view as *Fa'asamoa* namely: *Le Va*, *Fa'aaloalo*, *Alofa* and *Tautua*, and as a place where there is 'belonging' and a foundation for Samoan identity.

But you know, like we say that or our parents say that to us, but we know we belong to a *aiga*... O le *Alofa*. O le *agaga* (It's the love, it's the spirit), you know you walk down humble and you've got love even if you're *makiva* (poor) and you've got nothing but your family sees your face (F1F2)

Within this social structure, participants identified relationships with older cousins and especially grandparents as being powerful and supportive influences in their learning a myriad of things as part of *Fa'asamoa* as mentioned above including customs and rituals. It is within *aiga* that participants come to know *who* is in their *aiga* and *how* they connect to different sides of their family. The testimonies of many participants and in particular the youngest cohort, as to how much they learned about *Fa'asamoa* from their grandparents, and the importance of that *Va* (as all the grandparents had gone by the time of this research) in grounding them in their Samoan identity is of great interest to this researcher and possibly others, considering the

very youthful Pasifika population in Aotearoa New Zealand and over 65 % of the Samoan population being New Zealand born (Statistics New Zealand, 2018).

We had a lot of older cousins that came in and showed us how to do things... So, it was kind of like my older cousins, they were kind of trying to tell us which side they're from, you know like in terms of which side was Pa's family, which was Ma's family that they were representing (F3F2)

... our culture is our family. We are so rooted within our family and we will do anything for them and that's, that's how I like to think of it and it really hits home because especially what my nana told me, because my nana taught me a lot! (M3F3)

Elsewhere, there is evidence on the positive influence of elders in the lives of Samoan youth, contributing to well-being and keeping them grounded in their *aiga* and away from re-offending in the New Zealand Youth Justice system (Urale-Baker, 2017). Overall, it is *as aiga* that participants became familiar with song that was in their loved one's funeral, and it is *together as aiga* that they sang to farewell a beloved family member, evidencing a connectivity to each other, *wider aiga*, community and church. To reiterate an essential context according to the findings, *aiga* is what participants cited the most clearly when they were asked 'What is *Fa'asamoa*?'. This strongly suggests the Category 3 findings 'Connection in song' as firstly, being an outcome of Categories 1 & 2 and secondly, as reinforcing and strengthening connections in those categories. In other words, Category 1, 2 & 3 are interdependent and mutually influential.

Therefore, changes to the strength of this connection as *aiga* and its cohesion as a collective, it is argued here will impact all the areas identified in the first finding's category '*Fa'asamoa*'

including the rest of the findings in Categories 2 & 3. The findings (Change in *aiga*) suggest the weakening connections and participation in *aiga* due to: work demands; geographical distance; decreasing involvement in church; varying interpretations and understanding of *Fa'asamoa* and inter-marriage. Moreover, other parts of the findings (Category 3; Connection in song), for example 'Who decides? Who sings?' will be dependent on how *aiga* cohesion. As the 'Purpose' of song' (Category 3) is to facilitate connection as a collective of *aiga*, church and community in the spiritual and temporal, the strength of the *va* within *aiga* has to be enough to bring family together not only to attend family funerals but to participate and know the songs. In so many words, it is possible to infer the strength of connection in an *aiga*, if one was to attend a funeral for someone in that family from the participation in the singing.

Furthermore, when considering the findings in Category 2 (History in song) where song is learned in the context of *aiga* and church including such youth groups as (*Au talavou*), other family funerals and family practice, the impact on all these area by 'Change in *aiga*' from Category 1, is considerable. Subsequently, lessening participation in *aiga* and in church will impact on learning Samoan *Pese* (hymns), *Gagana Samoa* and core values (Category 1; *Gagana Samoa* and Core values) *Fa'asamoa* and more.

Therefore, as the church in New Zealand has in some ways become a substitute for the village, as a place where people share the same values and activities reinforcing certain these values and identity (Macpherson, 2002) the weakening of *aiga* connections and lessening of church attendance may have serious implications. An important implication of the church not playing the role of the village where *aiga* come together with other *aiga* supporting social cohesion, is something worth considering in light of the finding about change in Category 1. The fourth theme in this category (Influencers) evidences the important role played by elders and

musicians in teaching many of the participants not only *Pese*, but also imparting *Gagana Samoa* by ensuring that the words were pronounced correctly with corresponding respectful behaviour (*Fa'aaloalo*) and attitudes expected as being part of *Fa'asamoa*. For the participants in this research, *aiga* as part of church was a place for learning *Gagana Samoa*, song and being knitted together as a community. Considering the evidence that consistent church attendance over time can be a buffer for mental distress in New Zealand (Ejova, et al., 2020), a decrease in this cultural practice could negatively impact cohesion for *aiga*.

Change in the composition in *aiga* is supported by Siauane (2006) where those who attend the same church or come from the same village are oftentimes considered by Samoans as family; changing what is considered *Fa'asamoa* and this in turn influences how cultural values and rituals are enacted. The theme 'Change in *aiga*' in the findings somewhat echo what Siauane (2006) argued although in the case of this research, there is indication that change includes some of those who grew up in the church, moving to a non-Samoan church of their spouse or moving away from being part of a church altogether. The *Key person* for this research who by virtue of his professional role as a funeral director and having decades of experience put forward that there is an increasing *disconnect* inside of *aiga*, with weaker *Mafutaga* and less participation resulting in some families not being familiar with song.

Because sometimes, they don't know what the hymns are! They want a hymn... they oh we'd like to have a Samoan hymn but umm do you know one?... but that's the reality. You know our dad loved these hymns but umm do you know one?... So, I think we've got a lot more who can't sing... and I see it in funerals where you've got these grandchildren, greatgrandchildren, who aren't participating in it because they can't

sing! Don't know the words! Because we're not all going to church. We're not all going to choir practice once twice a week! (Key Person)

Also, this theme also provides a glimpse of a lessening of a connection between some participants, their *aiga*, *Fa'asamoa* and the church they grew up in. However, due to the funeral for their loved one taking place in that same church, the funeral of their loved one was the reason they returned. This disconnect is reminiscent of one male participant saying:

... in the most basic sense, it (*Fa'asamoa*) is my identity, so I still come back to it and still think about it a lot. Even though I've kind of been, haven't been in touch with it. Unless I come back to family things and funerals and things like that. But umm yeah for me, I'm happy I went through it, even though I ... haven't seen much of it right now, lately, and only when I come to see my family in times of trouble and you know like a death in the family. (M2F6).

This excerpt from the theme 'Change in *aiga*' indicate a sense of ambivalence by this middle age New Zealand born male who seems to be struggling with staying away from *Fa'asamoa* while recognising it as being part of his identity. In times of trouble, the above male participant returns to his *aiga* when there is a funeral painting a poignant picture of an inner conflict where the memories seem bitter-sweet. This participant represents what disconnection to *Fa'asamoa*, *aiga* and even church community can look like although in this case, he knew all the songs because of his history of learning *Pese* in his family and the *Au talavou*.

The history of learning for the above participant is set out in Category 2, and despite his struggle with *Fa'asamoa* at the time of this research, the findings in the themes under this category, 'Favourites' and 'Connection to other family funerals' under the subcategory 'Family

Practices' in Category 2, show that at least with most of the *aiga* in this research, the strength of connectivity and belonging as *aiga* is still strong; facilitating cohesion and familiarity with *Pese*. 'Family practices' bring *aiga* together in a way that is part of the history of these families, in other words, it is something that they have always done beginning back in the homeland-Samoa. The coming together of *aiga* for events such as funerals, song practice, attending church or family devotion has clearly supported not only the cohesion in *aiga* for this research, it has facilitated the learning of *Pese*. This raises questions on whether these practices will remain as strong as this research indicates considering that the Samoan population in New Zealand now include first, second and even third generations of those born in the adopted home, meaning that the Samoan population who were born away from the homeland is over 65 % (Statistics New Zealand, 2018).

These changes mean different freedoms which can avail *aiga* members opportunities to construct different identities (Macpherson, 1999). However, *Fa'asamoa* according to the findings is still considered to be; *aiga*, *Gagana Samoa*, customs and rituals (including song) and the church, this is generally reflected in the literature (Anae, 1998; Faleolo, 2014; Lautamulitalo, 1998, Lima, 2004; Macpherson, 1999). This being the case, then the 'fa'avae' (*foundation*) in Samoa may be all these things in spite of the changes. That is, the aforementioned values, firstly enacted and learned in *aiga* may be the foundation of *Fa'asamoa*.

As *aiga*, *Gagana Samoa* and customs and rituals were part of *Fa'asamoa* before the arrival of missionaries, Christianity can be seen as the most recent arrival in Samoa and becoming integrated with Samoan culture. An interesting observation as time moves on is whether this influence will persist as an integral part of *Fa'asamoa*.

The changes in *aiga* included a weakening of relationships within *aiga* where there is some lessening of getting together as a collective, attending church together and practicing devotions where *Pese* is a shared activity supporting the learning of *Fa'asamoa*, *Gagana Samoa* and song.

