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“It’s Like Going To The Moon”:
The Experiences of Samoan Tertiary Health Students at the University of Auckland

Roannie Sameme Bernice Ng Shiu

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Community Health

The University of Auckland
2011
Abstract

A social determinants of health approach suggests increasing ethnic diversity in the health workforce as one strategy to reduce ethnic health inequities and inequalities. Subsequently, this illustrates a need to increase the capacity and capability of the Samoan and Pacific health workforce in New Zealand given the growing health inequities and inequalities of these communities. In this qualitative thesis I examine the enablers and barriers to academic success for Samoan health learners at the University of Auckland.

Social and cultural identities are important as they inform how we learn and how we teach. Drawing on ideas of power and difference I demonstrate that culture and identity are fluid, historically located, and discursively constructed. I use the Samoan concept of lagimalie and Turner’s concept of liminality to illustrate how processes of identity for Samoans in New Zealand are shaped by Samoan and New Zealand/European culture. I further explore how Samoans negotiate the competing demands of academia and home.

In this thesis I adopt an inductive qualitative methodological approach embedded within fa’asamoa. I conducted interviews and focus group with thirty-two past and present Samoan students from the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, University of Auckland. Supplementing the interview and focus group data with current students, solicited diaries were also administered with twenty-four students. Two gendered focus groups were also conducted with twelve Samoan parents of students from the University of Auckland.

From the narratives and diaries of the students I identify the key factors that constrain and enable their learning under the categories of individual agency, family, university, spirituality, and friends. Family support is a central concern of this thesis. Parents and students describe how family support for academia is embedded within fa’asamoa. Students identify key discourses used to position themselves within their home and university and how their ethnic and cultural identity impacts on their learning. The findings from this thesis describe how some participants had successfully managed the competing demands of academia and Samoan cultural obligations. The findings also suggest learning environments that facilitate meaningful engagement and participation enable positive learning outcomes. The results illuminate important teaching implications for educators when engaging with Pacific and other ethnic minority learners. In addition the results aid in formulating recruitment and retention initiatives for Samoan and Pacific tertiary health learners.
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my uncle
who sadly passed away towards the end of my PhD journey.

Late Reverend Saniva Ng Shiu (BTh.)
(23 February 1948 - 24 December 2009)

A great man of God who led by example and
championed education for all Pacific people.
First and foremost I would like to thank God for blessing me with the many talented people that I have crossed paths with as a result of this journey and for providing me with the fortitude to complete this thesis.

I would like to acknowledge the Health Research Council of New Zealand for the Pacific Health Research Doctoral Award they granted me. I wish to also acknowledge the following financial support towards this thesis research: Building Research Capacity in Social Sciences (BRCSS) Postgraduate Completion Award, the Ministry of Health Pacific Workforce Award, and financial grants from the Punavai Support Trust, Fa’atuatuauna Support Trust, Lumana’i Manuia Support Trust, and the Alo and Fanau Support Trust in South Auckland.

I would especially like to extend my thanks and appreciation to my primary supervisor Dr Janine Wiles from the department of Social and Community Health. Without whom this thesis would never have been possible. Thank you for being so understanding, supportive, and patient. You are an inspiration and a fantastic role model and I am truly blessed to have been your student. Fa’amalo le tapua’i.

I would also like to acknowledge my co-supervisors Dr Vili Nosa from Pacific Health and Dr Colin Tukuitonga from the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. Thanks for sharing with me your expertise and wisdom.

This thesis would be virtually impossible without my participants who unselfishly gave up their time to help me produce this thesis. Fa’afetai tele lava.

My sincere thanks and deep appreciation goes to my ‘dream team’ led by Malepeai Dr Ieti Lima and Maiava Carmel Peteru and includes Dr Lana Perese, Dr Ruth Allen, Dr Liz Kiata, Amanda Dunlop-Hill, Associate Professor Peter Adams, Dr David Newcombe, and the Social and Community Health and Pacific Health Departments. Thanks also to Mel Falegiu, Jack Nielsen, and Sonia Townsend. Thank you for the support, understanding, and guidance.

In particular I would like to thank Rev Iakopo and Kuini Isaraelu and my congregation at Sulu o le Ola in Manukau City. Thank you for your support, encouragement and especially your prayers. Many thanks also to my friends especially Jane, Cameron, Nguyen, Naida, and Karman for the coffee breaks and for giving those morale boosts when I needed them most.

To my Ng Shiu and Lealasola ‘aiga thank you all for your support and encouragement. Finally to my family; my father, Fui Ropeti (my rock and tower of strength) and my mother Winnie (the one who keeps me grounded), Rodney and Sisi (and the Elisa family), and Aimee and Luka. Special thanks to my lil’ man Ezekiel and my princess Leyahna who without fail always made me smile when times were tough. Thank you for your love, prayers, patience and thoughts. This thesis would not have been possible without you all. Fa’afetai le onosai, fa’amalo le tapua’i.
# Samoan Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Aiga</em></td>
<td>Family including extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ali’i</em></td>
<td>High chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Alofa</em></td>
<td>Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aoga Amata</em></td>
<td>Samoan bilingual Early Childhood Education Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fa’aaloalo</em></td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fa’alavelave</em></td>
<td>Ceremonial obligation. A disruption to the normal activity of everyday life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fa’amanuiaga</em></td>
<td>Blessings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fa’asamoia</em></td>
<td>Samoan way of life, values, and cultural beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Feagaiga</em></td>
<td>Covenant between brother and sister and between minister and parishioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fiapalagi</em></td>
<td>Acting like a European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fonofale</em></td>
<td>Traditional Samoan meeting house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gafa</em></td>
<td>Genealogies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gagana Samoa</em></td>
<td>Samoan Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lotu</em></td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Malamatuā</em></td>
<td>Curses from elders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Matai</em></td>
<td>Chiefly system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Meaalofa</em></td>
<td>Gift; present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nu’u</em></td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tama</em></td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tapu</em></td>
<td>Sacred connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tatau</em></td>
<td>Traditional Samoan tattoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tautua</em></td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tina</em></td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Toona’i</em></td>
<td>An important gathering or feast. Usually refers to an important family event where extended family members gather for lunch on Sundays after church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tulāfale</em></td>
<td>Oratory chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Usita’i</em></td>
<td>Discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Va</em></td>
<td>Physical and relational space between people and things</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 The Pacific Health Workforce in New Zealand

Currently, New Zealand is experiencing workforce shortages in the health sector particularly skilled and qualified Pacific health workers. There is good evidence that it is advantageous if Pacific health solutions are Pacific led and acknowledge Pacific values (Ministry of Health, 2008). Presently, Pacific communities are experiencing large health inequities and inequalities compared to the rest of New Zealand (Wright and Hornblow, 2008). Pacific healthcare workers are able to address these health problems more specifically compared to non-Pacific health workers as they are best able to understand how Pacific cultural values impact on the health perspectives and behaviours of Pacific peoples (Pacific Health Research Centre, 2003). Given the current and emerging health needs of Pacific communities there is an immediate need to address the underrepresentation of Pacific health workers across all levels of the sector. The current capacity of the Pacific health workforce is unable to generally meet the population health needs of Pacific peoples in New Zealand. For example Pacific peoples make up almost 7% of New Zealand’s population, but only 1.7% of New Zealand’s medical workforce is Pacific (Medical Council of New Zealand, 2008). More specifically, Counties Manukau District Health Board has the largest Pacific population proportion at 35%, but Pacific peoples only represent 8% of the health workforce (Medical Council of New Zealand, 2008).

A key driver to increasing the number of capable Pacific health workers is to increase the number of Pacific people entering health related education programmes and to ensure that they complete their studies in a timely manner. Only small numbers of Pacific school leavers are entering health related tertiary education programmes. For example in South Auckland, only 5% of Pacific school leavers entered a health related tertiary programme (Ministry of Education, 2006). Furthermore, once enrolled in health programmes, many Pacific students struggle to successfully complete their programmes and graduate. The University of Auckland’s Annual Report showed that in the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences in 2009 Pacific undergraduate students had the poorest pass rate at 86.7% compared with the total pass rate of 92.6% (University of Auckland, 2010).

I argue that by understanding more about the barriers and determinants for Pacific people entering health programmes, the health sector, tertiary institutions, and Pacific communities will be better placed to formulate successful strategies to increase a capable Pacific health workforce.
In New Zealand most Pacific-focused research has taken a Pan-Pacific approach. Although this is a useful strategy to contend with the many cultures within the Pacific, the findings and conclusions may not be relevant to all Pacific cultures. Anae (1997) argues that Pan-Pacific identities are a construct of outsiders to deal with the complexity of multiple Pacific ethnicities that are distinctly different, but do share common cultural and social elements. Pan-Pacific categories, labels and research, whether implicit or explicit, engender a fallacy of a unified Pacific culture or community. Yet as Macpherson (1996) states, the “Pacific Islands ‘community’ is... a collection of distinctive groupings which have occasionally formed coalitions to pursue interests in common... a unified community was, and is, unlikely to emerge” (p. 124).

In this thesis I adopt a nuanced approach where the focus of this thesis is solely on the experiences of Samoan tertiary health learners. In order to understand the broad barriers and determinants for academic success for Samoan students I investigate the contextual factors that influence Samoan tertiary health students’ academic success such as: ethnicity; gender; family support; academic and training support; self-motivation and academic ability; and peer support. In particular I investigate how cultural identity influences the learning journeys of Samoan health students and how this impacts on their learning. I aim to identify and inform strategies in which a competent Samoan health workforce can be grown locally to improve the health and disability outcomes for Samoan and Pacific communities in New Zealand.

For my research a more specific approach was helpful as it provided a more meaningful understanding of the learning journeys of Samoan health students. Culture and identity are socially constructed and the experiences of individuals and cultural groups are different because of this. By adopting a nuanced approach I was able to deconstruct meanings that are particular to Samoans as well as illustrating the distinct differences between Samoan culture and other Pacific cultures.

The literature on diversity or minority health workforce recruitment strategies comes mainly from United States based research in recruiting African-American and Hispanic populations (Avery and McKay, 2006). Diversity in the health workforce is a highly emotional and political topic for many developed countries, especially in the United States (Cohen et al., 2002, Schnittaker and Liang, 2006). However, as an area of interest in the United States, a number of studies have investigated and examined the effect that patient-provider ethnic concordance has on health outcomes. That is the different outcomes that patients experience as a result of consulting with a health provider of the same ethnicity. Results have typically shown that ethnic concordance is positively associated with healthcare for ethnic minority groups (Cooper and Powe, 2004, Johnson et al., 2004).
As a recent area of interest, research and investigation into Pacific health workforce issues in New Zealand has so far focused on universal issues such as characterising the workforce by specialisation and area, and scoping exercises for the Pacific health workforce in general (Ape-Esera et al., 2009, Perese et al., 2009). Building on this initial work there are areas that still require further investigation such as Pacific recruitment and retention strategies in the health sector. One area that has recently received much attention in terms of increasing Pacific health workers is the area of child and adolescent mental health (Faleafa and Ng Shiu, 2008, Southwick and Solomona, 2007, Suaalii-Sauni et al., 2007).

1.2 The Research Question and Approach

This study has its origins in my involvement with the National Pacific Health Workforce Projects commissioned by the Pacific Health Branch of the Ministry of Health (Uniservices Ltd, 2006). The aim of the projects was to understand some of the issues for building the capacity and capability of the Pacific Health Workforce in New Zealand, an area that very little is known about. The results from these projects raised many questions for further research such as what are the barriers and enablers for academic success for Pacific tertiary health students, what exactly is family support, and what does family support look like? These are all questions that I felt required further investigation which led me to this thesis. The research question which frames this thesis is thus; what are the barriers and enablers for academic success of young Samoan tertiary health students in New Zealand, with a focus on family support. In addressing this question the specific objectives were:

1. To determine the factors that influence positively and negatively on Samoan health students’ academic success.
2. To explore why health professions may or may not be seen as a viable career options for Samoan students and, given the immediate need for Pacific health workers, what interventions can be taken to promote health careers amongst Samoan communities in New Zealand.
3. To understand the differences in the meaning of family support for students and families and to evaluate the impact that family support has on Samoan students in health programmes.
4. To identify strategies to enhance the recruitment and retention of Samoan and Pacific health workers.

In addressing the research questions above I drew on theories, ideas and concepts from the social sciences and education, predominantly with a human geography focus. Human geography is a theoretically and methodologically diverse field that focuses on the intersections and relationships between place, space and the environment, and people (Gregory, 2009). Human geography is broadly concerned with examining the human, political, and cultural aspects in relation to specific places and spaces. Consequently, as a field of inquiry, human geography is appropriate for this thesis as it
facilitates the exploration of the experiences of Samoan and Pacific communities as ethnic minorities in New Zealand generally and at university more specifically.

The university is a place of learning which is predominantly a New Zealand/European cultural space. For the purpose of this thesis I use the term New Zealand/European culture as the dominant culture of New Zealand society. I recognise that New Zealand is a multicultural society however the culture of New Zealand is still largely influenced by British culture as a result of New Zealand’s colonial past (Fairburn, 2008). Subsequently this thesis is concerned with how Samoan learners in health related studies negotiate the transition between their home and cultural communities and the university, and whether this influences their learning outcomes. The transition between the two is both physical and ideological. Understanding culture and why it matters in the context of learning is also a key concern of this thesis.

The experiences of Samoan learners are informed by both New Zealand/European and Samoan cultural systems that, potentially, compete with each other as well as influence and interact with each other. I argue that by understanding and exploring how both cultural systems impact on their everyday life, and more specifically their learning, we may be better able to identify strategies to reduce the health, educational, and social inequalities experienced by Samoan learners and Pacific communities. The next section details the literature and concepts used in this thesis to address the research question.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

In addressing the research question I used a number of concepts to understand the social, health and educational inequalities and inequities for Samoan students in New Zealand. By understanding the wider structural factors that impact on the learning of Samoan tertiary learners we can begin to understand how these influence the learning experiences of Samoan tertiary learners. Accordingly we can devise strategies and systems to help them graduate and thereby improve social, health and educational outcomes of Samoan and Pacific communities. The conceptual framework diagram on the following page illustrates the key themes and concepts I use to explore the learning experiences of Samoan tertiary health students:
The bottom box illustrates that multiple inequalities and inequities exist for Samoan and Pacific communities living in New Zealand. All these inequalities and inequities are related and in this thesis I examine health and educational inequalities and inequities in particular as motivations for the need to understand how to improve Samoan health students’ learning outcomes. For each theme I outline the
inequalities and inequities. I then use postcolonialism, social determinants of health and Vygotsky’s social construction of education theory as frameworks to understand why inequalities and inequities exist and suggest ways in which to improve social, health and educational outcomes for Samoan and Pacific communities. These concepts help us to understand the wider social, structural and contextual factors that create and perpetuate inequalities and inequities for Samoan communities as ethnic minorities in New Zealand.

Postcolonial theory is a useful framework to examine the social inequalities that exist as a result of the marginalisation and minoritisation of Pacific peoples in New Zealand. Postcolonial concepts enable the critique and contestation of how dominant discourses come to replicate the marginalisation of Pacific peoples in New Zealand by analysing the historical and current representation of Pacific peoples. Postcolonial concepts also illustrate how patterns of inequalities and inequities for Samoan and Pacific communities in New Zealand are associated with socioeconomic factors and institutional racism.

The social determinants of health model illustrates that health is socially determined as well as shaped by biological and clinical factors. Key concepts in this model include the importance of education, relationships with others, and feeling appreciated and part of society, as social factors that influence health. Another concept is that having access to a range of ethnically diverse health providers is one strategy to reduce ethnic disparities in health.

Vygotsky was a Russian developmental psychologist who argued that learning is socially constructed and that the cultural contexts of the home can be different to the culture of formal education institutions, thus cultural difference needs to be acknowledged by educators and mediated. Therefore, using Vygotsky’s concepts we can understand how knowledge and learning processes for Samoan learners are co-constructed and informed by fa’asamoa and university.

