

“E Sui Faiga ae Tumau Faavae:” O le Malaga  
o le Musika Sāmoa i Niu Sila—the Journey of  
Samoan Music in New Zealand

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## **Abstract**

Since the mass migration of Pacific communities to New Zealand from the mid-twentieth century, Samoans make up more than half of the Pacific population living in New Zealand as of 2022. The growing number of Samoans in New Zealand has seen the infiltration of New Zealand's popular culture with Samoan artists who have found different ways to express themselves through a predominantly westernised popular cultural milieu in New Zealand. This thesis explores the views of Samoans in New Zealand with the question: "How is Musika Sāmoa crafted, negotiated, and distributed as a method of cultural endurance?" The research focuses on Samoan ways of life known as faaSāmoa in diasporic communities through collective connectivity, the interconnections between music and culture, and the shifting characteristics of Samoan music in response to change. The findings of this research reveal the incorporation of gagana Sāmoa and allusions to past Samoan music through stylistic features are only a few of the elements of Musika Sāmoa that are used to maintain this vehicle of cultural identity. The ideas and discussion in this thesis are woven together through the methodology of su'ifefiloi, through methods such as talanoa and critical autoethnography, to hold content for transdisciplinary spaces (Lopesi, 2021), that prioritise Samoan values and perspectives. The thesis ultimately concludes that Musika Sāmoa is a mixture of these rigid foundational musical elements that are representative of the foundations within the Samoan culture, as well as a representation of the eclectic experiences that influenced the artists' music. Musika Sāmoa continues to serve as a vehicle of cultural endurance for the Samoan community in New Zealand, as it continues to journey through generations.

## **Dedication and Acknowledgements**

*"Praise the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; his love endures forever" Psalms 106:1*

E muamua lava ona faafo'i le viiga ile tapa'au sili oi le lagi, aua o ia e ou le viiga. I would like to acknowledge my supervisors, Dr. Kirsten Zemke and Arcia Tecun (Dr. Daniel Hernandez), who have been without a doubt made this journey bearable for me. Their passion for academia, guidance and wisdom became a beacon of light that guided my journey. Thank you, for agreeing to be my supervisors. Faafetai tele lava.

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Afai ua sasi se upu, faamagalo le auuana faatauva. Ia alofa Le Atua faatutumu mea ua faagaogaoina ona o le tou agalelei ma lo outou alofa mai.

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## **Faamaumauga 1 – Recollections**

### **Le amataga ole malaga – The beginning of the journey**

“La’u Sāmoa, La’u Sāmoa ea,

Le Atua e olou faavae e moni lea

Le Ao o lou malo tali’i’lagi,

Sāmoa ea i malo ‘au faatasi”

This is an excerpt from one of my favourite Samoan songs growing up, specifically the chorus to the song “Sāmoa Matalasi”. The version I grew up listening to was sung by the Five Star band, or Fetu Lima, and is also the name of the album which was released in 1981. Fetu Lima is musical band of five men who migrated to New Zealand from Western Samoa in the 1960s and took to fame their Samoan origin through singing at significant church or family events. The song is an endearing tribute to the country they left behind, and it gives poetic descriptions of the luscious landscapes and the beautiful people in Sāmoa. According to trusted sources (i.e., my father), I used to love this song and would try to sing along to it in the car as it played over the radio, or whenever it was played at home or in leisure.

At the raw age of four I recall hearing the beautiful sounds of this song. We have an old family video recording from my brothers’ twenty first birthday celebration at the Mt Eden Valentines restaurant. This consists of the usual formalities; the mini speeches, prayer, singing before eating the cake, the signing of the key by guests, as well as special performances. A particular performance to note at this birthday lunch, was a short number sung by my brothers’ friends from university; one is playing the guitar and the other two are standing around him singing along while he strums. At the corner of the screen is a little girl singing her heart out along with them, saying words she is yet to understand. They were singing the Five Stars’ Sāmoa Matalasi. That little girl is me and this marked the beginning of my appreciation for Samoan music.

I grew up in a predominantly Samoan speaking home. My parents made sure I knew how to speak and understand the language of our country of origin, Samoa. This entailed learning the Samoan alphabet, singing along church hymnals translated into Samoan, , reading the Samoan translated bible in our family worships and holding conversations in Samoan. This

was my introduction to the language that eventuate to my appreciation of the Samoan music and sounds.

Despite being able to understand the language I could not fully comprehend the essence of the song *Sāmoa Matalasi*. This was brought to light through my Year 7/8 Samoan subject, a bilingual class as an option during a mainstream lesson of the day. During this lesson, our teacher was making us translate *Sāmoa Matalasi* from Samoan to English. The first verse is roughly translated below:

La'u Sāmoa, e matalasi	My vastly beautiful Sāmoa
Ua si'osi'omia e le sami	Surrounded by the ocean
Atumauga lanu lau 'ava	With mountains so green
E feoa'i fiafia o tagata	The people move about happily

The place that the song was singing about was not something I was familiar with- I understood the language, and appreciated the culture, but I did not hold the same attachment to Sāmoa's beautiful landscape. The Sāmoa I was familiar with was the cultural festivals held annually at Rocket Park (Auckland) that my primary school Samoan group danced at. It smelled like the Sunday morning market where I could smell the pagikeke's (Samoan pancake) before I could see them. This was what I experienced as being Samoan. The song above describes a picturesque Sāmoa that I was yet to experience in such an affection and longing way. This was confusing for me – I thought I knew what being Samoan was.

These faamaumauga (recollections) are intended to offer the critical autoethnographic component to the thesis, by considering my personal experiences with Musika Sāmoa, with navigating my journey as New Zealand-born Samoan.

## Chapter 1. Introduction

This thesis aims to unpack the ‘survival’ of Samoan music in New Zealand according to Samoans in New Zealand. This thesis explores the views of Samoans in New Zealand with the question “How is Musika Sāmoa crafted, negotiated, and distributed as a method of cultural endurance?” The context will focus on the Samoan way of life known as faaSāmoa in diasporic communities through collective connectivity, on how the interconnections between music and culture, and the shifting characteristics of Samoan music in response to change. This topic was influenced by the people around me, through my upbringing and my life experience as a Samoan individual born and raised in New Zealand. The challenge to understand what constitutes the category of said ‘Samoan music’ and what the responses to this question say about being Samoan and its’ music.

The following analyses in this thesis are from engagements and interactions with music artists that identify as belonging to the Samoan community. In this chapter, I contextualise the research by giving an overview of some of the historical and social context of Samoans in New Zealand. After this, I outline my research questions, how they were approached, and some details about how they were generated. Details explaining my positionality are also included, primarily interested in helping the reader to understand how I am situated in the research (being a Samoan myself). Following this, I offer some brief comments about the scope of my research stating how time and space constraints restricted the inclusion of wider aspects to the study. Finally, a chapter outline of the entire thesis is detailed explaining my core arguments regarding Musika Sāmoa being a vehicle for cultural endurance for Samoan diasporic identities.

### 1.1 Context

As mentioned, my research concentrates on New Zealand Samoan diasporic contexts. I now offer a summary of some of the societal, political, religious, social, cultural, and musical context underpinning my research.

I trace through the last century of New Zealand and Sāmoa (formerly Western Sāmoa) interactions, going through the last century. This includes New Zealand’s colonising powers present in Sāmoa during the early 1900’s to the 1950’s, followed by the influx of Pacific



peoples migrating to New Zealand, Samoan people included, with the hopes of acquiring jobs and a slice of the “land of milk and honey” that New Zealand offered (Fairburn, 1961). This will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3. New Zealand is now home to more than 300,000 Pacific peoples, of which the Samoan population make up more than half of this number. Approximately 180,000 Samoans of varying generations are now living and growing up in New Zealand (Stats NZ, 2018).

The growing number of Samoans in New Zealand has seen the infiltration of New Zealand’s popular culture with Samoan artists who have found different ways to express themselves through a predominantly westernised popular cultural milieu in New Zealand. Televave (2006) offers one of the earliest accounts that consider the works of generations of young Samoans living in New Zealand and popular music, particularly with the African American music genre and culture of hip hop. The performing arts is only one of the many avenues that the growing population of Samoans in New Zealand participate in; however, one is also likely to find Samoans in sectors such as sports, fine arts, and local politics. The different generations of Samoans in New Zealand harbour a mixture of experiences that are not only reflected in the various representations of one’s identity through music and arts but are also reflected in the numerous discourses of identity that are used to discuss Samoan experiences in New Zealand. These will be discussed more closely in several Chapters to follow (3, 4, and 5).

An important discourse to be discussed at length through this thesis considers how the music at the core of this research is also a key component of the efforts to maintain a sense of Samoan cultural identity in the New Zealand diaspora. This is expressed as cultural endurance through the growth of Samoan families intergenerationally in New Zealand’s diaspora communities that now live further away from the ‘homeland’. As mentioned, the specific colonial history that is considered in this thesis includes a legacy that suppressed Samoan culture, language, and music in New Zealand; however, another significant part of this same conversation considers how overcoming this racism and suppression resulted in a vibrant musical culture that continues to thrive in the popular Pacific music scene in New Zealand. Of particular interest, I consider the ways in which Samoan music journeyed through generations of Samoans (NZ-born Samoans) and various social and cultural contexts (diaspora). Being one of the 180,000 Samoans in New Zealand myself, talking about this journey alongside my own through critical autoethnography is a deeply personal experience and I have held a particular appreciation and stake in the conversations held in and around this study.

A disclaimer to this study takes into consideration that, although Samoans hold a large presence in New Zealand as a part of the recognised Pacific (Moana) population, Tangata Whenua (Māori) of Aotearoa are the primary Indigenous people of this place. Although this thesis is not centred on the generations of Māori living and growing up in New Zealand, I consider my research parallel and a sibling, a reflection of the relationship between these two Moana cultures who have a history as relatives and neighbours who have intermarried and created music together. Nga mihi nui atu, Aotearoa—Faafetai tele lava, Niu Sila. Aotearoa New Zealand also hosts additional cultural, regional, and ancestral cousins with ancestral ties back throughout the Moana such as Fiji, Tonga, Niue, the Cook Islands and Tokelau (to name a few).

One of the driving inspirations that has fuelled this study is my aspiration to contribute to the conversation on Samoan music, being a Samoan myself. For any individual from the Moana reading this, may this be your encouragement to navigate your culture's journey in New Zealand through your own unique lens as one from the Moana as well.

## **1.2 Research Focus**

This section addresses my primary research question. What is contemporary Samoan music in New Zealand? There will also be some details regarding the process of working towards the question, with my sub-questions that emerged.

The initial research question considered answering the following: “How is contemporary Samoan music crafted, negotiated, and distributed as a method of cultural endurance?” Throughout the process of the study, the wording of this question changed slightly, wherein “contemporary Samoan music” became ‘Musika Sāmoa’. From cultural endurance, the question goes on to include more contextual wording with the inclusion of diasporic Samoans in New Zealand, as experiences and discussions based on those outside of the New Zealand-Samoan context may differ and vary according to their own contexts (i.e., Samoans in Australia, or Samoans in Sāmoa). Thus, the primary research question became; “How do Samoans in New Zealand craft, negotiate, and distribute Musika Sāmoa as a method of cultural endurance?”

The shift from contemporary Samoan music to Musika Sāmoa was ultimately made as a reflection of the research that revealed the general definition and understanding of ‘contemporary’ was not something the (Samoan) community was using to refer to the music themselves / ourselves (Mackley-Crump, 2015). Drawing from my personal experience in the Samoan community, I was able to identify a term that we use widely with music and at the core of this research; “Musika Sāmoa” translates to “Samoan Music”. As a Samoan, an interesting observation I was able to make was that, typically, referring to a musical composition as Musika Sāmoa holds connotations pertaining to embodiments of Samoan culture: specifically, references to the “traditional” Samoan music Moyle (1988) defined as being “pre-colonial.” In other contexts, within the community, referring to something as Musika Sāmoa meant that it had some sort of use within the community’s diasporic context that extended further than listening to the music for leisure. It held a cultural practicality to it that allowed Musika Sāmoa to be used for things such as cultural dances and rituals. Because of this, Musika Sāmoa seemed the most appropriate term as it was commonly used by the Samoan community, and its meanings within the community reflected the term's multiple functions. The inclusion of “Samoans in New Zealand” to the question supports the context of the study, which is specifically drawn from New Zealand-Samoan identities. Through unpacking the primary question further by understanding the details of how the music is crafted, negotiated, and distributed, is intended to help understand how the music and cultural identity intertwine, working in a reciprocal relationship to help one make sense of the other (music versus culture).

The main objective in understanding this question is to address the discourse within communities and understanding the idea of Samoan music survival. This is deeply influenced by the growing population of Samoans that are currently living in New Zealand. A further relevant factor is cultural change across time; there are, for example, musical phenomena that are now normative that would not have been 30 years ago, such as the incorporation of contemporary western popular music within Samoan music through instrumentation and/or music genres.

### **1.3 Positionality**

My position in the research can generally be described as that of an insider researcher however, there are more details that are relevant here. Firstly, on the point that I am an insider researcher, this is a reference to my identity as a Samoan, specifically a New Zealand-born Samoan. I identify as a woman, a factor to consider in terms of the relational tensions that I am culturally

aware of within this context throughout this research process including gendered behavioural expectations, such as with my talanoaga (storied discussions) with men especially. I am the only one in my immediate (nuclear) family of six children and two parents to be born and raised in New Zealand. This is a particularly unique lens within my family, as it impacted a lot of the experiences that I had growing up in New Zealand, compared to those of my siblings who were all born and raised in Sāmoa. In the context of this research, being a New Zealand-born Samoan, myself allows for the insider lens to be included at a personal level that goes beyond the scope of research boundaries. Growing up in a predominantly Samoan speaking household, the Samoan language became my first language and English came later when I entered primary school. I was surrounded by the Samoan language and culture and was taught within my family at a young age the mannerisms and values that were the essence of what it meant to be Samoan.

Secondly being involved in a Christian church was assumed to be a given: this entailed going to church weekly and being involved in church programs that took up most of the extra hours I had to spare throughout a week. I grew up in a Seventh-day Adventist church, which I still attend to date. There is not enough capacity in this study to get into particular details about our specific denomination, and how it compares to other denominations within the Samoan community (in Auckland, New Zealand) but a significant point about the denomination I belong to, is the interaction (or lack thereof) with the Samoan culture. The lack thereof refers to the reality in the Samoan Seventh-day Adventist church, particularly my own, where cultural practices are incorporated only to a certain extent; for instance, the Samoan language is heavily interacted with using the Samoan Bible and hymns sung in Samoan, but there is little to no interaction with cultural artefacts that hold high cultural esteem such as the ie toga. Perhaps this is something to be considered at length in another study. The alterations to cultural practices and rituals within different Christian denominations in heavily religious identifying Samoan community in New Zealand, is another testament to cultural change across temporal areas. In stating these, and although I consider my awareness of Samoan culture and language to be fluent and generally efficient, through comparisons with my friends who grew up in different denominations I find some differences in experience and understanding of Samoan culture along the lines of religious denomination. I, on the other hand, gained most of my Samoan cultural knowledge in my family space and environment, wherein occasions and family events called for this knowledge to be practiced. This is an important lens to keep in mind through the duration of the thesis, as in some instances I make personal highlights that compare experiences between myself and the different artists.

Another important aspect to my positionality is my prior knowledge of music, as this had some impact on the inspirations and motivations behind the urge to understand Musika Sāmoa in New Zealand. I was trained in western classic piano and transferred this knowledge with me in tertiary studies, where my undergraduate studies consisted of music practice and theory. Through these educational experiences with music, I held an appreciation for the behind-the-scenes experiences of musicianship that the artists typically undergo, which are parallel with the study at hand.

Collating all these positionalities and experiences, the cultural awareness that I hold as a Samoan is an especially important aspect to the research process that will unfold throughout this thesis.

#### **1.4 Research Scope**

The research scope was subject to constraints the research took place over the span of about a year, which included COVID lockdowns and getting COVID myself, there are matters that will not be able to be touched on in this document.

Firstly, it is crucial to note that this is not a historical study and rather focuses on a very specific time (from the early 2000s onwards), and place (diasporic Samoan community in New Zealand). However, there are important contextual inclusions of historical recounts that highlight the movement (migration) of the Samoan communities to New Zealand, allowing for their music to move with them all. The timeframe this study focus on is approximately from the early 2000's till today (2021). Clarifying this is another crucial aspect, that helps to consider some of the changes (if any) that Musika Sāmoa has undergone, since its being in New Zealand.

The considered timeframe from the early 2000s till today (2021), was intentional as it shifted from being categorised as predominantly post-colonial/modern music, to a more pinpointed time in history (2000s-2021). An added limitation to the research scope was that most of the music artists I interviewed with, reside in Auckland; this is not to disregard the experiences had by Samoans in other diasporic communities in (and outside of) New Zealand. Despite not a set out limitation from the beginning, restrictions around COVID-19, and financial hardship halted any initial contact with artists outside of Auckland, New Zealand. It is not guaranteed that the experiences of these artists based in Auckland are a uniform experience with Musika Sāmoa artists living in other parts of New Zealand. To extend this

further, there is also little guarantee that these are the same experiences that other Samoans living in other countries in diaspora share. These are possible avenues for further research.

During the early crafting processes of this thesis, I came to realise that some of my own earlier intentions were unable to fit in the capacity of this study. The initial challenge that being the ability to organise the different Samoan music into categories that made the music easier to understand, as one would be able to compare it within the particular western music genre it was being organised into. However not only was this time consuming it was also assuming that Samoan music is best interpreted through the western music lens. Personally, I found this both concerning and encouraging, as this became motivation to continue this journey with interacting and understanding what Musika Sāmoa is and what it represents for those it belongs to. Thus, Musika Sāmoa is sought to be understood through this thesis as its own music genre in a sense that it exists separate to the western music genre category rather than something that exists because of western music genres. This is perpetuated through the ideas and opinions of the artists that offer important perspectives as to what Musika Sāmoa is. Further distinctions of Musika Sāmoa will be made in Chapter 5.

Secondly, this study is not about the perspectives of the collective Samoan community, but rather it is drawn from a handful of individuals whose opinions on the matter are valued by the Samoan community in New Zealand as music artists. There are numerous avenues that were also considered at the very beginning that involved community interaction with the study, such as social media polls or through focus group discussions. The outcome of speaking only to artists rather than everyone from the community was a result of careful consideration and in the hopes that further research at a larger capacity will allow sufficient time, space, and resources to revisit the topic through the wider community lens. I reached out to multiple artists to participate in this study but for different reasons were unable to interact with the study. In saying this, I am immensely grateful for the five artists I was able to have talanoaga with.

Thirdly, this is not about the specific lives of the musicians as it is not a historical analysis of their life experiences. Despite briefly covering some of their musical inspirations and their answers to questions about who they are in Chapter 4, the study does not focus on magnifying certain life experiences of these artists. The artists also held the understanding throughout our talanoaga process, that this study was not about them explicitly and was instead about their music, with some consideration of personal experiences that may have had impacts

on the music. This focus was particularly difficult to navigate through, as the talanoaga was a space that allowed for consideration of certain life events which was both comfortable and respectful.