Contributing to this change as is evidenced in the findings include employment, children living overseas, and family members marrying non-Samoans and participants not attending the same church as that of their elders; all factors in less participation of the *aiga* as a collective as there is less interaction and *Mafutaga* (fellowship).

Areas for further research could be looking at these different areas to gain a deeper understanding on how this is impacting *Fa'asamoa* and *aiga*. One of these areas is that of the journey towards a 'secured identity' (Anae, 1998) as considering the change in the areas just mentioned, it would be a rich area for research to look at how the second and third generation of NZ born Samoans are faring in how they see themselves. Moreover, continuing on the vein of Anae's research, how are the younger generation faring in their journey toward a secured identity, and what are the songs that have been part of their journey?

This section of the discussion has considered what is *Fa'asamoa* and how it is changing as a continuum in Aotearoa New Zealand. In particular, change in the cohesion of *aiga* and by extension the church as evidenced in the findings, has possible implications for the future of *Fa'asamoa* due to its role as a primary place to learn *Fa'asamoa*. What is suggested when looking at the findings as an integrated whole is that in spite of changes, connectivity and belonging to *aiga* remains an important aspect of *Fa'asamoa*. It is primarily in their *aiga* and in their churches where participants learn *Fa'asamoa*, *Gagana Samoa*, their history and song.

The next section will discuss the contribution of the middle age New Zealand born females to *Gagana Samoa* (Samoan language), *Tautua* and overall participation in *aiga* compared to their male counterparts. Unsurprisingly, they featured in decision making for in different aspects of the funerals including song.

### ***Fa'asamoa and Lima taumatau***

The findings suggest women as being more proactive on several fronts in *Fa'asamoa* and in the funeral process compared to their brothers. Consequently, women's presence permeates all of the findings. As a Samoan woman, this was no surprise to this researcher due to personal experience. This group of women were either first generation born in New Zealand or came to their new home at a very young age. The main reason for highlighting this in the discussion is the juxtaposition between the central role women play in funerals and their under-representation in leadership roles in Samoa (Finau, 2019) and the *Fa'aMatai* system in the diaspora (Anae, 2020).

The findings suggest that women as a group were more pro-active in their *aiga* as in terms of *Fa'asamoa* and *fa'alavelave*; have higher competency in *Gagana Samoa*; higher direct involvement in taking care of elders and closely connected and involved in the church. As a group they were also more knowledgeable about *Pese* (song). Hence if *Gagana Samoa* is an essential aspect of *Fa'asamoa* and women have higher competencies and participation in these different areas of Samoan culture, this may suggest that in spite of not being represented in the *Matai* level of leadership, they are and have always been highly influential in *Fa'asamoa* evidenced by the role of grandmothers in the findings.

I grew up doing *Peses* (hymns, songs) with Nana and all that so I have those memories.

But then also I learned the words so I knew them myself (F3F3).

Yeah, but she was the only choice because my older brother, he can't speak Samoan, he doesn't really understand the *Fa'asamoa* way. But ... can speak Samoan, she's, she can speak on behalf of dad and that's why she had to go! (M2F1)

Of interest is the general regard and respect the males had for their sisters and female relatives in regards to their strengths and competencies, and the reasons why this is not translating into more women becoming *Matai* in the diaspora and in the homeland. As pro-active as the middle age female participants are in different aspects of *Fa'asamoa* according to the findings, there is some evidence suggesting that there is some alienation in the youngest female cohort of the participants. This participant had a very close relationship with her Nana from whom she learned *Pese* (Samoan hymns), however, she has some ambivalence about *Fa'asamoa*.

But when it comes to funerals, I feel like it's like, it really does separate those you know, that elderly family members use that as an opportunity to kind of like weed out those that you know grew up with *Fa'asamoa* (laughing) and those that are New Zealand born yeah! (F3F3)

The middle-age women played a vital role in the funerals for this research as they do generally within their *aiga*, church and *fa'alavelave*. When considering Macpherson's (2002) point of view that those first migrants from Samoa in the 1950s tended to be single women who were chosen by their *aiga* due to a 1950's were chosen by their *aiga* due to having a higher commitment to *aiga*, it may be that this finding is evident of that continuing commitment.

Furthermore, such individuals "...were more likely to be more committed to other Samoan values and practices and provided a solid platform from which a moral community might emerge" (Macpherson, 2002, p. 80). This begs the question as to whether it is the group of first

New Zealand born generation of women who are the torch bearers in continuing *Fa'asamoa* as a cultural practice and one of the sites this is reconstituted is at funerals (Anae, 1998).

The findings suggest that compared to their brothers, middle age women from the first New Zealand born or raise cohort are more pro-active in the cultural space and have a higher involvement and confidence in the *Fa'asamoa*. This is not so pronounced with the youngest cohort. How this translates into women in *Matai* roles in leadership for the future is uncertain.

The next section will discuss how participants define spirituality as part of a belief system and the 'spiritual' as an experience or connection in song as part of funerals.

### **Spirituality**

This section of the discussion will set out how participants understood and defined spirituality as part of a belief system as well as an experience or connection in song as part of the funeral ritual for their loved ones. Spirituality as defined in other places and peoples will also be considered as part of the discussion.

As set out in the literature review, Samoan people pre-encounter with the west had the Samoan Indigenous Religion (SIR) (Ta'isi, 2009) and a creation story (Fraser, 1897; Meleisea (1987b). In this pre-encounter world, spiritual beliefs included Tagaloa the progenitor and a spiritual world consisting of ten heavens and sisters had a sacred role in the *Feagaiga* complementing that of the brother and representative of the family gods, the *Ilamutu* (Ta'isi, 2009). The spiritual world includes the spirit of the dead or *aitu* who also exist in the world of the living ((Meleisea & Schoeffel, 2016). Post-encounter, the church and Christianity have been

integrated as a significant part of Samoan life whether in Samoa or in the diaspora (Macpherson, 2011).

The two worlds described above may help explain the way participants view spirituality as an integrated whole, a continuum from pre-encounter to post encounter. Accordingly, participants did not express any angst or contradiction about seeing these two worlds come together, a world which they have in some ways inherited. Anae (1998) argues that in the early days of the missionaries in Samoa Christianity became indigenised (p.89) and Samoanised in Samoa and New Zealand. Consider the following statement that suggests the reconciling of two world views culminating in a belief system shared by most participants.

That's where the 'Va' comes from, the 'Va' for the Samoan person, with their God. The God they are afraid of! That they fear! That they respect! (F1F3)

Remember that the Va is your respect for the other person! Your space is sacred! That's why we say 'When you walk near another person' Tulou! Pardon me! Because that's sacred! Don't violate the Va, and the space of that person! You know? That's how it is. So, the way you speak is respectful! It's so ingrained in our society! This thing, in our Samoan culture, the Va! That is what I am talking about, the Va is synonymous with Christianity! The values for Christian living are all found in the Va! How you put the other the other one first, the other person first than yourself! (F1F3)

The above statement suggests that pre-encounter concepts such as the Va has been reconciled and integrated with Christianity as part of the continuum that is *Fa'asamoa*. In comparison with other societies, Samoan people have some similarities with some groups in Africa (Burns, 2012; Arko-Achemfuor (2011) and Australia (Brown, 2014) insofar as the influence of

Christianity culminating in an amalgamation of different spiritual beliefs. In the west, identifying a formal religion or particular belief system as part of spirituality has become more of a challenge due the rise of secularism ((Emke, 2002; Holloway, et al., 2013; Morrell & Smith, 2008; Walter, 2003; 2016).

Spirituality for Samoan people according to the findings suggest an integration of pre-encounter beliefs from the Samoan Indigenous Religion (SIR) including beliefs in the supernatural and Christian beliefs. This reconciling suggests a continuum in what is *Fa'asamoa*' and permeates across all three categories of the findings. The next part of this section will look at the findings in terms of the actual experiences of participants which they have described as a spiritual experience/connection in song during the funeral of their loved one.

#### ***Spiritual experience and connection in song***

I think it shows umm like a spiritual connection to each other, to being part of something also like umm like something about people feeling connected with music. And I think that's a part, a lot of what *Fa'asamoa* is, it's about connectivity! (F3F2)

When reflecting back to the *Talanoa* with each participant and looking at the findings in Category 3, this part of the findings represents overall the most powerful and emotional moments in the *Talanoa*. These were the moments when there were often tears, high emotions where participants would even start to sing a song remembered from their loved one's funeral and the researcher would join in.

It may be useful to briefly touch upon here how the researcher makes sense of the process arriving at this this findings category. Of equal importance is the process by which participants

felt comfortable to the point of sharing personal, intimate and emotional moments in the *Talanoa*. This part of the discussion is been provided to honour the participants as often, the written word does not do justice to those powerful and intense moments in the *Talanoa*, where body language and being face to face provided a palpable experience conveying to the researcher the *sacred* nature of participants generously shared their innermost thoughts and feelings about the funeral of their loved one and song.

Category 1 (*Fa'asamoa*) enabled participants to present and share who they are and how they understand *Fa'asamoa* (including song), as well as situate and get comfortable with the researcher as a Samoan person who was doing research. Category 2 (History in song) set out participant's journey marked by song. Each of the first two categories provided participants an opportunity to share about their thoughts on *Fa'asamoa*, song and their history on where and with who they learned a particular song.