This co-construction of knowledge is helpful in understanding how the identity of Samoan learners is also informed by the cultural contexts of fa’asamoa and university, as depicted in the middle row of Figure 1.1. Fa’asamoa refers to the traditional knowledge, values, and customs of Samoans. I use the concept of lagimalie the Samoan term coined by Tupua Tamasese Efi (2008) that refers to the notion of balance to illustrate the complexities of cultural identities for Samoan students. As with learning, Samoan tertiary learners’ identity is fluid and dynamic and is informed by both cultural contexts. Liminality is an anthropological construct used to understand individuals being “betwixt and in-between” two states. For this thesis, Samoan tertiary learners are understood as being betwixt and in-
between fa'asamoa and New Zealand/European culture. Liminality illustrates how culture impacts on knowledge production and identity at an individual level.

I suggest that by recognising and understanding the wider social context in which Samoan tertiary learners live we have a better means for understanding the broader impacts on their identity and learning journey at university. By recognising that Samoan tertiary learners’ learning is informed by two cultural contexts, we can implement meaningful support strategies at university and in Samoan communities to attract more school leavers in to health and to help them complete their studies in a timely manner. By increasing the number of qualified Samoan health professionals the social, health and educational outcomes of Samoan and Pacific communities can be improved.

The conceptual framework is a road map for this thesis and is represented at the beginning of most chapters to outline the main themes and literature of the chapter and position the chapter in relation to the entire thesis.

### 1.3.1 Culture is...

Culture is a slippery term. People have different understandings and perceptions of what culture is, there is no one absolute or concrete definition for culture. One popular definition of culture is that it is an inherited set of lenses through which an individual views and understands the world (Gesler and Kearns, 2002). It is a process through which society and space are constructed; the shifting and unstable systems of meanings through which people make sense of the world (Hall, 1996). Mitchell (2000) provides a useful framework for understanding culture through the following six key principles tabled below:

**Table 1.1: Principles of Culture**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Culture is the opposite of nature. It is what distinguishes humans from other species and what makes us human.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It is the actual patterns and differentiations of a people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>It is the processes by which these patterns are developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The term indicates a set of markers that set one people apart from another and which indicate to us our membership in a group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Culture is the way that all these patterns, processes, and markers are represented, that is cultural activity that produces meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Culture often indicates a hierarchical ordering of all these processes, activities, ways of life, and cultural production.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mitchell (2000, p.14)

The principles above provide a useful framework for understanding cultural differences. Principle 2 refers to cultural identity as in “New Zealand/European culture” or “Samoan culture”. Principle 6 describes the way in which culture is sometimes used to differentiate and compare cultures against each other to create a hierarchical order. This has been the centre of debate for many years in
academia, particularly in postcolonial studies that critique the dominance and power of Western cultures over other cultures via the privileging of Western cultures (Sharp, 2009). Two notable critics of the dominance of Western culture, Foucault (1972) and Said (1978), have critically elaborated on the way in which culture influences power and knowledge through the meanings produced in discourse.

One caveat in writing and representing culture is the tendency for people to reify culture, or to turn culture into a concrete ‘thing’ (Adams and Markus, 2001, Duncan and Duncan, 1996). For example culture is used to explain differences in health and education outcomes between ethnic groups (see Chapter Two). The reification of culture often occurs when people try to attribute causal or explanatory powers to culture. This inadvertently implies that culture is static and timeless rather than fluid and dynamic. Mitchell (1995) argues that the propensity to reify culture in social sciences is largely due to the slipperiness of the term itself. He notes:

“Culture” is certainly reified as explanation, given causal force even when, or especially because, no one has been able to specify what “culture” is. It is precisely because the term “culture” has no clear referent that it becomes such a useful tool for arraying power, for organising distinctions in the world. (p. 106)

Mitchell thus cautions against the use of culture in social science as a phenomenon that has causal powers. For example Blakely and Dew (2004) note that culture is often examined in deficit terms to explain the ethnic differences in health in New Zealand, rather than examining the social roles that health beliefs play in Pacific cultures. The tendency of some academics to use cultural deficit theorising and victim blaming as an explanation for why inequalities exist between Pacific cultures and other minoritised cultures in New Zealand has long been criticised by Pacific postcolonial scholars, such as Gegeo (2001) and Liki (2007). An alternative discourse to that presented by deficit theorising is to examine whether and how inequities are a result of societies and institutions not recognising and understanding cultural differences. For example different cultural groups have different values. This is particularly relevant to New Zealand as government officials like to brand New Zealand as an egalitarian society that values diversity and difference. Whether New Zealand is an egalitarian society or not is debatable considering the disparities that continue to exist and persist between Pacific people and the rest of New Zealand.

Culture can be specified as something that both differentiates the world and provides a framework for understanding differences. Culture is part of everyday life that shapes human differences, behaviours, and experiences. Culture is a concept that brings attention to process, politics, and interrelationships with other spheres of social life (Mitchell, 1995). For example, culture can help us to understand the process of learning, and who decides on what can be taught in schools and universities. It is a concept that can help to understand how cultural differences, if ignored, can lead to the marginalisation and
disengagement of Samoan learners at university, and provides a framework to understand how inequality is spatialised by the privileging and dominance of one culture over others. What is important to note here is that people understand and use culture in a myriad of ways to understand the social and material world. It is socially constructed, reproduced, and always contested, and as such it needs to be viewed in its historical, economic, social, political, and geographic contexts.

1.3.2 Identity is...

Like culture, identity is another slippery and contested term. The construction of a person’s identity is complex and is embedded within their socialisation experiences; that is identities are the product of discourses in society and form the basis for members of a group to organise a sense of belonging (Kobayashi et al., 2009). Identity shapes and influences explanatory frameworks and paradigms as well as impacting on human behaviour.

There has been a long standing debate between essentialist and non-essentialist approaches to identity. An essentialist definition of ethnic identity suggests that there is one clear authentic set of characteristics which apply to all individuals of a given group such as those belonging to a particular ethnicity and which do not alter across time (Kobayashi et al., 2009). A non-essentialist definition of ethnic identity would focus on both differences and commonalities within the ethnic group and in comparison with other ethnic groups and changes over time (Woodward, 1997). Under the latter approach, identity is understood as relational and fluid and is produced at particular points in time. The changing definitions of identity by individuals are always re-emerging and renegotiated within a person’s life discourse. The way in which an individual may identify themselves as a young person may change and broaden for example once individuals have children they may prefer to identify themselves as parents. Individual identity changes are in response to personal circumstance as well as shaped by political and cultural discourses that are beyond the individual’s control.

Discourses and systems of representation construct places from which individuals can position themselves and produce identities. Representation includes the signifying practices and symbolic systems through which meanings are produced and which position us as individuals (Woodward, 1997). A signifying practice for example, includes the common practice by many African tribes where young adolescent boys undergo a series of “rite of passage” rituals signifying the transition from boys to men (Turner, 1974). Symbolic systems include language and visual representations. For example, the tatau1 in Samoa has become a contemporary form art and cultural symbolism for young Samoans across the world to represent their Samoan identity. It is argued that the popularity of the tatau is a response of young Samoans born overseas establishing and reinforcing their identity amongst the

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1 Traditional tattoo
cultures in which they live (George and Rodriguez, 2009). Representations are important as they produce meanings through which we can make sense of our experiences and who we are. Representation as a cultural process establishes individual and collective identities. These collective identities include gender, ethnicity, culture, and nationality (Gesler and Kearns, 2002).

Collective or group identities form the basis of social movements to achieve recognition and redress historical oppression; this is termed as identity politics or politics of difference (Kobayashi et al., 2009). Identity politics piqued the interest of geographers in the 1960s during the American Civil Rights Movement, which resulted in the development of “radical” geography to critique established theories of the state and economy. Since then identity politics in contemporary times has become a central research concern in white-settler colonies such as Canada, the United States and New Zealand, where some argue the aims of social movements fall into one of two categories, the first to establish alternate forms of nationalism and the second to seek recognition within multicultural societies (ibid.). Samoans and Pacific communities in New Zealand fall into the second category, where similar to other cultural minority groups, they find it difficult to politicise their oppression and non-territorial claims in the face of territorial claims of Māori. The representational rights of Pacific communities and other minorities are often overshadowed by the focus on the bicultural context of New Zealand so that Pacific communities remain in an ambiguous position in New Zealand (Grainger, 2008).

Identities are spatially contingent. Within this process of identifying, locating and contextualising ourselves as social subjects we are also attributing characteristics to place. Particular places take on specific identities as we attribute meanings to place. Similarly places ascribe meanings to the identities and characteristics of social groups. The concept of “ethnoburbs” describes the relationship between the settlement patterns of migrant communities and particular suburbs. Ethnoburbs are suburban ethnic clusters with a high concentration of one ethnic minority group in metropolitan cities (Li, 2005). In New Zealand this aptly describes Pacific and Asian communities where the suburbs of South Auckland are typically identified as Pacific spaces given the high proportion of Pacific peoples. Similarly the impact that the Chinese and Asian community has had on the Eastern Auckland suburb of Howick is reflected in the Howick being referred to locally as “Chow-wick” (Johnston et al., 2008). The way in which space is conceptualised, organised, and controlled raises questions of power and dominance such as who controls which space and how is space organised? The processes of residential segregation along ethnic and social class divides highlight these issues. For example areas of South Auckland which are largely populated by Pacific communities are also areas of high deprivation, whilst Howick and other Eastern Auckland suburbs with high Asian and European density are mostly areas of
low deprivation (Salmond et al., 2007). This illustrates how inequalities are spatialised along ethnic and socioeconomic lines in New Zealand.

1.4 Thesis Outline

This chapter provides the rationale and purpose for this thesis. I also outline the conceptual framework of this thesis and the key concepts and literature that were examined. In Chapter Two I explore the place of Samoans in wider New Zealand society to provide important contextual information. The chapter begins with a broad discussion on contemporary Samoans in New Zealand before discussing fa’asamoa. This is followed with a discussion on the theory of postcolonialism and its relevance to this thesis. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the concept of liminality to illustrate how the identity and learning of Samoans is informed by both fa’asamoa and Western New Zealand culture.

In Chapter Three I describe the health inequalities that exist for Samoan and Pacific communities in New Zealand. This is then followed by a discussion of the concept of social determinants of health that suggests one strategy to reduce Pacific health inequalities is to increase the capacity of a capable Pacific health workforce. However, there are also important educational factors that need to be considered to develop the Pacific health workforce in New Zealand. The second part of the chapter therefore discusses Samoan and Pacific inequalities in education. Using Vygotsky’s social construction theory for education I examine why culture matters for learning and how sociocultural processes of learning impact on the achievement levels of Samoan and Pacific learners.

In Chapter Four I outline my qualitative methodology, which was an inductive iterative qualitative approach informed by the Pacific ethical principles specified by the Health Research Council of New Zealand, to address the research aim and objectives. I then discuss in detail the five phase method I used to collect data. The chapter ends by outlining the thematic analysis approach I used to analyse and (re)present data as well as specific ethical issues in (re)presenting data.

Chapter Five is the first of my three analysis chapters. These chapters are descriptive as they outline the results from my data. In this chapter I examine the key learning enablers and barriers to learning that participants identified. These are grouped into the following five categories: individual agency, family, university, friends, and spirituality.

In Chapter Six I examine the results specific to the issue of support. In this chapter I present the views of students, parents and university in understanding what support means to each group and how
support is given to students. I also examine how support is reciprocal where students also provide support to their family.

Chapter Seven explores the issues of identity and place and how these issues influence Samoan learners at university. Using the concept of lagimalie as a metaphor I examine how Samoan learners negotiate the demands of being a Samoan tertiary learner and what this means in a Samoan home and in university. I also examine ethnic spatial inequalities and how the university is a postcolonial cultural context and what this means in the classroom. I examine how identity impacts on the learning of Samoan learners and explore the issue of classroom engagement. Using liminality I explore how students can integrate their two cultural contexts to have a positive impact on their learning.

Chapter Eight is my discussion chapter where I revisit my research question and my conceptual framework. Here I examine the results in light of current literature and my conceptual framework and discuss the strengths and limitations of this thesis. I also outline how this research contributes to existing bodies of postcolonial, social inequalities and Samoan literature.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis. I provide some recommendations for tertiary institutions and policy based on the research findings and analyses. I also provide some recommendations for areas of future research to improve the learning outcomes for Samoan and Pacific learners.
Chapter Two: The Place of Samoans in New Zealand

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide contextual information about contemporary Samoans in New Zealand. I begin by discussing the key issues for contemporary Samoans living in New Zealand, specifically how changing immigration and demographics impact on the identity of Samoans in New Zealand. This is then followed by a discussion of fa’asamoa with an explicit focus on aiga, the matai system, Christianity and lagimalie. In the following section I discuss the theory of postcolonialism as a way of understanding how social inequalities and inequities arise from the privileging of Western culture. I then explore how university could be understood as a postcolonial context. The chapter then concludes with a discussion of the concept of liminality. Liminality is a useful concept to illustrate how Samoan tertiary health learners negotiate the transition between the cultural context of home and university. In this section I explore how the identity of Samoans living in New Zealand is informed by both fa’asamoa and New Zealand/European culture, thus being in-between cultures.

The key concepts discussed in this chapter are highlighted by the light blue shapes in Figure 2.1 below:
Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework concepts discussed in Chapter Two
2.2 Samoans in New Zealand

This section provides demographic and contextual information that places Samoan communities within wider New Zealand society.

2.2.1 Demographics

Samoans form the largest Pacific group in New Zealand, making up over half of the Pacific population and representing 3.3% of the total population (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). Between 1986 and 2006 the Samoan population almost doubled with an increase of 98% and the increase was 14% between 2001 and 2006 (ibid.). The growth of the Samoan population in New Zealand is largely driven by birthrates rather than by permanent migration. This is represented by 60% of the Samoan population born in New Zealand (ibid.). New Zealand and Samoa have a unique relationship that is reflected in New Zealand’s immigration policy. New Zealand has a quota system which allows up to 1,100 permanent residents per year from Samoa (Callister and Didham, 2007).

In 2006, 38% of Samoans were under the age of 15 which is the same for the total Pacific population. Only 4% of the Samoan population is over the age of 65 (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). This illustrates that the Samoan population is a youthful population. This has implications in terms of education given that over one third of the Samoan population will be in compulsory\(^2\) schooling. Another key feature of the Samoan population, as with other Pacific populations, is that many Samoans have multiple ethnicities. Two thirds of the Samoan population gave Samoan as their sole ethnicity in the 2006 census while 22% reported at least one other ethnic group. In this group the majority of ethnic makeup is Samoan/European at 44% and this was followed with Samoan/Other Pacific at 25% and 22% reported Samoan/Māori, as illustrated in the figure below.

\(^2\) This refers to primary/intermediate and secondary schooling. Schooling in New Zealand is compulsory for children aged between 6 and 16 years old. Schooling in New Zealand is free up until the age of 19 years.
There was an almost evenly balanced gender distribution of Samoans with 49% males and 51% females (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). The Samoan community is a highly urbanised community with 98% of the community living in urban areas. The majority of Samoans live in the greater Auckland region accounting for 68% of the Samoan population. Of this total, 54 percent live in the South Auckland region (ibid.). Elsewhere in New Zealand, 16% of Samoans live in Wellington and 5% live in the Canterbury region.

About 70% of Samoan adults have a formal educational qualification (secondary school or post-school qualification). The comparable figures for the total Pacific and New Zealand populations are 65% and 75%, respectively. A higher proportion of Samoan women (72%) than men (65%) had a formal qualification. Furthermore, the proportion of New Zealand-born Samoans (77%) who have a formal qualification is much higher than overseas-born Samoans (62%) (Statistics New Zealand, 2007).