## 1.5 Chapter Outline

The thesis is broken up into six chapters. The second chapter focuses on matters of methodology and method. The first section will focus on *su'ifefiloi*, which is a methodological framework that is similar to a mixed method approach but draws from Samoan ideologies and is understood through analogies from Samoan culture (Lopesi, 2021). Followed by discussions of critical autoethnography, which according to Whitiui (2014) allows indigenous academics a cultural process within their research. These discussions are inserted throughout the thesis, but also distinctly placed in sections preceding certain chapters, called *faamaumauga* (Lopesi, 2021). These *faamaumauga* are journal-like entries that are the autoethnographic component but are also representative of the *su'ifefiloi* framework that incorporates different methods to the research. *Talanoa* is also discussed in Chapter two and is considered here as a method, with reference to literature regarding *talanoa*. Towards the end of this chapter, Samoan cultural concept of *Va Tapuia* is discussed in conjunction with Pan-Pacific values of respect, reciprocity, and relationship. These are important contributions in this chapter as they are underlying principles that ground me, the Samoan artists, and the research to Samoan culture.

The third chapter will give a brief historical contextualisation via the colonial history of Sāmoa, Samoan migration to New Zealand, the generations of Samoans born in New Zealand, and the various meanings embedded in usages of the term 'traditional'. This chapter also elaborates on why the use of the term 'traditional' is avoided in this study, and the music instead referred to as *Musika Sāmoa*. In the fourth chapter, the participants are introduced, including the main topics in *talanoaga*, including: family, language, culture, and values. The participants are discussed chronologically, based on who I spoke to first to who I spoke to last during the research process. To briefly mention who these artists are I will name each artist and give some background information about them.

**Nanai Viellani Lale-Peteru** is a member of the *Punialava'a* family band, who have been an established group within the Samoan music scene since the late 70's. The *talanoaga*

with Nanai offers the group's early experiences with Musika Sāmoa and highlights their more recent contributions now that they are living in New Zealand. Considering that their experience is one that is extensive across generations, Nanai's contribution highlights just how important understanding the context behind the music is, to grasp how external influences can impact musicianship.

**David Feauai-Afaese Vaeafe** who led the musical project LEAO, defines their music as experimental Samoan music. David's music is inspired by Samoan music artists he refers to as "classics," including Punialava'a and the Five Stars, but it also incorporates aspects of western popular music such as 70's / 80's British rock music. In this talanoaga, David shares how their music is representative of the deconstruction process that is undergone to represent their personal experiences.

**Sara-Jane Erika** (née Auva'a) is another artist I spoke with, who is renowned for her contributions to Musika Sāmoa through her solo career as singer but also through the band Pacific Soul which she was a member of. Sara-Jane shares how her experiences with Musika Sāmoa over the years was a vehicle for cultural appreciation and encouraged their generation to engage more with Samoan culture- music was recognised as a key vehicle in doing so. **Lisi** is a New Zealand-born Samoan currently living and crafting his music in Australia. Although explicitly stating that his music is not Musika Sāmoa, the rapper shares his experiences and interactions with Samoan music through his daily life has impacted his music as a hip hop artist.

**Lesa Leititilani Alo**, or Lani Alo, is a New Zealand-born Musika Sāmoa artist whose professional solo career began in 2020. Lesa's contribution to this study offers a unique perspective of the processes that Musika Sāmoa in New Zealand has undergone recently. As opposed to the opinions of Nanai or Sara-Jane, whose experiences are comparative to their recent past (i.e., early 2000's), Lesa's experiences highlight a relatively recent process that is experienced for the first time by Lesa. All the artists that I was fortunate to hold talanoaga with offer unique insight into the ways that Musika Sāmoa is crafted, negotiated and distributed, as means of cultural endurance. These are processes that are not typically common knowledge in the Samoan community in New Zealand, highlighting further the value of these contributions.

The fifth chapter focuses on what makes Musika Sāmoa and how it is crafted and distributed. An important contribution of this chapter is understanding faaSāmoa, defined in the context as what makes something Samoan. This is important as it helps to support how their understanding of faaSāmoa reflects their definition of Musika Sāmoa. One of the ways



faaSāmoa is also understood states that it also refers to something being in the Samoan language and is also considered to incorporate Samoan values and principles such as respect. This conversation is an important precursor in the defining of what Musika Sāmoa is, which is also understood in terms of what it is not (as evidenced in the Musika Sāmoa checklist in Chapter 5). Thus, Musika Sāmoa is recognised as having specific Samoan cultural aspects, including the Samoan language, which is expected to be set in a specific way as well (i.e., incorporate metaphoric phrases). Other influences of Samoan culture should also be incorporated, like the Samoan igi, for something to be considered as Musika Sāmoa.

The sixth chapter is the conclusion, in which the journey, influences, and future of Samoan music are contemplated. This chapter addresses the finding from the overall study, that the concludes that process in defining Musika Sāmoa has complex parameters that continue to change, depending on the context that the music is being crafted, negotiated and distributed (my contextual parameters: in New Zealand, by Samoans and circa 2021).

## Chapter 2. Methodology

This chapter will focus on the methodology, the primary methods and the theoretical framework that were used in conducting this research. The first section will discuss the methodology that is applied to this study; su‘ifefiloi, which is a Samoan methodology that is based off of a mixed methods approach to ethnography. The distinguishing factor that differentiates su‘ifefioi to other forms of mixed method approaches is that it allows me to draw ideas from different disciplines to support the themes of this thesis (Lopesi, 2021). However, it is also a metaphor for the frame of the thesis that draws from indigenous (Samoan) practices, these will be discussed further in the following chapter. Building off the recent works of Samoan scholars Lana Lopesi (2021) and Luka Lim-Cowley-Bunnin (2021), I provide my own contributions to su‘ifefiloi as a methodology within the discipline of ethnomusicology. In the following paragraph, I will elaborate the main characteristics that su‘ifefiloi has.

First, I will explore the term su‘ifefiloi by explaining its etymology: tracing this back to contexts beyond academia, specifically within faaSāmoa contexts (both prior to and after academic use of the term). Su‘ifefiloi will then be discussed in terms of its relevance to this research topic and its value for other research in the future. Following this, I will give an overview of critical autoethnography; its relevance, significance and use in this thesis. Prior to each chapter are “journal entry” type excerpts, which represent autoethnographic insights as the entries are drawn from my personal experiences as a Samoan. The framework borrows from Lopesi’s thesis (2021) and will be incorporated in my own writing as reflections of different occasions that I recognise as holding some relevance to each chapter.

Follow on from this, I will discuss the method of talanoa, defining the term in relation to this research, as a main method of data collection. Talanoa was used in my interactions with my interview participants as it enabled us to hold conversations in spaces that both were comfortable and appropriate for the participants and I. Talanoa allowed for culturally appropriate measures to be followed and acted on, within what would otherwise be the typical interview space. As it is a method that originates from Pasifika communities, using talanoa as a main method supported the perspectives that were shared in these talanoaga (interviews) that would otherwise be overlooked by the more common (western) question-and-answer structure interview. Underlying the methods (su‘ifefiloi and talanoa) is the Samoan cultural concept and value of Vā Tapuia which will be discussed in conjunction with the Pan-Pacific values of

respect, reciprocity, and relationship. Elaborating on these values and concepts will help someone reading this that may not understand the Samoan culture to this extent in order to understand the context of the different talanoaga, and further understand the point of this thesis.

## 2.1 Su‘ifefiloi

A brief overview on the etymology of the word su‘ifefiloi, to support the understanding of this process in both creative and academic senses. Following this, I will give an overview of the metaphorical understandings that previous scholars have elaborated to build an understanding of this methodology, as the framework is drawn from extra-academic Samoan cultural practices. As the process draws from a mixed method approach, being able to draw out the relevance of this process in more than just one way is significant in further understanding how this methodology is so versatile.

The use of su‘ifefiloi as a methodology in academia was introduced in 1998 (J. Ellis, 1998) as a way to understand a mixed methods approach to research. For (Samoan) scholars, using su‘ifefiloi provided a new way for Samoan scholars to better understand our own culture beyond western frameworks and understanding; su‘ifefiloi allows Samoan scholars to be able to use Samoan worldviews and methods of analysis, as well as prioritise research aims connecting to culturally sensitive aspects within faaSāmoa—these frameworks, processes, and focuses are necessary to fulfil the framework's purpose being grounded in faaSāmoa (Tielu, 2016). The term “su‘ifefiloi” is in the Samoan language, and its etymology is best understood when breaking up the word- “su‘i” means to sew (weave) and “fefiloi” is best defined in as a mixture or combination of different things put together. The process refers to the weaving together of a mixture of elements, to create something new (Tielu, 2016); in a typical cultural context, the term is used to describe the process when weaving together flowers, to make a flower garland or the ula lei (J. Ellis, 1998). Other creative projects that incorporate the process of su‘ifefiloi in the Samoan cultural context, such as songs (Figiel, 2016; Lim-Cowley-Bunnin, 2021; Lopesi, 2021) and ula lolo (Lopesi, 2021).

In this research project, su‘ifefiloi is recognised as a methodological process that weaves together mixed methods of ethnography, talanoa, literature analysis in a qualitative overarching framework, to create “something new” in the form of ideas and conclusions (Tielu,

2016). To further understand su‘ifefiloi, I will discuss the framework in the context of each of the aforementioned creative projects; doing this will support not only the framework as an academic process, but also encourage further understanding for the ways that su‘ifefiloi can be used as a metaphor for research. This section will explore the different ways su‘ifefiloi has been used in creating different cultural products, to grasp the relativity that su‘ifefiloi has as a methodology in this thesis.

**Su‘ifefiloi as a Flower Garland / Ula Lei:** This was first referred to by Sia Figiel (1998) as an analogy to understand the process involved with su‘ifefiloi. The analogy compares sorting through the flowers and sewing them together to make the ula lei to the process of collecting and sorting through data that is later sewn together to create something else entirely, which in this case is the thesis. This analogy highlights the importance in the picking part of the process; understanding what is most relevant for the topic, thus creating the beautiful ula lei.

**Su‘ifefiloi as a Song:** Like the stringing and sewing together of the flowers to form the flower garland, su‘ifefiloi is also used to describe the “stringing of one song to another, like flowers to leaves, to form a long song” (Figiel, 2016). These songs are commonly heard during a taualuga performance and are made up of a sequence of songs that link to tell different stories (J. Ellis, 1998). There are various representations of these medley-type songs within Samoan culture that have held value within Samoan culture for a long time (Moyle, 1971). The “old” medley su‘ifefiloi music is commonly thought of as being part of traditional practices to Samoans. The songs are used at different family events of cultural value, i.e., at the end of a birthday or cultural showcase, other times at funerals (Leota-Sao, 2022). In a modern interpretation of this, Lopesi suggests that su‘ifefiloi is present through the art of remixing music or songs, otherwise known as “fob 27 mixes”; these were CDs (compact disc) with remix versions of songs, collated and sold at places like the Avondale market (Lopesi, 2021). Even more recent are the DJ (disc jockey) mixes that different DJs upload to streaming platforms such as YouTube or Soundcloud (Lopesi, 2021). All of these musical analogies that incorporate su‘ifefiloi are highlighted by Recollet (2016) as creating “a future imaginary attentive to the past as it critiques the present, and [venturing] forward into the beyond” (Recollet, 2016). A minor observation, is that processes like remixing music that incorporate different methods of sampling, collecting, and collating to make something “new” can be understood as being an effective way to imagine “future worlds” (Lopesi, 2021; Recollet, 2016). Similar to the su‘ifefiloi of the ula lei, su‘ifefiloi of songs provide insightful ways to connect past and future

realities to create something entirely new. It could be argued that this methodology is more applicable to this thesis, however I intend to use the ula lole analogy to understand su'ifefiloi in this research instead.

**Su'ifefiloi as ula lole (lolly lei):** The ula lole or the lolly lei is another metaphor recognised as a way to understand su'ifefiloi. Lopesi introduces the metaphor in an article entitled “Su'ifefiloi: A Samoan methodology for transdisciplinary theorising in cosmopolitan worlds” (2021): she utilises the three components that make up the ula lole as analogy to understand the su'ifefiloi process in research. What was most compelling in applying the ula lole process to my own writing was that much like Lopesi, I have yet to participate in the making of ula lei to fully grasp the importance of the su'ifefiloi process that comes with it (Figiel, 2016). Although I have made many ula lole using the three commonly used materials—plastic wrap (or cellophane), the lolly (preferably wrapped like the Fruit Burst range from Pascall), and the ribbon (the thin plastic type)—something Lopesi also comments on participating in making as opposed to the ula lei (2021). In applying the ula lole analogy to this work, I draw from Lopesi's writing on this, as well as a personal understanding through my own experience of the process. Unpacking the relevance of each of the materials, I adopt from Lopesi's understanding of the three elements required for the ula lole—the wrap, the lolly and the ribbon.

The plastic wrap is the outer layer that holds everything in [...] [the] plastic wrap being the overarching theory that [is] being developed...The different lole represent all of the disparate parts, methods, perspectives and knowledge enfolded by the theoretical envelope [the glad wrap] [...] In each section of the ula lole, the mix of the lole is different. The ribbon ties give the ula lole structure; otherwise, all the lole would just fall through the plastic-wrap casing ...[The ties] are the structuring and organisation of the research. (Lopesi, 2021)

The practicality of the ula lole here not only speaks to its practicality as the tangible thing (the lolly necklace) but also its usefulness in the context of this research on Samoan music. The difference between the ula lole and the aforementioned ula lei also alludes to the adaptations to cultural practices that may have been made to suit diasporic contexts. For instance, the tropical flowers that are found in Sāmoa are unlikely to be found in New Zealand's cold weather. So instead, we use what is more available to us which are the products at the local supermarket. This is not to claim that Samoans in New Zealand are no longer making ula lei, nor is this speaking on the history of ula lei / ula lole, but I am drawing from my lived

experience in making ula lole more frequently, which has a lot to do with my personal experiences as a NZ-born Samoan living in New Zealand.

By looking at the metaphor that is the ula lole, the glad wrap here is considered as the casing that keeps everything intact. In the same way the glad wrap casing holds together the lollies, the theories of talanoa, critical autoethnography, and diasporic identities help encase the different elements within the research, conducted via interviews and further methods. The different lollies represent the different theories, perspectives through talanoa and research, and knowledge that are unique and are intended to be representative of different flavours (ideas, perspectives). The ribbons that provide the structure of the ula are essential for the “survival” of the ula lole, otherwise the lollies would fall through the ends of the glad wrap into random piles of lollies—in the context of this research, the considered structure and organisation of the thesis as a whole are the “ribbons” that allow for the different ideas to be coherently connected. Additionally, I imagine the faamaumauga sections—as explained in the next section—to be representative of the ribbon ties. These are stories that are also an opportunity to provide my personal insights to the research, because of knowledge derived from my lived experiences. These faamaumauga hold together the scholarly research along with my own and invite the reader to draw their own personal relevance with the content of this thesis. The inclusion of only three faamaumauga excerpts are symbolic of the journey, that has a beginning, a middle, and an ultimate end (although, Lopesi (2021) has faamaumauga before most of the chapters in their writing).

This section has outlined the methodology that is being applied to this research writing about Samoan music in New Zealand, understood through the metaphorical “ula lole” structure. In developing a basic understanding of su‘ifefiloi as a methodology, I introduced different metaphorical analogies, including su‘ifefiloi as ula lei, su‘ifefiloi as a song or remix, and su‘ifefiloi as ula lole, all of which highlight the different values and uses in the research process. The significance of this research framework is in its ability to hold content for transdisciplinary spaces (Lopesi, 2021), prioritising Samoan values and perspectives, as well as allowing space for the research to continue beyond the scope and limitations of this specific research topic.

## 2.2 Critical Auto-Ethnography

The autoethnographic component of this research is used in support of other research methods, such as talanoa. The faamaumauga are the sections of critical auto-ethnography that provide the personal contextual connection with the research topic, which will be the focus of this section. Whilst also providing space for the su'ifefiloi methodology to be implemented, the faamaumauga have the role of the ribbon ties on the ula lole, helping support its shape (Lopesi, 2021). This is represented through the structure of the whole thesis; in the same way that the ribbons hold together the plastic wrap and the lollies, the faamaumauga hold together the theories and the research (interviews).

In aligning with the work by Tuinamuana and Yoo called “Wayfinding and decolonising time: Talanoa, activism, and critical autoethnography” (2020), critical autoethnography is discussed as a research method that “allows [one] to write about personal experiences and critique broader and cultural ones” (Tuinamuana & Yoo, 2020 citing Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Whitinui (2014) claims that autoethnography also allows indigenous academics a “cultural process” within their research. I interpret the cultural processes that Whitinui alludes to as culturally significant practices that one learns to inhabit through one’s life experiences, including growing up, at home, at church, and so forth.

In this context, the cultural processes are embodying values specific to holding and adorning talanoa spaces: these will be elaborated in a later section, specifically highlighting the value of respect as practised in conversation and talanoaga—an example of this is referring to someone deferentially with their matai title if they have one. According to Whitinui (2014), critical autoethnography provides more meaningful, relatable understandings for both the researcher and the reader. In unpacking this further, he goes on to say that the knowledge and knowing of oneself is influenced by multiple elements, including social contexts, structures, and environments. The use of critical ethnography is proven here to be used as a “tool to challenge misconceptions of others about their identity, as indigenous peoples” (p. 464).

In critiquing the method of autoethnography, Chang (2008) suggests a more ethically concerned approach to autoethnography. They caution the over-exaggeration of the use of “self,” warning that retelling personal experiences based exclusively on personal memory can be viewed as “negligence of ethical standards,” arguably misappropriating the role of “auto” in autoethnography (Chang, 2008; Ellis, 2009). The ethical standards that Chang refers

to include, but are not limited to, the autoethnographic recounts that may venture beyond what western academia deem to be ethically appropriate (2008). My understanding of this is that this includes matters that are deeply personal and collectively significant- explicit engagement with personal topics and subjective experiences. Taking this critique into consideration, I find myself agreeing with the cautions highlighted by Chang to an extent, I question whether some of the stories I share from my personal experiences are too personal. In answering this same question, I find that the rebuttal critique by C. Ellis (2009) offers a strong perspective on why my personal stories deserve to be included as a source and wealth of knowledge. In their review of Chang's writing, Ellis (2009) states that although this critique might influence one to think of the politics of "inclusion and exclusion", this type of thinking limits autoethnography to strict instruction and ritualisation, making it no different to other research methods that already exist (p. 363). In turn, I agree with Ellis's ideal: that autoethnography should invoke a sense of empathy that allows for reciprocal care to be shared by both readers and authors (Ellis, 2009). While considering these perspectives on the matter of autoethnography's use in research, it is also important to consider the purpose of the ethnography. In this particular case, the intention of the critical autoethnography is to provide ethnographic insights to the research in question. These insights are drawn from personal experiences that fall outside the scope of the research.

Throughout this writing, I start each section with critical autoethnography. Inspired by Lana Lopesi's doctoral thesis (2021), these are written in first-person and will be based on my personal experiences to do with Samoan music, expressions of my New Zealand-born Samoan identity, and other likely experiences of relevance to this discussion. These sections are entitled 'faamaumauga' and it is through this framework that Lopesi most impresses critical autoethnography (Lopesi, 2021). In understanding 'faamaumauga', Lopesi also pinpoints part of the word itself relevant to implementing its requisite action: "mau, meaning to grip or hold tight" (Lopesi, 2021, p. 46). Thus, the records that are accounted for in the critical autoethnography act as a steadying mechanism to help one navigate these conversations and experiences for the reader, but also for themselves.