Category 3 generally marks the stage in the in the *Talanoa* where a trust had been established in the sacred *Va*, facilitating a sense of intimacy and bond where participants were able to share strong emotions enabling a great depth in the level of sharing. Due to the data collecting method (*Talanoa*) where rather than a structured interview format is utilised, a co-constructed conversation around the research concept is more appropriate and congruent with *Fa'aaloalo* in the sacred *Va*, participants in general chose to share about *Fa'asamoa* and their history with song as a starting point before talking about the themes in this category.

That is, it is argued here that the intensity and intimacy of the findings in this third category may not have been possible without participants becoming more comfortable after setting out their thoughts and worldviews set out in the first two findings categories. It must also be said

that the first part of the *Talanoa* helped participant's comfort levels by having the opportunity to situate who they are and who the researcher is, in the context of the Samoan community.

This level of comfort between participants and researcher is part of the data insofar as reflected in the deeply personal and emotional content shared by these *aiga* members; that are meaningful to them. That is to say that the findings in Category 3 in particular, represent the most emotive and greatest depth of feeling shared by participants as they remembered song from their loved one's funeral, to the extent that at times they would shed tears and even start singing. This category came out of that *Va fealoaloa'i*, enabling trust and intimacy whereby participants and researcher engaged in deep conversation in the spirit of mutuality in the sacred *Va*.

A very important finding are the themes under the first subcategory (Purpose), as this evidence the deliberate choice of songs which signal how participants and their *aiga* see themselves and their loved one in relation to *Fa'asamoa* and spiritual beliefs; including messaging about what they value as meaningful.

Firstly, all six themes: Spiritual experience/connection; *Le fe'au* (The message); Mana; Unbroken chain; Emotion and Honouring the dead, are accessed, conveyed and amplified in song. In other words, the very action of singing and hearing song *together* is a powerful portal through which powerful feelings and emotions are expressed and values are re-affirmed; including feelings of belonging, connection and hope. As one middle-age female participant put it, reading the words of the song and singing the song are very different as the singing awakens something "*It's like things are awakened...awakening yeah, yeah a spiritual thing*" (F1F2).

This is not new for the participants as they have experienced this in other funerals (Category 2: Connections to other funerals) and in the words of one middle age male, he talked about how people ‘*underestimate the role of song*’ and “*take it for granted*’ as ‘*we do it all the time*” (M2F3). What this suggests to the researcher is the view that song in funerals for these participants and therefore theoretically, other Samoan people, makes possible an embodied experience and connection from their *Itulagi*, to the spiritual, *aiga*, their community and the world at large. In other words, song as part of funerals, is normative practice in the side of heaven where participants come from. It is something that has been part of their life experience with other events and social gatherings and in this case with funerals. Another salient point to be made in regards to all these themes is that they are part of a continuum activated and amplified in song as part of a continuing death and dying ritual, viewed as either as parallels or more so as a woven tapestry as a metaphor representing a particular and on-going cultural world view.

A consistent experience across most participants is the sense, feel or *Lagona* (to sense, feel) of something beyond in song as part of funeral ritual.

It’s like you, the feeling of love, and then that’s how you embrace the loved one that has passed on! It’s because their body is no longer here, you know even though spiritually you can’t see them, but you can feel them! So, in words, in ways of feeling them, it’s through song! You know that’s how I present that. (F2F5)

The spiritual connection described by the above participant as part of the Category 3 findings is similar to other cultures in their funeral rituals. Research by Burns (2012) revealed that in music as part of funeral ritual the Ewe in Ghana evoke spiritual power and bravery, and for the Akpafu in Ghana also funeral dirge refers to a river crossing as between the world of the living

and the beyond (Agawu, 1988). This theme continues with the Bininj people who are indigenous to the Northern Territory of Australia where “Songs play a vital role in the deceased spirit’s transition from the living world” (Brown, 2014, p.177).

The literature evidences song in funeral ritual playing the same role in other cultural settings situated in other *Itulagi*, where something is conveyed and a spiritual experience/connection is facilitated; something transcendent. It is argued here that the spiritual experience in song as part of funeral ritual for participants reflect a shared experience across humanity and (Brown et al., 2000; Nettle, 2000) and in this case-funeral ritual (Wong, 1998; Baraldi, 2009; Rappaport, 1971). More importantly, as part of humanity, in the Samoan context, *Fa’asamoa* according to Ta’isi (2009) ‘speaks’ to the ‘heart and soul’ and song is a fundamental part of ritual in the *Fa’asamoa*.

So far, connectivity in the *Fa’asamoa* to the realm of the spiritual when looking at the findings suggest a connection that reflects the history of Samoan people in their *Itulagi*. Broadening out, funeral ritual and song in other *Itulagi* places spirituality and spiritual connection as a concept and experience that is shared across humanity reflecting a variation of belief systems. In spite of these variations, one element seems to be consistently present across cultures - the search for meaning and belief in the beyond.

As funeral is often considered ritual and furthermore religious ritual, the next section will discuss how the findings reveal ritual as a powerful and central experience for participants when they farewelled a loved one. The next stage of the discussion will look at the findings on participant’s experience of funeral ritual in light of the lenses provided by the literature. As already stated, participants considered custom and rituals as part of *Fa’asamoa* in the findings (Category 1). Accordingly, *Fa’asamoa* as experienced in funeral ritual for participants present

an opportunity to consider how socially constructed experiences compare to how ritual has been conceptualised in the literature.

### **The lenses of ritual**

Looking back at the findings, not only does it tell about song being part of *Fa'asamoa*, it is part of farewelling the dead by Samoan *aiga* in their funerals as ritual. Due to the vastness of the literature on ritual and the limitations imposed by the parameters of a doctoral thesis, particular conceptualisations from selected scholars have been chosen namely; (Ta'isi,2009; Durkheim, 1965; Van Gennep, 2019; Rappaport, 1971, 1999). Without claiming any comprehensive expertise on ritual as a concept in this great body of literature, suffice to say that some of the ideas of the aforementioned scholars may provide interesting ways to view the findings in a way that may be of interest to others who may pursue this research in this area; Samoan funeral as ritual.

The findings primarily reveal how participants perceive *Fa'asamoa*, which in their view include song as part of ritual; in this case funeral ritual. This researcher's position is that all the findings say something about *Fa'asamoa*, song as part of *Fa'asamoa* and part of funeral ritual. Of great importance is the finding overall which identifies song as an activity or social action that as part of funeral ritual connects participants in a higher intensity to their world, including God, each other, past and present and future, the spiritual, sacred and temporal.

The utility of the lenses provided by the main four scholars set out above is as follows. Ta'isi (2009) provides insight into the *Fa'asamoa* culture perspective as an insider where ritual as part of *Fa'asamoa* privileges the metaphorical, beauty and what is meaningful insofar as it speaks to the heart and soul in the sacred *Va*. In other words, ritual is relational, signifying what is the essence in meaningfulness in *Fa'asamoa* namely; *Alofa*, caring, sharing and connectivity

in the sacred *Va*. Durkheim (1965; as cited in Bellah, 2005) affords a look at the level of the collective as the location for understanding ritual as social action revealing ‘collective representation’ or beliefs of a group. Van Gennep on the other hand in contrast to Durkheim enables the viewing of ritual as changing roles for the individual; or as a rite of passage. Rappaport provides the view that ritual as part of evolution carries with it a message, much like a time capsule where ritual carries a continuing and particular meta-message.

In selecting these scholars, the researcher is not advocating a preference for any of these lenses, rather, they were selected because the researcher finds them interesting as way to view the findings. Additionally, these lenses are not chosen to justify or lend credibility to the findings, but more so to elucidate the relationship or contrasts between some of what has been written about ritual and the voices of the participants in this research.

On the face of it, the findings about *Fa’asamoa* and in particular song as part of *Fa’asamoa* including the funeral rituals have some similarities and stark contrasts when looking at what Ta’isi (2009) has to say about a death and dying culture in *Fa’asamoa*. This is understandable when viewing what is interpreted by this researcher as a view of funeral ritual that is rarely practiced in contemporary times. Additionally, the location of the funerals in this research being in Aotearoa makes it even more likely that some traditions have changed.

What is clear is Ta’isi’s (2009) view that death and dying ritual include song and chants in the *Fa’asamoa* where the “... principal objective of our funeral rites is to lift us into an emotional high in which life is equated with death and life and death become one and equal” (p. 66).

This resonates with the findings where there is an amplification of connectivity in the spiritual, social and historical for the participants when singing and hearing song as part of the funerals

(Category 3). Song for participants are not only memories, song carry memories and, in the hearing, and singing, participants are carried back to the past remembering people, relationships, events and places while feeling hopeful for the future.