The median annual income in 2006 for the Samoan adult population was $21,400 (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). In comparison the median annual incomes for the total Pacific population and New Zealand populations in 2006 were $20,500 and $24,400 respectively. One of the main reasons for Samoans lower income levels is because of the youthful age structure. Evidence shows that income and earning potential increases with age (de Raad, 2007).
2.2.2 Migration to New Zealand

Considerable migration from Samoa and other Pacific peoples occurred after World War 2 during New Zealand’s economic boom (Macpherson, 2004). Pacific migrants filled the gaps in semi-skilled and unskilled labour. This led to the concentration of Pacific migrants in urban areas such as Auckland, as these were the locations of employment, industry, and opportunity (Pulotu-Endemann and Spoonley, 1992). Further, social processes such as chain migration and cultural patterns of mobility exacerbated the urbanisation of Pacific migrants (ibid.). Chain migration is the social process where initial migrants become established in a particular area and then other family members and friends migrate to either live in the same household or become established separately but within the same area (Hiebert, 2009). For Samoans, patterns of migration and mobility have always been family and community driven (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009). This cultural pattern of mobility explains in part the clustering of Samoan communities in migrant cities. In New Zealand, areas with a high proportion of Samoans are typically suburbs in and around the fringes of Auckland City such as Grey Lynn and Manukau City. These areas are also suburbs of manufacturing plants and companies in which Samoans were typically employed (Anae, 2006).

From the 1980s New Zealand began to experience an economic downturn and so the situation of a shortage of labour was reversed as New Zealand faced increasing unemployment. Despite this, Pacific migration did not cease as would be expected but still continued at a reduced rate, largely because of familial relationships (Macpherson and Macpherson, 1999; Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009). Although New Zealand was in a recession, it still represented an ideal homeland for Samoans as New Zealand still had far more educational opportunities and future prospects (Pulotu-Endemann and Spoonley, 1992).

The 1980s and 1990s was a challenging period for Pacific migrants in New Zealand. Economic pressures had created a situation where Pacific migrants who had once been openly welcomed by the state were subjected to racism and discrimination as exemplified by the infamous dawn raids (Spoonley, 2001). The dawn raid was a practise utilised by the National government in the 1980s to identify and locate “ overstayer” migrants. This practice involved immigration officers and police invading homes of only Pacific peoples in the early hours of the morning. Dawn raids were not new but the manner in which it was carried out with the specific intent of singling out Pacific overstayers indicated both a sense of desperation on the part of the government to be seen as addressing the issue with severity and the impotence of the existing immigration system (Grainger, 2008). The practice also can be seen as a manifestation of institutional racism towards Pacific migrants as the visibly racial ‘other’ (ibid.). The government claimed that at the time there were approximately 9,500 illegal immigrants in the country but Pacific people accounted for less than a third of that number. Migrants were viewed as stealing...
jobs from New Zealanders and creating unnecessary unemployment for the ‘typical’ New Zealander. Pacific people were the most visible of migrants in New Zealand and considered the easiest target (Liava’a, 1998). Pacific people were also the only ones prosecuted and deported for immigration violations. The irony is that throughout New Zealand’s history and even up until now the majority of migrants have come from Anglo-Saxon nations, more specifically from Britain. In comparison, Pacific migration was still relatively small compared to European migration (Spoonley et al., 2003). This led to racial violence and conflict as Pacific migrants bore the brunt of the consequences of the economic downturn (Gough, 2006).

For Samoan migrants and their families, Auckland continues to be the destination of choice both temporarily and permanently (Anae, 2004). The growth of New Zealand’s Pacific population from the 1940s to the 1970s was migration-based but since then the growth has been domestically driven, resulting in the majority of Samoans living in New Zealand now being young New Zealand-born Samoans. The identity politics of New Zealand-born Samoans have recently become a hot topic for Samoan social science academics as discussed later in this chapter.

2.2.3 Contemporary Samoans in New Zealand

The experience of Samoans living in New Zealand is informed by a combination of New Zealand/European institutions and traditional Samoan perspectives. The degree of importance that each of these factors have on Samoan New Zealanders has changed slightly over time. Since the first migration waves of Samoans to New Zealand Samoan communities have evolved where there are now intergenerational differences between Samoans born in Samoa and New Zealand born Samoans. In addition a burgeoning group of middle class Samoan and Pacific communities has emerged (Callister and Didham, 2007).

Early academic writings on Samoans in New Zealand indicate how the church and the aiga were the two stabilising features for the community during their initial disconcerting phase of settlement in New Zealand, as illustrated by the extract below:

... the Samoan community in New Zealand has coped with the problems of adjustment chiefly through their own social resources. That they have had to do so reflects in some measure the insufficiency or inadequacy of institutions in the host society. More significantly, that they have for the most part succeeded in doing so reflects the strength of the social institutions that the migrants brought with them to New Zealand, especially the aiga and church. (Pitt and Macpherson, 1974, p. 11)

This observation from the 1970s illustrates the historical and cultural significance of aiga and the church for Samoan migrants. Criticisms made in the New Zealand media of the current relationship between the church and Samoan congregations (see Grainger, 2008) fail to recognise that the church
historically became the provider for all social services for Samoan communities. As Pitt and Macpherson (1974) highlight, this was the result of New Zealand institutions being unable to meet the needs of Samoan communities.

With the large number of Samoans and Pacific peoples residing in Auckland, Auckland is often touted as the ‘Polynesian’ capital of the world and the showplace of Pacific culture (Anae, 2006). For example the University of Auckland is home to second largest *fale*\(^3\) in the world. One key feature of the Samoan community on the identity of Auckland is the sporting achievements and successes in cultural mediums such as music, television, and art of Samoans. Many of New Zealand’s successful national sports teams such as the All Blacks (rugby), Silver Ferns (netball) and the Kiwis (rugby league) have included significant numbers of Samoans (Grainger 2008; Te’evale 2001). New Zealand based artists like Michael Tuffery incorporate elements of Samoan cultural traditions in what is considered New Zealand contemporary art. New Zealand born Samoan music artists have also influenced mainstream music in New Zealand where artists such as Savage and Scribe have won many New Zealand Music awards in the last decade. Music and in particular hip hop has become a way for young New Zealand Samoans to articulate and construct their identities whilst at the same time influencing New Zealand’s music landscape (see Bennett 2002).

The Samoan community in New Zealand has evolved from transient migrants to a community that is willing to lay down more roots in order to create and sustain a transnational population (Gough, 2006). The fact that the growth of the Samoan community is largely domestically driven indicates that the majority of Samoans in New Zealand are politically and legally New Zealand citizens. The assumption is that as a citizen one belongs and is part of the state, but this is not always the case. Citizenship is an important factor that impacts on the relationship between Samoan communities and New Zealand given that Samoans, as with Pacific communities, are not considered New Zealanders rather, they are considered foreigners in the dominant discourse (Anae, 2006; McCreanor *et al.*, 2006). This can be attributed to the assumed congruence between citizenship and national identity where Pacific people are considered to be citizens by name but because of their looks they are still viewed as being foreigners.

Recently, this issue came to head in New Zealand politics and media where a television presenter who was employed by New Zealand’s state-owned broadcaster questioned Prime Minister John Key on whether he would appoint a new Governor-General “who looks and sounds like a New Zealander” (Neville and Harper, 2010). The current Governor-General is Sir Anand Satyanand of Fijian and Indian

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\(^3\) Traditional Samoan house
ancestry, who was born and raised in Auckland. This caused outrage in New Zealand and internationally but a spokeswoman for the broadcaster was reported to have said that the presenter was only saying things that “the rest of New Zealand was thinking but too scared to say” (ibid.). Following the aftermath of the controversy public opinion was indeed split; where there were people who were in full support of the presenter whilst others were dismayed by the racist comments. This recent event illustrates how citizenship and national identity are political and based on ethnicity.

For Samoans living in New Zealand the issue of citizenship raises questions of identity and belonging. These questions in turn can impact on the sense of belonging that Samoans have in relation to institutions. These questions are important if we are to understand the experiences of minoritised learners in educational institutions. Issues of belonging and citizenship can potentially impact on the achievement of Samoan students who, by birth, are citizens in New Zealand but are continually marginalised and made to feel alien in spaces and places that are legitimately theirs. The following section explores the issue of New Zealand-born Samoan identities.

2.2.4 Samoan Identity “Labels”
Samoans in New Zealand have distinctive experiences and values which they do not share with other Pacific peoples. Differences of culture and language outweigh the commonality of the New Zealand experience (Anae, 2006). Unlike other Pacific people in New Zealand, Samoans have been able to maintain their language at strength with 64% of people of Samoan ethnicity indicating they could speak Samoan although only about 40% were born in Samoa. Interestingly, the 2006 census revealed that the Samoan language was the third most spoken language in New Zealand after English and Te Reo (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010a).

What is interesting is the negotiation and dynamism of New Zealand-born Samoans in the formation and creation of their identities. This negotiation is often fraught with internal political identity struggles, which are shaped by both traditional and New Zealand/European frameworks that are more often than not competing and contradicting each other. Anae’s (1998) doctoral thesis explored the social construction of ethnic identity by New Zealand-born Samoans via fa’asamoa, church, and the context of New Zealand. Anae aimed to provide an understanding and an interpretation on the construction of self by New Zealand-born Samoans and carried out her research with the Samoan congregation of a Pan-Pacific Christian Church in Auckland. Qualitative methodologies were utilised to gather data that included the researcher engaging in participant observation by attending and participating in church related activities as well as 39 in-depth interviews and three group discussions. Based on her research she claims that “secured identities can be reached by viewing the identity

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4 Māori language
journey as a series of rites of passage—enforced rituals which challenge one’s right to be ‘a New Zealander’, and on the other hand, one’s right to be ‘a Samoan’” (Anae, 1998, p. 354).

Tupuola (1998, 2004), a Samoan academic currently working abroad, investigated the construction of identity within a diasporic context by examining the identity of young Samoan women born in New Zealand who were aged between 16 and 18 at the time of her study. Her study participants argued that the Western adolescent identity model did not represent their identity, nor did the ethnic and cultural identities that Samoan elders and peers “impose” on them. The participants also went on to state that they resented the label of New Zealand-born Samoans. Participants suggested that the identity formation that best illustrated how they construct and perceive themselves emulates that of “coloured” or “black” Americans (Tupuola, 2004). Thus, Tupuola argues that Pacific identities are created globally and that current scholarship on Pacific youth identity fails to recognise the importance of the global nature of Pacific youth in New Zealand by focusing too much on local contexts. It is difficult to ascertain whether the participants were indeed trying to emulate coloured or black American youth, or rather, that they identify with coloured or black American youth, as there was no transcript material provided in the journal article. This study differs from that of Anae in that some of Anae’s participants were able to critically reflect on their identity journeys from adolescence to adulthood. For example Anae’s participants had grown up in the church but during their young adult years had drifted from the church. However, as they too begun having their own families they realised the value of the church in retaining fa’asamoa and cultural values, and felt that it was important that their children were raised in a Samoan church for both spiritual and cultural teachings. Thus, it would be interesting if there is a follow up study with Tupuola’s participants to gauge whether in adulthood they perceive their identity constructions in the same way.

Tupuola’s (2004) conclusions also differ to the conclusions of Keddell’s (2006) study. Keddell’s (2006) small qualitative study examined the construction of identity for four young people who had one Samoan parent and one Pakeha parent in New Zealand. Using a narrative approach Keddell argued that the construction of identity is informed by the dominant discourses operating in the macro contexts of their local community (such as schools) and the micro contexts of the nuclear family. There are some differences in the studies as Keddell’s study was with a smaller group of Samoans of mixed ethnicity while Tupuola’s participants were all females. However, comparisons can be made in understanding how young people of Samoan ancestry construct their identities. Keddell’s conclusions are similar to that of Anae (1998) in that the construction of identity is locally based whereas Tupuola argues that it is globally based. Nonetheless these studies highlight the challenges that Samoans face in trying to find their place in New Zealand and the social implications that these have on their everyday lives.
The construction of identities is complex especially for migrants living in a predominantly white society. Multiple nationalities challenge assumptions about citizenship and belonging for citizens who look visibly different to mainstream. The assumption of having citizenship and being born in a country does not equate to a sense of belonging if you are continually marginalised and made to feel like an outsider because of the colour of your skin. This raises issues of power and dominance of mainstream cultures over minoritised cultures through the privileging of mainstream cultural traditions and norms. Struggles over ethnic identity politics are important given that learning is embodied. The way you look and how you feel in environments can influence and impact on your learning. Feeling out of place because of identity issues in classrooms has the potential to impact negatively on learning outcomes.

2.3 Fa’asamoa

This section provides an overview of fa’asamoa by first explaining what fa’asamoa means followed by a discussion of the three fundamental institutions of fa’asamoa, which are: aiga; the matai system; and Christianity, each of which is defined and elaborated on respectively. This is then followed by a discussion of the concept lagimalie.

Fa’asamoa, or the ‘Samoan way’ refers to the traditional ways and customs of the Samoans. It underpins Samoan identity and is founded on alofa or love (Efi et al., 2008). Fa’asamoa is also based upon traditional customs, practices, and spiritual and cultural values of Samoans, and the concomitant worldview, lifestyle and language within which they are embodied (Lima, 2004, p.11). The current head of state for Samoa, Tupua Tamasese, refers to fa’asamoa as:

>a body of custom and usage... a mental attitude to God, to fellow men and to his [sic] surroundings. It is a distinctive lifestyle. It is not the physical make-up, the mood or passion of one man. It is a collection of spiritual and cultural values that motivates people. It is the heritage of people. (Efi et al., 2008)

Samoan historian Meleisea refers to fa’asamoa as the term used by the Samoans for their political and economic system, a framework for action based upon the social structure of the aiga (family), the nu’u (village) and the pule (authority) of the fono a matai (council of chiefs) (Meleisea, 1987b). Traditional customs and cultural values are outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Samoan customs and cultural values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aiga</th>
<th>Family including extended family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gafa</td>
<td>Genealogies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotu</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alofa</td>
<td>Love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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5 family  
6 Balance of peace
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Fa’aaloalo</strong></th>
<th>Respect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Va</strong></td>
<td>Physical and relational space between people and things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gagana Samoa</strong></td>
<td>Samoan language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Matai</strong></td>
<td>Chiefly system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fa’alavelave</strong></td>
<td>Ceremonial and other obligations. A disruption to the normal activity of everyday life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tautua</strong></td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feagaiga</strong></td>
<td>Covenant between brother and sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Usita’i</strong></td>
<td>Discipline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not every Samoan has the same understanding of *fa’asamoa* but what remains constant is maintaining the family and links with the homeland (Lilomaia-Doktor, 2009). This is epitomised in the *fono fale* model which underpins mental health delivery models for Samoan communities (Pulotu-Endemann, 2009). The *fono fale* model was developed by Pulotu-Endemann to help mental health agencies in providing mental health services to Pacific communities. The fono fale model identifies family and links to Samoa as important factors to consider when delivering mental health services to Pacific communities (ibid.). There are now a number of Samoan health delivery models, such as the *fa’afaletui* (Tamasese *et al.*, 2005), which illustrate the socioecological approach within a Samoan context where individual, social, cultural, economic and political factors are interwoven to provide a contextual background for Samoan individuals.

More recently Samoans globally have tried to encapsulate Samoan cultural values through performance arts, visual arts, and architecture. The concepts of *va* and *feagaiga* have captured the imagination of Samoan contemporary artists and as a result Samoan artists’ like Laita, Taulealo, and Feu’u have incorporated the concept of *va* in some of their artwork. For example the canvas below is the interpretation of *feagaiga* by Fatu Feu’u, a Samoan artist based in New Zealand whose work has been showcased around the world including in America, Japan and Holland.
The conceptualisation of feagaiga and other Samoan traditional values through modern arts is a means of keeping Samoan traditions in the consciousness of Samoans and conveying a Samoan identity in a globalised world by Samoan artists (Taule’alo, 2001). The understandings and representations of Samoan traditional values and cultures continue to evolve where traditions that are deeply rooted in Samoan tradition are kept alive through and in contemporary mediums by Samoans.