The fa'amaumauga are also like moorings and moments to breathe, like navigational markers in the sky or ocean, a reprieve in and amongst the theory discussed in the thesis. Working toward theory can feel like being lost out at sea; therefore, thinking with Iosefo et. al.'s (2020) notion of wayfinding as critical autoethnography, the fa'amaumauga throughout the thesis offer moments of readjustment and recalibration for the journey



ahead, through reflecting on my own lived experiences to help reorient myself within the research journey. Written in the first person, they demonstrate my own processing of and positioning within the research. (Lopesi, 2021, p. 47)

In alignment with the understanding of faamaumauga offered above by Lopesi (2021), the faamaumauga in this thesis uphold the space that allows my experiences to breathe and exist. Keeping to a similar structure to Lopesi's, my faamaumauga are expressed through first-person narrative as they recount memories and experiences to do with Samoan music within the Samoan New Zealand communities in which I was and am situated.

In summary, the critical autoethnography component of this thesis allows for the usage of my experiences as a New Zealand-born Samoan to articulate the overall context of writing in relation to understanding Samoan music, specifically for people from my community. Through the frame of faamaumauga preceding each major chapter, the critical autoethnographic component to this thesis is ongoing and is positioned to depict the journey of the music and experiences.

### **2.3 Talanoa**

Another element of the su'ifefiloi methodology that was mentioned previously, includes the method of talanoa. This section will explore talanoa as it is understood by conventionalised academia (Naepi, 2019; Tecun, Hafoka, Ulu'ave, & 'Ulu'ave-Hafoka, 2018; Tuinamuana & Yoo, 2020; Vaioleti, 2013), and in doing so, will inform the way talanoa is used in the context of this research. I find it crucial to remind the reader that the use of talanoa in this thesis is also informed by the critical autoethnographic experiences I have lived through, as a young New Zealand-born Samoan woman, growing up and living in New Zealand. This section will outline how different academics use and understand talanoa (as method and/or methodology), before offering the research specifics of talanoa in this thesis.

Talanoa holds different meanings to different Pacific groups (Naepi, 2019; Tecun, 'Hafoka, Ulu'ave, & 'Ulu'ave-Hafoka, 2018; Tuinamuana & Yoo, 2020; Vaioleti, 2013). This section will attempt to describe how different Pacific groups understand talanoa. The term 'talanoa' can be applied to both formal and informal situations (Tecun et al. 2018; Tuinamuana & Yoo, 2020). However, where Tuinamuana and Yoo claim that one can have an informal "talanoa" between you and a friend and you can also have a formal "talanoa" between you and your superior, Tecun et al. argue that informal is still formal in the sense that it follows a shared

cultural logic of being mindful of relationships from a specific Moana context (2018). These ideas will be explored further within the following section, as well as briefly exploring talanoa via its academic history, meanings, and usages specific to this research project. First, its origins in academia will be considered. Then I will outline definitions and critiques of talanoa as both a methodology and a method. Detailing how talanoa should be understood as a crucial research method in the context of this thesis will then follow. I will also provide specific examples of talanoa in the scope of this research.

The method of talanoa was first introduced within a modern internationally public context as an “open conversation [had between individuals] from the heart” by Sitiveni Halapua (Halapua & Pago, 2013 in Tecun, ‘Hafoka, Ulu‘ave, & ‘Ulu‘ave, 2018). Its efficacy in its introductory context was largely aided by its prior contextual usage and familiarity.

Although some Pasifika researchers continue to discuss whether the concept of talanoa is a Pan-Pacific idea, another suggestion is that talanoa can both be Pan-Pacific while also being specific to certain Pacific nations (Naepi, 2019). As a Pacific indigenous research method, talanoa is more commonly associated with Fijian, Samoan, and Tongan cultural contexts (Vaiolleti, 2013). In order to explain understandings embedded in these cultural contexts, I will provide some recollections of Fijian and Tongan perspectives on talanoa. From the Fijian perspective, talanoa is viewed as a “process where two or more people talk together or when one person is the storyteller and has an audience who largely are listeners” (Nabobo-Baba, 2008). Furthermore, Nabobo-Baba draws attention to the use of talanoa as a methodology in a manner that allows for “complex cultural protocols [to be] followed” (Nabobo-Baba, 2008). From a Tongan perspective, talanoa can be understood by breaking down the word and giving meaning to the different parts of the word itself; “tala” and “noa,” “tala” meaning “story, talk” and “noa” meaning “balance, equilibrium, zero” (Tecun et al., 2018). Through this comprehension, talanoa allows for one to make deeper connections beyond what might be considered as surface level as it requires “closeness rather than distance, and [one] must be mindful of the result” (Tecun et al., 2018, p. 162).

Despite this method’s establishment in academia, critics question whether there is enough “conceptual strength” in talanoa to be used as a Pan-Pacific concept (Tuinamuana & Yoo, 2020; Tunufa‘i, 2016). Although in extension of this critique, Tunufa‘i (2016) goes on to say that talanoa “remains a useful research tool that is similar to [...] other methods such as focus group discussions and individual interviews” (p. 227). An important inference in this

critique is that talanoa may be viable as a form of research method rather than methodology that consciously engages with context, culture, and ethnicity-specific requirements (Tunufa‘i, 2016). Taking this into account, I have opted to use talanoa as a valuable research method rather than an idealised methodology as it engages with certain contextual specifics as opposed to a broad “pan-Pacific” approach (Tuinamuana & Yoo, 2020); for instance, talanoa allows for the conversation to be help. In doing so, it is also important to highlight the differences between method and methodology that were decisive in making this choice; method is understood in this context as the way in which something is done (i.e., talanoa practised through my interviews or talanoaga with different artists). Conversely, methodology is understood in this context as the underlying framework that informs the way the research is done (i.e., su‘ifefiloi is the methodology that is at the core of this research, informing its framing). In theory, the use of talanoa in the context of this research was successful; the use of the method of talanoa embedded a relational consciousness going into the research processes. In this way, conversations become ongoing processes, open for future generations to add their knowledge and experiences to. The timelines afforded to me in completion of this study did not offer what I believe would have been sufficient time to nurture, build, and maintain the relationships between myself and the research participants. Alongside the challenges that came with holding these talanoa via Zoom rather than in person, the research method of talanoa is constantly being reflected on throughout the processes of this research. The following section will explore the talanoa method process more in terms of its position in this research.

### **2.3.1 Talanoa as Method; Research Specifics**

This section will elaborate the use of talanoa as a research method in the context of this study. Based on the general ideas offered in the previous section, I will explain the specific use of talanoa in this research by introducing the artists, the connections between myself and the artists prior to our initial talanoaga where relevant, and the research implications of their involvement. I will also discuss the process that went into selecting the different artists. A core idea of talanoa method is the face-to-face conversations that build relationships (Tuinamuana & Yoo, 2020; Vaioleti, 2013). A crucial point to be made is that these talanoaga were adapted to suit the conditions the different artists were in due to the presence of COVID-19 in our communities. Because of this situation, our talanoaga were held via Zoom (video conference software), and not the in person face-to-face conversations that were mentioned. These factors

will be elaborated on to explain the impact Zoom had on the use of talanoa as a method. Finally, I will detail some of the koha (donation) processes that were given to the participants as a token of my appreciation for their time and their contribution towards the research at hand, and to the wider talanoaga on Samoan music.

There were five artists that I spoke with, all of whom I met and held talanoa with through Zoom. The artists that I spoke to were chosen on the grounds of their association with Samoan music, whether through their own music production or through experience as Samoan music listeners. The talanoaga were semi-structured as there were questions that were set to help guide the initial conversation, although the use of talanoa as method allowed for the conversation to steer itself to touch on the different ideas in the different questions.

Because of this, there was little need to ask each question specifically. This is an example of the way that talanoa as a method provides an important contribution into both the space of this research, but also in a wider academic sense, as it consciously engaged with contextual/ cultural ethnic specific requirements, that would otherwise be overlooked in the more common interview/focus group situation (Tunufa'i, 2016).

The process that went into selecting the different artists began with my insider knowledge as an avid Samoan music listener. This helped me to discern who different artists were and understand where the contexts the music was used in different Samoan communities within New Zealand (specifically in urban Auckland). From this starting point I utilised public social media accounts and other publicly available information about the artists to initiate contact with them. On more than one of these occasions, I would message the artist through their social media account (Facebook or Instagram, for example), and once they responded we were able to establish other forms of contact (i.e., they would send through their email to send the research information to and so forth) or continue initiating meeting times through their social media account. A limitation found early in the research was that not every artist that was approached agreed to participate in the study and there were also instances where other artists had originally agreed but unforeseen circumstances impacted them to not follow through with participating in the talanoaga. Despite this, the individual artists offered crucial perspectives on Samoan music's happenings especially in contexts outside of Sāmoa (in New Zealand and other countries where diaspora Samoan communities are). A crucial component of their

perspective is their insider musician status. While I could have spoken to music managers or further music production-involved people, the artist's perspective offers an opinion of their artistic intentions and intra-communal influences.

As mentioned previously, the talanoaga were held through zoom due to the many restrictions that we were under due to COVID-19 (Te Kawanatanga o Aotearoa- New Zealand Government, 2022). The process of organising a meeting with an artist via zoom included email communications to discuss available time and dates; and it was assumed that both myself and the artist had sufficient access to Wi-Fi (access to Zoom) and a comfortable space to speak from (typically from their home). Following this, I was able to send out another email with Zoom link details (date, time, and links) for the artist. As straightforward as this seems, this was highly disruptive to the talanoa process as we were unable to make the typical connections that meeting in person would have allowed, exchanging pleasantries and introductions over some common ground, i.e., food. Despite this disruption the talanoa via Zoom ran relatively smoothly, and besides the occasional Wi-Fi hiccup, the talanoaga were very worthwhile.

Lastly, I will speak on the gift-giving / koha process within my research. In my initial ethics application, it stipulated that I was to offer a gift voucher of some nature as a token of my appreciation to an artist for their participation in the research. In other research contexts this perhaps would have been sufficient in thanking the interviewees; however, factors such as my positionality as a young Samoan woman speaking mostly to Samoan men who were also older than me (besides the one other woman I spoke with) holds a cultural significance that is understood through the concept of Va Tapuia (Amituanai-Toloa, 2006). This will be discussed in more detail in the next section. Drawing back to the gift-giving process specifically applied in this research, my personal cultural understanding informs the decision I made to show my appreciation in more than just a gift voucher. Thus, I will be showing my appreciation in the form of gift giving monetary compensation, as well as a Samoan cultural artefact. These gifts are in the process of being together as I write and are intended to reach each artist before the due date for this thesis. Besides these physical markers of appreciation, there is a deeper gratitude that will remain from my person to each artist. Had my financial situation not been an issue, these gifts would exceed this and would hold more monetary value. In the hopes of understanding how the appreciation continues beyond the gift itself, I will briefly touch on the concept of Va Tapuia, and its role in the context of this thesis.

### 2.3.2 Va Tapuia: Respect, Reciprocity & Relationship

Va Tapuia is a Samoan concept that translates to sacred space and is present in the space of the feagaiga between brother and sister (Amituanai-Tolosa, 2006). This section will discuss the presence and use of the Va Tapuia within this research space, specifically in relation to the talanoaga I held with the different artists, via Zoom. I will briefly detail Va Tapuia with reference to Amituanai-Tolosa's work on understanding Va Tapuia in the research space (2006), before providing specific insight into the way this concept impacted the talanoaga process, the talanoa method within this research. In discussing these specific details, I will also touch on Naepi's writing on the values of respect, reciprocity, and relationship in Pan-Pacific research methodologies (Naepi, 2019) to help broaden the understanding of Va Tapuia. The intention in detailing these values and highlighting them in practice, is to show how these cultural values that are beyond the scope of this research are carried throughout this space because of their importance within Samoan culture outside of the research context.

In their work on Va Tapuia, Amituanai-Tolosa explains how the origins of the concept dates to ancient Samoan beliefs that are founded on the value of respect or faaaloalo (Amituanai-Tolosa, 2006). As the concept is also originally based on the relationship between a brother and sister, the Va Tapuia centres itself on the respect within this relationship; not only is respect present in this relationship, but the respect is also reciprocal and there is an understanding for there to be a "return of respect" between brother and sister (Amituanai-Tolosa, 2006). Va Tapuia is not limited to the relationship between brother and sister but is also applied to relationships from person to person (not relationship specific), and relationships between people and the land. Across all these relationships, it is assumed that "[when] one takes out...one has to put something back" (Amituanai-Tolosa, 2006). In research contexts, Amituanai-Tolosa highlights how va tapuia is still present in upholding relationships, holding respect within the research space, and the reciprocity of both knowledge and respect. In evaluating va tapuia in the research context, they highlight how upholding these values counter the limitations that the institutional ethics application has on protecting Pasifika researchers (and participants) (Amituanai-Tolosa, 2006). Thus, the presence and upholding of va tapuia allows the researcher to be placed in "institutional positions that can affect and change lives for the better" (Amituanai-Tolosa, 2006). Va tapuia allows for the research itself to have a collective benefit besides that of just the researcher alone. Amituanai-Tolosa describes this in their writing:

Research should be seen by participants and the community as beneficial to their lives and to the lives of their children. It is about taking participants on our shoulders and guiding them to inaccessible and invisible heights. It is about empowerment by connecting the past, the present and the future in recognition that participants are indeed a mirror of ourselves and that when we are wrong, they are wrong too. (Meaola Amituanai-Tolosa, 2006)

Relating this to this specific research context on Musika Sāmoa in New Zealand, it was understood by the participants that their involvement in this study was not for personal advantage (on my part or theirs). But rather to add to the on-going necessary conversation about Samoan music and how it relates to the cultural music relates to the Samoan community living outside of Sāmoa. This is crucial to nurture and understand Samoan identities that are growing up and living outside of Sāmoa—living in diaspora and as Moana cosmopolitan.

In Naepi's work on Pan-Pacific research methodologies (2019) the values of respect, reciprocity, and relationship are recognised as being present in most Pan-Pacific research frameworks, including talanoa, kakala, and vanua to name a few (Naepi, 2019). Naepi talks on each of the individual values regarding their own research, drawing from specific examples of respect, reciprocity, and relationship. In a similar light, I will draw out specific interactions within my own research where the values of respect, reciprocity and relationship were upheld. Firstly, each value will briefly be explained as was defined by Naepi (2019); the value of respect is understood by Naepi as acknowledging and recognising someone's value or role in a particular context (2019; cited Bennett et al., 2013). Reciprocity honours the research context as well as people's participation in the research: Naepi (2019) mentions that in the research space, this means that there is a mutual gain for both the participant and the research context (study and researcher included). This is best achieved through proper recognition and appropriate reimbursement, although this may vary depending on the nature of the research or cultural context (Naepi, 2019) Reciprocity is summarised by this statement: "[i]n practice, this value is about ensuring that the community stands to benefit from the research just as much as, if not more than the researcher" (Naepi, 2019). This leads to the value of relationship, where it seems almost a mixture of both respect and reciprocity being enacted. By showing respect that is reciprocal, the relationship is upheld, Naepi states that relationships should be "developed and maintained in a respectful manner" (Naepi, 2019). In maintaining this relationship in a research context (researcher and participant), this means that the relationship continues past the conclusion of the study itself and is upheld through the appropriate measures that are deemed

respectful in a particular cultural context. These are mentioned broadly as the practice of this varies depending on each culture's practices. This leads into the next point, wherein I will share some of the ways I enacted respect, reciprocity, and relationship (maintenance) in this research context. Practising respect as a researcher meant, amongst other things, understanding the artist's music, this could include matters such as their most recent release, the type of music they produce, and further. As a Samoan respect meant understanding the *va tapuia* between myself and the artist; to speak to them using respectful terms, or to refer to them respectfully if they held a *matai* title. In practicing reciprocity in the context of this research, the mutual respect between myself and the participants allowed for this to be shown in different ways. In Samoan culture today, acknowledging people in formal cultural context—although contexts vary also—is typically shown through gifting of an envelope with money, a Samoan woven mat (ie *toga*), and a box of food item—usually cans of corned beef or a box of frozen chickens. This is more common in funeral, wedding, or birthday situations where the host gives back to the guests, with exchanging of words and these gifts. A common phrase I hear when these gifts are being presented, “*o se faafetai vaivai*” translates roughly to “this is a weak token of our appreciation.” The chief speaking intentionally undermines the gift, comparing it to whatever was offered by the opposing group, whether it was money, or a gift of some sort—sometimes it is a performance. But the point to stress here is that there is nothing of material value that conveys the true appreciation that is experienced. Drawing this back to my research context, in my closing statements to the artists, I would mention something along those lines: that there is not enough gratitude to offer. Reciprocity in this research context is present through these conversations but is also embodied by the appropriate reimbursements the artists receive. Lastly, relationship development and maintenance are a result of both respect and reciprocity and are present throughout the whole research process. I intend to maintain the relationship outside the scope of this study and to show support for their art.

This section offered insight into the underlying values and concepts that are culturally grounded and based in *faaSāmoa*; *va tapuia*, respect, reciprocity, and relationship maintenance. These were all practiced and present throughout this research. I affiliate myself with these values and concepts daily as I have been taught through my cultural upbringing. Although they are not explicitly foregrounded in this thesis, they nonetheless are of vital importance.

## 2.4 Conclusion



In this chapter I elaborated on the methodology at the core of this research, the methods used throughout and the theoretical frameworks that exist in academia, that will help inform the outcomes of this study. A significant contribution to this chapter outlined the use of *su'ifefiloi* as the methodology as it supports the spaces between different disciplines to encourage transdisciplinary conversation. The other sections of this chapter focused specifically on the theory behind the research methods that were used to conduct this research; *talanoa* was explained in terms of its ability to provide more culturally conscious awareness to the research, including to its research participants and further data collated. Critical autoethnography was also detailed in this chapter and its role in the research was elaborated, specifically in supporting the contextual position of the author while allowing for critical analysis to interact with further information.

Although there are some conflicts of opinion—some of which were highlighted as well—ultimately, these are useful and necessary contributors to the writing at hand. With an urgent sense to understand how this thesis could impact the Samoan (New Zealand Samoan) community more widely, I had to first understand how it was currently being understood (referring here to understanding in an academic sense). This led to finding articles and readings by Samoan authors, in various locations, discussing the uses everyday methods such as *su'ifefiloi* and *talanoa* could have in analysing our cultural paradigms. In the latter half of this chapter, I covered the research method of *talanoa* and its specific use in this study. Drawing specifically from the *talanoaga* held for this thesis, I highlighted some interactions held with the artists. Finally, I mentioned some of the underlying concepts and values that were present in the *talanoaga* process, but which were also recognised as ongoing cultural values that continue outside of western research contexts. *Va Tapuia* is introduced here as a concept that highlights relationality between individuals; the values of respect, reciprocity, and relationship maintenance support *Va Tapuia* as it offers other ways to understand this crucial concept. Having discussed these, the next chapter will speak more to the contextual cultural background of the music in question. In considering the people it belongs to, and the journeys taken for the music to still be heard today, I pose the following question: who are Samoans and how is their music in New Zealand in the first place?