These memories include past funerals of loved ones (Category 2). However, there is some contrasts between the findings and Ta'isi (2009) insofar as he connects this 'emotional high' to an indigenous religion where God is not the creator but the progenitor or family, where the funeral ritual challenges death by drawing attention to human beings' ability to procreate. This 'emotional high' somewhat reflects the theme 'Emotion' (Category 3) where in song, participants experienced intensely a range of negative and positive emotions including: thanksgiving, feeling horrible; joy, sadness, grief and humour in connection to their memories of the departed. In the words of one participant "*The sad is always there and there is a time for sadness and a time for joy*" (M3F2). What does remain of *Fa'asamoa* according to Ta'isi (2009) in a traditional sense from the findings is the centrality of *Gagana Samoa* and persistence of the valuing of the sacred *Va* and the essential importance of relationships.

Nevertheless, this cultural expert in *Fa'asamoa* is concerned with the loss of song and dance as part of ritual and the need for *Fa'asamoa* to speak to the heart and soul or it will die. The findings suggest that overall, song and *Gagana Samoa* is part of funeral ritual suggesting that at least for these participants, the funerals for their loved one represented a meaningful *Fa'asamoa* for them.

The findings evidence a shared belief on what *Fa'asamoa* is; including customs and rituals and connectivity in the sacred *Va*; including song as part of ritual. This shared belief is akin to what Durkheim refers to as 'collective representation' in ritual. What is interesting here is Durkheim's argument that ritual comes before belief and not the other way around (Bellah,

2005). In ritual where there is homogeneity in movement, (in this case singing together) the individuals' sense of self is lessened enabling them to become part of the group as a whole enabling group awareness.

For Durkheim, ritual is firstly a social act where solidarity is established or reaffirmed, establishing an obligation and connection between members as insiders manifesting in what he refers to as a 'moral force', and in ritual the group has an acute awareness of itself distinguishing insiders from outsiders. In the words of one participant when referring to the intense experience of connectivity in song "*This is us*" (F1F2), indicating a sense of solidarity among those taking part in her father's funeral.

Due to this research being concerned with song as part of funeral rituals, the findings are therefore taken here as something representing the sacred. Durkheim makes the distinction between two different times, namely the profane and the sacred; the latter being a time of religious ritual and collective effervescence where the group participate in action leading to a collective experience of high emotion and excitement. This echoes what Ta'isi (2009) has identified as an 'emotional high' experienced in Samoan funeral ritual. In other words, the sacred is set apart in ritual from the everyday humdrum of life.

An example of this in the findings is when one participant, with a sense of awe said "*It's like things are awakened...awakening yeah, yeah a spiritual thing*" (F1F2), when the songs were sung in her father's funeral juxtaposed to reading the words. There is a sense of the sacred and awe keenly felt by participants evidenced in the findings in Category 3 (Connection in song), suggesting that the context of the event and the social enacting of songs ushers in the sacred nature of the funeral ritual.

Of importance given the findings is the idea that ritual creates community where there is unity in beliefs and practices representing religion as Durkheim defines it “A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim, 1995, p44). There is evidence in the findings that indeed this is the case where there is shared belief between the participants and a sense of solidarity, belonging as members of a group; as Samoans, *aiga* and church members.

Song as part of ritual were on the whole known by participants, not as something new but reminiscent of other funerals they had experienced. The role of song in the lives of participants was evidenced in the findings (Category 2) including as markers throughout their history and memories which were ‘awakened’ when talking about song and funerals, in many instances where some of the same songs for the funerals in this research were part of other farewell rituals and family practices where certain songs were considered ‘favourites’. Perhaps none of this is surprising given the sample for this research being all Samoans who used to or still attend church, and the majority being members of the PIC church. Therefore, there was already a relationship between most if not all of the participants established through other funeral rituals experienced together before this research.

Collective effervescence is interpreted here as the connectivity keenly felt by participants in song and in the words of one young male participant “Like *as if you were part of the ocean, just part of something bigger!! (M3F3)*. Additionally, songs were purposefully chosen to foster (Category 3) connectivity between all the mourners as well as honour the relationship with the departed. However, an interesting question arises out of Durkheim’s view that ritual precedes

belief, signaling a possible area of research in the future for those interested in exploring how Samoan funerals are situated in relation to this view.

Although the findings represent themes across the dataset, nevertheless, the data was collected on an individual basis in a *Talanoa* and therefore the themes consist of individual voices. Moving from the work of Durkheim where the focus is on the social level, a lens on the findings on how ritual transitions the individual's role is provided by the work of Arnold van Gennep and his seminal work: *The Rites of Passage*.

In this seminal work Gennep sets out a universal structure for different rituals: rites of separation (funerals); the margin or transition or liminal rites (betrothal, initiation) and rites of incorporation (marriage). The funerals of loved ones for this research belong to what Van Gennep refers to as ritual of separation. However, the approach to the findings here is to look at the findings as reflecting in the three separate elements Van Gennep views as being the underlying structure present in every rite of passage namely: *separation, transition and incorporation*. When looking at the themes in the findings, the purpose of song for the funerals in this research is to facilitate as part of ritual the above three stages. As individuals, all the participants (including mourners close to the departed) experienced separation from the departed and vice versa.

It may be useful to take a closer look at the relationships between the departed and those he/she has been separated from. The findings show that the songs were decided by a collective of close friends, family and fellow church members. The song choices were overall songs known to the mourners with the 'purpose' (Category 3) of connecting all concerned to a spiritual experience/connection, evoking emotion, honouring the dead and so forth.

In the funeral rituals in this research, song expressed separation for children of the departed whose father/mother has left; individuals whose spouses have passed on are now a widower or widow; grandchildren have lost a grandfather; individuals farewelled a sibling or cousin or family member; the church community has lost a valued member. Song heralded not only change, but new beginnings with an adjustment in the social status for all connected to the departed. All this is expressed in song in the singing together as a community to farewell the dead. In spite of the separation, song also expressed thanksgiving and hope of seeing loved ones in the beyond.

It's not just a physical thing, it's very much spiritual! It's that connection! So, it's that connection, not so much Christianity, but you know in our own, being Samoan that our spirit feels their spirit and they're moving and that's why we become emotive (F1F2)

All the themes under the subcategory of 'Purpose': Spiritual experience/connection; *Le fe'au* (the message; mana; unbroken chain; emotion and 'Honouring the dead' somewhat meet the elements or underlying structure viewed by Van Gennep as being universal in all rites of passage. The findings in Category 3 holds a special interest for this researcher insofar as the experience in song for participants brings into focus the element of *transition* or the *liminal*, as all in the funeral ritual moved towards a different social status. For example, song conveys emotion about children now being fatherless, wives becoming widows, the departed being in a different space and so forth. The findings tell the story of song as part of *Fa'asamoa* funeral ritual conveying and expressing a shift in life as the mourners know it, bringing change while remaining the same; farewelling of the dead. This story is one of separation, transition and incorporation as being distinct parts of funeral as ritual, while all being a part of life as an on-going continuing process.

What does this tell us about *Fa'asamoa*? The suggested answer becomes clearer when the other two subcategories 'Who decides?', and 'Who sings?', are incorporated into the picture. *Fa'asamoa* continues to be a highly socially interactive and relational community, as evidenced by the purpose of the song, those who decided on which song, as well as participation in the singing of the songs. This suggests that there is high social cohesion in the *aiga* and as members of their church community. Additionally, there is a shared meaning of faith as a continuum of belief in a spiritual world from pre-encounter to an integration with Christianity and a familiarity of their community with the songs chosen whether in the Samoan language or otherwise.

The idea that a message is conveyed in song as part of the funeral as in theme 'Le Fea'u' (The message) is an idea that has been conceptualised in an interesting way by Rappaport (1971). He argues that in religious ritual (funerals), a metamessage about the message conveyed in funeral ritual is part of human adaptation and survival. It is also in religious ritual where the message is made sacred and the tone is emotional. In other words, the interpretation by this researcher of Rappaport's work is in regards to the emotional state experienced in religious ritual is what gives it power. As already discussed, this is evident in the Ta'isi's work and reflected in the findings in Category 3 as part of *Fa'asamoa*. The message in the Samoan funeral ritual as evidenced in this research is *life is connectivity to the spiritual, God, the temporal, people across time, space and place*.

In conclusion, the conceptualisation of religious ritual in the literature suggests a universal significance given to farewelling the dead. The literature on ritual offers a perspective through which the farewelling of a loved one is situated in the realm of the sacred and the spiritual distinct from the profane as Durkheim has argued. Song as part of ritual has been part of

religious ritual across cultures throughout history. The findings and the literature on ritual suggest that *Fa'asamoa* share with other cultures the social process where farewelling the dead is ritualised signifying an important universal amongst humanity-the farewelling of the dead.

Up to this point of the discussion, the focus has been on the findings as knowledge. The last section of this chapter will look at the findings in relation to the ontological position of this thesis ,namely critical realism.