These new mediums provide transnational Samoans the space in which to articulate and express their cultural identity. The use of Samoan motifs and symbols acts as signifiers and as a way of distinguishing Samoan culture. The importance of Samoan contemporary art globally is to recognise that despite the migration and mobility of Samoans, Samoan cultural identity still remains a significant part of their lived experiences and practices even if they have been born outside of Samoa.

2.3.1 Aiga
The central element in Samoan culture is the aiga. The aiga has been credited with successfully maintaining fa’asamoa and thus migrant cultural stability for Samoans (Thornton et al., 2010). Macpherson (2004) argues that Samoan aiga is the most important day-to-day form in which fa’asamoa is enacted and replicated. Within the family, reciprocity, tautua, fa’aloalo, and alofa are crucial in Samoan social relations. Young people are expected to serve and show respect to elders. The unquestioning obedience required and expected of Samoan children has become an increasing struggle and more difficult to deal with for young Samoans living abroad (Anae, 2006). Meleisea and
Schoeffel (1990) highlight how Samoan parents found it difficult to understand the extent of freedom that European New Zealanders give their teenagers, causing much tension in the Samoan family home in New Zealand. The authoritarian parenting of Samoan parents in New Zealand is not only based upon cultural values but also in response to their living situation. In most cases, the propensity for a more authoritarian parenting style compared to mainstream norms can also be explained as an adaptation to unfamiliar environments and perceived dangers (Auerbach, 2006).

Many Samoan families have made great sacrifices to migrate to New Zealand. Often the major factor in Samoan families deciding to migrate, as with other Pacific families, is specifically to ensure that their children have more education opportunities which will hopefully translate into better economic outcomes for the aiga (Macpherson et al., 2000). Unfortunately, the aspiration of Samoan parents for a bright economic future and social mobility in New Zealand does not always translate into real outcomes (Nash, 2000). This is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Educational research has shown that moral family support and parental involvement are positive enablers for children’s academic achievement at any level and for any ethnic group (Auerbach, 2006; Crozier and Davies, 2006; Jeynes, 2007). From literature and research it is clear that Samoan parents provide moral support and have significant interest in their children’s education (Fletcher et al., 2009; Utumapu-McBride et al., 2008; Valdez et al., 2007). However, many Samoan parents still view schools as completely responsible for the education and schooling of children, while perceiving that the family and community’s responsibility is primarily concerned with non-school aspects such as family lineage, spirituality, and cultural teachings (Onikama et al., 1998; Valdez et al., 2007). This division is further exacerbated by parents’ own lack of understanding of the school system in New Zealand and limited proficiency in English.

Qualitative studies that have explored Pacific students’ academic achievements in tertiary education have reported that Pacific students identify the importance of family support along with academic and pastoral support (Anae et al., 2002; Coxon et al., 2002). Although the studies go into detail in to the specifics of what academic and pastoral support means to Pacific students and the services that they should entail, there is not the same level of enquiry into family support. Thus, the voices of parents and family are currently missing from Samoan education literature. Family support is a significant factor that needs to be explored more fully given the importance of family and aiga in the lives of Samoans as well as the positive impact that family and parental involvement has on the educational achievements of children. One caveat in representing the voices of Samoan parents is to ensure that this is embedded within fa’asamoa as an alternative worldview so as to avoid deficit theorising.
2.3.2 Matai system

The matai system is one of the distinguishing features of Samoan society. The matai system is at the core of political organisation in Samoa and links political and kinship systems (Thornton et al., 2010). Meleisea (1987a) defined a matai as a chief, a person empowered through possession of a chiefly name or title, with authority over lands and people. They are part of a village system as well as being leaders of a dispersed extended family. The title transforms the holder from a secular or common status to one that is filled with dignity, sacredness, authority and stately presence. The empowerment, however, lies within the name of the title rather than the titleholders. Although matai are in a sense all chiefs, chiefly titles differ in terms of rank, general prestige, and power. There are two types of matai, one of which is ali’i, who are described as the noblemen or dignitaries with formal powers to command. The other type is called tulāfale, whose role as an orator is to speak on behalf of the ali’i, and whose power is explicitly political. These two roles complement each other (Tuimaleali‘ifano, 2006).

Matai titles are not always given on the basis of ascription, although Samoans do stress genealogical connections to matai titles (Tuimaleali‘ifano, 2006). Instead, the bestowing of a title is done through a democratic process where a person is elected by the consensus of the affiliated group gathered for the event. There are no set criteria or norms for electing a titleholder, however there is a certain standard where the elected titleholder is seen by their extended family as being the most able member. An able member should be knowledgeable in Samoan lore, genealogy and oratory as well as being capable of using this knowledge, as Samoans put it, with profound wisdom and caution (Meleisea, 1987b). Consideration is also given to a person’s talent, tautua and or financial standing. However the process is without its challenges. As time passes and different branches of extended families begin expanding conflict between families arise as respective representations of custom often differ generating disputes as to who has the right to hold different titles and govern customary land (Tuimaleali‘ifano, 1998). Such disputes are resolved in the Samoan Land and Titles Court however the court is based on an uncondified and indefinite understanding of custom and usage thus creating a proliferation of ‘custom and usage’ interpretations and definitions (Tuimaliali‘ifano, 1998, p.102). Consequently, there is a difficult but much needed task to define and codify custom and usage in order to resolve title and land disputes and address contradictions in differing interpretations.

2.3.3 Christianity

Christianity continues to be a defining feature of Samoans in New Zealand. The 2006 census data showed that 86% of Samoans affiliated with a religion and of that proportion 98% affiliated themselves
with a Christian domination (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). Samoans born in Samoa were more likely to report a religious affiliation than those born in New Zealand.

In ancient Samoa religion and spirituality were prominent in the Samoan indigenous reference as indicated through the concept of lagimalie. Christianity and the importance of church however is an introduced Western phenomenon. The first missionaries arrived in Samoa in the early 1800s, spreading the teachings of Christianity and Western Christian values and practices. By the late 1900s a “Samoanised” form of Christianity gained universal acceptance in Samoa (Meleisea, 1987a). This is reflected in the national emblem and flag of Samoa which states “Faavae Samoa le Atua” which translates to “Samoa is founded on God”, and in the landscape of Samoa where there is proliferation of stately and grand European churches. Tofaeono (2000) provided a detailed genealogy of religious beliefs in Samoa in his theological dissertation, in which he aimed to construct a contextual eco-theology. Tofaeono suggested religious beliefs need to be based on the understanding that they tend to reflect changing beliefs and values through time and so his dissertation focused on three major historical religious phases for Samoa, which are: the pre-European contact era; the early missionary and colonial activities; and the contemporary situation. This dissertation is one of the few academic pieces on Samoan religion that includes an in depth interrogation on how the Samoanised form of Christianity came to be, by providing a detailed discussion on religion in ancient Samoa.

In New Zealand the church took on a unique role for Samoan communities as aforementioned. Churches became a surrogate for traditional villages in Samoa as a foundation and central point of social organisation (Pitt and Macpherson, 1974; Anae, 1998). As such, the church became and arguably is still a prominent platform for Samoan identity particularly in a New Zealand context. In this sense the church became constituting and constitutive of Samoan identity during the first migration wave in New Zealand (Anae, 1998). The acknowledgement of the church as a site of Samoan identity construction in New Zealand has led several Samoan academics like Tiatia (1998) and Anae (1998), examine issues of Pacific identity and church in New Zealand through academic scholarship. In recent times anecdotal evidence shows how the church has become a scapegoat for attributing the inequalities in educational achievement of Pacific learners through deficit theorising (Nash, 2000). The common discourse suggests that Pacific learners are failing at school and low academic achievement can be attributed to Pacific learners spending too much time participating and attending church activities in lieu of studying and completing homework. Some researchers are beginning to actively contest this discourse through research. One such study includes research conducted with parents and teachers of Pacific children in New Zealand (Fletcher et al., 2009). The narratives from the interviews with both parents and teachers

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7 Predominantly Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist denominations.
showed that church is a useful site for students to learn literacy skills through reading the bible. Bible reading is encouraged in Pacific homes and therefore becomes an important text in which Pacific learners can develop their literacy skills. This discourse will be interrogated more critically in the results and discussion chapters of the thesis.

2.3.4 Lagimalie

Lagimalie is the Samoan term coined by Tupua Tamasese Efi (2008) that refers to Samoans’ balance of peace; it is a state of wellness. There are four key harmonies that hold the balance of peace for Samoans, which are summarised in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: The four harmonies of Samoans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Harmony with the cosmos</th>
<th>Acknowledgement of the sacred relations between Samoans and heaven. The importance in understanding this sacredness between heavens and the environment has long been respected by Samoans whose livelihoods in the past were dependent on cosmically based navigational knowledge. (Lefale, 2008).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harmony with the environment</td>
<td>Involves the equivalence in the relationship between Samoans and plant and animal life and the recognition that the contribution of plant and animal life to ensuring survival of people and earth is divine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony with other people</td>
<td>Samoans find that there exist special relationships between people that are dictated by tapu,8 which in turn are accompanied by sacred covenants called feagaiga9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony with oneself</td>
<td>There are three key parts to a person or self: the tino10, the mafaufau11 and the agaga12. Harmony with self requires harmony with these three parts. Harmony with oneself is also acknowledgement that humans are self-reflective beings and that intelligence and wisdom are as much as a result of self reflection and personal experience as they are a result of knowledge and teachings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within fa’asamo, the process towards lagimalie or a state of wellness occurs when all four harmonies are in balance and harmony with one another. Two of the harmonies that warrant elaboration for the purpose of this thesis are the harmony with other people and harmony with oneself.

Two relationships that are paramount for maintaining harmony with other people for Samoans are the relationship between parent and child, and that between brother and sister. The relationship between parent and child is also a metaphor for harmony between matai and family members and/or between the nation state and its citizens. The relationship between parent and child is sacred and Samoans recognise that it is in this relationship that children learn the values of love and compassion, so that love for others draws on the love between parent and child. The mother and child bond is spiritual and

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8 Sacred connections
9 Covenant
10 Body
11 Mind
12 Spirit
material as the child is carried in the mother’s womb. Both parents nurture the life of the child by instruction and example. This is exemplified in the Samoan maxim:

\[\text{pi’i pi’i ama (hanging on to the outrigger)}\]
\[\text{vae vae manava (sharing the womb)}\]

According to Tui Atua Efi this expression is interpreted as the instruction of parents to children to remember the importance of love and of balance and good judgement (2008: 110). The maxim implies that parents have a responsibility to love, raise, and care for children and in return children will respect and care for their parents. The relationship between parent and child is marked by the power invested in parents to give children either fa’amanuiga\(^{13}\) or impose malamatuā.\(^{14}\) In any case, harmony between parent and child provides the basis of harmony in society.

Feagaiga is an important covenant or sacred relationship that pertains to the relationship or harmony between brother and sister and is another distinguishing feature of Samoan culture (Tofaeono, 2000). The feagaiga is both status and covenant and underlines indigenous Samoan principles of gender and the social and political organisation of ancient Samoan society. The feagiaga is a principle that guides relations, duties and power between brother and sister. It is also used to refer the status of a religious minister in terms of heading the congregation. In ancient Samoa feagaiga was based on the premise that the brother takes care of the sister and is founded on the principle that women have the gift of producing life, and as child-bearers women were seen as sharing divinity with the gods. The feagaiga and harmony between brother and sister also underscores the relationship between husband and wife and male and female (Meleisea, 1987a).

Harmony with self refers to the Samoan indigenous religion that perceives self to be comprised of three parts as stated in Table 2.2: harmony in the mind, body and soul (Macpherson, 1990; Efi et al., 2008). Although Samoan academics and scholars have written about the concepts of harmony and balance for the Samoan subject, particularly in the context of health and wellbeing, Tupua Tamasese Efi (2008) provided a Samoan term for the concept in written text. As Samoan culture is an oral culture there are other possible and equally valid Samoan terms that refer to the concept that have yet to be written. Given that there is no other textual alternative, lagimalie is used in this thesis as the term to encapsulate the Samoan concept for the Samoan subject maintaining peace, balance and harmony in life.

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\(^{13}\) Blessings
\(^{14}\) Curses
Lagimalie has been used in the field of Pacific mental health to begin theorising Pacific frameworks in regards to understanding the Pacific psyche or soul, in order to develop mental health services that are effective for Pacific clients (Alefaio, 2009). Although lagimalie is a Samoan concept and term, it has been used in relation to mental health service delivery with Pacific communities to communicate the holistic nature of health as perceived by many Pacific communities.

Lagimalie is an important concept for this thesis as it can be used as a metaphor for the ways in which Samoan tertiary learners strive to maintain and balance the worldviews, expectations and demands of their home Samoan world and the university Western world. Lagimalie is also illustrative of the complexity in identity and the lived experiences of Samoan learners engaged in New Zealand tertiary health studies.

2.4 Postcolonialism

Within the university context postcolonialism provides a framework in which we can understand the privileging of Western cultural knowledge and how this impacts on the learning of minoritised learners in a multicultural society (Burman and Chantler, 2004). Postcolonial theorists critique and deconstruct the cultural and broader ideological legacy of imperialism in Western societies. In multicultural societies, such as New Zealand, appreciating alternative worldviews other than European worldviews is important given the diversity in population. An appreciation of different cultural contexts, ways of knowing and knowledge construction by educational institutions and educators in New Zealand has the potential to impact positively on the educational achievements of Samoan learners in New Zealand.

Since its inception there have been a number of debates as to what postcolonial theory is and the way in which postcolonial ideas such as power and difference are used to theorise a number of conditions (Sidaway, 2002). One of the key debates in terms of understanding postcolonial theory is over the use or non-use of the hyphen. Some argue that the use of the hyphen (that is, post-colonial) indicates the chronological period after colonialism or the post-independence era, thus emphasising the break between colonialism and independence (Sharp, 2009). Thus, post-colonialism typically refers to a chronological historical period.

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15 This term is adopted from Burman and Chantler (2004) who define it as a position that some groups and communities acquire as an outcome of a socio-historical process rather than by virtue of some inherent property (p.393).
In contrast postcolonial theory is a large and well-established body of literature that examines the ways in which people of non-western societies are marginalised through “othering”. As Gregory (2000) suggests, postcolonial theory is,

*centrally concerned with the impact of colonialism and its contestation of the cultures of both colonising and colonised peoples in the past, and the reproduction and transformations of colonial relations, representations and practices in the present (p. 612).*

The extract above explains how socio-historical processes during the colonisation period in which difference and power was established between colonialists, typically European societies, and those colonised, typically non-Europeans, are still reminiscent in the present.

Postcolonialism deconstructs the subject formation of non-Europeans by Europeans, and critiques Western normative understandings and representation of colonised subjects established in the colonial past (Gregory, 2000). Questions of othering and the minoritisation of ethnic communities are often central to postcolonial inquiries. Othering is the process by which people are defined as being different from the dominant or majority group (Hubbard *et al.*, 2002). In this sense postcolonialism as an approach is useful for this thesis as it illustrates how historical events and processes contribute to the minoritisation of Samoan and Pacific communities in contemporary New Zealand society.

Young (1990) categorises othering and cultural stereotyping as a form of oppression which she terms cultural imperialism. Cultural imperialism is the “universalisation of a dominant group’s experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm” (Young 1990: 281). The injustice of cultural imperialism is that oppressed groups’ own experiences and interpretation of social life differ from the dominant culture while the dominant culture imposes its experiences and interpretation on the social life of the oppressed group. Young argues that the group defined and stereotyped as inferior and “other” are done so by the dominant group because they are culturally different to that of the dominant culture. Consequently, othering is dialectic in that the stereotyped and inferiorised images by the dominant group can be internalised by other. Othering raises the questions of who is being “othered” and by whom and by what authority.

Postcolonialism became prominent in the 1990s and is concerned with analysing and criticising how colonising ideologies, values, and knowledge are perpetuated in the post-colonial era and are replicated by the institutions of education, governance, and media (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2006). The concern is that in spite of national independence from colonial and imperial regimes it is more difficult to overturn the internalisation of colonial values and ways of knowing in post-colonial societies (Gregory, 2000; Sharp, 2009). Subsequently the universal humanist claims of the colonial past remain
and are perpetuated in the post-colonial societies in the present. This was the main concern of Said (1978) who troubled colonial representations of non-Western cultures through his Orientalism writings.