## **Faamaumauga 2:**

### **Le Malaga- The journey**

I borrow the questions from my talanoaga with the artists in this faamaumauga. The three questions ask, who are you? Where do you come from? And who do you bring with you in this space?

#### **Who are you?**

Malo, I'm Maria. Legally Mary-Agnes but only my GP calls me that. I'm a New Zealand-born Samoan, born and bred in central Auckland. I trace my Samoan lineage to the villages of Ga'utavai, Savai'i and Moata'a, Upolu. I've been a Seventh-day Adventist all my life and continue to worship at the same church I was born into. I'm the youngest of six and am the only one that hasn't lived in Sāmoa for any period of my life. My schooling life has only been in and around Auckland- from kindergarten to tertiary education, I attended schools that were either a 5minute walk away, or a 30minute bus ride away. When I was 6 years old, I started at Dorothy Nu'u's Music School, which also happened to be my neighbour one house over. This is where I learnt how to play the piano, nurse my fear of maths through music theory, and exercised my self-discipline during the daily practise times (IYKYK, this was HARD for a 10y/o).

I love Samoan music. You could call it a personal bias but that would make the rest of the actual thesis problematic (lol), but for the longest time I could never really understand that they were singing about the luscious green mountains (refer to Faamaumauga 1.), I just liked the way it sounded. Although I pride myself in my sufficiency in Samoan, which according to my sisters still needs some work, the poetic language in the songs that I seemed to like so much was a little too hard to decipher at first glance (first listen, same thing).

I'm all of these things and all of the little experiences that are in-between.

#### **Where do you come from?**

I remember being asked this question when I was in Melbourne a couple years ago, and I was so sure in my initial response:

Me: "I'm from Auckland"

Them: "...but where are you really from?"

Me: "...um? I'm Samoan if that's what you're asking?"

Them: “ohhh yes...I had a Samoan neighbour once, I wonder if you know...” (proceeds to ask me about a Samoan they know, assuming all Samoan’s know each other).

If I was asked the same question now, I’d ask first to specify whether they were referring to my ethnicity or where I live.

Responding with “Sāmoa” when asked where I am from is technically not wrong, but I would be lying if I said this was the full correct answer. I’m also from Auckland, New Zealand, where I’ve lived my whole life. Where I grew to appreciate the four seasons in one day. I understood Auckland better than I understood other things in life.

But I am Samoan, though. My cultural lineage is what connects me to the small island nation, and my experiences as a Samoan in New Zealand also connects me to the culture. I could simplify the whole ordeal by just stating that my ethnicity is Samoan, my nationality is New Zealand and be done with it. But it all seems a little bit bigger than that. I’m not diasporic Samoan as Sāmoa has never been ‘home’ for me. For my siblings and parents, yes- Sāmoa is home for them. Mine is in Auckland, New Zealand.

### **Who do you bring with you in this space?**

Everyone I’ve ever interacted with in any capacity regarding music. It goes without saying but all my loved ones, my family and friends, those I associate with on a daily. All of these people are with me in this space. But I also think of unconventional experiences and associations that I bring with in this space, including my kindergarten teacher Sandy, who always played the Macarena song for us to dance to. The Samoan group tutors from primary school who were full-time mums, and part-time dance teachers. My music teachers in high school who showed me music was more than just the theory and classical training I had. The girls I would catch bus with throughout high school, who would let me listen to their phone/iPod on the bus ride home (because I had no device lol). My school friends who struggled through MUS101 and every other MUS paper with me. My other school friends from university who knew nothing about music but appreciated good music when they heard it. My ethno-seminar whanau made up of a diverse mix of music lovers.

And anyone else who I’ve had any sort of musical interaction with- I bring them with me in this space.

## Chapter 3. Samoan Music & People in New Zealand

This chapter will give an overview of Samoan identity across some of the different sociocultural experiences of Samoans in NZ. More particularly, this will be discussed via their musical expressions. First, I will provide a brief summary of the recent history of the Samoan nation state because Sāmoa's history does not start from when it was colonised. Part of this history of Samoans in New Zealand includes the migration of large numbers of Samoan families to New Zealand (Fairburn, 1961; McLean, 1999). This chapter of Samoans in diaspora uses the concept of "Moana cosmopolitan" that allows people of the Moana to understand "mobility and place as connected" (Lopesi, 2021, p. 13) as a way to understand Samoans living outside of Sāmoa. I also unpack other labels such as "New Zealand-born Samoan" used by Samoans living outside of Sāmoa to describe their identity. This chapter will then collate literature on Samoan traditional music as background for upcoming sections on contemporary Samoan musical expressions.

### 3.1 Sāmoa: Colonised Edition

The colonial history of Sāmoa begins in the late nineteenth century. The colonisers included Germany, the United States of America, and New Zealand, the latter of which as part of the British commonwealth (Davidson, 1967). The scrambles of the colonial western powers resulted in the political partitioning into Eastern and Western Sāmoa's; the eastern region became a territory of the United States of America, while the west was reassigned from being a German colony to a New Zealand one in 1920 (McLean, 1999). In 1962, Western Sāmoa (as it was known then) became an independent state within the British commonwealth, and in 1996 relinquished the "Western" in their name, to be "Sāmoa." To date, as the current year is 2022, the American territory of Sāmoa (eastern islands) remains so, with its main island Tutuila being home to the capital city Pago Pago. As is common in colonial histories, both regions of Sāmoa have been the sites of conflict between opposing parties. One of these conflagrations was the Mau movement, a Samoan-led political organisation, which was based on existing Samoan cultural practices and distinct hierarchical systems (Murray, 2005). Ultimately, this led to Western Sāmoa gaining independence (Sāmoa, as will be referred to going forward) from New Zealand. This came about unfortunately not without bloodshed. A significant occurrence from this movement is commemorated annually, known as "Black Saturday." In 1929, the New Zealand administration attempted to arrest members of the Mau movement when they marched

through the city of Apia. Struggles between the marchers and the New Zealand police who were occupying the country broke out. New Zealand police opened fire on the march parade, which left eight dead (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2020), one of whom was prominent Samoan leader, high chief Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III, whose last words have left Sāmoa a legacy and plea for peace, “Sāmoa, filemu pea, ma si o’u toto ne’i ta’uvalea, a ia aoga lo’u ola mo lenei mea,” translated in English as, “Sāmoa, peace be upon you, let my bloodshed not be in vain, as it was spilt for peace.” Despite this altercation, Sāmoa and New Zealand’s relationship would later calm, with the next decade seeing many Samoans move to New Zealand around the time Sāmoa gained independence. This movement is directly tied to New Zealand’s colonial relationship with Sāmoa and speaks to how the New Zealand occupation and violence impacted the social, political, and economic conditions that pushed and pulled migrant movement between these modern nations.

### **3.2 Sāmoa: New Zealand Migrant Edition**

In the 1950’s, New Zealand was expanding its economy by developing their industry and service sectors, thus a call was made to the neighbouring smaller Polynesian islands for cheap labour. New Zealand was sold to Samoans as the “land of milk and honey”, to extend the biblical analogy, New Zealand was to be the promised land (Fairburn, 1961). This was an attractive proposition to the small island nations, Sāmoa was one of these whose people streamed in to get a slice of the promised land. The Samoans who migrated over were offered the “luxury” of wages, with the biggest benefit being having enough money to afford a life in New Zealand, whilst sending remittances back home (Fairburn, 1961). Despite this, a national economic decline in 1973 saw an increase in unemployment for Samoan and other Pacific migrants.

For these Pacific migrants who had just spent the last twenty years rebuilding their homes in New Zealand, this would not have been an easy transition. From this decline, the Pacific migrants, including the Samoan population living in New Zealand, fell victim to what is known today as one of the darkest experiences of Pacific communities in New Zealand history; this was the racist home raids and deportations of alleged overstayers by the New Zealand government and police of Pacific families. This occurrence is referred to today as the Dawn Raids, a reference to the raiding of Pacific homes at the crack of dawn, which saw to the

deportation and exploitation of the same Pacific Island peoples who had once envisioned New Zealand as the land of milk and honey (Fepulea‘i, 2005). Other Pacific Island nations that were victim to this unjust experience included those from Tonga and Fiji, and unfortunately even misidentified Māori who were used as scapegoats for New Zealand’s economic downfall during this time (Anae, 1998).

The significance of the Dawn Raids had more to do with its design, as there were indeed overstayers from these Pacific Island nations that were in New Zealand, but it was the traumatic experiences that remain as “vivid...indeed bitter memories” (Anae, 1997). Second to this, was also the racial profiling of those who were considered migrant or an “overstayer,” compared to those who were not profiled for this as being Pākehā or European were not considered “not of this place” (Mua Strickson-Pua, 2018). As it were, white Europeans had a higher number of overstayers in New Zealand at the time (Salmon, 2010) so it did not make statistical sense to target the black and brown overstayers. Despite this, Samoan migrants and the generations that followed these migrants, coined New Zealand-born Samoans (Anae, 1998), are now the largest Pacific group in New Zealand according to the most recent census (Stats NZ, 2018). Since the 1970s, there have been generations of aiga that uprooted from homeland Sāmoa in search of greener pastures, economically speaking. There are also now generations of Samoans that have always been “rooted” in New Zealand, having been born here. Understanding how the Samoan community has shifted from having a higher population being born outside of New Zealand (particularly in Sāmoa) to having a higher population born within New Zealand is a crucial point in understanding the identities of the music at the core of this study. I myself am included in the population of what Anae coined the New Zealand-born Samoan (Anae, 1997; Anae, 1998).

### **3.3 Samoans: in Diaspora / Moana Cosmopolitanism**

There is much to be said about Pacific diasporic communities. These groups often reside in first-world, multicultural locations such as New Zealand. Whilst I could refer to other Pacific nations' migrations to New Zealand, to focus on the central concerns of this thesis, this chapter will concentrate on discussing Samoan communities in New Zealand.

Diasporas are generally understood as communities living outside of a homeland that have created generations and families in other countries. Samoan diasporas now exist in other countries and continents including, New Zealand, Australia, America, and Europe. As stated

earlier, the main purpose and the common drive behind the migration of Samoan is the prospect of moving to greener pastures, economically speaking, where more opportunities mean a “better life.” This is different from many other diasporic communities globally who responded to displacement and migrated to seek refuge (Levi & Scheduling, 2010). To assume that Samoan diasporic communities are only present in New Zealand and Australia, is a gross understatement. Macpherson (2013) describes through the scenario of a wedding how the reading of 'telegrams' has changed over the years; from expatriated family sending telegrams from American Samoa or New Zealand (circa the world wars in the twentieth century) to messages from loved ones from "as far away as Dunedin, Dubai, and Dundee"- so as to say, that Samoans were no longer situated in these far away destination by force (as they were above), rather by choice (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2013). Suffice to say, Samoans are not limited to the specific New Zealand context of this study but are also subject to a wider globalisation that allows them to move more freely amongst other nations; this is an important point in conversation that is beyond the scope of this study, although further study in this area would be a helpful contribution to academia.

In their writing on Pacific festivals in Aotearoa New Zealand, Mackley-Crump (2015) explores how Pacific people negotiate between the culture of their homeland and the Western culture (the dominant culture of settler-colonial New Zealand) that they are surrounded by, New Zealand, specifically through the lens of Pacific music festivals. A key insight that Mackley-Crump reveals is that the Pacific diaspora remains in a “process of transitioning” (Mackley-Crump, 2015) that is fluid, subject to constant re-negotiation, and responsive to both internal and external events. Mackley-Crump also highlights how the notion of “homeland” is still very important in informing strong-rooted connections to these homelands. Varying relationships and connections to the “homeland” evidence that these changes (to cultural identities and understanding) remain “...open-ended, with cross influences and fertilizations continuing to define Pacific cultures in both diaspora and island homelands” (Mackley-Crump, 2015). New relationships form between the two communities as generations continue to be born outside of the homeland and to be established in the country of migration.

In more recent understandings of the Pacific community and diaspora, Lopesi coined the term “Moana cosmopolitanism” to describe the “globality experienced by Moana people, [which] relies on the intersection of roots and routes” (Lopesi, 2021). “Roots and routes” enable understanding about how people can be “explicitly rooted and expansively routed” at the same

time (Clifford, 1997, 2013; Teaiwa, 1998; Diaz & Kauanui, 2001, in Lopesi, 2021). “Rooted” refers to ancestral, temporal, and spatial connections, often to communities bound together by shared culture, genealogy, and history; conversely, “routed” refers to journeys, directions, and methods, often transnational and interdisciplinary. Moana cosmopolitanism challenges the deficit views of loss within diaspora discourse. Lopesi argues that Moana people are not new to participating globally, a reference to the countless navigational journeys in Pacific people’s histories and presents (Lopesi, 2021). The significance of the concept of Moana cosmopolitanism to this research is in its useful theorising of the way the experiences in the movements of the Pacific communities impacts their identities. Not only is this relevant to the research, but as a Samoan growing up in and living in New Zealand, Moana cosmopolitanism represents my own experiences that resonate more with the definitions offered by this conceptual framework, as opposed to diasporic identities; personally, Sāmoa is the motherland/homeland/ancestral land of my ancestors, of my family born there and where my “blood” traces its origins to. But as a New Zealand-born Samoan, New Zealand remains “home” as this was the breeding ground where I grew and learned the most. Another key feature of Moana cosmopolitanism is that it refers to digital movements that are especially relevant to the experiences had by most Samoans living in this digital age. Particularly in regard to post COVID-19 impacts which proved globally how crucial connections via social media was, as it allowed for families who were kept distanced to remain in communication with one another. This key feature of Moana cosmopolitanism is useful in this research context as it validates the negotiation, creation, and distribution of Samoan music outside of Sāmoa and also validates this another important form of communication and connection for Samoans living as Moana cosmopolitan to their roots, while living out their routed lives.

### **3.4 Samoans: New Zealand-Born Edition**

After the waves of migration to New Zealand, Samoans and other Pacific Island communities found themselves creating new families and generations in their new homes. These generations are what Anae describes as the “New Zealand born Samoan” (Anae, 1997): this term encapsulates the unique transcultural experiences of NZ-born Samoans. This section will explore the notion of “NZ-born Samoan”: the identity, the label, the birth-right, the citizenship status, and the unexpected identity crisis, including reference to my own personal experiences, as a New Zealand-born Samoan myself.



New Zealand-born Samoan identities have been described as “caught between cultures,” implying some sort of identity crisis because one does not know where their identity belongs (Teleavave, 2006). The understanding of Pacific diaspora, and Moana cosmopolitan offered as a prelude to this section, shed light on how the journey of Samoan people in New Zealand, and specifically the journey of belonging has influenced the way they understand their identities. The New Zealand-born Samoan that finds themselves “caught between cultures” is the newer layer to be explored and acknowledged after the initial migrants and those that set up homes. Offering a story of my own to examine being “caught between cultures,” I recall a time where a close relative of mine made a comment on my fluency in the Samoan language: “You don’t talk like a New Zealand born,” they said. I understood without needing an explanation what they were referring to, because I had been taught from a young age how to be Samoan in a way that I noticed my other Samoan friends were not: I understood and spoke the language, I was taught mannerisms and behaviours that I would later learn were unique to Samoan culture, all of which became second nature and things I didn’t give second thought to enacting or speaking as. Upon reflection, I was born into a rare family situation (albeit not the only one of its kind), as I was a New Zealand-born Samoan, born at the Women’s National Hospital in Greenlane (Auckland), while the rest of my immediate family had been born in Sāmoa and spent most of their developing years there. This meant that I was able to survive some of the scrutiny that some NZ born Samoans feel about “not being” proper Samoans. Perhaps I survived the scrutiny because I was raised in a home of Samoans from Sāmoa, with varying points of reference to Samoan life. Whereas my friends who didn’t have the same experience with people in their immediate or greater environment with Samoan language, customs and behaviours were maybe more susceptible to the scrutinising experience. The relevance in understanding the New Zealand-born Samoan phenomena is that it offers support in acknowledging how music is a vehicle in navigating and negotiating cultural identity living as Moana cosmopolitan.

Music is one of the core ways that New Zealand-born Samoans learn their language, culture, and stories; from the lyrics of the songs to the instrumentation, to the context(s) the song might be heard (i.e., in Samoa, or in family scenarios).<sup>x</sup> But also, music is a place where they now interrogate and negotiate their own place in the world as “caught between cultures” by creating their own which reflect their complex alliances.

In conclusion, New Zealand-born Samoan identity is a complex interchange of experiences and cultural manifestations, as shaped by being situated at the intersections of different geographical and ideological contexts. One of the environments in which this is most observable is in music: the next section will discuss this further.

### **3.5 Samoan Music: Traditional?**

This section offers the various journeys and characteristics that create Samoan music. Some of Samoan music's earliest documentation in English was done so through musicological analysis by Moyle (1966-1969), and Love (1972). Moyle's work collated Samoan music traditions and practices from all over Western Sāmoa, defining what he observed as "traditional music" to be music (instruments and genre) that he posited as having likely many pre-colonial elements (Moyle, 1988). However, Moyle did still include some Christian music as "traditional," even though this would not possibly be pre-colonial. He argued that indigenous Samoan musical elements integrated amalgamated into Samoan ecclesiastical music, as Christianity itself became grounded in Samoan life and community practice (Moyle, 1988). Moyle's work was extensive and was based on longitudinal fieldwork across a range of places in Sāmoa, whereas Love's work considered the music of a single village on the island of Upolu (Love, 1991). At the core of his writing, Love draws on the origins of Samoan music being part of an oral tradition that is linked to the performance and structure of speech in a Samoan cultural context; during the time of his study, this context was one of old "tradition" (in reference to its customs) in which former practices were slowly fading (Love, 1991). Where Moyle's work is extensive geographically, Love's research is coined by Thomas as having a "depth through several generations" (Thomas, 1992). Both Moyle and Love's research on Samoan music were valuable contributions to academia, providing informative insight into what might have been lost had palagi academics not embarked on recording and documenting Samoan musical practices. However, their contribution was only an introduction into what Samoan music was and is.

McLean's "Weavers of Song" (1999) collated information about the music of Polynesia, but mostly drew from Moyle's and Love's ethnographic studies for the chapter on Samoan music. McLean and Moyle utilised the notion of "traditional" arguably as a source of

convenience rather than a musically clear-cut category. Because tradition is temporally and spatially contextual, as well as subject to the perceivers' own interpretations, the meaning of the word “traditional” is often vague and unreliable. Here, I argue that “traditional” instead refers to music that belongs to the Samoan community: the artists, the listeners, or the audience, all play a crucial role in understanding what, when, and where a certain music counts as “traditional.” In this research, the artists I spoke to helped to refine this definition by identifying common markers that distinguish Samoan traditional music from other types of Samoan music, and even further in comparison to other music altogether. This will be touched upon in a later section.