### **The Critical realism (CR) gaze**

The conceptualising of what constitutes reality as set out by the ontological position for this thesis (CR) will be set out in discussion with the findings. Although this researcher has set out the position that only an omniscient observer (God) can know the totality of reality, CR was chosen as it is the most compatible with this view of reality-that what human beings can know is never the whole picture. Nevertheless, the conceptualising of reality in CR provides some interesting ways of understanding reality, including what cannot be empirically verified. CR is understood here from the work of Bhaskar (2016) and interpreted by (Danermark, et al., 2019; Houston, 2001; Steinmetz, 1998). As the creator of CR, Bhaskar's work is difficult to understand, and as Danermark, Ekström and Karlsson (2019) point ou; CR is a philosophy. Due to this difficulty, the understanding of CR leans heavily on these author's interpretation of Bhaskar's work

Houston (2001) suggests that social constructed knowledge in social work does not get to the 'depth' of what is underneath the socially constructed knowing in the world. This reality is "independent of our thoughts or impressions" (Houston, 2001, p. 850). Attempting to looking at the findings in 'depth' is the main reason for this section in the discussion.

Through the lens of CR, reality consists of three different levels “the empirical level consisting of experienced events; the actual level, comprising all events whether experienced or not; and, lastly, the causal level, embracing the ‘mechanisms’ which generate events” (Houston, 2001, p. 850). In other words, the causality of any reality (Including the social) is the result of complex mechanisms in open systems (society) and these mechanisms sometimes act together or contradict each other. CR argue that causality of reality (whether empirical, actual or causal) can best be referred to as ‘tendencies’ due to the complexity of underlying structure of mechanisms in many open systems that make up society.

Taking into account, of the CR view of existence and reality, the findings as an integrated whole need to be understood as reality experienced by members of *aiga* as participants. Of equal importance is the reality that is not experienced by participants but which nevertheless exists i.e., the causal mechanisms that interact in open systems as part of society. These causal mechanisms include the psychological, social, economic (Houston, 2001) and suggested here; the political, education and cultural. This does not translate to human actors having no agency or perspective, but this has limitations insofar as to those causal mechanisms that are unjust and oppressive. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind what Bhaskar argues (1979) that social structures “do not exist independently of the agents’ conception of what they are doing in their activity” (Cited in Steinmetz, 1998, p. 181). As stated by Houston “...the role of critical realism is not only to uncover psychological and structural mechanisms, but to challenge their existence where they lead to human oppression” (2001, p. 851). This has important implications for the area of study within which this thesis sits i.e., in social work.

The findings are from the experiences of members of the Samoan community in Auckland as part of the greater society. The findings represent the world of meaning for this group in the

way they respond to a universal truth; the dying of a loved one. The response in funeral ritual and song as a way to farewell the dead is part of *Fa'asamoa* as well as song as part of history and song as an experience and expression of emotion and connection.

The position taken here about the findings is that overall, they tell a positive and meaningful story about the participants and their *aiga*. Consequently, causal mechanisms that negatively impact Samoan funeral ritual and song as an integral part of *Fa'asamoa* need to be identified in order to be countered. *Aiga* as a cultural social unit has been identified as the primary location for socialisation in *Gagana Samoa*, *Fa'asamoa*, identity, song and knowing who is in a participant's family. Samoan funeral rituals in New Zealand as evidenced in the findings is a powerful site for *aiga* to gather and remember as well as affirm who they are in song.

The ontological position of CR is a reminder of the structural in society with various causal mechanisms that may impinge on Samoan funeral practices and family practices of gathering in song. Considering the positive contribution of collective singing to well-being (Clift & Hancox, 2010, Gridley et al. 2011), those supportive mechanisms to Samoan funeral practices need to be supported.

Additionally, the wider society and its various open systems have to be considered as to their negative impact on the positive findings in this research in to the future. Of greater importance is the need for those who are social work educators and practitioners to be mindful of what cannot be seen or observed, but nevertheless positively or negatively driving the socially constructed world.

## **Recommendations**

Considering the findings as inter-connected, pointing to an essence in *Fa'asamoa* for Samoan people living in Aotearoa, there are several areas where recommendations may be useful. The first part of this section will be making recommendation on a general level in regards to social work and policy and some considerations for the funeral industry. This will be followed by more targeted recommendations in the areas of: social work practice; education; research and policy. However, before the presentation of these targeted recommendations, the researcher will introduce a model of the findings '*PesePese*ga o le mavaega guitar' followed by an 'Integrated guitar framework for social work practice', situated in the social work context.

### ***General recommendations***

Generally, social work practitioners need to consider the importance of a deep understanding of Samoan *aiga* and the meaningfulness of funeral ritual in the *Fa'asamoa*. Social work practice needs to consider the importance of having deep understanding of what and whom the Samoan *aiga* are that they are walking alongside with. From here, having a deep understanding of death, dying and funeral ritual from a Samoan worldview would be the next step. The pressure cooker environment in which social workers practice may mean that this is seen as just more work. However, it is argued that such a depth of understanding will in the long term facilitate more meaningful outcome for Samoan *aiga* and further learning for practitioners. In turn, prompt and motivate social agencies to improve their services, programmes, workforce cultural competency and hold management and policymakers accountable with advising ministers of government departments. An appreciation by social workers of the meaningfulness of funeral ritual for Samoan *aiga*, including song, will enable connection to well-being, healing and a connectivity to cultural identity. In other words, attitudes to *aiga* needing to attend a loved

one's funeral need to avoid the mentality that it is just empty ritual. Rather, it should be seen as a cultural practice that is grounding for Samoan people; especially those who are working with a social worker. Attending a funeral in a client's family (if approved by the client) may be a way of connecting a social worker to those they work with as well as a rich site for cultural learning. Those social workers who are not inclined to be 'religious', may learn more about the world of their clients rather than be concerned that it is not what they believe in.

The second general area for recommendation is in the area of policy. As with social work, it is crucial to recognise that funeral ritual is as important for the healing and well-being for the living as it is for the honouring of the departed. The sense of re-connecting and closure that comes with being part of farewelling the departed came through in the findings. There was no evidence where any participant or *aiga* expressed regret or angst when recalling the funerals for this research. Rather, what came through from participants when looking back was relief and a feeling of happiness that came from having being part of the farewell. Therefore, policies need to signal the importance of funeral ritual to Samoan *aiga* and recognise the important and positive impact farewelling the dead in a meaningful way brings.

The professionals in the funeral industry including funeral directors who are not familiar with Samoan funerals may learn from the findings that their practice need to adapt and reflect what Samoans consider *Fa'asamoa*; and the importance of song and gathering for *aiga* that is more extensive in duration than some other funerals in their experience. Considering the growing Samoan population, standards for practice in the funeral industry may need to integrate the findings including familiarisation with some basic understanding of *Gagana Samoa*.

Of the utmost importance, especially considering the new reality that is COVID-19, all the above areas including practice, policy and the funeral industry need to consider how the

findings from experiences of participants and *aiga* in funerals pre-pandemic factor in adjustments compelled by health risks.

### ***An integrated model and framework***

Mobilising the findings from this research and locating it in the social work context is done by proposing a 'guitar model': '*PesePese*ga o le mavaega' and an integrated framework for social work practice. This has been developed to support targeted recommendations in the areas of social work practice, education, research and policy. This section will outline the details of the *PesePese*ga o le mavaega guitar model (Figure 2), and the Integrated guitar framework for social work practice (Figure 3), before the recommendations are presented in the subsequent sections. The inclusion of the framework is to provide a visual as well as a conceptual backdrop that is specific to social work practice within which the findings in the model can be understood.

The rationale for the choice of the guitar as a visual metaphor for both model and framework are:

- a) The guitar is personal to this researcher as a song writer/musician. Song has been part of the identity for the researcher from when she was a child in Samoa and the guitar has been the accompanying instrument for the composing of song for over four decades.
- b) The guitar is an instrument that came from outside of Samoa and yet as in many other parts of Oceania, it has become part of Samoan music evidenced by its ubiquitous presence in the lives of Samoan people - whether in their homeland or in the diaspora. It is also evocative of a bridge between the pre and post colonisation periods in the Pacific. In other words, it is argued here that the guitar

(as well as the ukulele) has become part of Samoan identity and Samoan music making.

- c) As a musical instrument, the guitar – when played well - makes a harmonious sound. However, the opposite is also true. Harmony is a powerful metaphor for the importance of balance between different elements of social work values underpinning practice and support the metaphor when considering the practice context in the *Integrated guitar framework for social work practice*. Harmony is also a way of understanding balance, well-being, beauty and meaningfulness in relationships (Ta'isi, 2009).
- d) In for instance wind instruments, only one note can be played at a time; there are no such limitations with the utilisation of the guitar in the hands of a player with skill. The player represents the social work practitioner in how she/he weaves different elements of social work practice in utilising the findings.
- e) Whether in regards to the model or integrated framework, the whole of something - the findings or social work practice values - is represented in the guitar. Different elements in the model and the integrated framework are woven together for meaningful engagement in social work.

As can be seen from the ***PesePese* o le mavaega guitar model** (Figure 2) on the top E string (fret 1-10) there are the core values in the 'Fa'asamoa' findings category and subcategory of 'aiga', namely *Le va*, *Fa'aaloalo*, *Alofa* and *Tautua*.