His postcolonial writings focused on how white Europeans and North Americans fail to understand, or even try to understand, differences between Western cultures and non-Western cultures (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2006). Said asked questions about how colonised cultures are represented, the power of these representations to shape and control other cultures, and how colonial discourse constructs the coloniser and colonised subject positions. Said’s most influential work, Orientalism (1978), emphasised the relationship between power and knowledge in the way European scholars and others viewed and imagined the Islamic Arab world. Following the work by French poststructuralist Foucault, Said understood discourse as systems of linguistic usage and codes, discursive formations whether written or spoken, that produce knowledge. Discourse as a form of knowledge that exerts power is of particular importance in the articulation of Orientalism, by Said, whereby Orientalism is both a discursive formation and a corporate institution for the production of the “Orient”.

Said argues that the concept of difference is enabled through discursive formation. Said argues that Western countries or the ‘Occident’ defines itself by what it is not, the ‘Orient’. Thus the binary of the ‘Occident’ and the ‘Orient’ was socially constructed by Westerners to create and establish Western power. Power emerges through Western institutions and practices that name, characterise, and describe the Orient whilst those who reside in the Orient are silenced. Orientalism describes how and why the Orient becomes subjugated through the privileging of Western culture.

Said suggests that the Orient also includes all of the cultures of northern Africa, East to Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. The representation of people in these regions are dominated by Western imaginative geographies and perpetuated through dominant discourses and institutions such as schools and universities (Sharp, 2009). Said characterises the discourse of Orientalism by using a series of binary oppositions between the positivities of the West and the corresponding absences representing the East (Gregory, 2000; Said, 1978). Examples of some of these binaries are listed in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Orientalism binaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEST/OCCIDENT</th>
<th>EAST/ORIENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive/presence</td>
<td>Negative/absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Irrational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Despotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Timeless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developed | Backward
---|---
Science | Superstition
Moral | Immoral
Religious | Heathen

Source: Adapted from Gregory (2000); Said (1978); and Sharp (2009)

According to Said the binaries are different and not equal. So-called Western knowledge values one set of binary terms, that is the Occident over the Orient, in which case the Orient terms are seen as either deviating from the Occident term, or as definitively wrong as the Occident term is universalised to represent the right way (Said, 1978, p.59). These binaries result in discourses that mark the Orient as different from the Occident. One such discourse is based on science and knowledge, which is of particular relevance to this thesis. The proof of Western superiority via science has formed the basis of privileging Western ways of knowing through the institutions of government and education. The proof of Western science is outlined below using the summation provided by Sharp:

1. In relation to the body, Western medicine overpowers disease by conquering illness and the fact that indigenous populations were decimated by European diseases introduced by Europeans was proof of European’s superior knowledge of the body.
2. The power and superiority of Western technology to conquer time and space, that is to travel long distances with relative ease with the invention of trains, ships and airplanes.
3. European science has conquered nature where the environment was made productive through mining minerals and science explains how nature works.
4. Orientals were immoral and it was the “white man’s burden” to bring morality to the Orient through religion and a Protestant work ethic. Because of morality, Europeans are able to control natural bodily desires (2009:21).

Orientalism critically analyses the way in which European science and knowledge of the Occident has been used to establish and make sense of the difference between the West and East (Said, 1978, p.61). Thus, the scientific “proof” of the West provides the avenue for Western ideologies, knowledge, and culture to be privileged over alternative ways of knowing and ideologies in postcolonial contexts (Loomba, 1998).

Critics have argued that Said’s binary distinctions are a dualistic structure that essentialises Western and non-Western cultures (MacKenzie, 1995). Further, Said has been criticised for implying that Western dominance and imperialism is and has been unchallenged, thus ignoring subaltern studies and academics such as Spivak (1990) who seek to give voice to the unvoiced and whose work resists the imperialism of Western culture. The binaries have also been challenged by Feminists who argue that Said has implicitly gendered the Orient as female and in doing so reinforces patriarchal notions that women are unable to speak or represent themselves (Sharp, 2009).
Other critics question the legitimacy of his claims given that the countries of his focus for *Orientalism*, Palestine and Egypt, were only under European rule for a relatively short period compared to other “Oriental” countries such as the British Raj in India (Irwin, 2006). Despite the critics and critiques of *Orientalism*, Said has influenced many academics and his ideas of imaginative geography and discursive formation remain relevant and pertinent for interrogating the dominance and power of European culture in contemporary societies.

Orientalism can be used to understand the way in which European New Zealand represents the Pacific and provides a framework to understand the privileging of Western values, science, history, geography and culture in New Zealand Universities. Orientalism provides a framework to highlight how the Pacific has been represented by Westerners using Western theories and knowledge since European contact to describe and characterise the Pacific, and how these representations are perpetuated in contemporary lectures and tutorial rooms at university. Orientalism also provides a framework for Samoan learners and other minoritised learners at university to critique natural and taken-for-granted knowledge taught at university.

New Zealand, like the United States, Canada, and Australia, is viewed as a breakaway settler colony that despite having formal independence from the colonial control of the founding country has yet to decolonise (McClintock, 1992). These societies are still based and founded on the cultural and ideological legacies of imperialism. Thus, the use of postcolonial concepts in these break-away settler colonies investigates and exposes what is in essence contemporary imperialism (ibid.). Postcolonialism in the New Zealand context has been used in a number of contexts both independently and interdependently, such as the legacy of British colonialism in modern day New Zealand, the issue of indigenous territorial rights and governance, and the arrival, status and position of minoritised cultures in New Zealand (Spoonley, 1995). In New Zealand the postcolonial critique is most evident in writings by Māori scholars such as Walker, Bishop and Tuhihai-Smith who argue that the state plays a significant role in maintaining the hegemony of Pakeha whilst marginalising Māori in every sphere of New Zealand society (see Bishop, 2003; Walker, 1990; and Smith, 2006).

The arrival of Samoans in New Zealand is a reflection of the relationship between Samoa and New Zealand during the colonial era. Between 1914 and 1944 Samoa was a colony of New Zealand. Reports from colonial administrators during this period document the perception of Samoans by New Zealand administrators which support the Orientalism thesis and Sharp’s (2009) aforementioned Western science summation. In 1923 the New Zealand Administrator in Samoa, Richardson, perceived Samoans as “backward children who would, under New Zealand’s benevolent influence, gradually advance
[emphasis added] until they could live and act like Europeans” (Meleisea, 1987, p.134). Then in 1929 as Samoans led the Mau movement, a peaceful movement of non-cooperation with New Zealand to protest for the self-governance of Samoa, the marine in charge of disbanding the Mau, Commodore Blake stated:

At the present moment he [the Samoan] is in the position of a sulky and insubordinate child who has deliberately disobeyed his father, as the administrator is generally termed, and no peaceful persuasion will induce him to submit. There is no alternative, therefore, but to treat him roughly... (cited in: Meleisea, 1987, p. 138)

These accounts illustrate the colonial perceptions and stereotyping of Samoans as child-like, lacking in intelligence, and immoral. These stereotypes conceived by colonial administrators were supported by the academic writings of European anthropologists and social scientists sent to research the Pacific during the colonial era. European academics of the time reported that Pacific Islanders were “friendly savages” who are physical beings; are “primitive” and lacked the mental faculties and intelligence to cope with modernity and; are “children of nature” who are uncivilised and carefree (Grainger, 2008; Hokowhitu, 2003; Taouma, 2004). Such phrases distinguished difference between Pacific peoples and Europeans through the parent-child binary. In some ways this mirrors the argument of Said in which Europeans othered Pacific Islanders and described them as childlike in need of ‘parental’ guidance in to establish hegemonic dominance. This is further exemplified in Richardson’s account as he suggests, the colonial ideal was for Samoans to assimilate into European culture.

To effectively colonise and rule, colonial administrators adopted the principle of “know your natives” (Stoddart, 1986). Thus, geographical and anthropological societies in Europe flourished in the Colonial era where geographers were used to chart spaces that had been conquered and identify natural resources that could be exploited in colonies. Anthropologists established difference based on race through Western rational scientific explanation by measuring specific body parts (Sharp, 2009, p.35). The use of academia to establish difference between colonisers and those colonised highlights the critique of the scientific discourse in Orientalism. The flaws in anthropological Western science used to establish difference have since been proven, yet the colonial representations of Samoan and Pacific people are still current in contemporary New Zealand, illustrating the discursive power of Western discourse.

The socioeconomic position of the majority of Samoans in New Zealand today reflects the differences established during the colonial period. Pacific people in New Zealand are politically an ambivalent community, as citizenship has not been sufficient for Pacific peoples to overcome the prejudices of ethnicities in New Zealand. Rather they might be described using Wu’s term of “perpetual foreigners”,

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a description used in relation to Asian’s in America with American citizenship (Wu, 2002). Irrespective of citizenship or residency status, as Mitchell (2003) argues, “there was an implicit assumption of what a New Zealander was and that Pacific Islanders in New Zealand collectively fell outside of this definition” (p. 139). The difference created between Pacific cultures and Europeans during the colonial period is reflected in the minoritisation of Samoan and Pacific communities in contemporary New Zealand. The colonial stereotypes ascribed to Pacific people are common within current media discourses. Pacific people are described as unwilling (or unable) to assimilate into mainstream New Zealand, and as having a tendency toward violence, criminal behaviour, and immorality (Loto et al., 2006; Mitchell, 2003; Te’evale, 2001). Furthermore, Te’evale (2001) contends that the popular theory in New Zealand is that Pacific people do not have the mental faculties and discipline required to succeed in other more serious areas of life (Te’evale, 2001, p. 222).

In New Zealand the unequal relationship between Samoan and New Zealand/European communities is also spatialised. The 2006 New Zealand Deprivation Index provides evidence showing patterns of inequalities in neighbourhoods by ethnicity. Neighbourhoods of high deprivation are primarily occupied by Pacific people, conversely neighbourhoods of low deprivation are more likely to be occupied by New Zealand/Europeans (Salmond et al., 2007). Over one third of the Samoan population live in the South Auckland region of Manukau City (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). Within Manukau City the highest proportion of Samoans are predominantly located in the suburbs of Mangere, Manurewa, and Otara while there are only small numbers of Samoans in the suburbs of Botany, Howick, and Pakuranga (Manukau City Council, 2008). Figure 2.4 below is a map of the Manukau City Deprivation Index for 2006 which is followed by Figure 2.5, a map of the Manukau City Deprivation Index for 2001.
Figure 2.4: Map of Manukau City Deprivation Index 2006 by Meshblock

Source: Manukau City Council, 2007
The two maps above illustrate that the majority of the Samoan population live in suburbs of high deprivation. Between 2001 and 2006 there was an increase in deprivation in Western Manurewa. In Mangere the South Western area has reduced by two levels of deprivation in 2006 but this is offset by the meshblocks directly north of this area where deprivation has increased by three levels. These maps indicate that there is a deepening of relative deprivation of neighbourhoods with high Samoan
and Pacific communities. Neighbourhood deprivation is one of a number of indicators of social inequalities (Wilkinson and Marmot, 2006). Social inequality indicators such as poverty, health, and education reveal a general pattern of inequalities in New Zealand based on ethnicity rather than poverty (Hattie, 2003; Haynes, et al., 2008). Māori and Pacific communities are more likely to experience inequalities in income, health and education than European New Zealanders (see following chapter). This is not to say that poverty is not an important factor in creating inequalities, it still is. But results from recent research conducted in New Zealand investigating health and educational inequalities found that even when controlling for deprivation, ethnicity is the most significant determinant of social inequalities such as cancer survival or education and academic success (Hattie, 2003; Haynes et al., 2008; Juhong and Maloney, 2006).

2.4.1 Ethnic Social Inequalities

The literature on ethnic social inequalities in developed countries such as Australia, the United States, Britain and Canada is voluminous (Bambra et al., 2009, Graham, 2004, Howden-Chapman and Tobias, 2000, Wilkinson and Marmot, 2006). Researchers have investigated an array of social indicators and have attempted to explain why social inequalities and disparities exist. The root and underlying causes for ethnic inequalities is highly contested (Wilkinson and Marmot, 2006). Some investigators argue that socioeconomic position is the key determinant cause of inequalities (Graham, 2004; St John and Wynd, 2008); some suggest that socioeconomic position makes little to no contribution to ethnic inequalities (Hattie, 2003); whilst others comment that it is a combination of both ethnicity and socioeconomic position (Nazroo, 2003). The ongoing debate in attributing underlying causes of ethnic disparities is based on the quality of data and trying to make comparisons between different countries. Categories of defining and documenting ethnicity vary across countries and the methods used to determine and record multiple ethnicities differ also. Recording ethnic categories is a contested issue that is beyond the scope of the thesis but it is worth noting that these differences make cross country comparisons difficult. Similarly, some of the problems in determining underlying causes are limits in data collections (Constant and Zimmermann, 2008; Johnston et al., 2009). Measures used to determine socioeconomic position and poverty also vary between countries (Harper et al., 2008). Despite the difficulties in researching ethnic disparities, understanding why ethnic inequalities exist is important to ensure the effectiveness of intervention initiatives and programmes to create equitable societies.

The problem with patterns of ethnic inequalities is that unlike patterns of socioeconomic inequality, they are difficult to overcome. The general consensus in regards to reducing socioeconomic inequality is that individuals need access to education and training to increase their knowledge and skill base and to become qualified so that they are more attractive in the workforce and are able to secure a high earning positions (Lee and Burkam, 2002; St John and Wynd, 2008). This is an overly simplistic
summation but the point is that overcoming and improving one’s socioeconomic position is possible. It is impossible to change one’s ethnicity. Although we are unable to change our ethnicity we can change the way in which ethnic identity and culture is perceived so that all cultures are respected and equally valued. This is the relevance of postcolonialism. The privileging of Western culture by Western societies has led to a hierarchy of cultures, with Western and European cultures at the ‘pinnacle’ (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2006; Wilkinson and Marmot, 2006). Racism is an effect of this hierarchy and privileging of cultures and a consequence of reifying and essentialising culture and ethnic identity (Young, 1990).

In New Zealand, racism is visible through deficit theorising models that suggest Samoan inequalities exist because of Samoan cultural practices. These notions became apparent during the Folole Muliaga saga where a Samoan woman living in Auckland who relied on an oxygen machine for breathing passed away hours after a contractor for a Power company disconnected the household power in 2007 (Binning, 2007; Bridgman, 2010). Her death created a media frenzy and the public began asking questions as to why and how this could happen (Laws, 2008). Public debate began as people started laying blame. On one side commentators laid the blame solely on her and her family’s inability to pay their power bill as well as questioning their lifestyle choices (ibid.). In particular Muliaga’s dietary habits and giving money to the church came into question. On the other hand others began arguing that by blaming Muliaga, people were ignoring structural failures of the government and a society that permits electricity to be unaffordable (O’Sullivan, 2010). This unfortunate incident highlights the racist and deficit overtones in contemporary New Zealand, whether intentionally or unintentionally, and tendency for media commentators to essentialise and reify culture by attributing causal and explanatory powers to culture adding to the cultural deficit discourse.

Although Samoans have migrated to New Zealand in large numbers for better educational and employment opportunities, this has resulted in a less favourable position than they had hoped for. In order for Samoans and other Pacific peoples to negotiate a more equal position in society in New Zealand, they need to overcome the stereotypes created during the colonial past that render Samoans, even if they are legally citizens, to the margins. At the same time New Zealanders need to view Samoans as equals and erase the effects of racism. Postcolonialism provides the possibility of creating a more equitable cultural society by deconstructing and exposing how difference is created (Gregory, 2000) so that society values alternative ways of knowing like fa’asamoa.