Moyle (1988) used the word traditional to describe the music he found in Sāmoa during his research (implying that as much as he could garner, this echoed music from pre-colonial periods in Sāmoa). Notions of “traditional” in the Pacific are interrogated by Mallon in relation to cultural artefacts in the museum space. He says that the categorisation of cultural material as traditional is problematic because it has a colonialist basis in “cataloguing indigenous peoples” (Mallon, 2018). Not only is it a prescription by an outsider about what is and what is not traditional, but it limits the conversation about Samoan traditional material to a space in time, which entails the assumption that anything created after this point in time is fixed to a different version of culture. Rather than referring to pre-colonial practices of culture (including music) as traditional, I will refer to these practices as indigenous to the culture; the main characteristics of something found indigenous to a culture is informed by, opposing (but not the opposite of) colonial impacts, and signifies specific set of genealogical and ontological ties to places, histories, and languages (to name a few).

As mentioned earlier, Sāmoa’s contact with colonial powers such as Germany and New Zealand would later be evident in many factors of life after regaining independence. From the prominent integration of Christianity into daily forms of life in Sāmoa, to the growth and trade of non-indigenous crop and livestock (Davidson, 1967), music was not exempt from the influences of colonialism. One of the earliest impacts on Samoan music would be their influence on religious practices, which would become evident in the use of hymns for church services, along with the use of western instruments, like the piano, and the development of brass bands in various communities in Sāmoa (Solomona & Bendrups, 2019). Of these inclusions, the Samoan language is noted by scholars to be a reoccurring and common factor in Samoan music. According to Televave, a distinct feature of Samoan music is the inclusion

of the Samoan language, which “functions as a means of communicative expression and a marker or indicator of one’s ethnic or cultural identity” (Televave, 2006). In acknowledging this factor, Samoan music today is one that is not limited to the specific musical elements mentioned in Moyle and McLean’s writings: instead, it is inclusive of these historic elements, the Samoan language, the use of Western or foreign instruments and musical practices, and the different spaces into which Samoans have migrated to or been born in. The mass migration to New Zealand is one of these instances, where the Samoan music created in New Zealand slowly began to replicate the other popular music that was (and is still) around these artists. The changes in the context of the music are a crucial part of this development, as discussed in the subsections under section 3.2, Samoans themselves are geographically scattered around the world (Janes, 1990). The most common places of migration out of Sāmoa include the United States of America, Australia, and New Zealand (Fairburn, 1961). Drawing back to a point earlier made in this section, it should be clarified that the music examples used in this thesis will not be referred to as traditional Samoan music. Instead, I utilise the Samoan term “Musika Sāmoa” (translates to Samoan music), which is otherwise understood as popular Samoan music which is popular to the Samoan diasporic community and is grounded within this community. It also reflects global journeys and the journeys of new (younger) generations.

### **Musika Sāmoa: Journey’s Starting Point**

A vital part of the conversation unfolding throughout this research, is the journey-narrative that has been attached to the Samoan music, which is at the core of this thesis. Pacific music authors including those mentioned already, Moyle (1988), McLean (1999) and Televave (2006), have contributed to this conversation (about Samoan music) by providing critical details on what is best attributed as the starting point of the journey. As the previous sections have described, the journey of the Samoan music thus far has not only moved with its people (literally, from Sāmoa to New Zealand) but has also moved with the trends and societal contexts it has been exposed in (i.e., instrumentation that was inspired by western music genres). Televave’s work on “Samoan popular music” sets the tone in discussing how generations of New Zealand-born Samoans are negotiating and creating not only their music, but their cultural identities are also being negotiated and created as well (2006). Through the talanoaga I hold with the different artists, understanding what exists in academia around being caught between cultures (Televave, 2006) I find is a relatively good start to continue the conversation from. Are Samoans in New Zealand still producing Samoan music? Are they New Zealand-born? If so, addressing artists,

how is the music making process working for you? Let us begin the talanoaga here, by understanding first who it is that is principally informing the findings of this study.

## Chapter 4. The Musicians & Their Music

This chapter elaborates on the relationship between Samoans in New Zealand, first generation Samoans born in New Zealand, and the generations that followed thereafter, through discussions of their art. The history between Sāmoa and New Zealand, and consequently how that history impacted the understanding of Samoan music from ethnomusicologists, is a major part of this conversation. The interviews held with the Samoan musicians for this study, through the perspective of a New Zealand-born Samoan (myself), uncover understandings of Samoan music from Samoan perspectives. From these interviews, one of the key points that is reinforced is that Samoan music is inclusive of; historical elements, the Samoan language, Western or foreign instruments and musical practices being incorporated into it, and the different spaces into which Samoans have migrated to or been born in. Most of these seemingly exterior factors play a crucial role in the ways that the artists' music is crafted and negotiated. Interviews were held via Zoom, due to constrictions related to COVID-19 and location, given the occurrence of these interactions via digital spheres, Moana cosmopolitan discourse is heavily applicable here. Samoan knowledge through cyberspace evidence the ways in which diasporas operate currently, as well as how Samoan communities globally remain connected across temporal and physical distances. This challenges the idea that diasporic communities are wholly “disconnected” and not conversant with the same information that is present in discourses in Sāmoa. These artists were chosen as significant because of a range of factors, from winning Pacific music awards, to incorporating never-before heard combinations of genres, to reinforcing the role the music plays in upholding practices of the Samoan language.

This section offers music and insights from five different artists I had the privilege of holding talanoa with over Zoom. First, I will state the reasons for the questions I posed. Then, I will share some of the biographical aspects of my talanoaga with the artists.

### 4.1 Contextualising the Questions

It was culturally appropriate for me to start by asking who they (the musicians) are name and age were the most common answers. This was followed up with an extension of the first question; I asked where they come from, and who they “bring with them” into the talanoaga space. The artists then shared with me the villages to which their lineages extend, and their

childhood neighbourhoods. Their answers about who they were bringing with them into the context of the research ranged from identifying recent musical inspirations (drawn from experiences) to individuals whom the artists identified as their muse. Through these interviews, the method of talanoa is the vehicle that supported the embodiment of the cultural values—respect, reciprocity, and relationship—that allowed for these conversations to be had in a culturally appropriate manner. The reciprocity that helped to nurture the relationship meant that it was also culturally appropriate for the participants to understand who I am as well. The Samoan cultural framework in this process is evident in the handling of the relationships as well as the interview space itself, where faaSāmoa was practised through conversation: by conversing in Samoan, for example.

## **4.2 Meet the Artists**

The following artist biographies are organized chronologically, in the order in which I held the interviews. The discussion was headed by the three questions mentioned previously; “Who are you? Where do you come from? And who do you bring with you in this space?”. The perspectives for some of the artists are not just representative of themselves but extend to that of the music group of which they are a part.

### **4.2.1 Nanai (Punialava‘a)**

In this interview I spoke with Nanai, who is a member of Samoan music group, Punialava‘a. This group was once led by his parents (and friends) and has since been passed on to Nanai and his siblings to continue the group’s legacy. Being the eldest of his siblings, Nanai offered insight into their group’s creative process, but also emphasised some of his own understandings of the Samoan music scene, which is defined here as the popular music that the Samoan community listen to, heard via the Samoan radio based in New Zealand (Radio Sāmoa) and other streaming platforms (YouTube). To familiarise the potential reader with the attributes of the music group Punialava‘a, Nanai provided a rough timeline of the journey that their ensemble has undergone. In its early days from the late 1960’s to the early 70’s, Reverend Iosefa Lale Peteru (Nanai’s father) wrote and produced hits he played together with friends in a group based in their village of Vaialele. These hits were played by the only Samoan broadcasting radio station at the time that was based in Western Sāmoa. This radio station

(2AP) played an important role in the distribution of the band's music initially, as not only was it the only radio in Sāmoa during this time (mid 1900's), Nanai shares how the process to get their music on air was met with "gatekeepers" at the radio station, who would essentially allow or decline a song's airtime (on radio) (APN Holdings NZ, 2013). Since their debut from the Samoan village of Vaialele, Punialava'a has experienced changes to their group, including changing group members and changes to their location, through the decades. Currently, the group are still creating and putting out their music and are now located in South Auckland, New Zealand. The group is predominantly made up of the sibling combination including Nanai, his brother and his two sisters. Although Punialava'a have experienced changes to what their music sounds like, considering the changes the group has endured, the ensemble still strives to uphold the authenticity in their songs by having a repertoire that is mostly sung in Samoan, thus upholding more than just their reputation, but also their emphasis on incorporating the Samoan language. In upholding their legacy, the group was in fact honoured for their efforts when they received a Lifetime Achievement award, in 2018 (Pacific Waves, 2018) at the Pacific Music Awards (NZ). The award recognised the group's continuous work over five decades, which saw them writing hits that have also been covered by other artists.

In my talanoaga with Nanai, his initial response to answering the questions posed above led us down a journey on the importance of his names and how each held a specific value in his family, and consequently to himself. In extension of this talanoaga, he also shared the importance of the name Punialava'a; what and who it represented. Nanai explained that the group was named after their village malae, similar to (but not exactly the same as) Māori understandings of "marae"; the malae's main function is to hold meetings and gatherings in the village and/or for a family, therefore making it a space that embodies belonging for those that have ancestral ties to the malae. Thus, not only was Punialava'a the malae for their village in Sāmoa, but the band also Punialava'a became what Nanai recognises as the musical extension of this; their music became the context that people grounded their belonging as Samoans. To Nanai, this is an important founding aspect to the group, as it became reflective not only through the generations of the Punialava'a band but is featured in their music through their lyrical content and their song themes- including poetic illustrations about love, family, relationships (platonic and romantic). He highlights how connectivity is especially vital for Samoans living in diaspora, and further states that despite limitations, namely geographical distances, the amazing thing about being Samoan is that distance or percentage cannot change



that you are still Samoan- *“O le Sāmoa o le Sāmoa...it doesn't matter what percentage of Samoan you are, or where you are, you are still a Samoan”* (Nanai, 2021).

In this one comment, Nanai slightly touches on the issue of blood quantum within Pacific identity- the idea in which your “Pacific-ness” or “Samoan-ness” is measured by how much blood you have that belongs to a certain Pacific nation/that is Samoan (Berking, Fatialofa, Lupe, & Skippis-Patterson, 2007). The issue itself is propelled in western practices (i.e., for health care, education schemes) to make the categorising process easier; for instance, a Samoan student may only be eligible for a scholarship if they are 25% Samoan, with at least one of their grandparents being Samoan. The detrimental impact of this is experienced by the Pacific identities that it targets and is an issue that Pacific scholars argue as being an outdated means to understand identity (Berking, Fatialofa, Lupe, & Skippis-Patterson, 2007). In so many words, Nanai positions his opinion alongside Pacific scholars in stating that no numerical figure can measure how Samoan you might be. The discourse on blood quantum within Pacific identities is a complex conversation that continues outside the scope of this research context.

In acknowledging this talanoaga further, I share a transcription of my talanoaga with Nanai wherein we discussed who he brought with him in this (research/music) space:

*Maria (M): who do you bring with you in this space?*

*Nanai (N): Do you mean in the space of this discussion or...?*

*M: I guess, yea, in talking about Samoan music, and thinking about what Punialava 'a contributes to this space, who do you bring with you to this talanoaga?*

*N: Ok... I bring with me... my parents, obviously their music, their ideologies. My grandparents, their music, and ideologies- I've even incorporated some of my grandparents' ideas into some of our recent music, but people don't know that.*

Nanai goes on to share that the influence of both his paternal and maternal grandparents played significant roles in the shaping of his experiences with music. He shares that he and his siblings grew up surrounded by music in Sāmoa, through interactions with his family and his church. He was also surrounded by Samoan culture, in the form of faalavelave (family events and occasions), and recognises these occasions, that saw him being constantly surrounded by family, are also contributions to who he “brings with him in this space.”

An interesting addition to our talanoaga was when Nanai said that he brings with him, what he claims is the counterpart to Samoan music experience, western music genres such as Pop and Rock music, as well as African American music genres like Hip Hop, RnB, which are distributed through western industries, production, and distribution.

*N: Because of my surroundings, I was introduced very early to palagi music by my parents- like Frank Sinatra, The Beegees...my parents had old as records from these various groups, and I would listen to them. So yea, I also bring their music with me to this space. But as I was growing up and I was travelling [from Sāmoa] to New Zealand, I would take back with me my MTV recordings from New Zealand, and I would take my VHS recording back with me, and yea I had videos of artists like Michael Jackson, and Queen...my music was very eclectic from a young age.*

From this, Nanai recognises that, although there are heavy family orientated and Samoan influences on his opinions in this study, these are not exclusive influences in his case. This section has shed some understanding of the Samoan music group, Punialava‘a, through the lens of Nanai Viellani who shed light on how this family-based music group emulates their family-oriented values through their band and their music. He also shed light on the influences of both Samoan and non-Samoan influences by acknowledging the influences around them (him and his family band). All of which are highlighted as being key contributors not only to how Nanai understands his own identity but is also a reflection of the music that Punialava‘a produce and share with the Samoan community.

#### **4.2.2 David (LEAO)**

In this interview, I spoke with David who leads out the musical project “LEAO,” which is based in Auckland. David is of Samoan descent, although born in New Zealand; he acknowledges that a lot of his life experiences speak to him being a New Zealand-born Samoan, all of which is discussed in a later chapter. The music project LEAO came about through an interesting conversation between David and a friend, questioning the incorporation of traditional music aspects to the music they held personal preferences for (David goes on to state that these are recognised by mainstream as alternative music). This conversation has since led to the group’s distinct sound being heard on multiple streaming platforms. LEAO’s music is influenced by what David categorized as traditional Samoan pop music, including bands like Punialava‘a and the Five Stars as well as his preferences in different western music genres,

including 70's-80's British rock music and post punk music. All of these were informed by his experiences growing up, and what others around him listened to as well. They also share that their preferences for different music genres may be considered as alternative, in the sense that they are alternative to what "everyone else is listening to." Collating these ideas together, we are presented with the music from LEAO, that is not only inspired by the incorporation of the traditional Samoan pop music, but another key aspect of their music includes the use of Samoan language (as lyrics). They share that their music was the main, if not only way they were able to connect to faaSāmoa. The composing and creating of Samoan music became a comfortable space for David, that allowed them to enjoy the Samoan culture. They acknowledge that perhaps in comparison to others who were surrounded by faaSāmoa, for instance living with someone who spoke the Samoan language or being taught mannerisms and behaviours that reflected Samoan values like respect, their environment growing up was different. Thus, for David, the music became a medium to connect with a part of himself he felt he never got to experience.

In our talanoaga, David shared that prior to the LEAO project, Samoan music was tied to nostalgic memories from his childhood that allowed him to connect with loved ones. These aspects are valuable contributions to help one understand how David's music was reflective of these lived experiences. In response to the question posed about who he brought with him into the context of our conversation (to this study), David highlighted how the experiences mentioned above are significant contributions to the shaping of the LEAO project. He also shared that the project itself is named after his grandfather's matai title, Leao, and therefore pays homage to him through the symbolic name of his musical project. Building on this aspect of paying homage, David adds that this further connects the project to the ancestral link that, for one living as Samoan diaspora, is a significant connection to make and maintain.

The perspectives that inform the music that the LEAO project share, offer insights into understanding identities within the Samoan diaspora. According to David, this is especially true for generations of Samoans that were born in New Zealand, who compare their experiences with Samoan culture limited to a New Zealand-born Samoan who, for example, "*goes to church every Sunday with their family and sings in the church choir...or who learnt how to speak Samoan fluently*" (David). The music becomes a creative space that allows for cultural and musical discovery, emulating experiences that help inform their Samoan identity.

Drawing back to the question asked about who was in this (research) space with him (David), an interesting response connects the points above-

*David (D): I associated music with spaces and experiences in those spaces, rather than with specific people.*

Elaborating on this point, David shares that although there are some inspirations to LEAO's music that can be accredited to individuals (i.e., his grandfather), it's the spaces and experiences that he felt had more significant contribution to his understanding of music. David adds that it is through these spaces and experiences that he was able to build some understanding for Samoan cultural values such as respect (Samoan word- faaaloalo) and va feiloai (translates to relational ties and is likened to the concept of Va Tapuia). Through these experiences, David uses a Samoan proverb to support how his experiences are valuable in building his understanding of aganuu faaSāmoa. The proverb reads: "E sui faiga, ae tumau faavae," which embodies the idea that practices may change but the foundations remain. For David, this became a central marker for the LEAO project: the spaces and experiences with music allowed him to build a foundation as to what faaSāmoa entails, while being able to incorporate his personal experiences as a New Zealand-born Samoan through it as well.

D: [The music] is modern but it also pays homage to traditional aspects of Samoan music.

In elaborating this quote, David ties it back to the Samoan proverb mentioned above, where although their music may hold slight differences that are reflective of the more alternative genres (inspired through his own personal preferences and life experiences), there are aspects to the music that allow them to uphold the foundations to Samoan music. A key component of upholding the foundations to Samoan music, is the use and incorporation of Samoan language within music.

This section provided an insight into some of the understandings that inform LEAO project and reflect David's cultural identity and experiences, which in turn inform the way that LEAO's music is created. David distinguishes differences in experiencing Samoan culture to others around him whom he identifies as having "more" of a Samoan upbringing / experience. This point acknowledges the relevant differences that are present within experiencing Samoan culture, according to David's personal experience and knowledge. He states that use of the Samoan language is a vital contribution to Samoan music, highlighting how his encounter with

the language is rooted in his listening to Samoan music, with Samoan lyrics. This phenomenon is present in the way LEAO's music is created and produced.

#### 4.2.3 Sara-Jane

This section will detail some of the talanoa that I held with artist Sara-Jane, who is more commonly recognised for her work with the Samoan pop-music band "Pacific Soul," along with her individual contributions (as a solo artist) to the Pacific music scene in New Zealand. Sara-Jane is of Samoan and European descent and identifies that her experiences as both an afakasi (refer to Televave, 2006, and Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2014 for more on this) as well as a New Zealand-born Samoan, played vital roles in her own journey in understanding who she is. When posed the question "who are you," Sara-Jane responded with the following statement.

*Sara-Jane: I come from a long line of sea-fearing navigators, from both sides- my dad moved from Sāmoa to New Zealand during the 70s, while Mum's family came to New Zealand in the late 1800s from Gloucestershire [in England], and they settled in Masterton, later moving to Remuera in Auckland.*

In elaborating on this quote, Sara-Jane adds that her involvement with the Pacific music scene in the past in New Zealand helped to inform her understanding of faaSāmoa, namely in encouraging her use of the Samoan language. A crucial contribution made by the Pacific Soul (circa 2000s), was their covering and reversions of what Sara-Jane identifies as "Samoan music classics." Specifically, this occurred in taking the songs by The Five Stars who are known amongst the Samoan community as Fetu Lima and are a family-based group made up of siblings and cousins. In an interview the lead vocalist Alofa Stevenson recalls their migration as a family to Auckland, New Zealand in 1974 and the forming of the band from their garage that was initially handled by their father (The Five Stars Band, 1990). Remaking the Five Stars music was to cater to younger generations that were growing up away from Sāmoa, in the diaspora, according to recounts by Sara-Jane. She explains that this was an important process for herself as well, as the music she was involved in putting out for the generations of Samoans (NZ-born and living in diaspora) included her as well. The music was intended to cater for the new Pacific population growing up in New Zealand; this influenced the way the was performed and collaborated with and saw to the inclusion of the English language to encourage further engagement with the music. It is fair to assume that this intention was met, as the group were awarded "Best Pacific Album" at the New Zealand Music awards in 2003, and further awards

in other Pacific nations as well (Best Polynesian Album at the Hawaiian music awards 2003) (Televave, 2006).