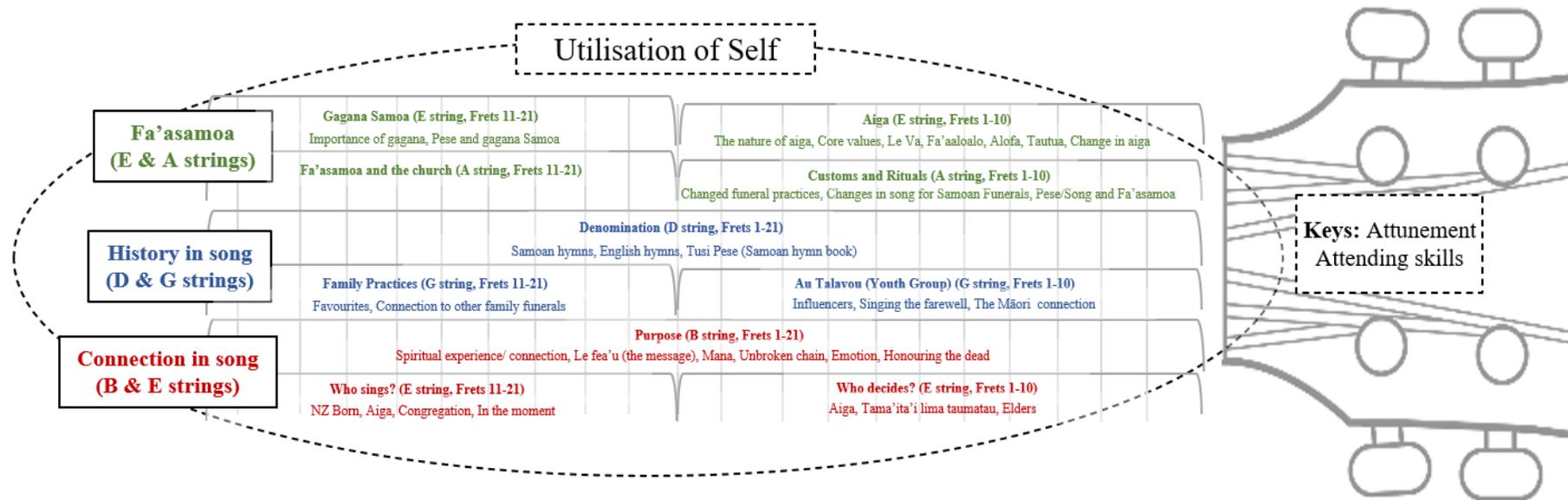
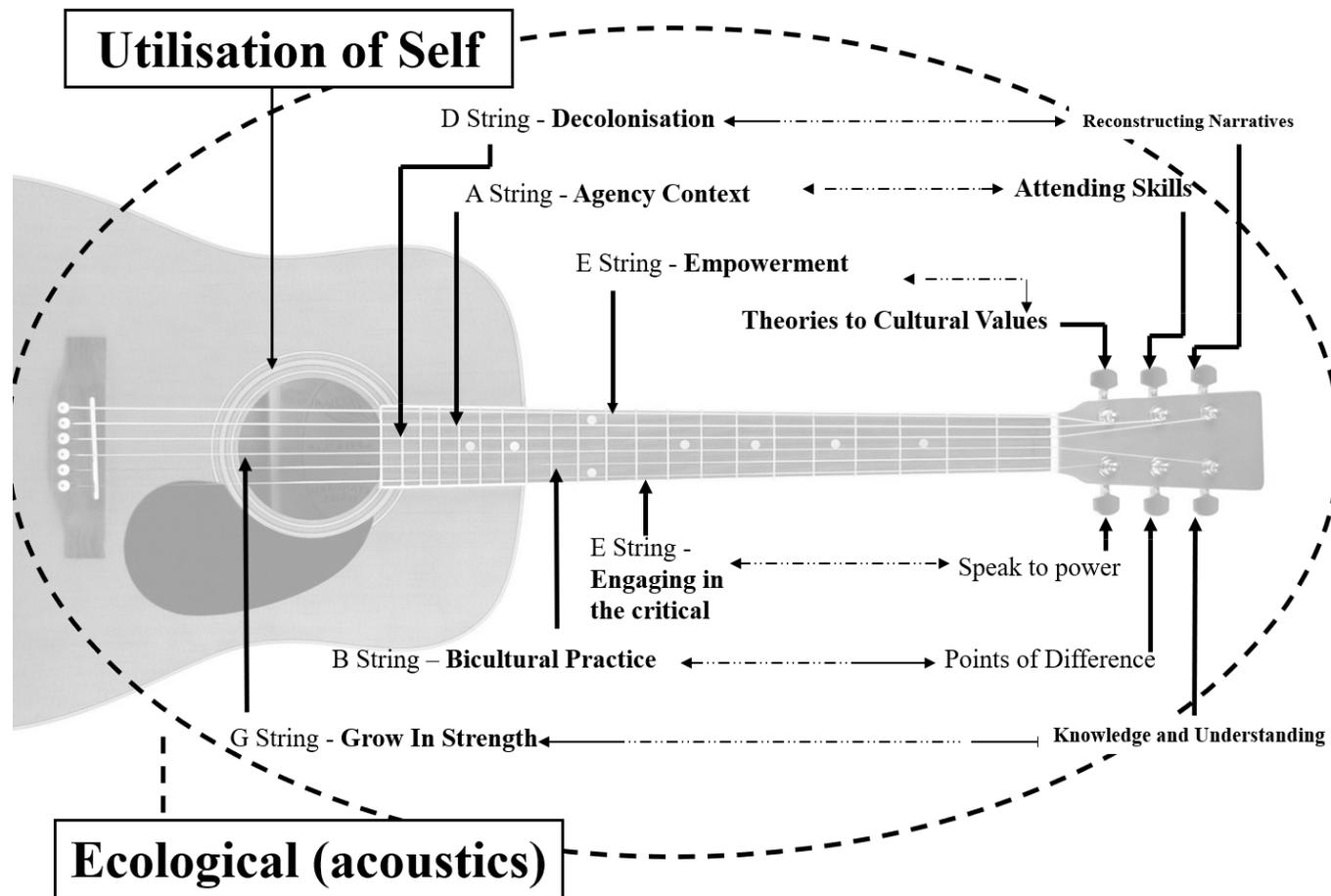


Figure 2. Pesepesega o le mavaega Guitar Model



**Figure 3.** Integrated guitar framework for social work practice

## ***Targeted recommendations***

### **Social work practice**

An important recommendation for *practice* is the need to instil in social workers a way of being in the sacred *Va*, as something that is embodied—a way of being juxtaposed to something that is understood on a cognitive level. Practice in social work need embody these values and way of being in the world in order to be effective when working with Samoan people.

Social work practice needs to embody the above values as well as the context of the other findings where an understanding ‘History in song’ and ‘Connection in song’ as part of ‘*Fa’asamoa*’, or the experience of Samoan people is an importance context for appropriate cultural practice in social work. The above recommendation in the area of practice in social work leads to the next recommendation in the area of education.

### **Education**

In support of the decolonisation discourse education in social work need to include in the curriculum the following:

- a) Workshops centred on learning through the ‘doing’ of ‘being’ embodied in music, song and the Samoan language. Privileging experience of connectivity in the sacred *Va*, learners are encouraged to ‘*Lagona*’ (feel) sensations facilitated in music, sound and vocalisation as a collective exercise. This can be seen on the guitar model under the findings category ‘Connection in song’ and the subcategory ‘Purpose’ (B string, fret 1-21). The themes under this sub-category show a compelling connectivity in song as part of funeral ritual including; spiritual experience/connection; a message conveyed in song; a sense of mana and a sense of mana and honouring of the departed and the community.

b) Important to convey in workshops that the rationale for music and song as an activity is to embody a worldview that connects song and funeral ritual as beyond an expression of grief and loss to include a more holistic perspective. Therefore, song as part of Samoan funeral ritual includes celebration, coming together as community, re-affirming belonging, re-connecting with friends and family and collective thanksgiving. In other words, song as part of funeral ritual is part of the healing for individuals and as a community coming together in a for communal experience that also reinforces kinship and social relationships. Grief and loss have been dominated by western literature such as for example the work of Kübler-Ross (1969) which provide some useful ways of understanding grieving the loss of a loved one as being in stages. However, it is the contention of this recommendation that this is too narrow and prescriptive in regards to indigenous peoples and the way they ritualise and make meaning of the loss of a loved one. That is to say that the decolonisation stance pushes back against impositions from others on how people from a different history and culture make sense of a universal experience- including the farewelling of a loved one. Moreover, it is the position of this researcher that as esteemed as the work of Kübler-Ross is-it has cast too much of a shadow in defining a human experience that is socially constructed in different cultural contexts across space and time. This stance is congruent with social work values including the importance of indigenous people being empowered to practice their cultural ways of being in the world that is meaningful for them. Moreover, experiences including in their cultural rituals need to be defined by Samoan people

themselves made possible by ways of understanding their world that originate from their *Itulagi*.

- c) Pasifika methodologies need to be taught as part of the core curriculum for all social work courses.