One problematic issue concerning the use of the terms postcolonial and postcolonialism of late is the increasingly unfocused use of the term to describe a variety of cultural, economic and political
practices (Loomba, 1998; Sidaway, 2002). In doing so, the terms begin to lose their meaning altogether. On the other hand, the fact that postcolonialism is a theory and term that transcends disciplines and can apply to different texts such as literature, journalism and speaking should be celebrated (Sidaway, 2002). The use of postcolonialism in any text should outline the way in which the term is used and needs to describe the context or contexts in which it is being applied to avoid appropriation. This chapter began by describing the position and context of Samoans in New Zealand at present and this section (and the previous chapter) has detailed the way in which postcolonialism is used for this thesis. The following section describes universities in New Zealand as postcolonial contexts.

2.4.2 University - A Postcolonial Context

Academic success in education is based on normative assumptions. Medicine and health sciences as a tertiary field of study are deeply embedded within a Western biomedical context (Cooke et al., 2006) that typically silences other cultural health perspectives. Consequently the Western cultural practices surrounding the process of becoming qualified in medical and health sciences, that is, the content being taught, how it is taught and who the educators are, can potentially be a barrier to success for non-Western students (Bishop, 2003; Castle, 1993; Kepa, 2008; Nakhid, 2003). Understanding the transition between the two cultures and how Samoan health students negotiate the dual perspectives to inform learning and knowledge construction is an important issue that warrants investigation. Although Samoan learners may come from a different cultural context to that of the university, as an institution, the university has been insufficient and inadequate in meeting the demands of Samoan tertiary learners as demonstrated in the previous chapter.

Educational spaces are important sites in the production and re-production of cultural meanings. The cultural underpinnings embedded in educational spaces reflect wider societal cultural norms. As such university provides a context in which we can examine the privileging of Western culture. Inwood and Martin (2008) examined the manifestation of privileging “whiteness” by analysing the campus at the University of Georgia as a cultural landscape. The authors argued that embedded within the built environment, such as in lecture halls of the university are explicit and implicit messages of who belongs to the university and who should be excluded. A recent exhibition showing the history or African-American students at the University created a political debate on campus as the images were a reminder of how the campus had historically excluded and discriminated African-American students.

A medical education study was conducted in New Zealand in 2006 where a survey was sent out to all medical students to determine the consequences for, and coping methods used by medical students who had experienced an adverse experience during their medical training (Wilkinson et al., 2006). In
2006 there were approximately 1,660 medical students in New Zealand, all of whom were sent the survey, and the response rate was high at 83%. There were no demographics given for the sample surveyed. There were eight categories of adverse experiences that were surveyed but the most common were: humiliated or degraded (51%); yelled or sworn at (38%); discomfort from sexual humour (28%); treated unfairly because of race (19%); and treated unfairly because of gender (19%).

The authors reported that students of Asian or Indian descent (38%) and students who were Māori or Pacific Islander (30%) were more likely to experience being treated unfairly because of race compared to European students (4%). Using a five-point Likert scale students were then asked to rate the effect that these adverse experiences had on them where 5 was most upsetting and important, and 1 was not at all upsetting and important. The results showed that the most upsetting experience was that of being treated unfairly by race with 68% of respondents rating either a 5 or a 4, followed by being humiliated or degraded at 49%. Racism is an important factor that influences the learning of Pacific medical students in New Zealand as students find experiences of racism the most upsetting. Although racism may be unintentional, educators need to be sensitive to cultural differences and be wary of the curricula to ensure that all students find medical school a positive learning environment.

A similar study was conducted in a British medical school where the authors explored ethnic stereotypes of UK medical students in the context of academic underachievement of ethnic minorities in medical education (Woolf et al., 2008). The study included 27 year-three medical students (of European, Pakistani and Indian ethnicity) and 25 clinical teachers. Initially one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with students, but after 12 interviews it became apparent that students felt uncomfortable discussing the topics. Subsequently, the researchers altered their research methods and substituted the interviews for ethnic specific focus groups. The main finding from the study showed that Asian medical students were more likely to be stereotyped in a negative manner than European students by clinical teachers. Asian students felt that stereotyping created a barrier to forming positive relationships with their teachers. Consequently, the researchers concluded that ethnic stereotyping contributes to the underachievement of ethnic minorities as poor relationships with lecturers reduce learning. Both these studies indicate that racism and stereotyping is a real issue for ethnic minority medical students and constrains their learning and achievement.

The issue of institutional racism in New Zealand universities as it has been studied in recent literature suggests that it is still a relevant and important issue particularly in regards to the academic achievement of students (Nahkid 2006; Wilkinson et al. 2006). The study conducted by Wilkinson and others (2006) above provides the perspectives of minority students on racist attitudes of educators. From an educator’s perspective Nahkid (2006) also highlights the persistence of institutional racism.
within New Zealand universities through her experience at another Auckland University where academic staff opposed the idea of providing a separate tutorial specifically for Māori and Pacific students on the basis that it was unethical. More specifically,

[staff] believed that it was unethical to favour one group of students over another, to exclude students that were non-Pasifika and non-Māori from the tutorial, and to spend university resources in areas that they believed were students’ responsibilities. (p.300)

The case was made that Pacific and Māori students were failing and were in need of extra assistance. However, the majority of staff believed this was unethical; consequently the proposal for Māori and Pacific tutorials was declined.

2.5 Liminality - In-between Cultures

Liminality is a concept that describes a transitional status in an individual’s life; it is a condition or state of being “betwixt and between”. The concept was popularised by Turner, a European anthropologist in the 1960s and 1970s, when he applied the concept to his research on adolescent male rituals with the Ndembu tribe in South Africa. Turner began formulating liminality by drawing on van Gennep’s (1909) concept of the three-stage rite of passage: separation; transition; and incorporation (Turner, 1969). Turner (1969) renamed van Gennep’s transition stage as liminality (limen signifying “threshold” in Latin) to describe the ritual and symbols associated with the transition between adolescence and adulthood with the Ndembu tribe (p. 99). In Turner’s view, the transition stage involved the liminal initiates or neophytes crossing a threshold from an existing state marking the beginning of the rite and entering into a liminal phase. In this phase the neophyte undergoes rituals that strip them of their former identity (child) and inscribe a new identity (adult). After this transition the neophyte is returned to society having completed the transition from childhood to adulthood. From this research Turner concluded that liminality was not only a rite of passage phase, but as the condition or state of being that was:

betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial... liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon. (Turner 1969, p. 95)

Although liminals during this phase are in flux in terms of their individual identity there are typically guides (liminal officiants) who help in terms of negotiating the liminal state and prepare them for the transition to their new status (Turner, 1969, p.105).

Turner (1969) argued that the use of liminality is not limited to ritual studies but is useful in explaining social change. The liminal state is part of the process of social change whereby an individual or group gives up one social state but has yet to enter the new prescribed social state with accompanying
responsibilities and perspectives (Bettis and Mills, 2006). Thus, it is argued that in a liminal state, an individual belongs neither to their “old world” nor to their “new world” (Mahon-Daly and Andrews, 2002). Turner (1977) later acknowledged that his original conception of liminality had overlooked the transformative possibilities embedded in the liminal state. In other words, the transformations in which individuals can “try on” new ways of being (Bettis and Mills, 2006).

Liminality has become popular with the concept being used in a number of disciplines (Barfield, 1997). Sociologists for example have used the concept to describe various transitional stages in people’s lives. The most common example is puberty for young boys and girls, and the rites associated with puberty where adolescents are no longer children but have yet to reach the status of adulthood (Bettis and Adams, 2005). Thus, adolescence can be viewed as a liminal state.

The liminal state is also a common theme in higher education literature where liminality is often used to theorise the first-year experiences of students at university (Gourlay, 2009; Palmer et al., 2009; Scanlon et al., 2007). As a body of literature, the first-year experience at university is a high priority growing area within education as educators and researchers attempt to address and understand high first-year attrition rates in higher education (Harvey et al., 2006; McInnis et al., 2009; Yorke and Longden, 2008). The high attrition rate is a cause of concern, especially for universities in terms of reputation and finance, as well as for educators and societies given the currency of qualifications in a globalised economy (Marginson and Wende, 2007). In terms of the health sector this is a pertinent global phenomenon as most countries are currently experiencing shortages of a highly qualified and skilled health workforce and countries compete to attract highly mobile health professionals (see Chapter Three). The fact that many students are able to meet the requirements to enter higher education but are then unable to advance through to second year is a concern (ibid). Some researchers argue it is necessary to understand students’ first-year experience to implement strategies to improve the attrition rate (McInnis et al., 2009). Liminality is one framework that is often offered to describe first-year student’s experiences and explain some of the implications and linkages that liminality has on first-year student’s academic achievement. For example, students’ in their first year of tertiary education struggle with the transition from being a secondary student to becoming a tertiary student (ibid.). The use of liminality in this context is twofold in that student’s themselves are described as liminal and university and higher education institutions are regarded as liminal spaces (Palmer et al., 2009).

Some researchers argue that students construct new identities at university in a liminal process that is informed by a rites of passage model with rituals and symbols as they undergo the transition from
student to professional (Meyer and Land, 2005). Gourlay (2009) argues that the practice of academic literacies such as learning how to write academically is one ritual that helps to reinforce students’ sense of identity as university students in the first year. Learning to be independent is also viewed as a significant ritual in identity formation for first-year learners. One study highlighted that interactions with lecturers was of particular importance as it is through the interactions with lecturers that students begin to understand the university construct of being a student and what is expected of them at university (Scanlon et al., 2007). The study was conducted across two Australian Universities where 602 first-year students completed a First Year Students’ Experience of Loss & Academic Performance Questionnaire followed by 27 semi-structured interviews with students who had completed the questionnaire. Students in this study described lecturers who do not communicate their expectations of students well as unapproachable, leading to ambiguity in a new learning context. Students interpreted the lack of interaction with lecturers as the university conveying their expectation of independence.

University and higher educational institutions are regarded as liminal spaces by academics (Palmer et al., 2009). The extension of liminality in regards to space and place is also of particular interest to geographers. Feminist geographer Buckingham together with other colleagues drew on liminality in their study on the training experiences of women with dependent children (Buckingham et al., 2006). The authors argued that “training places can have the capacity to enable women to suspend their identity as mothers and wives...” (p. 899) as they found that the women in their study used the training spaces to perform different identities, try out different roles and develop networks and portfolios (ibid. p. 904). The results indicate that trying on these different roles empowered the women.

Southwick’s (2001) nursing doctoral thesis examined Pacific women’s experiences of becoming nurses in their first year of practice post registration in New Zealand. Southwick argued that Pacific nurses undergo a rite of passage similar to that defined by Turner where they are transformed from student to nurse through nursing training. She suggests that nursing training as a liminal space also incorporates rituals that include theoretical and practical training. Furthermore, Southwick argued that the liminal space provides a new framework to reconceptualise marginality. She rearticulated Turner’s three-phase rite of passage, which in her words are, “state/space/state” to being, becoming and belonging (p. 63). Southwick argues that the three-phase rite provides a new lens to view marginality as opposed to the binary frameworks (mainstream/marginal) that are so often used by academics to theorise marginality. With this new framework she organised her interviews and analysis with her participants, four self-identified Pacific nurses, in accordance with being, becoming and belonging. Thus the ‘being stage’ referred to the “growing up” stories of the participants, the becoming stage
referred to their experiences during their three-year nursing training, and the belonging stage referred to their experiences so far of being a registered nurse.

Southwick concluded that New Zealand-born Pacific nurses are caught between two cultures and need to accept that they will continue to be marginalised by those two cultures, New Zealand and Pacific, but that this does not necessarily imply a terrible fate. Marginalisation, Southwick argues, needs to be reconceptualised as the social location of possibility (Southwick, 2001, p. 119). This conclusion resonates with Turner’s assessment of liminality as a process of social change and provides a framework for transformative abilities where individuals can try new ways of being and new identities. Although I agree that liminality provides a space for social change and to try new ways of being, I disagree with the sentiment that Pacific people in New Zealand are caught between two cultures because they are marginalised by both. This perspective essentialises Pacific and New Zealand cultures in a dichotomous binary and suggests that Pacific people are disempowered to foster their own identity. Although Southwick views the space in-between as a marginalised and argues that marginalisation should be reconceptualised as possibility, I argue that being in-between can also be empowering. Pacific people in New Zealand can resist stereotypes and being marginalised by constructing identities that are informed by both New Zealand culture and Samoan culture and are therefore in-between, rather than caught between, two cultures. Liminality provides the possibility for Pacific people creating positive subjectivities through the resistance of dominant stereotypes. Caught between cultures suggests that the subject is neither this nor that culture, while in-between suggests that you are part of both.

Other anthropologists have criticised that the concept of liminality has become too general and universal thereby losing its explanatory power (Babock, 2002). Eade and Coleman (2004) also argue that ascribing the very term liminal or liminality to phenomena often has the negative effect of deeming them as inconsequential because they are viewed as not part of everyday life. Despite these criticisms of liminality, the original concept that explores new identities and ways of being due to the lack of a fixed identity is a useful framework for my research.

Liminality is useful in explaining the cultural identity of Samoan learners at university in New Zealand where Samoan learners are liminal, as they neither identify completely with New Zealand/Pakeha culture nor completely with Samoan culture, but rather with both. Liminality also raises questions as to who are best suited as liminal officiants for Samoan learners at university. Is it university support staff such as the Māori and Pacific Academic staff and if so, should they be Samoan, Pacific or should they
be any university staff member irrespective of ethnicity. This and the exploration of new ways of being dependent on context are explored in more detail in subsequent chapters.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has provided demographic and contextual information that places Samoan communities within wider New Zealand society. As migrants, Samoan communities established themselves in New Zealand through the processes of chain migration during the 1950s. The church became an important institution for Samoans as a service provider and as a means of keeping cultural practices alive. At present, the Samoan community is a youthful community with the majority of Samoans being New Zealand-born. There is also an increasing number of Samoans with multiple ethnicities. The new demographic characteristics of contemporary Samoans and the different cultural contexts in which they live have impacted on their construction of identity. The home and cultural communities such as church are informed by fa‘asamoa. This section has described the key factors of fa‘asamoa, that is, aiga, the matai system, Christianity, and lagimalie and how fa‘asamoa is operationalised in New Zealand today. Fa‘asamoa is still an important feature for Samoans living in New Zealand and as a consequence the cultural ideas impact on identity and learning processes.

Postcolonialism provides a theory in which we can describe New Zealand as a product of European cultural frameworks. In this chapter I have also used postcolonialism as a framework to also understand the minoritisation of Samoan communities through the hegemonic dominance of New Zealand/European culture. Therefore ethnic social inequalities and inequities can be perceived as a product of postcolonialism. Samoan tertiary learners are products of both fa‘asamoa and New Zealand/European culture. By understanding the wider macro contexts of Samoan tertiary learners we can better understand the micro processes that influence the identity and learning processes. Liminality is therefore an appropriate framework to illustrate the how these two cultural contexts albeit they are at times paradoxical, constitute the identity of young tertiary Samoan learners and impact on their learning.
Chapter Three: Health and Educational Inequities

3.1 Introduction

This chapter specifically examines the health and educational inequalities and inequities experienced by Samoan and Pacific communities in New Zealand. Inequality refers to disparities in outcomes while inequity refers to unfairness and differences that are unjust (Braveman and Gruskin, 2003). This chapter focuses mostly on the health and educational inequities faced by Samoan communities in New Zealand. As most research and reporting on Pacific communities in New Zealand adopt a Pan-Pacific approach, the evidence is predominantly based on Pan-Pacific research although where available ethnic specific evidence is given.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is an examination of health inequities. I begin by outlining and describing the health status of Pacific communities, followed by a discussion on key health risk factors that include diet and nutrition, smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, and gambling and access to health services. I then discuss the social determinants of health concept both as a framework to understand ethnic health inequities and as a strategy to improve the health outcomes of Samoan and Pacific communities. The social determinants of health model suggests that increasing ethnic diversity in the health sector has the potential to significantly reduce ethnic health inequalities (Howden-Chapman and Tobias, 2000). Subsequently I examine the merits of this premise by reviewing current literature on ethnic diversity in the health sector.