Within the scope of this research, Sara-Jane shares that she brings with her all these collective experiences as well as what can be recognised as the outcome of their music. She notes that around the time that the songs by Pacific Soul (and her own singles) were being released, there was a lot of judgement around New Zealand-born Samoans not being able to speak Samoan; this judgement generally claimed that those who were not fluent in the Samoan language were not Samoan enough. She shares that this was reflected not just in plain statements made towards them, but that there was negative treatment associated with the judgement; almost as if you were being looked down upon. So, the music then became a tool to get over this stigma, and it encouraged generations of New Zealand-born Samoans to learn the language, through their interactions with the music.

*SJ: Around the time [our] songs came out there was a lot of judgement around NZ-born Samoans, by Samoans. So, the music became a tool to get over that stigma by encouraging Samoans to learn the [Samoan] language.*

Sara-Jane notes that nowadays this negative stigma has changed and there seems to be less judgement around New Zealand-born Samoans not being able to speak Samoan. In our talanoaga, it becomes clear that the popularity and engagement with songs like those Pacific Soul put out could have had an impact on this changed stigma. Sara-Jane also noted that it's not the judgement that has changed, but more that it seems more common that the generations of New Zealand-born Samoans are learning the Samoan language. To date, Sara-Jane is still interacting with Pacific music in New Zealand, with a slight shift towards Pacific gospel music which she notes is another aspect to the Pacific (and not just Samoan) diasporic community.

This section provided insight into understanding who Sara-Jane is as a Samoan and highlighted the ways that her music contributed to her own Samoan identity. Sara-Jane also identified the weaknesses within the Samoan community that were held over the New Zealand-born Samoans, namely the negative stigma that criticised these Samoans of not being "Samoan enough". In combating these negative narratives, Sara-Jane emphasised how music such as those produced and distributed by Pacific Soul were intentional in the way that they encouraged cultural interaction and cultural learning through the music.

#### 4.2.4 Lisi

This section will consider the talanoaga held between myself and Lisi, a hip hop artist (rapper) of Samoan descent currently living and producing music in Australia. Lisi shares that his story starts in New Zealand, where he was born and lived for the first four years of his life, after which his family migrated to Sydney, Australia. He goes on to share that as a teen, his family moved to Brisbane, where he is located currently. In answering the question “who are you?”, Lisi details how these movements experienced with his family played a crucial role in the way he would come to identify, as well as the eventual role of his music. He shared that family is not only an important part of who he is, but also a shared aspect for other Samoan families. The value of family was further extended, in that he found himself “making [his] own family here [in Australia]”; as most of his extended family were either in New Zealand or Sāmoa, Lisi said that making his own family was necessary and ultimately made sense, due to physical geographical distances that amounted to more time away from his extended family than there was together. His family would therefore consist not only of his nuclear family, but also includes close friends who are considered and treated as relatives. With music, this would look and sound like having music that was dedicated to his parents or having friends around him that he grew to consider as family through their close relationship. Lisi claims that a lot of the same influences that were informing his understanding of what it means to be Samoan, particularly Samoan living in Australia, would eventualise through his music; he adds that he is grateful for the cultural upbringing he had, that he has been able to incorporate into his music. He also shares that he is fond of where he lives (Goodna) and “reps it hard” through his music. The inclusion of Samoan aspects Lisi identifies as ranging from the lyrical composition (having lyrics that were in Samoan), to having family values included, that he recognises as being a by-product of the underlying cultural value of respect (faaaloalo).

In thinking about other influences on Lisi’s music, he names a wide range of hip hop artists that he credits his creative process to, including names such as Biggie, N.W.A., Tupac, Nas, and some “new school” artists such as Kendrick Lamar and J. Cole. Lisi specifies that, collectively, there is a common theme of pride these artists share in their music that he intends to emulate through his music as well.

*Lisi(L): Listening to all of them, you know, you hear the pride in the way that they talk about their everyday lives...I wanted to be one of those artists, but for young polys.*

Further into this part of our talanoaga, he adds:

*L: You know I'm just an everyday Joe that's got something to say, that any ordinary everyday Joe can listen to.*

In our talanoaga, Lisi goes on to elaborate on the everyday situations and people he intended his music to be about and adds that this was just stuff that was normal, these “everyday situations” referring specifically to situations that saw his mates getting involved with trouble, “just typical street stuff”. From this point, perhaps it was assumed by Lisi that I understood what “typical street stuff” meant, and perhaps at this point I shared in this thinking, there was no further questioning of what was meant here by this phrase. To my understanding, the “typical street stuff” is likely referring to working class communities and the experiences to beat the daily struggle to make ends meet.

Despite making a clear reservation very early in our talanoaga that his music is not Samoan music, rather he prefers to categorise his music as poly-rap” (poly short for Polynesian)—and it is rather that he is a Samoan contributing his music to the mainstream audience, Lisi notes that he came to appreciate Samoan music on his own.

*L: I created my own love for Samoan music in my early teens. I started off listening to new school artists, like U-Ali and that, and I didn't find out they were originally sung by other people till later*

*M: When you mention that it was something you created for yourself, can you just elaborate what you mean by that? Like, how did you come to appreciate this music on your own? Was it a random YouTube find or something?*

*L: Na like, it all came from my other Samoan friends, they would listen to it a lot and it just kinda rubbed off on me. It wasn't really from my parents, they were definitely R'n'B kids growing up. It was almost like they didn't like it [Samoan music], which was probably because they grew up listening to it, but it's not something they would've played themselves.*

This is an interesting aspect to consider in the scope of this research, as it gives note to some of the unspoken influences on music taste, like being influenced by your Samoan friends to listen to certain music. This comment sheds light on some of the non-typical ways that



influence the way that music is heard, and consequently how it is understood. Drawing from my own experiences, the Samoan music I heard and listened to was influenced by my family members, as it was what I heard them listening to. Lisi specifically mentions that his parents were “R’n’B kids growing up,” which meant Lisi was to experience the Samoan music in other spaces outside of his family environment (or this can be considered still within his family, as Lisi mentioned earlier that his friends were part of his family).

In understanding who Lisi is, this section has offered some insight into the way the artist considers his own identity, and how his music is representative of this. In this section, Lisi challenges the general definition that Samoan music is any type of music that is specifically made by a Samoan. Instead Lisi states that his music should not be considered Samoan music as his music does not embody characteristics of Samoan music, including the Samoan language. He also shed light on how differing the experiences with Samoan music can be, as he mentioned that he gained his appreciation for Samoan music through his friends rather than generic music platforms-i.e., listening to Samoan radio, or Samoan music at home.

#### **4.2.5 Lani Alo**

This section will shed light on artist Lani Alo, informed through the talanoaga we had where he answered who he is, where he comes from, and who he represents in this space. Lesa Leititilani Alo of Samoan descent is the youngest of three siblings and was born in New Zealand. Very early during our talanoaga, I came to know of his matai title, from which I reverted to refer to the artist using his matai title. This was practiced as a sign of respect towards his chiefly status.

In sharing more about who he is, Lesa mentions how much of the technology he was exposed to growing up played a significant role in the way he heard music: as he later elaborated, this would later impact his appreciation of music as well. He shares that growing up, he most frequently heard Samoan music through Radio Sāmoa (based in Auckland) and even included that he would participate in the contests hosted by the radio station. Lesa credits a lot of his early understanding of Samoan music to Radio Sāmoa based in New Zealand (1593AM, as mentioned earlier) as it was the mainstream platform that exposed him to the Samoan music scene. Other early influences included the roles that his older siblings played in his life, as Lesa tended to mirror their musical preferences growing up and found that he enjoyed listening to the old-school gospel music and old-school hip-hop music to which his

siblings exposed him. Alongside these music preferences, he shares that in reflection he considers his personal preferences for other genres as “phases” throughout his life: these included listening to bands like Zed, Simple Plan, and even Bruce Springsteen (who he mentioned was a current favourite during our talanoaga). Having grown up being heavily involved in his Samoan church, Lesa shared how his appreciation of church choral music stemmed from his personal involvement in his church. In our talanoaga, he also shared with me that he holds the role of choir director, and that he always tries to incorporate choral music in the music he releases. In 2020, Lesa’s musical efforts were recognised by the music industry in New Zealand when he was awarded with the Best Pacific Gospel Artist, alongside the award for the Best Pacific Song for his single “*Alo i ou faiva*” (featuring Livingstone Efu) at the Pacific Music awards (Sunday Morning, 2020).

In considering the question posed about who he represents in this space (of this research), Lesa reaffirms the mentioned musical influences as being with him in this space, but also adds how all the experiences he had had, prior to creating his music, are intrinsically part of his art.

*Lesa: When I think about who I bring with me in this space, obviously I bring with me my family, but I also carry with me the experiences that shape my art. Like, how my rock and pop music phase[s] still play a big role, unconsciously, in my music- I bring those with me too.*

The quote above highlights not only how life experiences feature in his music, but as was mentioned by some artists earlier, Lesa recognises how influences that are external to the culture itself are present in his music. This being the impact that his “Rock and Pop music phase” has on his music. Although the western music genres may not be the focal point for his music, Lesa points out the influences are still there and are relevant to his experiences as a New Zealand-born Samoan. Drawing back to the influence of Radio Sāmoa (in NZ) on his music, Lesa recalls a memory that impacted the way he learnt to understand Samoan music from a young age:

*L: If you were to ask me for the one sound bite that would’ve influenced Samoan music for me, growing up, it would be Punialava’a riff to their song that Tavai (radio presenter from Radio Sāmoa, 1593AM would play every morning.*

After the point, both Lesa and I go on to mimic the sound of this riff as we find that we both shared in this experience of hearing the same song from Radio Sāmoa in the morning. Thinking holistically about this part of our talanoaga and considering that I spoke to a member of Punalava‘a whom the sound bite belongs to, it’s interesting to observe how older generations of Samoan music continues to have an impact on new Samoan music artists today.

This section has outlined some of the talanoaga held with artist Lani Alo, who offered some insight into the way he understands how he relates to his music and how his music reflects his experiences. The valuing of family is present in Lesa’s experiences as an artist and as a New Zealand-born Samoan, as he speaks on the emphasis that his family has on his music (preferences), therefore reflected in his own music.

### **4.3 Themes from Talanoaga**

The interviews offered a range of both shared phenomena as well as specific journeys. The talanoaga held spaces for the artists to start to share their definitions and their understanding for Samoan music. For instance, a statement that surfaced in more than one of these talanoaga was the importance and the value of performing and maintaining the Samoan language, being able to speak and understand it, and the role the language plays in Samoan pop music. The next section will this idea of what makes their music “Samoan” in depth and include their definitions as to what Samoan music is. Further shared Samoan values that were highlighted were the importance of family and the influence family had on the types of music they listened to, showing how family has influenced the ways they heard music. Both language and family will be discussed further in the chapter to follow.

### **4.4 Conclusion**

The artists interviewed answered questions about who they are, where they were from, who they bring with them, as well as understanding their music childhoods and influences. The artists shared their unique stories, with some, like Nanai, David and Sara-Jane, also speaking for their music groups. These introductory summaries and questions were a key part of learning about how Samoan music is crafted, negotiated, and distributed, and how they all see their music as a means of encouraging Samoan cultural endurance and celebration.

## Faamaumauga 3

### E faaauau le malaga- the Journey continues

Sāmoa e, maopo'opo mai  
 Ia e pei o le toloa  
 pe lele i fea,  
 ai ma'au lava i le vai

This is an excerpt from the chorus of a song by Vaniah Toloa (Vaniah Toloa, 2012). At the core of this song is the muagagana “*ia e pei o le toloa /pe lele i fea, ae ma'au lava ile vai*”, which roughly translates to “be like the duck who, no matter where it goes, always returns to the water” The song is an ode to the diasporic Samoan communities, who are being encouraged through the song lyrics to hold onto who you are as a Samoan, no matter where you are. The ‘returning to the water’ I interpret not only as a diasporic return to the literal island of Sāmoa, but in Moana cosmopolitan realities this can also mean returning to one’s cultural identity (roots) in and amongst western popular culture. For me, this looks like visiting and looking after my grandma. Or remembering to grab my ie lavalava before going to family events. It also looks like teaching my nephews and nieces growing up in urban Auckland, how to correctly refer to something in Samoan. It’s also speaking to the elders of my church in Samoan and with respect.

A different version of the same song features of Samoan music artists, Rasman and Ice cream Man. This version includes some English translations to the song, a section of the bridge reads:

“Even though you’re far away, they will know who you are, by the way that we live day by day”.

As the journey of Samoan music continues through generations, I hold onto this encouragement with the hopes that the future generations of young Samoan living in Moana cosmopolitan realities will continue to find their “water” to return to in their Samoan identity.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

This chapter will discuss further findings from the talanoaga held with the different artists, regarding their thoughts on Samoan music. The first section on measuring Samoan-ness, highlights ideas on what it means to be Samoan as was commonly shared by the artists, particularly using the word faaSāmoa in the context of this study. In considering these, it is important to mention that as each interview was held individually, the opinions and perspectives offered to me by the artists in the spaces of our talanoa, were not prompted by others' responses as there was no interaction between the artists themselves during the time of the study.

### 5.1 Markers of FaaSāmoa

What makes something Samoan? What does it mean to be Samoan living in diaspora, or as a Moana Cosmopolitan. The artists interviewed considered the role of the Samoan language and the value it holds for the people it speaks to (i.e. Samoans), according to the findings through the talanoaga and references to academic literature (Anae, 1997; Televave, 2006). The Samoan language was identified by the artists as an important marker in “measuring” one’s understanding of faaSāmoa. Other markers of faaSāmoa mentioned by the artists were the importance and the role of family systems, as well as the role and value of the church (not denomination-specific). Although their experiences were not identical, family and church play were important in their daily lives and were considered elements of faaSāmoa.

#### 5.1.1 Language

*A leai se gagana, ona leai lea o sa ta aganuaa. A leai la ta aganu'u / agaifanua, ona po lea o le nuu.*

- Professor Dr Aiono Fanaafi (Akeripa, 2017)

The Samoan proverb (muagagana) above can be translated into English as: “if there is no language, then there is no culture; if there is no culture then all the village will be in darkness.” In relating this to the role of Samoan language, or gagana Sāmoa, the muagagana implies that the “survival” of Samoan culture (faaSāmoa) lies in the existence of the most recent version of the Samoan language (gagana Sāmoa). The scope of this research fails to pass comment or mention any earlier versions of the Samoan language, due to restrictions of time

and space in this research context. I start with considering the role of gagana Sāmoa in faaSāmoa, the significance of the language for a diasporic community, arguably becomes even more urgent, and music itself is an important part of language maintenance (citation).

In considering the role of gagana Sāmoa in faaSāmoa, the method of talanoa allows for cultural sensitivity valuing the spaces these conversations, or talanoaga, are held in. Part of this cultural sensitivity allowed for both myself and the individual participants to refer to each other in ways which we understood to be respectful, according to our shared cultural and ethical etiquette as Samoans. For instance, the encounter shared earlier between myself and Lesa, wherein I would address him using his matai title once I learned that he held one. This example may not have been exactly the same experience with the other artists, but other cultural markers replicated a similar respect that gagana Sāmoa holds. With the artists that were not so fluent in speaking Samoan (but held some understanding), I would still incorporate the use of gagana Sāmoa in our talanoaga in the opening and closing statements. The talanoaga themselves consisted of both the Samoan and English languages, switching between the two languages with those that understood both, or more sporadically with gagana Sāmoa for the artists who weren't as fluent. The use and incorporation of gagana Sāmoa allowed us to practice Samoan cultural values, as it allowed for us to embody respect into our talanoaga. An important aspect of gagana Sāmoa is that it is the first practical cultural embodiment that others (non-Samoans) see or hear when they come across other Samoans. However, in the zoom talanoaga I held with the different participants, there were sections, if not entire conversations, that were carried out in the Samoan language. This same example speaks to the role of gagana Sāmoa as being a tool to 'enhance solidarity' (Televave, 2006) in our conversations and within our cultural community. In building on this idea, I offer this instance when one of the artists realised my fluency in gagana Sāmoa.

*N: If you don't mind, I'll switch to say something in Samoan. Is that ok?*

*M: Of course, go ahead*

*N: E lelei sou faaSāmoa? [Can you speak the Samoan language well?]*

*M: Yea I think so...na yea of course. Faaauau le ta faasoa [Let's carry on the conversation]*

*N: Ok good... [he then proceeds to share his opinion on a matter, using gagana Sāmoa]*

From this point forward, the talanoaga between myself and this artist switched from English to Samoan language quite often. The enhanced solidarity was evident in Nanai's new-found confidence to share his perspectives with me in Samoan. On my part, I would be lying if I said I didn't hold pride in being able to understand the complex conversation we were having. If you notice in the excerpt included above, the same term I have been using to refer to Samoan culture is also used as a word reference to ask if I can understand the Samoan language (faaSāmoa): the same term that refers to something being Samoan is also the suggestive term commonly used to refer to being able to say something in the Samoan language and also one's competence in Samoan reciprocal and relational ethics and etiquette. This example further highlights how the gagana Sāmoa, is intrinsically tied to and necessary in the embodiment of Samoan values (respect) and in enhancing solidarity or cultural pride. The same word has multiple relative meanings and associations that are best understood in a Samoan context (in this example, the Samoan context is the conversation being had between Nanai and I).

Gagana Sāmoa has been discussed in the ways that it embodies cultural values, enhances cultural pride and solidarity, but an underlying role it plays is that it is a marker of identity. There is another Samoan saying that reads, "*e iloa le Sāmoa i lona tu, savali ma lana tautala*". When translated to English the saying reads, "You can tell a Samoan by the way they stand, walk, and talk". The part of this saying that is to be emphasised here is the mention of the way that one talks. Thinking specifically about how talking as a Samoan is embodied in my interactions with the artists, I draw from the example mentioned earlier when honorific language was intentionally used to refer to Nanai and Lesa who both hold matai titles. Another way that speaking like a Samoan is distinguished, is evident in the lyrical makeup in Musika Sāmoa. Scholars on Pacific music (including Solomona 2009, Moyle 1988, and Love 1991), collectively mention the frequent use of metaphorical allusions in songs, the context of which would depend on a song's theme (i.e., a love song). Solomona states that "the most important aspect of Samoan songs whether it is traditional or contemporary is the use of metaphors, and good use of such language by a Samoan composer is impressive to Samoan observers" (Solomona, 2009). Solomona goes on to discuss this aspect through lyrical analysis of specific Samoan songs. Unfortunately, the limitation of this study restricts the same luxury in this

context.

Other features to the Samoan saying above identify that a Samoan is also recognised through the way they hold themselves- how they stand and walk. In articulating this further, Starks et.al affirm that although language is an integral aspect within Pacific identities, it should be considered in relation to other cultural dimensions rather than on its own, namely physical attributes, customs, and cultural items, to avoid missing “overall views of the community” (Starks, Taumoeofolau, Bell, & Davis, 2005).