### ***Research***

Recommendations for research continues to support the decolonisation project by advocating that Pasifika methodologies from the *Itulagi* (side of heaven) (Vaa'i, 2017) be utilised when researching Pasifika people. This will privilege research that invites collaboration of Pasifika community and therefore making more meaningful contribution in defining meaning such as connections between community and cultural rituals. This can be seen in the model of the findings under the first findings category '*Fa'asamoa*' and the subcategory 'Customs and Rituals' (String A, fret 1-10).

The centrality of Pasifika methodologies when researching Pasifika people privileges and value the knowing and being Samoan, making it possible to achieve more co-constructed and co-collaborated research not only in the research process itself but also in how the data is collected and therefore determining findings. A case and point is the methodology including *Talanoa as* a data collection method in this research have philosophical underpinnings that include; the sacred *Va*; acknowledges the spiritual realm as part of the *Va*; *Fa'aaloalo*; respecting the past as part of the present and future and viewing people as participants in contrast to the view that participants are people.

It is argued here that the depth of the findings for this research would not be possible without the people who shared their experiences in song as part of funeral ritual when farewelling their loved without sensing ‘*Fa’aaloalo*’ from the researcher.

Lastly, the *Kakala* as an overarching methodological framework for Pasifika research with Samoan *aiga* has been very useful in this research for several reasons. Firstly, the metaphor of the *Kakala* is a constant reminder that people are not data, rather they are Pasifika people with their own stories to tell, with assigned meaning as to their culture, history and connectivity in the temporal and spiritual as expressed in song as part of a death and dying culture. Secondly, it is a methodology that is amendable to supplementation with other concepts particular to the area of research. Lastly, although not all the six stages of the *Kakala* are manifested in the thesis, the last two stages; Malie (reflecting on relevance and usefulness of research) and Mafana (outcome of research is celebration and transformation) is an on-going process reminding the researcher that the research does not end when one achieves an academic qualification, rather it continues beyond the page, into the lives of real people in real communities. Additionally, the face-to-face relationship between myself and supervisors can be said to be an integral part of all six stages of the *Kakala*: Teu, Toli, Tui, Luva, Mafana and Malie. This relationship began with discussions to help explore and identify an area of research and a specific vein of inquiry (*Teu*). The data collection (*Toli*) and analysis (*Tui*) also required much guidance and feedback from supervisors. My supervisors were also the first individuals who received various stages of reports in different stages of the research including the final outcome before submission (*Luva*) on the findings as the thesis was taking shape to ensure that there was something important to present to other stakeholders. Lastly, my supervisors

and myself discussed the usefulness and relevance of the research in terms of bringing about transformative change (*Malie & Mafana*).

The *Kakala* is also a beautiful metaphor in relationship building in the *Va* between myself as a doctoral student and my supervisors into a team with defined but complementary roles as we embarked on this journey, beginning with the *what, why and how (teu)* of the research culminating in this thesis. It could be said that the research process as set out in the *Kakala* is not just a sequence of steps representing a means to complete research, but also a relational process that requires the forming of working relationships and bonds between individuals. The dissertation or thesis is thought of as the final and definitive output of a doctoral degree, but it is equally appropriate to say that the relationships formed during the process are of equivalent importance.

### ***Policy***

In regards to policy, the strongest recommendation made here is in regards to the area of mental health and well-being. When looking at the findings as presented in the ***Pesepesega o le mavaega guitar model***, all the categories, sub-categories and themes can be viewed as a whole or a song. It tells us how Samoan people see themselves and what *Fa'asamoa* means to them. Additionally, song and history are intertwined in an on-going dance that carries the past forward and mark events, places and relationships. 'Connection in song' evidence connectivity in both temporal and spiritual domains. Here, there is a suggestion that song is the spark that flies upward even in times of inevitable loss, amplifying a sense of connection as part of Samoan funeral ritual.

The above suggest that health policy need to recognise funeral ritual for Samoan people as being an important part of who they are in regards to identity, belonging and well-being. That

is to say that funeral ritual is more than farewelling the dead, rather it is also to contribute to the healing and well-being of the living.

### *A new reality in Samoan Funerals*

The year 2020 was a difficult year for many, and for numerous unfortunate individuals the repercussions of the pandemic lead to jobless, homeless, and in some cases an inability to be present in farewelling their loved ones. Perhaps an upshot from this is that it may have triggered a reconsideration and renewed consideration of the importance and nature of familial relationships.

Consequently, funerals during COVID-19 restrictions in New Zealand eventually became a new normal, not unlike many other adjustments faced by the New Zealand population. In my case, two close family members passed away during this research: an uncle in Samoa and a cousin in Australia, in addition to a long-time friend passing away in Wellington. Attending any of these funerals was an impossibility. The consequences of these limits manifested in my family, such as in the case of my mother, who cried due to not being able to see her deceased niece in Australia and then her brother in Samoa. I could only farewell my friend over the phone and support her husband from afar and send a little money. It was not lost on me that funerals may never be the same again and that Samoans would be no exception. The data for my research had already been collected and analysed which meant that experiencing funerals during COVID-19 was surreal: In short order, people had to settle for video-calling in to be part of funerals, to sing and see loved ones across a screen rather than be there in person. Young people were called to duty due to their higher proficiency with technology.

From personal experience, Samoan people make a great effort to be present at their loved one's funeral. I wondered then and still do in early 2021 about the implications this has for Samoan

*aiga*. It seems that the funerals included in this research may be a thing of the past where there was freedom to travel and *aiga* have the opportunity to embrace and comfort each other while farewelling a loved one. Singing the farewell as *aiga* was suddenly taken away along with the opportunity to be with loved ones in the same physical space, to touch, to hold and to connect. Writing this in late January 2021 has provided food for thought not only in regards to many changes brought on by COVID-19, but in relation to funerals; how does this affect farewelling the dead in the future? What does this new reality mean for relationships and connectivity in *aiga* when there are funerals with no physical contact? What happens to relationships when there is no collective singing in Samoan funerals? When the intimacy that comes from physical contact is no longer possible, how does this impact a death and dying culture in *Fa'asamoa* that has always highly valued gathering together, *vis-à-vis*? How does this affect *le Va fealoaloa'i* (Sacred social relationships)? What are the implications for the cohesion of *aiga*?

The personal motivation for this thesis and the personal reflection during the doctoral journey culminating in the new reality in Samoan funerals due to COVID-19 makes this research invaluable due to capturing Samoan funeral practices prior to 2020. It offers a snapshot of a time when gathering to farewell a loved one in song was the norm. It remains to be seen whether such normality will return.

## **Conclusion**

The discussion has taken the position that all the categories, sub-categories and themes are part of an integrated whole and inter-connected. The implication is that any part of the discussion whether on a particular theme or category has a relationship to the rest of the findings and other parts of the discussion. As stated previously, it is the interconnectedness of all three findings categories, sub-categories and themes which represent the essence of meaning of *Fa'asamoa*

as connectivity for those *aiga* in this research. How participants make meaning of these connections provide a unique view connected to a particular group (Samoan in Aotearoa) with a particular history (Samoan history, colonisation and migration) at a particular period concerning an important event-farewelling a beloved elder in the sacred Va.

*Fa'asamoa* as a continuum has in its essence through time and space the valuing of connectivity, relating the self to the collective, the temporal and spiritual domains from the past to the present and to the future. The role of women in *aiga* in everyday life and in Samoan funeral ritual is not insignificant. As imparters of *Gagana Samoa* and guides to the young in their Samoan identity, and decision makers as well as carers of elders, it remains to be seen if this translates to having more of them in leadership roles such as *Matai*. Spirituality as part of the essence in the continuum that is *Fa'asamoa* is of great importance to participants and their *aiga*; a spirituality that includes the pre-encounter Samoa and Christianity.

The spiritual experience and connection amplified in song as part of Samoan funeral ritual for participants has such a potency that it provides a glimpse of the beyond. The conceptualisation of religious ritual in the literature has provided a way to see ritual as having structure and as an event where a community affirms what is sacred to them. Moreover, this literature suggests that religious ritual in farewelling the dead is universal in the family that is humanity to which Samoan people and *Fa'asamoa* belong. Lastly, the ontological gaze provided by critical realism (CR) challenges the human experience of reality as ultimately complex, including that which cannot be seen or observed but nevertheless part of the reality we experience.

## APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL

**Research Office**  
Post-Award Support Services



The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92019  
Auckland, New Zealand

Level 10, 49 Symonds Street  
Telephone: 64 9 373 7599  
Extension: 83711  
Facsimile: 64 9 373 7432  
[ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz)

### UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE (UAHPEC)

23-Mar-2018

#### MEMORANDUM TO:

Prof Christa Fouche  
Counselling, HumServ & SocWrk

#### Re: Application for Ethics Approval (Our Ref. 020710): Approved

The Committee considered your application for ethics approval for your study entitled **Song in Samoan funerals in New Zealand**.

We are pleased to inform you that ethics approval has been granted for a period of three years.

The expiry date for this approval is 23-Mar-2021.

If the project changes significantly, you are required to submit a new application to UAHPEC for further consideration.

If you have obtained funding other than from UniServices, send a copy of this approval letter to the Activations team in the Research Office at [ro-awards@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:ro-awards@auckland.ac.nz). For UniServices contracts, send a copy of the approval letter to the Contract Manager, UniServices.