In the second section I examine educational inequities for Samoan and Pacific communities, reviewing the academic achievement levels of Samoan and Pacific learners in secondary and tertiary education. This is then followed by a discussion of Vygotsky’s social construction of education theory. Vygotsky’s ideas also provide the potential to improve the learning outcomes and academic achievement of all Samoan and Pacific learners in Western-based institutions. Figure 3.1 below indicates the key concepts discussed in this chapter as highlighted by the light blue squares.
3.2 Samoan and Pacific Health Inequities

This section describes the health inequalities and inequities experienced by Samoan and Pacific communities in New Zealand compared to the rest of New Zealand. The fact that there are inequities in health between Pacific peoples and the mainstream is not new but there is concern that the inequities...
in health are likely to get worse instead of better (Ministry of Health, 2002a). There is a large body of literature documenting and describing the poor health of Pacific peoples based on both government and academic research (Harris et al., 2006; Haynes et al., 2008; Ministry of Health, 2002a; Ministry of Health, 2002b; Ministry of Health, 2004a). Although there is some Pacific ethnic specific information available (Novak, 2007), the majority of published research in regards to Pacific health adopts a Pan-Pacific approach.

Inequalities in health are often illustrated using health indicators such as mortality and morbidity rates, exposure to risk factors, and utilisation of and access to health services. In 2004 the Ministries of Health and Pacific Island Affairs published a health indicators report titled, *Tupu Ola Moui: Pacific Health Chart Book*. The report illustrates that compared to the total New Zealand population, Pacific peoples have poorer health status, are more exposed to risk factors for poor health, and experience barriers to accessing health services (Ministry of Health, 2004a). The report is the first comprehensive review of key Pacific health indicators, collating more than 150 health and social indicators pertaining to Pacific peoples. These social and health indicators include health outcomes, health service utilisation, health risk factors, and socioeconomic determinants of health. The following sections summarise the major health concerns facing contemporary Pacific communities in New Zealand.

### 3.2.1 Pacific Health Status

Chronic disease is a major health concern for Pacific adults, with disproportionately high rates of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer and chronic lung disease (Ministry of Health, 2004a). Recent health research on Pacific peoples in New Zealand has to a large extent concentrated on diseases like diabetes, cancer and strokes (Feigin et al., 2007; Simmons et al., 2009; Sundborn et al., 2008). These types of non-communicable diseases have had a huge impact on Pacific people’s health patterns in terms of morbidity and mortality over the last 30 years (Bathgate 1994; Foliaki and Pearce 2007). The high quantum of care\(^{16}\) for Pacific patients to manage chronic disease illustrates the need for health services, facilities and health workers that are responsive to the health needs of Pacific communities. Diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer, like most non-communicable diseases, are expensive to treat, require long-term hospital-based treatments, are often chronic and therefore pose significant impediments on national healthcare systems (National Health Committee, 2007). Further, the experience and onset of chronic disease tends to occur in the older age groups leading to an increased demand for palliative care (ibid.). Pacific communities do however, suffer from non-communicable diseases earlier than the rest of the New Zealand population and have higher than average rates of a number of major chronic diseases such as stroke, diabetes, and cancers (Ministry of Health, 2004a). At

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\(^{16}\) Quantum of care refers to the amount of time and money for interventions/treatments or any episodes of care between a patient and a provider.
an individual level, this is quite distressing and can cause enormous emotional and financial stress. Financial stress, in particular, for Pacific families is a major concern especially if the individual’s family relies heavily on their income.

Pacific people in New Zealand are estimated to have more than a 25% lifetime risk of developing diabetes, which is more than 2.5 times the risk of Europeans. As a result, 12 years of life, on average, for Pacific people is lost (Ministry of Health, 2002a). Furthermore, Pacific peoples’ rate of renal failure is five times greater than that of the rest of the country, which in part is attributed to late detection and poor management of diabetes (ibid). Pacific cardiovascular disease mortality rates are consistently and significantly higher than those of the total population. The 45–64 years cohort has twice the rate of the general population and the 65-year cohort rate is 1.5 times higher (Ministry of Health, 2004a). Pacific peoples are also at a greater risk of suffering from a stroke in their lifetime compared with the general population (Feigin et al., 2007; Sundborn et al., 2008).

The Pacific rate for all cancers also contributes to Pacific peoples’ relatively high mortality and morbidity. For example Pacific women have above average mortality rates for breast cancer and cervical cancer, with 85 deaths per 100,000 compared with the national average of 63 from breast cancer (Ministry of Health, 2004a). The ethnic differences in cervical cancer mortality rates have led to suggestions that first, there is a need to increase screening (Lovell, 2002). Lovell (2005) conducted a qualitative study on South Auckland women’s access to cervical screening services. Lovell interviewed women of European, Asian, Māori and Pacific ethnicity, as well as health professionals, to explore issues of access to cervical screening services and culture. She found that Māori and Pacific women reported being less likely to be screened because of nervousness and embarrassment as the process of smear taking compromises cultural beliefs about sacredness. Lovell highlights the need for culturally specific screening services and the importance of ethnic health educators in promoting the availability of health services to help negotiate women through the act of smear taking so as not to offend cultural beliefs (p. 152). Second, there is a need to increase the number of female Pacific community healthworkers to promote cervical screening, thereby increasing participation in screening programmes (ibid.). Studies in the United States have shown the positive impact that African-American female health workers have had in increasing the number of screening participants and consequently reducing the number of breast cancer patients in the Southern states of America (Partridge et al., 2005).

Although most reports on the health status of Pacific people adopt a Pan-Pacific approach, one report has identified health priority areas for Pacific ethnicities based on Counties Manukau District Health
Board data (Novak, 2007). These findings illustrate why a nuanced approach is important in terms of Pacific health research in New Zealand. The key findings for each Pacific ethnic group are summarised in the following tables.

**Table 3.1: Key Samoan Health Findings**

| Child Health |  ● Relatively high early childhood (0–4 years) hospitalisation rates. All causes but in particular acute bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia and respiratory infections.  
|             |  ● Relatively high child (5–14 years) hospitalisation rates for all causes for females.  
|             |  ● Relatively high child (5–14 years) hospitalisation rates for males in pneumonia and gastroenteritis.  
| Women’s Health |  ● Relatively high adult female mortality for all causes.  
|               |  ● Relatively high adult female hospitalisation for cardiovascular disease and kidney/urinary infection.  
|               |  ● Having first child at a later age which corresponds with more caesareans and diabetes in pregnancy  
|               |  ● Relatively high percentage of births complicated by caesareans.  
| Men’s Health |  ● Relatively high adult male hospitalisation for all causes.  

Source: Adapted from Novak (2007)

This data suggests that there is a need to address the health of the Samoan community in general, given the high rates of hospitalisation for all health categories for men and children, and the relatively high mortality rates of females in all health categories.

The Tongan key findings outlined in Table 3.2 also indicate that there is a need to address children’s and women’s health problems in particular. However, the findings also indicate that Tongan women have slightly better health than Samoan women.

**Table 3.2: Key Tongan Health Findings**

| Child Health |  ● Relatively high early childhood hospitalisation for females for all causes and dental conditions.  
|             |  ● Relatively high early childhood hospitalisation for males for all causes and in particular pneumonia, respiratory infections, acute bronchiolitis, gastroenteritis and dental conditions.  
|             |  ● Relatively high child hospitalisations for pneumonia.  
| Women’s health |  ● Relatively high hospitalisation for stroke, road traffic injury.  
|               |  ● Relatively high rates of caesareans.  
|               |  ● Relatively high rates of late delivery of babies.  
|               |  ● Relatively high percentage of pregnancies complicated by diabetes.  
| Men’s health |  ● Relatively high rates of hospitalisation for all causes and in particular CORD\(^{17}\) and myocardial infarction.  

Source: Adapted from Novak (2007)

Table 3.3 for Cook Islanders’ provides similar findings to the Samoan and Tongan communities where children and women seem to be most vulnerable in terms of health and wellbeing. Of particular concern for the Cook Island community is the relatively high rates of child mortality for all causes. This is the main point of difference between Cook Island children and Samoan and Tongan children. Also, Cook Island women tend to have a higher prevalence of high risk health behaviour such as alcohol consumption and smoking. In comparison to the Samoan and Tongan communities, the Cook Island community has lower prevalence of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

\(^{17}\) Chronic obstructive respiratory disease
Table 3.3: Key Cook Island Health Findings

| Child Health                      | • Relatively high rates of child mortality for all causes. |
|                                 | • Relatively high percentage of births being low in birth weight. |
| Women’s health                   | • Relatively high female mortality |
|                                 | • Relatively high prevalence of current smokers |
|                                 | • Higher prevalence of alcohol consumption |
|                                 | • Relatively high 12 month prevalence of any alcohol disorder. |
|                                 | • Relatively high number of teenage births |
|                                 | • Relatively high hospitalisation for congestive heart failure. |
| Men’s health                     | • Relatively high 12 month prevalence of any alcohol disorder. |
|                                 | • Relatively high male prevalence of hypertension. |

Source: Adapted from Novak (2007)

The Niuean community has the most positive key findings out of all the Pacific communities where the main health issues are once again related to child and women’s health. These results may be because of the relatively small number of Niueans in comparison to other Pacific communities.

Table 3.4: Key Niuean Health Findings

| Child health                      | • Relatively high percentage of births being low in birth weight. |
| Women’s health                   | • Relatively high percentage of births being complicated by assisted delivery. |

Source: Adapted from Novak (2007)

This summary of the key findings from Novak (2007) shows that different Pacific communities have different health problems and needs. Samoan and Tongan communities have more health problems related to diabetes and cardiovascular disease compared with the Cook Island and Niuean communities. Cook Island females tend to have higher prevalence of alcohol consumption and smoking.

All the community group findings provide evidence that women and children are at higher risk of health problems compared to men. Of concern is the high rates of hospitalisation for Samoan and Tongan children for all causes and in particular, the high rate of child mortality for all causes amongst Cook Island children. This may indicate that there are significant barriers for Pacific women and children in accessing health services or that there is a failure of the health system in terms of addressing the health needs for Pacific women and children, or potentially both.

3.2.2 Health Risk Factors

This section provides an overview of pertinent risk factors for Pacific communities in New Zealand as identified in the literature. These include diet and nutrition, smoking, alcohol and drug addictions, and gambling.
Diet and nutrition

Diet and nutrition of Pacific New Zealanders is an important health issue for all New Zealanders considering the impact that poor nutrition has on individuals’ health and consequently the need and resources required for adequate healthcare (Teevale, 2009). Diet and nutrition provide a prime example of how political and structural factors impact on individual’s health.

The link between diet and nutrition, and non-communicable diseases is highly complex and not entirely proven. For Pacific communities the high rates of non-communicable diseases, especially diabetes and cardiovascular disease, have been primarily attributed to the dietary patterns of Pacific individuals (Foliaki and Pearce, 2007). The quality of food poses the biggest problem for Pacific peoples (Evans et al., 2001; Teevale, 2009). The consumption of less nutritious food is a complex issue. Although people know and realise that they should be eating healthier and nutrient rich foods, their choices are limited by their income. For example, Teevale (2009) found that some Pacific families in Auckland would prefer to eat healthy choices such as wholegrain breads and include more fresh fruit and vegetables in their diet, but it was more affordable to purchase unhealthy substitutes such as white bread and takeaway foods such as fish and chips to feed their families. Teevale (2009) also suggest that altering the disposition of income may also be a means of achieving these changes. These studies indicate that it is difficult to promote healthy eating without attempting to increase the income of Pacific communities as income often dictates food consumption and eating habits.

Smoking

Smoking is one of the leading risk behaviours that have negative consequences on the health status of Pacific New Zealanders. Statistics show that smoking remains high among Māori and Pacific peoples, at 45% and 37% respectively compared with Europeans at 20% (Ministry of Health, 2004a).

The Cancer Society of New Zealand (2003) stated that smoking-related deaths and illnesses are the most easily preventable in Pacific communities because once an individual stops smoking for a year their body functions similar to a non-smoker. Yet permanent damage such as scarring on the lungs cannot be reversed. This indicates that there need to be more services in terms of smoking prevention and cessation for Pacific peoples.

Alcohol and drug abuse

Research has shown that half of Pacific adults are regular consumers of alcohol with Pacific males more likely to drink alcohol than Pacific females. Pacific males are over represented in alcohol related problems and are most at risk of being admitted to psychiatric institutions in relation to binge drinking compared to Pacific females and European New Zealanders (Nosa, 2005). The prevalence of
hazardous\textsuperscript{18} or binge drinking for Pacific males is 4.0 per 100,000 compared to 2.4 for the total New Zealand population. The Ministry of Health defines hazardous drinking as “an established pattern of drinking that carries a high risk of future damage to physical or mental health” (Ministry of Health, 2004a). Pacific males are more likely to use recreational drugs, with more opting to use stimulants than Pacific females (ibid.). Alcohol and drug abuse has often been cited as a major cause of the high rates of violence, motor vehicle accidents, mental health problems, and financial problems in Pacific communities (Pacific Health Research Centre, 2003).

\textit{Gambling}

Problem gambling has only gained recognition by the MoH as an important health issue between 2001 and 2002 because of the detrimental impact it has on individuals’ mental health and wellbeing (Perese, 2009). The prevalence of problem gambling\textsuperscript{19} is higher for Pacific New Zealanders compared with other population groups. Pacific adults are six times more likely to be problem gamblers compared with Europeans (Abbott and Volberg, 2000).

Researchers at the Auckland University of Technology are currently conducting a longitudinal study on Pacific families in South Auckland (Paterson \textit{et al.}, 2007). The study investigates a number of health behaviours considered risky such as gambling and alcohol consumption of Pacific mothers. The study shows that Pacific people are more likely to become regular gamblers (Bellringer \textit{et al.}, 2008). The main reason why Pacific people gamble is to increase and supplement their income (Perese, 2009).

3.2.3 \textit{Access to Health Services}

The root of ethnic inequities is widely attributed to the lack of access to quality healthcare for migrant and ethnic minority groups. For Pacific patients, accessing quality care can be difficult due to language and cultural barriers. Navigating the health system can be especially difficult in terms of accessing the treatment and providers necessary for treatment. In some cases, language maybe a major barrier as indicated by studies which show that often, Pacific people lack understanding and knowledge about the treatment of their illness (van der Oest \textit{et al.}, 2004; Ministry of Health, 2009; Wright and Hornblow, 2008). For example, a study conducted on tuberculosis health services in the Waikato region for ethnic minority groups (van der Oest \textit{et al.}, 2004) showed that some patients did not understand that they needed to take the full course of antibiotics to treat tuberculosis. In many cases, patients stopped taking their medication once symptoms had alleviated. The researchers found that communication barriers and misunderstanding with non-Pacific health professionals were the primary contributing factor to non-adherence of tuberculosis treatment (ibid). The authors suggested that

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{18} Prevalence is measured by an Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) where the score is greater than 8 (Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand, 2004)
\item\textsuperscript{19} Problem gambling is defined as patterns of gambling behaviour that compromise, disrupt or damage health, personal, family or vocational pursuits (Abbott and Volberg, 2000)
\end{itemize}
Pacific health workers are able to engender greater compliance and adherence to treatment by Pacific peoples than non-Pacific health workers (ibid). Furthermore, the study found that structural and cultural barriers inhibited Pacific peoples from accessing and utilising health services (ibid). For this reason, many supporters of ethnic health workers, including those in the health sector and researchers, advocate the need for an ethnic specific health workforce in order to treat and provide quality health outcomes for a diverse community (Braun et al., 2003; Lovell, 2002; Partridge et al., 2005).