In this instance, gagana Sāmoa is not only embodying Samoan values, but it is implied as being a quality through which Samoans can identify other Samoans. It is also a marker of identity that is helpful in diasporic communities living outside of Sāmoa, who have been lumped together under labels such as Pacific Islanders (including Tongans, Niuean’s, Cook Islanders, etc.) (Anae, 1997). For other Samoans in this context, being able to recognise the Samoan language continues the enhanced solidarity within the community (Akeripa, 2017; Televave, 2006).

According to the 2018 census, gagana Sāmoa is the third most spoken language in New Zealand, following English and Te Reo Māori (Stats NZ, 2018). In the context of other populations in New Zealand, this is a significant indicator of how widely spoken gagana Sāmoa is, which in turn can signify the continuity of gagana Sāmoa in the New Zealand Samoan diaspora. Despite these significant proportions, an interesting contribution by one of the artists I interviewed spoke to the detrimental effects of being unable to have any knowledge of gagana Sāmoa: in the following excerpt, they recollect their experiences with Sāmoa music and how it became their main source for learning the language.

*SJ: ...around the time our songs came out, you know, there was a lot of judgment around NZ-born Samoans not being able to speak Samoan.*

*M: Right, so this would’ve had some sort of effect on you learning the language and singing at the same time, right?*

*SJ: Yea, the music became a tool to help us get over that stigma, and it kinda encouraged us to learn the language through the music. So, it worked out for us in the long run.*



In this experience, artist Sara-Jane highlights that there was a stigma held by the Samoan community- that not being able to speak Samoan was disgraceful towards one's culture, or at least somewhat equivalent to disgrace (also mentioned in Enari & Taula, 2022). This begs the question: What is the significance of one knowing how to speak and understand Samoan? The answer lies in the role that gagana Sāmoa plays in being a marker of your Samoan-ness (faaSāmoa), as the embodiment of Samoan cultural values, and in the way that it encourages solidarity. Being able to hold onto these truths, whilst living in diaspora, is vital in understanding one's cultural and ethnic identity. Another implication that is highlighted here in having a high number of non-Samoan speaking Samoans living in the diaspora is that the language's survival was once (possibly, still is) threatened: through movements and migrations, and through the generations of Samoans continuing to be born in other countries, the Samoan language did experience some decline in the past (Anae, 1998; Televave, 2006). This was largely associated with similar experiences to that of Sara-Jane's that revolved around stigmas that were held almost in vice versa to Sara-Jane's experience: where it was looked down on to speak Samoan, and the English language was encouraged, and in some cases, enforced (Anae, 1998; Fairburn, 1961). In circling back to understanding the role and significance of gagana Sāmoa, there are countless writings that talk on the value of indigenous language, cultural survival, and maintenance in diaspora, that can support the claims made here (Mackley-Crump, 2015; Starks, Taumoeofolau, Bell, & Davis, 2005).

An important point to emphasise from Sara-Jane's quote above is how she explains further that the "music became a tool [...] to learn the language through the music" (Sara-Jane, 2021). To clarify, Sara-Jane, along with the different music groups she belonged to, had music that was sung predominantly in gagana Sāmoa; as most songs were covers of old classics by the Samoan music band The Five Stars, Sara-Jane recognises that her experience with the Samoan music had great impacts on her understanding and grasping of the Samoan language.

Further building on Sara-Jane's notion of allowing the music to be a tool to learn and practice gagana Sāmoa, the perspectives of other artists help articulate the relationship between Samoan music, and gagana Sāmoa. David (2021) shares how they consider the role of gagana Sāmoa particularly in informing how other artists, who can speak Samoan fluently, compose their lyrics in Samoan.

*D: I think language is a location for people to recognise a meaning...like when you hear something in the Samoan language, you can recognise it immediately...when you*

*hear the Samoan language, you can recognise immediately that 'hey this things Samoan'- but I guess within that Samoan context of language and the performance of the language, it's informed by the way composers can write fluently...which I'm pretty envious of.*

Unpacking this quote, David emphasises the vital role that music plays in being a location to recognise meaning, whether in reference to meaning of one's life or just recognising that it is Samoan is not specified. In a different talanoaga, Nanai shares their take on understanding the maintenance of gagana Sāmoa through the music.

*N: Language should still be a huge part of music... isn't that the whole point of creating [Samoan] music? Isn't that what it's about?*

In this example, Nanai was being asked what role language plays in the crafting of Samoan music and this was his response. It almost sounds as if it's a no-brainer: the relationship between Samoan music and Samoan language is emphasised here as holding an explicit, intrinsic relationship. What is assumed in this statement, however, is that "everyone" shares the opinion that the language is a huge part of the music. Despite this, what Nanai also magnifies is the implicit understanding we share (him and I), as we both also share in understanding faaSāmoa to a similar extent. In elaborating his points, Nanai shares how the significant role of language in music is applicable to other Pacific peoples living in diaspora. In this experience, he shares how a situation with the Pacific Music Awards saw their music group's nomination for a Pacific music award: for Nanai, what was striking about this category is that the other nominees for the same award, had not written or performed their songs in anything but in English.

*N: How does it make you feel [referring to the situation outlined above]? One of the participants sang all their songs in English, the only thing Pacific about them was their name, with all due respect.*

Arguably there are a few ideas to pull from this point. Firstly, it is implied here that indigenous language must be present to allow it to belong to a Pacific group (i.e., gagana Samoa included in Samoan songs). Secondly, the authenticity of a Pacific music group is presented as being based on how they embody their Pacific island's language in something as mundane as their stage name, and that these ideas are always correct (through time, and in any space) and that

these practices are possible for everyone. Lastly, and perhaps best left for another space to digest, Nanai is also pointing out the flaw(s) involved with the deciding process for the awards ceremony- how is the authenticity of Pacific culture (if any) being measured to ensure an artist or a song fit into the category given? What is the measure of Pacific-ness, in wider cultural contexts such as Pacific Music awards? This specific debacle may have more relevance to divulge deeper into, alongside the discussion of western music categorisation (genres) in Samoan (Pacific) music.

These are all important aspects in considering the relationships between the music, and the language. In the context of our conversation, this statement by Nanai moulds well with our other topics as he goes on to add that something seemingly so minor as language is anything but minor.

*N: Speaking for our family, because we've had these conversations and some have said 'well, they're from the Pacific, that's what makes their music Pacific'. But I believe it's more subjective. Because with only the names and all that [that are in Pacific language], it's easier for it to get lost among the other music...but you know if the song is in the Tongan, or Fijian or Samoan language, you can listen with your eyes closed without any information and know that its Tongan or Samoan.*

This recount drawn from personal experiences that have informed their opinions, each of these artists suggested ways that the vital roles played by music and gagana Sāmoa go hand in hand. These excerpts have highlighted how there is what can be considered a reciprocal relationship between the music and language, wherein the music is created with Samoan lyrics, and thus supports the use of the Samoan language. But also, where the lyrics are in Samoan, this becomes a subjective identifier that helps differentiate Samoan music from other music. There were other aspects of faaSāmoa that were touched on by the artists that are also worth mentioning, in support of piecing together the different elements that make up something or someone's Samoan-ness, which I will now elaborate on in the following subsections.

### **5.1.2 Church & Family**

Another aspect of faaSāmoa the artists mentioned in our talanoaga relates to that of the Church and their family. These systems (church and family) have underlying values that are important in “being Samoan.” This section will show how these values were shared during the talanoaga:

These values include respect, reciprocity, and relationship. In the home (family) and the church tended to be the first points of reference for learning faaSāmoa (according to the artists).

In my talanoaga with the different artists, discussions that had anything to do with church tended to be based on the influence of Church music on their music, with some who had music that was also influenced by their Christian values (reflected in what they sang about). In one of these talanoaga, David shared how church music influences how he envisions his music to sound.

*D: I think musicality's in Samoan music- sure we've incorporated and integrated the western 12-note harmony into our music. But I feel like there's something really distinctively "Samoan" about Samoan choir singing, and I think that's something that's really unique and it's something I try to have in my music. Like there's a third verse in 'Siva Masina' [a song in the album] ...I was just messing around with harmonies, but when I heard it back after the recording the first thing that came to mind was church, which was a nice feeling. I try and write something that would sound good in a choral music piece... Before I started doing the whole live performance thing, I didn't want to sing the songs I wanted a choir to sing the songs. But you know that's really expensive*

Elaborating on this thought, David notes that for him there is a distinction between church music and Christianity:

*D: I guess, in terms of Christianity, I feel like it's the music .... nestled within that are the Christian values. But the music itself is its own vessel that anything could be in. And so, with that sorta choir singing, that's reminiscent of Samoan choir singing, I put my own meaning to that.*

Much like David's expression to mirror the Samoan choral singing in their music, Lani Alo shares how one of their favourite Gospel artists inspired him to include similar choral singing in his music.

*L: I listened to a lot of Kirk Franklin growing up and I always loved the way the choir sounded. And maybe I haven't achieved it yet, sonically, but I try to incorporate a similar sound to my music- which also fuels my role as choir director as well...but yea, I'm always trying to find a way to include choral music in my own compositions and I*

*know a lot of that is influenced by listening to people like Kirk Franklin and being in the church choir.*

These excerpts shed light on the ways that church music informs some of the features that artists incorporate into their Samoan music.

Another important of faaSāmoa that the artists identified as holding a significant role in their music, is that of the family: the value of the family dynamic, understanding their respective roles in their families, and the way their own family experiences infiltrated into their music. For Nanai, he shares the influence of certain family members, particularly in the way they informed his understanding of music and performance. Some of these family members included his grandparents who are mentioned in an earlier to have an impact on their musical ideas (Nanai, 2021). Other influences from their family included his parents, who hold the role of approving (and disapproving) the new music Nanai and his siblings produce. Nanai labels their roles as gatekeepers of the music and explains that a lot of their current success is to the credit of the gatekeepers: they offer the constructive criticism Nanai identifies as being what other Samoan music artists need in the crafting of their music, which will be elaborated in a later section. Lisi also mentions how his family influences his music. With specific reference to his little cousin, Lisi shares how he recognises how much his music is now influencing his little cousins, and because of this, he strives to remain a good influence for them. Another aspect of family that Lisi mentions highlights one of the many impacts of living in diaspora: he shares that they “make their own family here [in Australia]” (Lisi, 2021), as most of his extended family live in New Zealand and not in Australia. What is significant about this is the way Lisi is proud of the family they “made” in Australia and reflects this in his music: he demonstrates pride for the areas around him, for instance.

The sections above outlined the markers of faaSāmoa that the artists identified, specifically the ways in which Samoan language (gagana Sāmoa), and the roles of the Church and Family, hold significant positions in informing the way faaSāmoa is understood. In building on this idea, the next section will explore the ways these same markers of identity are prevalent through the crafting, negotiation, and distribution of the Samoan music, or Musika Sāmoa.

## 5.2 Musika Sāmoa—What Is It?

This section shows how the artists’ music is crafted, negotiated, and distributed, via as a part of creating contemporary Musika Sāmoa and how artists manage and incorporate technological advances (like social media) to create a community music across the distances of diaspora. I posed to the artists to share plausible “criteria,” or a checklist that they would suggest to someone who wanted to make Samoan music. I show how the music is distributed, particularly considering social media. The naming of this section under “Musika Sāmoa” is an acknowledgement of the opinions of the artists that give authenticity to this thesis. Referring to the music using western terms such as modern, urban, and contemporary, were not practiced by the artists in any of the interviews that were conducted. This section works to refine the blurred lines around defining what “Samoan” music is.

### 5.2.1 Crafting

This section collates all the perspectives of the five artists I spoke to and presents their thoughts collaboratively to create the “Samoan music checklist.” One of the questions I posed to the artists during our talanoaga asked them to identify what Samoan music is to them. From this, they would share how their music differs from the definition they would have just provided for me, or instead how it is similar to that definition. In considering the main similarities, I will outline in the form of a checklist what the artists’ most common ideas were, in defining what makes Samoan music what it is.

#### *Musika Sāmoa: A Checklist*

- *Samoan language/Gagana Sāmoa*
  - *Does it incorporate the Samoan language into the lyrics?*
    - *Yes- it’s Samoan. Worry about the finer details later*
    - *No- is the artist Samoan? It could still possibly be a ‘Samoan’ song (however, now it depends on other things like instrumentation etc)*
- *Good tune*
  - *(Subjective to different people’s taste)*
  - *Is it influenced by another popular western genre?*
    - *Yes- that’s what we want*
    - *No- that could still work*

- *Catchy melody, easy to sing along to?*
  - *Yes- perfect!*
  - *No- that's fine, it might come under the 'harder' Samoan songs though.*
- *Theme of the music (The theme of the song determines what kind of Samoan song it is- i.e., is there heartbreak? Is it retelling a historic tale?)*
  - *Does it tell a story? Is the story portrayed poetically?*
    - *Yes and yes- well done, Musika Sāmoa indeed*
    - *Yes and no- on the right track*
    - *No and no- as long as it targets the right audience, I guess*
  - *Is it a relatable story?*
    - *Yes- easier to sing along to. Nice!*
    - *No- the good lyrics and good tune might will probably make up for it*
  - *If it's not a story, is it a song that can be used at family occasions?*
    - *Yes- definite pass. We love practicality*
    - *No- different audience, it's fine*
- *'Traditional' musical aspects (specific to the time)*
  - *Does it incorporate the Samoan igi?*
    - *Yes- instantly yes*
    - *No- soft yes*
  - *Does it have musical elements also reflected in popular western music genres? (i.e., keyboard, drums etc)*
    - *Yes- on the right track to creating that Musika Sāmoa hit*
    - *No- that's fine. It's still a good song, I'm sure*

There are other aspects of Samoan music that were also discussed in my talanoaga with them, specifically to do with crafting or in creating the music. In an excerpt of some talanoa with Nanai, he mentions an interesting English phrase to do with another music genre and makes the comparative connection towards Samoan music.

*N: You know how with country music, there's a saying, "to write a country song all you need is 4 chords and a bottle of whiskey" ... I think our "4 chords and a bottle of whiskey" would be, to have alofa- and to use this in our music.*

*M: Can you elaborate a bit more on this?*

*N: We can write about love in different ways; not just in a romantic way, but you can also to explore other relationships between different ... Alofa is what we need to write a Samoan song.*

According to Nanai, a necessary element in the crafting of Samoan music is that it should inhabit the quality of alofa (love). Alofa is viewed as a plausible theme in music: I would also argue that it could also be present during the crafting process, even if not having any physical presence in the music itself. At one instance during our talanoaga, Nanai also adds that other influences on the crafting of their music, is the incorporating of music trends they as a group recognise as popular (in the Pacific community in New Zealand). By doing so, Nanai shares this presents their music in a way that is enticing to younger audiences: a by-product of this is that the music remains popular to the younger Samoan audience for longer, according to Nanai.

Another aspect that is recognised as contributing significantly to the crafting of Samoan music, is named by Lisi as the reversions and cover music of “old school Samoan songs” that are recreated in differing contexts to that in which the original was released. Lisi explains that, for him, the Samoan music he was familiar with tended to have connections to a past that was closer to the homeland of Sāmoa, which can also be positioned as the homeland of the music. Acknowledging these songs as having important roles in understanding the creating of Samoan music also accredits the experiences of the artist whose art (music) reflects the past music in their current contexts. Another element, suggested by Lani as being an important contribution to the crafting of Samoan music, is the eclectic experiences that artists are constantly drawing from. Lani is referring to experiences to do with music, but the same can be said about personal life experiences that have enough impact on one to infiltrate one’s music. All of these ideas are what the artists identified as being in the criteria / checklist for crafting a Samoan song.

### **5.2.2 Negotiating**

This section will explore the negotiation processes that the artists identified as having a significant impact on the Samoan music making process. The negotiation process is discussed here in terms of the trimming and shaving-type details that the artists undergo to produce their music. This specifically refers to what one of the artists described as “gatekeeping” this includes negotiations over being part of the Pacific music scene and negotiations over definitions and meanings. Elaborating on the idea of “gatekeeping”, Nanai shares this is similar



to a proof-reading process. Practically, this looks like having the music listened to by experienced or learned individuals of the Samoan community, who can then approve or decline a song for well-informed reasons. Nanai explains how this is an important part of the creative process and can impact the “make it or break it” element of a song.

*N: So what usually happens, we write the song or put the rendition together, ia, then we play it for our family, and they give us their advice- what sounds good, what needs to be changed, you know those types of things. We've had a few songs where we've had to start all over again, and that's ok...it's a really important part of the way we [Punialava'a] make our music.*

The family music group Punialava'a are not new to the process involving gatekeepers to approve their music before being able to release their music publicly. Nanai shares about how the gatekeeping concept were based on the processes the group had gone through, in the past while based in Sāmoa. The earlier experiences that their group went through, namely from the 70s onward, had positive effects on the outcome of their music and acknowledges those experiences helped Punialava'a “better songwriters.” Nanai described this experience, which his parents and their friends had also undergone in the past.

*N: ...[T]hey would go through the gatekeepers who would critique their songs before approving it to be aired on the radio- because you know, at that time there was only the one radio station, the 2AP [in Sāmoa]. So it was a panel of elderly men usually, who would say to them, this sounds good...this doesn't make sense, you know? There was a lot of rewriting, but it was helping them become better songwriters because of it. The same goes for us now, the rewrites of the original are important part of the process...*

Drawing back to how gatekeeping signifies a negotiation process within Samoan music, based on the experiences shared through Punialava'a, the idea of the music having to meet a set of standards seems prevalent. Their experience is not only time and location-specific, as they have continued to practice the gatekeeping process with their music production despite living outside of Sāmoa and making music more than thirty years since their initial experiences with gatekeeping.

Although this is a compelling process that is strongly advised by Nanai to be taken up by other Samoan music artists to encourage better song-writing skills, Lani's experience

highlights a different approach to gatekeeping. As a predominantly solo artist, Lani shared how their independence (not belonging to a label) allows him to be in full control of the music he puts out, as opposed to having the opinions of a label to alter his creative process. Based on these experiences, Lani is of the opinion that there are no gatekeepers in the Samoan music process (at present), but he also urges that the refining and critiquing should be intended for the artist, rather than their music.

*L: I think the focus should be to instead protect our music, and this has a lot to do with the application of the Samoan language- which goes back to my point before about how our art is a reflection of all these things around us. My art is a product of everything around me, which includes what I was taught about faaSāmoa...*

Lani's perspective suggests that, rather than having others critique your work, there needs to be extensive self-assessment and critique. Despite these opinions, it was still difficult to pinpoint what the exact standards of musical creativity and performance were: perhaps the closest we got to answer this question was when Nanai mentioned that, in the process of gatekeeping, the Samoan music artist continues to practice underlying Samoan values, like faaalalo and alofa. Thus, in abiding with these values, one should measure their music against the underlying Samoan values that are practiced in embodying faaSāmoa.