The Chair and the members of UAHPEC would be happy to discuss general matters relating to ethics approvals. If you wish to do so, please contact the UAHPEC Ethics Administrators at [ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz) in the first instance.

Please quote Protocol number **020710** on all communication with the UAHPEC regarding this application.

*(This is a computer generated letter. No signature required.)*

UAHPEC Administrators  
University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee

c.c. Head of Department / School, Counselling, HumServ & SocWrk

## APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (KEY PERSON)



**EDUCATION AND  
SOCIAL WORK**  
SCHOOL OF COUNSELLING,  
HUMAN SERVICES AND SOCIAL WORK

**TE KURA TAUWHIRO  
TANGATA**

**Epsom Campus**  
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Ave  
Auckland, New Zealand  
**The University of Auckland**  
Private Bag 92019  
Auckland 1142  
New Zealand

### Participant Information Sheet (Funeral director)

**Project Title:** Song and Samoan funerals

**Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisors:** Prof Christa Fouche and Dr Melani Anae

**Name of Student Researcher:** Natasha Urale-Baker.

#### Researcher Introduction

My name is Natasha Urale-Baker and I am a PhD student currently enrolled in a PhD degree in Social Work at the School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work the University of Auckland. As part of my degree, I am carrying out a research project that looks at exploring the Samoan aiga members' experiences of songs in Samoan funerals in New Zealand.

#### Project description and invitation

I am respectfully asking you to be a participant for this research project. Your participation is voluntary. Being a participant involves having a talanoa with me about your experiences and views on song as part of Samoan funerals. You have been selected as you are one of the most prominent and experienced funeral directors in the Samoan community.

#### Project procedures

The interview/talanoa with you will take approximately one and half to two hours. It will follow a semi-structured format. The exact time, date and location for the interview will be decided based on what is convenient for you. The talanoa will be digitally recorded, transcribed and translated into English in the case where the Samoan language is spoken in the talanoa/interview session. You will be given the opportunity to edit a transcript of the interview if you wish. The data collected during this research project will be used for the production of a thesis to complete a PhD degree in Social Work. Data and information may also be used for journal articles or reports. A summary of results can be made available to you if you wish.

#### Data storage

The data collected during this research project will be kept on a secure password protected computer and consent forms will be stored separately in a filing cabinet in the research

supervisor's office at the University of Auckland. Audio recordings will be deleted once an accurate transcript is available. Electronic data will be backed up and stored on the University of Auckland server and consent forms will be kept in a locked cabinet in the supervisors office. All data will be destroyed after 6 years.

### **Right to withdraw**

You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. You also have the right to withdraw data from the research up until one month after the interview.

### **Confidentiality**

No personal information about you will be collected and information that may identify you will be excluded from academic publications and presentations arising from this research. If the information provided by you is reported or published, all effort will be made to do it in a way that does not specifically identify you as the source. However, since you are one of the most prominent funeral directors in the Samoan community, there is a chance that you may be identified or that someone may recognise you as the source of data. Please be aware of this possibility before you consent and in providing information in the interview. You will also have the opportunity to review a transcript of the interview.

### **Contact details**

If you require more information or have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the researcher, research supervisor(s) or Head of School

### **Student researcher**

Natasha Urale-Baker  
School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work  
Faculty of Education  
University of Auckland  
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### **Supervisors**

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### **Head of School**

Allen Bartley  
School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work  
Faculty of Education  
University of Auckland  
Phone: 64 9 379 7999 ext 48140

## APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (AIGA)



**EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK**  
SCHOOL OF COUNSELLING,  
HUMAN SERVICES AND SOCIAL WORK

**TE KURA TAUWHIRO  
TANGATA**

**Epsom Campus**  
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Ave  
Auckland, New Zealand  
**The University of Auckland**  
Private Bag 92019  
Auckland 1142  
New Zealand

### Participant Information Sheet

#### (Family members)

**Project Title:** Song and Samoan funerals

**Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisors:** Prof Christa Fouche and Dr Melani Anae

**Name of Student Researcher:** Natasha Urale-Baker.

#### Researcher Introduction

My name is Natasha Urale-Baker and I am a PhD student currently enrolled in a PhD degree in Social Work at the School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work, University of Auckland. As part of my degree, I am carrying out a research project that explores the experiences of Samoan aiga members with songs in Samoan funerals in New Zealand.

#### Project description and invitation

I am respectfully asking you to be a participant for this research project. Your participation is voluntary. Being a participant involves having a talanoa with me about your memories and recollection of songs as part of a funeral for a loved elder who has passed away. I would like to have a talanoa with six family members from up to eight aiga who have lost a loved elder who was a matai (male or female) in the last five years. It is hoped that I can speak with a range of family members, including elders (male and female-Samoan born), middle aged family members (male and female-Samoan born, 40-50 years old) and young people (male and female-New Zealand born, 18-30 years old) from each aiga.

A family will be excluded from this study if the family funeral was known to the PhD student before recruitment started. Any individuals in existing relationships with the PhD student will not be included as a participant. As this research aims to include six members of each aiga to be participants, where less than three members consent for participation, the family will be excluded from participation. If family members withdraw consent after interviews have already been conducted, participants will be consulted before the data is used and given an opportunity to withdraw.

#### Project procedures

My interviews/talanoa with you (one-on-one) will take approximately one and a half hours to two hours. It will follow a semi-structured format. The exact time, date and location for the

interview will be decided based on what is convenient for you. The talanoa will be digitally recorded, transcribed and translated into English in the case where the Samoan language is spoken in the talanoa/interview session. You will be given the opportunity to edit a transcript of the interview if you wish.

The data collected during this research project will be used for the production of a thesis to complete a PhD degree in Social Work. Data and information may also be used for journal articles or reports. A summary of results will be made available to you if you wish. Upon your request, I am also happy to visit you and your aiga personally to share a summary of the research findings. Information on counselling services that you may wish to access will be provided. A list of services is also available at the bottom of this document.

### **Data storage**

The data collected during this research project will be kept on a secure password protected computer and consent forms will be stored separately in a filing cabinet in the research supervisor's office at the University of Auckland. Audio recordings will be deleted once an accurate transcript is available. Electronic data will be backed up and stored on the University of Auckland server and consent forms will be kept in a locked cabinet in the supervisor's office. All data will be destroyed after 6 years.

### **Right to withdraw**

All participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. Participants will have the right to withdraw their data from the research up until one month after the interview. While participants are free to withdraw their own information from the study, information from other consenting family members may remain in the study.

### **Confidentiality**

The information collected about participants will be kept confidential. Personal information about participants will not be collected and information that may identify you will be excluded from academic publications and presentations arising from this research. If the information provided by participants is reported or published, this will be done in a way that does not identify the participant as its source. While no names will be provided, there is a chance that the participant may be identified through details that someone may recognise. Participants are to be aware of this possibility before consenting to the interview.

### **Contact details**

If you require more information or have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the researcher, research supervisor(s) or Head of School

### **Student researcher**

Natasha Urale-Baker  
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**Supervisors**

Christa Fouche

School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work

Faculty of Education

University of Auckland

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Individual Interview Guide

#### Project Title: Song and Samoan Funerals

For the sake of this guide, it is worth emphasising that the *talanoa* method is, by design, loosely structured and conversational. For example, questions on the part of the interviewee toward the interviewer are encouraged, and topics tangential to the research topic are also allowed (within limits, see below). Thus, the research-related topics below are presented in a roughly chronological order, although in practice the order of some questions may vary. Moreover, the questions are presented here in English, but may be spoken to participants in Samoan, or a mixture of Samoan and English depending on the interviewee's preferences.

Broad themes to be covered (in bold), and examples of questions relating to each theme (bullet-points):

#### **1. Participants' recollection of the funeral, including their observations of the people and events at the funeral.**

- "Can you please share with me your memories of this funeral?"
- [After noting what parts of the funeral the interviewee emphasised most from the funeral] "Why do you think *that* part of the funeral sticks out so much for you?"
- "What are some parts of the funeral that you think are important, but that you haven't mentioned yet?"
- "How many services were there?"
- "Who officiated the service?"
- "Was the body of your loved one brought home prior to the funeral, or was the body of your loved one kept at a funeral home?"

#### **2. Participants' recollection of the role of song in the funeral.**

- "What are your memories of the songs sung during your loved one's funeral?"
- "Did the songs include songs in any languages other than Samoan?"
- "How many of the songs were religious?"
- "What do the songs that you remember mean to you?"
- "How do the songs that you remember relate to *fa'asamoa* ?

#### **3. Participants' own thoughts on the meaning of the choice of song in the funeral.**

- "What do these songs mean to you?"
- "What do you think these songs are *meant* to mean?"

#### **4. Participants' understanding of the relationship between these songs and broader Samoan culture (*fa'asamoa*), especially as this culture exists in New Zealand.**

- "What does Samoan culture/*fa'asamoa* mean to you?"
- "How would you describe *fa'asamoa* as it exists in New Zealand?"
- "What do you think the connection is between this song/songs and *fa'asamoa*? If there is, can you please describe this connection?"

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