Other understandings that were mentioned by artists but have been forfeited for space and certainly deserve to be revisited at a later time, include that of negotiating the definitions behind what makes something Samoan (which proved a lot deeper than expected). In answering a follow up question, "is it Samoan music, or is it music made by Samoans?", David responds with the following:

*D: For me, it's just Samoan. Its instinctively and essentially Samoan because it's coming from a Samoan perspective, a Samoan heart.*

In a contrasting light, Sara-Jane responds to the same question in this way:

*SJ: I think it makes sense to think about it using the genres that exist, rather than viewing it as only belonging to the artist's cultural background. Like just because you're Samoan and you do rap, doesn't mean that's island music. The muso in me is like 'na, there are genres of music'. I think it's more to do with issues of labelling generically, rather than taking the time to think about what it means...But also, you*

*take an artist like Mr Cowboy, who is 100% a country music artist. But then he starts singing in Samoan and some would say that's easily a Samoan song as well.*

In this example, Sara-Jane is speaking on the ways that the music can be understood better, using musical language originating in western music. These terms inform understandings and negotiations of the music, such as those of grouping via the use of western musical constructs like genre. Thinking about the negotiating of Musika Sāmoa, the categorising and understanding of the music becomes easier to decipher for those that are not of the Samoan community. The way in which I imagine this to be simpler to understand, is that the music may check off each point of the Musika checklist above, ultimately making it Musika Sāmoa (in theory); the negotiating of music into western music genres combines musical understanding of both Musika Sāmoa and western music genres. The example offered by Sara-Jane above is a perfect example of this process being applied to Musika Sāmoa, and perhaps opens avenues to more conversations about further negotiation, and categorisation of Musika Sāmoa within western popular music genres. This may be a particularly crucial conversation to be had, especially in considering Moana cosmopolitan connections via digital connections, which have become more frequently used due to rampant social media network and streaming use. These will briefly be elaborated on in the following section, in regard to the processes involved with Musika Sāmoa's distribution.

### **5.2.3 Distribution**

The section will outline some of the processes mentioned by the artists to influence the distribution of Samoan music. I will consider technology, social media, and streaming platforms as the main channels through which to understand music distribution, as was informed by the artists. An observation to be emphasised is the comparative differences in technology that were highlighted in relation to Nanai and Lani's experiences: in the past, Punialava'a were working towards getting approval to have their music heard on one radio platform. Nanai, however, acknowledges that now there are various ways to release music that will not only be heard on one radio station in Sāmoa, but instead can reach a worldwide audience, and at very low costs as well (Lale-Peteru, 2021). Other forms of distribution include CDs, which Sara-Jane recalled: copyright and piracy issues were especially prevalent at this time, which almost made their efforts pointless to an extent. In these circumstances, Sara-Jane remembers a time when CDs sold at the Sunday market, but they were also being burned to create mock-copies of original albums (Sara-Jane, 2021, also in Televave, 2006). Discussing

the issues around copyright and piracy today are beyond the scope of this research, but this is an important conversation to have.

In understanding technology in relation to Samoan music, the scope of this research limits the discussion to the post-colonial, post-migration era associated with contemporary Samoan identities (refer to chapter 3). In an earlier discussion of the crafting and negotiating of Samoan music, Nanai shared how the gatekeeping that Punialava‘a had to experience created a barrier that impacted the ability for their music to be heard. Although he acknowledges that these were the editing processes their music needed to make it better, today the barriers for Samoan music are not of the same nature.

*N: See today, rather than having to go through the panel of gatekeepers before they release their music, it's just an easy upload and the music is online and available for everyone.*

In a similar strain of thought, artists Lani and Lisi acknowledged how the level of accessibility currently allows for artists like themselves the opportunity to distribute their music to places they never would have imagined (Lisi, 2021; Lani, 2021). In another talanoaga, David highlighted the functionality of advanced technologies for future generations: for instance, thanks to streaming platforms such as YouTube, there is now a “register of history and culture” that is accessible to individuals like him who find themselves displaced from contexts of culture, but also for future generations to come and watch content of what people were listening to in 2021 (David, 2021).

*D: I love the idea of the music that I make will hopefully inspire someone else 10 years in the future...[I] want to make a register for the next generation to find and be inspired by. I like how platforms like social media and streaming platforms weave together these timelines- all these experiences that wouldn't have existed if not for platforms like YouTube...social media as well plays a huge part in it, like, there's one artist I follow even on Instagram, I love the cultural content she posts up there. There's a lot I've gained from the connections made through on social media...*

In this discussion, David alludes to the concept of Moana cosmopolitanism: connections are made through digital channels that would otherwise be non-existent if not for social media and streaming platforms. In drawing the discussion back to the distribution of the music, this

example highlights how streaming platforms, social media, and changes to technology allow for extensive distribution, and therefore widespread consumption (and enjoyment), of Samoan music. While the distribution of music grows through different developing avenues, it is helpful to consider just how different music distribution has become, in as close a time as the last decade. In an earlier excerpt pulled from my talanoaga with Nanai, he mentioned how as he grew up in Sāmoa, there was a time when he would access music by travelling to New Zealand-

*N: ...But as I was growing up and I was travelling [from Sāmoa] to New Zealand, I would take back with me my MTV recordings from New Zealand, and I would take my VHS recording back with me, and yea I had videos of artists like Michael Jackson, and Queen...my music was very eclectic from a young age.*

Although specifically referring specifically to western popular music influences (to their music), this also speaks to the accessibility, or lack thereof, that one had to western popular music during this time (around the late 1900s). Scholars on Pacific music have considered the developments and changes to music technology within the Pacific communities, specifically these communities living in diaspora, sharing how just as the people themselves move, so does their music. In the 2000s in New Zealand this would have looked like CDs and prior to that were 'mixtapes or cassette tapes, being distributed at the local flea market (Televave, 2006). The range of accessibility available to the artists releasing their music, and the audience consuming/listening to it, continues to expand as the artists have highlighted. Restrictions between distance or location are almost non-existent, as the music is conveniently available through a smart phone or device. As David alluded to above, this is access that neither has boundaries of time, or restrictions relating to material damage- think of the music lost to a scratched CD? Perhaps something that may be of issue in terms of distribution, is individual access to devices (smart phones, radios etc.) where the easy-to-access music can be found- an encouragement for further research and conversation.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Musika Sāmoa is an embodiment of Samoan cultural values, and it holds the physical marker of Samoan language, and Samoan music trends that are validated through history (i.e., the Samoan igi). This chapter provided an overview of findings drawn from the different talanoaga that were held with each artist, particularly their opinions and perspectives about what Samoan music is. An essential precedent to understanding what Samoan music it was to first understand

how the artists understood being Samoan: the two are intertwined and exist interdependently (faaSāmoa and Samoan music). Elaborating on this essential precedence, the Samoan language, or gagana Sāmoa, was emphasised as having a significant contribution in understanding Samoan-ness, or faaSāmoa. The talanoaga with the artists highlight how cultural endurance and maintenance are achieved using gagana Sāmoa, particularly by generations of Samoans living as diasporic communities. The findings also identify the role of the family systems and a church base, as playing a key marker in measuring faaSāmoa- where a lacking in association with family and/or church would potentially mean missing out on experiences that are paramount for understanding what it means to be Samoan. A vital contribution this chapter offered, was in unpacking the crafting, negotiating and distribution of Musika Sāmoa, through the lens and perspectives of the different artists. In the crafting of Musika Sāmoa, a list of the most agreed upon aspects that are featured in Musika Sāmoa amongst the artists were compiled in this chapter, highlighting how there are features to Musika Sāmoa that are insistently present.

The main categories of this checklist pinpoint the featuring of gagana Sāmoa, the incorporation of a good tune, a theme or story, as well as including musical elements borrowed and inspired from popular western music genres. The negotiating of Musika Sāmoa is discussed in regard to the artists experiences with processes that are compared to the proofreading process that their music undergoes: gatekeeping is identified as a keyway that Musika Sāmoa is being negotiated. Distribution of Musika Sāmoa is discussed in association with the technology available today, which allows for their music to reach digital corners of the world at speeds that are continuing to advance further (compared to experiences with music distribution even just 10 years ago). The discussion of Musika Sāmoa in this chapter are the physical and practical markers that are consequent to the Moana cosmopolitan lived experiences of these Samoan artists. The comparisons of earlier music discourses and the Musika Sāmoa of today highlight how these features of Samoan music (the crafting, negotiating and distribution of it) have a mixture of fixed and fluid features through time and space (i.e., NZ in the 90's versus NZ in the 2020's). The fixed features are identified in the crafting of Musika Sāmoa, with some additional features to the crafting of Musika Sāmoa that are more recent contributions to the composition of Musika Sāmoa. These additional features are representative of artists' personal preferences, and other societal contexts that also have an influence on the music. This discussion on Musika Sāmoa is an important contribution to the Samoan diasporic community as it strives to understand how Samoan culture can be maintained through Musika Sāmoa, impacting individual experiences of Samoan cultural identity.

## Chapter 6. Conclusion

In this section, I will reinstate the research question that was offered in the introductory chapter. In the following section, I will expand on the phenomena of Musika Sāmoa and the journey it has navigated through. Before further expanding on where this journey led, wherein the following section will discuss the findings of this research that conclude Musika Sāmoa to be a reflection of both cultural maintenance and endurance, as well as an eclectic representation of external influences, and the future of Musika Sāmoa that continues to maintain while changing, propelling the reality of the proverb, “e sui faiga ae tumau faavae”. After this, I will offer some personal research reflections that address perspectives of things that could have been done differently, things that were not expected prior to conducting this research, and any perspectives that have shifted since the research has ended. Finally, I will conclude this chapter in sharing the ultimate findings from this study, namely that while Musika Sāmoa is a complex music that is representative of the Samoan culture, it also encapsulates the fluid experiences of its people, through time and space.

The initial research question was intended to understand contemporary Samoan music. Further research and discussion amounted to the question dropping the term contemporary and incorporating Samoan terminology instead. Thus, the question that this study intended to answer was: “How do Samoans in New Zealand craft, negotiate, and distribute Musika Sāmoa as a method of cultural endurance?” The su‘ifefiloi methodology offered sufficient support for this question to be answered in its entirety, through different talanoaga and critical autoethnography, as it allowed for these different methods to be woven together in such a way that is representative of the encompassing cultural acknowledgement, in academic contexts.

### 6.1 Journey of Musika Sāmoa

The journey of Musika Sāmoa crosses expanses of land, water, genealogy, sound, and practice. Here, I will summarise key aspects of this journey, focusing on the movements of Samoan people from Sāmoa to New Zealand, the changes to cultural practice through the societal and cultural context shifts, and how generations of Samoans have navigated through these contexts. As was mentioned in Chapter 3, the historic accounts that are most relevant to this study can be traced back to colonial interactions between New Zealand and Sāmoa. Consequential to these colonial interactions, are the emigrational movements by Samoan populations to New

Zealand which has continued from the last century. New Zealand-born Samoans are consequential to the Samoan communities that have grown, so much so that they statistically make up more than half of the Pacific population in New Zealand. These movements can be alluded to as the literal journey of Samoans in New Zealand, all of which is vital information to understand the journey of their music. A key aspect to New Zealand-born Samoan identity, is the conflict in cultural identity of feeling ‘caught between cultures’ (Televave, 2006) which is felt by these individuals- myself included. The crafting of Musika Sāmoa is recognised as a vehicle to help maintain a sense of Samoan cultural identity. The journey of Musika Sāmoa is pinpointed in academia through academic writings about Samoan music. In accordance with these writings, the journey of Samoan music has ranged in discussions from pre-colonial music in Sāmoa (Moyle, 1988), to conversations about early New Zealand-Samoan music from a western popular music lens (Televave, 2006). The discussions in this study have revealed how there are certain aspects to Musika Sāmoa that have been maintained throughout generations, to emphasise its crucial role in the music- for instance, the incorporation of gagana Sāmoa is a crucial inclusion in Musika Sāmoa and is reflected in writings such as those by Moyle (1988), Televave (2006), and Mackley-Crump (2015). The main factors that are considered in this discussion on the journey of Musika Sāmoa, are highlighted by artists in this study and are amounted to two main points: the first point is the intention of the music (crafted and negotiated), and the second is the method in which the music is acquired (distributed). To elaborate on the former point, I revisit Sara-Jane’s thoughts on the intention that the Pacific Soul was set out to address: to encourage interaction with Samoan language, in order to ultimately encourage knowledge of Samoan language (Sara-Jane, 2021). This intention was set to overcome negative stigmas that were tied to learning and being taught Samoan. Whereas the contributions of younger artists like David and Lesa (Lani Alo) share how their music is a reflection of the environment(s) around them, rather than filling a “need” to encourage cultural interaction and knowledge, David and Lesa’s music represents those who are making this music as a willing representation of who they are: not to mistake that artists like Sara-Jane were not willingly presenting their music, but to highlight that there are different intentions here- the former being to encourage interaction with Sāmoa culture, and the latter a reflection of cultural experiences, rather than for the educational purposes that the former held.

Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.3) outlined the processes that were mentioned in the talanoaga by the artists, pertaining to the different ways that music can now be acquired/heard/bought.



Most of these methods are identified as being recent technological developments that have been particularly important for music distribution during periods of lockdown from COVID-19. Social media sites and streaming services are some of the key methods of distribution that are identified by the artists. Considering this in regard to the journey of Musika Samoan allows one to recognise the mobility that digital spheres allow one's identity to grow in. Nanai's sharing of Punialava'a early experiences with the lengthy process to get their music broadcasted on Sāmoa's only radio station, as opposed to their more recent experiences with their music where they can edit and release their music at their fingertips, highlights just how rapidly the more recent technology allows for music to be heard. In highlighting this point further, David said:

*D: That's something that wasn't possible before and something that gives me agency...knowing I have the capability to register so autonomously- and in the way I want to distribute or share a certain music...it becomes more fruitful and easier.*

These ideas further propel the concept of Moana cosmopolitanism that has been incorporated in this study, particularly in helping to interpret how digital space allows one to hold many identities at once. Despite the maintenance of aspects of Musika Sāmoa through different geographic and temporal spaces, there is no denying that there are other influences on Musika Sāmoa that are non-Samoan musical elements. What still makes it Musika Sāmoa are the aspects that tie it back to Samoan culture, like the use of the Samoan language.

## **6.2 Other Influences on the Music**

One of the recurring reflections during talanoaga was the influence and incorporation of non-Samoan musical elements into the Samoan music world. These vary from instrumentation to song themes, to stylistic formatting of the song. Music preferences of older siblings, parents and friends are recognised as influencing the artists own preferences, which is then reflected in their music. Of mention are the western popular music artists like Frank Sinatra (Nanai), or Bruce Springsteen (Lani Alo), which are apparent in different elements in the Musika Sāmoa artists music. The diverse contexts of New Zealand continue to influence and impact the music of artists such as those I spoke to in this study. Incorporating these influences into the music adds to the narrative that the music is a journey: it can be considered an individual's journey, influenced by many things as well as their own family. It can also be considered as the collective journey, to represent shared experiences in diverse, diasporic contexts such as New Zealand, for Samoans living here. While these non-Samoan musical elements are important to

make note of as a source of influence in Musika Sāmoa, the incorporation of gagana Sāmoa and allusions to past Samoan music through stylistic features are only a few of the elements to Musika Sāmoa that remain.

### **6.3 Future of Musika Sāmoa?**

As discussed earlier, Musika Sāmoa has undergone numerous changes historically. These shifts prompt questions about how Musika Sāmoa will sound and be grouped in the future. From the prior sharing of the artists during talanoaga, I estimate that shifts will occur in favour of Musika Sāmoa becoming globally recognised. Principle cultural elements will likely remain, such as the value of gagana Sāmoa and incorporating music from the past. A possible future facet of Musika Sāmoa that is continuing to grow in popularity, are the Musika Sāmoa that are now reversions or covers of old Musika Sāmoa. Being based in New Zealand, artists like Wayno and KaSeki incorporate non-Samoan musical elements into their version of songs whose popularity dates to the last century. Considering these phenomena could allow for more conversations around Moana cosmopolitan experiences through generations to come. Thinking about the future of Musika Sāmoa, one must also keep in mind the muagagana that was mentioned earlier: “E sui faiga, ae tumau faavae,” where the practice may change, but the foundation remains the same. For Musika Sāmoa, particularly in New Zealand this foundation dates to early colonial interaction between the two nations. The upholding and nurturing of this faavae is what allows Musika Sāmoa to exist today.

### **6.4 Reflections**

There are a number of reflections to be drawn from the metaphorical su‘ifefiloi ula lolo that has been woven here in the writing of this thesis. This section will briefly reflect upon some of the details of the study that would be reconsidered, had I the opportunity to, and highlight some of the discourses that were touched on in this study that I encourage more interaction with.

One of the details that I would reconsider, are the types of participants that I spoke with. Although I immensely value the contribution offered by the artists in this study, I am also interested in understanding the wider community thoughts on Musika Sāmoa, from the perspective of the listener/audience. This minor detail could potentially change the way Musika Sāmoa is then understood in academia, as the opinion might have little to no comment on the crafting processes. Another aspect that may be better suited for a larger research project, and in extension of this thesis, would be to explore the different contexts that certain music may be heard in—for instance, are there certain Musika Sāmoa only heard in one place and nowhere else? Another interesting comparison to be made is between Musika Sāmoa that is being

produced in New Zealand, versus Musika Sāmoa that is produced in Sāmoa; how do they differ and where is this music heard?

Of the discourses that were only briefly touched on that should be given more attention, I refer to the blood quantum discourse that was barely touched on in Chapter 4. In elaborating this phenomenon, I urge for further discussion and consideration, about diasporic Samoan identities.

### **6.5 Conclusion- “E sui faiga ae tumau faavae”**

Through the weaving of the ula lolo using su‘ifefiloi, this thesis was concerned with defining and understanding what Musika Sāmoa is, according to the perspectives and experiences of expert musicians in this music scene, and in relation to my personal experiences as a New Zealand-born Samoan. Musika Sāmoa is understood to be a complex music that is representative of the Samoan culture; but it also encapsulates the fluid experiences of its people, through time and space. The crafting of Musika Sāmoa was detailed in a form of list that fused the collective opinion of the five artists I spoke to, as to what Musika Sāmoa is made up of. The negotiating of Musika Sāmoa was discussed in association with the crafting of the music (composition and production) and highlighted by the artists as involving processes that are influenced by non-Samoan musical elements (i.e., western pop culture). Distribution of Musika Sāmoa was discussed regarding the technological advancements that allow for easier access to music, for both the artist and the audience. The distribution of Musika Sāmoa also speaks to the lived realities that are being experienced by Samoans living as Moana cosmopolitans, where navigating one’s cultural identity is easier to access through digital realms and one can belong to more than one identity. In conclusion, this thesis found that Musika Sāmoa is a mixture of these rigid foundational musical elements that are representative of the foundations within the Samoan culture, as well as a representation of the eclectic experiences that influenced the artists’ music. Musika Sāmoa continues to serve as a vehicle of cultural endurance for the Samoan community in New Zealand, as it continues to journey through generations.

## Glossary

Definitions from Samoan Dictionary, Milner, G.B. 1993

aganuu faaSāmoa (aganuu Samoa)	Samoan cultural customs
Alagaupu (Samoan saying)	Saying, expression, proverb
Alofa	love
Faaaloalo	respect
Faalavelave	Family events and occasions
FaaSāmoa	Samoan customs, ways of life
Faavae	foundation
Gagana Samoa	Samoan language
Matai	Chief (Chief title)
muagagana	Samoan proverb
Pagikeke (pagikeke's)	Samoan round pancakes
Talanoa	Chat, make conversation, have a talk
Talanoaga	Discussion, conversation
Taaluga	The last dance

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