The National Medical Care Survey conducted in 2001 and 2002 is the first nationally representative survey of Pacific patients attending general practitioners (Davis et al., 2005). The survey was funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand to describe primary healthcare in New Zealand including the characteristics of providers and their practices, the patients they see, the problems presented and the management offered. Two important findings raise some concerns over the quality of care that Pacific patients receive in New Zealand. First, doctors reported that they were less likely to have had high rapport with their Pacific patients. Only 54.8% of doctors reported high rapport with Pacific patients in comparison to 68.7% for patients drawn from the entire sample. Second, the proportion of Pacific patients attending third-sector providers, such as the community-governed non-profit practices, was higher than the national average. Pacific patients attending these providers reported receiving much higher levels of service than those at private general practitioners (GPs). For example visits lasted longer, more treatment items were provided (both prescription and non-prescription), and referral rates were higher. Community governed non-profit providers have lower fees but provide much better quality of care and service based on referral rates and clinic experiences to Pacific patients.

This section has described the health inequities between Pacific communities and non-Pacific communities in New Zealand. From the research the link between socioeconomic contexts, societal structural problems, and health statuses has been identified. This relationship is suggested as a reason as to why broad inequalities in health exist between Pacific peoples and non-Pacific peoples in New Zealand. The multiple health risk factors and the high prevalence of chronic disease for all Pacific age groups illustrate the need for access to quality health services. However, aforementioned research has shown that seeking healthcare when needed is not as straightforward as one might assume for Pacific communities. Rather Pacific communities experience multiple barriers in accessing healthcare in New Zealand.

An approach drawing on the social determinants of health framework would suggest that ethnic diversity in the health workforce has the potential to ensure that healthcare services are meeting the
needs of ethnic minority groups that are typically underserved. In this context, increasing the capability and capacity of the Pacific health workforce in New Zealand has the potential to reduce health inequities and inequalities because Pacific health providers are better placed to meet the health needs of Pacific communities.

The following section examines the concept of social determinants of health generally, and the issue of ethnic diversity in the health workforce more specifically.

### 3.3 The Concept of Social Determinants of Health

The concept of social determinants of health originated from the contentious work of McKeown (1979). McKeown argued that the improvement in health over the last two centuries can be attributed to improved economic and social conditions rather than to specific medical advances or public health initiatives. At the time of writing, McKeown’s assertion that social conditions are fundamental causes of disease caused controversy, particularly amongst medical and public health professions, and they still continue to question the legitimacy and validity of McKeown’s thesis (Colgrove, 2002). Nonetheless, the idea that health is socially determined (McKeown, 1979) and shaped by genetic and clinical factors has become increasingly popular. This is reflected in international government health policies and strategies that are based on social determinants of health to improve health outcomes. This international trend was initiated in 1974 with the publication of the Lalonde report commissioned by the Canadian government (Graham, 2004). The report is often cited as the first official government working document to identify social factors as important health factors and served as the catalyst for the Canadian Health for All (HFA) charter in the late 1970s. In 1981 the HFA charter was subsequently adopted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and since the 1980s, governments have adopted the social determinants approach in designing, delivering and developing public health policy (ibid.). Underpinning this approach is the general premise that to improve the health status of populations and reduce health inequalities, root causes of socioeconomic inequities and basic determinants need to be addressed (Wilkinson and Marmot, 2006).

The popularity of the social determinants of health approach lies in its acknowledgement that health inequities and inequalities are a reflection and manifestation of broader structural inequalities within societies. Since its inception, the social determinants of health approach has broadened to include recognition that there are many influences on health (Wilkinson and Marmot, 2006). The approach forces people to examine broader social and structural factors of society such as politics and economics and how these relate and affect one another at the macro and meso level to impact on the health and
wellbeing of individuals at the micro level. In order to devise effective health policy to improve the health of populations all these factors need consideration (Glouberman and Millar, 2006).

Despite the adoption by many governments globally, the challenges of defining what the social determinants of health are and the need for evidence to support the concept resulted in the WHO establishing the independent three-year project, the Commission on Social Determinants of Health in 2005, led by Sir Marmot. The main objective of this Commission was to understand the social determinants of health, how they operate, how they can be changed to improve health, and to link this knowledge with action (Marmot, 2005). The final report, *Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health*, was launched in 2008 with the Commission identifying three overarching recommendations: improve daily living conditions; tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources; and measure and understand the problem and assess the results of action (World Health Organization, 2008, p.3).

The literature and research into understanding social determinants of health is voluminous (Bambra et al., 2009). Since the writings of McKeown (1978), academic research has continued investigating social determinants of health as a framework to understand why health disparities exist between different groups and communities along ethnic and socioeconomic lines. As such, a number of models have been developed in order to illustrate the concept of social determinants. Figure 3.2 below is adapted from Howden-Chapman and Tobias (2000), illustrating their interpretation of social determinants of health in the context of New Zealand.
The Ministry of Health have adopted the above model in their health strategy (Ministry of Health, 2000). An underpinning concern of this thesis is the accessibility of affordable quality healthcare and educational opportunities for Pacific communities. Aforementioned research has shown that access to quality healthcare is an important determinant of health. A social determinants of health approach suggests that to reduce ethnic inequalities by improving access to quality healthcare services, the health workforce should reflect the communities and population that it serves. For Pacific communities in New Zealand this translates to increasing the representation of Pacific health workers in all sectors of the health workforce including clinicians, public health workers, and health managers.
3.4 Ethnic Diversity of the Health Workforce

Increasing the ethnic diversity of health workforces as an intervention to reduce health inequalities in multicultural societies like New Zealand, the United States and Canada is a contested issue. There are many nonminority health workers who serve and provide excellent care for minority patients and clients and vice versa there are many minority health workers who provide excellent care for nonminority patients and clients. There are also some patients who are indifferent to the ethnicity of health workers as long as they are suitably certified and qualified. Thus there are multiple factors that affect the relationship between health provider and patient. In some relationships ethnicity and culture are more important than in others. The advantage of ethnic diversity in healthcare extends beyond the immediate relationship of providing culturally competent healthcare between provider and patient. In broader terms ethnic diversity in healthcare also affects access to care, patient choice and satisfaction. It has been argued that minority health workers are more likely to work in minority communities that are typically medically underserved (Bush et al., 2009; Smedley, 2007).

Generally, advocates for increased ethnic diversity of the health workforce have argued that a more ethnically diverse health workforce improves the quality of care for ethnic communities (La Viest, 2005; Wright and Hornblow, 2008). Ethnic health workers are better able to address language and cultural barriers such as different health belief models amongst ethnic patients compared to nonethnic health workers (La Viest, 2005, p.236). For example, Pacific health workers have a better understanding of Pacific health cultural beliefs that impinge on Pacific people’s health-seeking behaviour compared to non-Pacific health workers. Pacific workers and community healthcare providers have traditionally taken a multidisciplinary approach to healthcare (Pacific Health Research Centre, 2003). This is in response to the holistic approach to health as practiced by Pacific people and the diverse health needs identified by Pacific health practitioners in New Zealand (Ministry of Health, 2008). This illustrates how Pacific health workers might be better able to respond to the needs of Pacific communities at least to deliver health services and resources in a culturally appropriate manner. This argument resonates with Pacific communities as demonstrated in the mid-1990s during health consultations with the Ministry of Health, which stated a strong preference for “by Pacific for Pacific” models of care and service provision (Perese et al., 2009).

Despite many commentators supporting an increased commitment to greater ethnic diversity of the health workforce there are very few studies that have directly researched whether patient outcomes are affected by doctor-patient ethnic concordance (Betancourt et al., 2003; Oscós-Sánchez et al., 2008; Cohen et al., 2002). Betancourt and colleagues (2003) acknowledged the lack of strong quantitative data but argued that, “a plethora of anecdotal evidence suggests that lack of diversity in the leadership
and workforce of healthcare organisations results in structural policies, procedures, and delivery systems inappropriately designed or poorly suited to serve diverse patient populations” (p. 296).

Most research in patient-doctor ‘racial concordance issues’, or in other words, ethnic specific health services, has been conducted in the United States (Saha et al., 2000; Stevens et al., 2003). These studies have tended to focus mainly on preference of patients. One study found that African-American, European and Hispanic/Latino patients actively sought care from practitioners of the same ethnic background specifically because of language and personal motivation and not because of the lack of options (Saha et al., 2000). The researchers concluded that cultural and ethnic considerations were the main reason for health provider choice when there were a number of health providers to choose from.

Other studies evaluating ethnic specific health services found that those patients whose regular medical practitioner was of the same ethnic origin reported higher levels of patient satisfaction (Barwick, 2000; Betancourt et al., 2003; La Veist, 2005; Schnittaker and Liang, 2006). For example Morales et al., (1999) found that Spanish speaking patients had higher levels of satisfaction of care from Spanish speaking providers than from non-Spanish speaking providers.

Lau and Zane (2000) compared mental health treatment outcomes between cohorts of Asian-American clients using ethnic specific providers with a matched cohort utilising mainstream providers. The study was conducted using Asian-American consumers from an outpatient mental health facility in Los Angeles. There were a total of 3,178 clients with 1,981 clients receiving services from ethnic specific agencies and 1,197 clients receiving services from mainstream agencies. To examine the effects of ethnic specific services, data from the Automated Information System were analysed. To analyse treatment outcomes researchers used the Global Assessment Scale\textsuperscript{20} score at intake and following discharge. Results revealed that after controlling for demographics, pre-treatment severity and diagnosis, the cohort using ethnic specific providers showed better treatment outcomes such as correct and prompt diagnosis and more cost effective treatment outcomes. This study is based on quantitative data and it is one of the few outcome studies based on ethnic-specific health services. Qualitative data, such as interviews with clients and service providers, would be helpful to build on the quantitative data to gain a better understanding in the differences in treatment outcomes.

\textsuperscript{20} The Global Assessment Scale is a popular and well researched 100-point scale used to rate client’s overall psychological, social, and occupational functioning, with one indicating the most severe impairment and 100 referring to good functioning in all areas of life. The measurement of functioning as an outcome variable reflects the move toward emphasising community adaptation and living skills over symptom reduction in the public sector service delivery system (Lau and Zane, 2000, p. 68).
Mental health services as a sector is considered a leader in the area of Pacific health workforce development. This is based on the reports and research undertaken in regards to analysing and exploring treatment outcomes for Pacific mental health consumers. One of the first ethnic specific studies for mental health consumers in New Zealand was based on Samoan perspectives on mental health and culturally appropriate services (Tamasese et al., 2005). The researchers conducted gendered focus groups with Samoan elders21 and service providers employed within the Public Mental Health Service. Two of the five key findings from the report are particularly relevant for this study. First, participants were concerned that current services are based on Western medical beliefs that differ from Samoan holistic beliefs, and as such the diagnosis, treatment, and structuring of mental health services are all Western-based which has limited value for Samoan people. Also language barriers were identified as a constraint of current treatment as the English language was used predominantly for mental healthcare. This presents a problem for those clients who have limited understanding of the English language. The participants were encouraged by the fact that cultural consultants and advisers were being employed at the time to address the cultural needs of mental health consumers. Second, the participants described a successful mental health service for Samoan people as being designed by and largely staffed by Samoan people.

The New Zealand Mental Health Classification and Outcomes study by Pulotu-Endemann, Annandale and Instone (2004) based on a Pacific perspective is similar to Lau and Zane’s study (2000). The study used a case-mix method with mental health services provided by eight district health boards, including two Pacific teams. Although the study did not explicitly focus on Pacific users’ outcomes, the results showed that Pacific people have a holistic view of mental health, yet the services that are currently offered to them are based on mainstream conceptual models of mental health that do not acknowledge the importance of family and cultural values. It is unsurprising that Pacific consumers reported negative experiences of these mental health services as the delivery of these services failed to recognise their holistic approach to mental health. Despite the limitations of the study, one being the small numbers of Pacific consumers, the authors suggested that those who deliver mental health services need to be aware of cultural sensitivities, and that Pacific mental health workers are better placed to meet the needs of Pacific mental health patients.

The research so far has suggested that Pacific healthcare workers could address many of the health problems of Pacific peoples because of their understanding of how cultural health belief models impact on health and health-seeking behaviour. In addition, services that are more responsive to underserved groups can reduce barriers to access and encourage access thereby improving outcomes for these

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21 The minimum age for the elders was 50 years old.
groups. The above studies on ethnic health outcomes are useful in firstly, establishing that quality and access to healthcare is a real problem for minority populations in New Zealand, and secondly, beginning a dialogue in addressing some of the structural issues and barriers in New Zealand’s healthcare. These studies are similar to studies in the United States which show that when given the choice, African-American and Hispanic patients tend to choose health practitioners of the same ethnic background (Kington et al., 2001; Smedley, 2007).

Although studies are beginning to emerge from New Zealand’s research about the problems of access to health services for Pacific peoples, there has yet to be any substantive study to evaluate the effectiveness of Pacific health workers in improving health outcomes for Pacific patients. Awareness of the benefits and advantages of having an ethnically diverse workforce have seen the public sector in New Zealand actively recruit and promote diversity in the workforce (Faleafa and Ng Shiu, 2008). Across the public sector there has been an intense focus by organisations to have their workforce reflect the communities in which they serve. Diversity in the workplace is viewed as being central to delivering services and outcomes effectively to the New Zealand public (State Services Commission, 2004). In 2003, the State Services Commission initiated the Human Resource Framework project in which one of its objectives was to “enhance the ability to attract and retain diverse and capable talent” (p. 3). This project has encouraged the public service to focus attention on setting targets and initiatives on recruiting Pacific staff members.

Research in regards to access and quality of healthcare for ethnic minority communities have yet to acknowledge that ethnic minority health workers are also best able to train and teach cultural competency to all health learners in training environments. Cultural competency is becoming an increasing area of interest in the medical field with medical schools in multicultural societies introducing compulsory cultural competency papers in medical training (Kumas-Tan et al., 2007). It is difficult to be able to understand the importance of cross-cultural encounters from reading articles, books or training manuals alone. It is not until one experiences encounters of cultural difference that one is able to fully comprehend and appreciate the importance of negotiating cultural difference. Therefore ethnic minorities are better able to articulate and explain how to deal with conflicts arising from cultural differences in health beliefs and practices, as they are more likely to have experienced some of the challenges associated with cross-cultural differences in health settings.

Ethnic minority health researchers are also more suited to lead studies and investigate health research with their communities. The need for ethnic and indigenous groups to lead research has long been established in academia (Kobayashi, 2001; Mohammad, 2001) and is discussed in more detail in
Chapter Four. This argument can also be extended into policy to increase ethnic representation in health leadership and policy writing. Ethnic minority professionals are able to bring different perspectives and worldviews that can ensure policy is both robust and effective in meeting the needs of ethnic minorities.

Researchers who advocate for increasing ethnic diversity in the health workforce have begun to investigate the low achievement of medical health students from ethnic minoritised communities at University (Radcliffe and Lester, 2003; Wass et al., 2003; Yates and James, 2006). For example, one study from the United Kingdom conducted in 2006 used a case-control study at the University of Nottingham Medical School to identify positional predictors of undergraduate students who struggle with medical training (Yates and James, 2006). Students who experienced academic difficulties that affected their performance were purposefully selected and controls were selected at random. The main findings were that ethnic minorities, in this case those of Asian descent struggled the most and this was reflected in their high failure rate for undergraduate medical courses. The researchers found that Asian students tended to hide or deny difficulties until their problems reached crisis point.

Literature from the United States on the educational achievement of minority tertiary students has focused on the experiences of African-American and Latino students (Maton et al., 2006; Rogers and Molina, 2006). Maton and colleagues (2006) conducted a study reviewing the trends of minority students of colour at a psychology department from 1989–2003 using statistical psychology enrolment data. The study began by reviewing the need for increased representation of ethnic minority groups to deliver appropriate health services. The authors suggested that the academic achievements of ethnic minority groups at university cannot be divorced from the social realities of inequities in wider society.

The need for ethnic diversity in the health workforce is wider than just the medical and clinical setting. Patient and client satisfaction and choice in accessing quality healthcare are indeed important issues. As previously stated, Pacific representation is important in all sectors of the health workforce. Pacific health leaders, researchers and policymakers are just as important as Pacific clinicians and medical personnel in New Zealand. Developing a capable and robust Pacific health workforce requires a commitment from the government, Pacific communities, and educational institutions in order to ensure that young Pacific school leavers choose health as a career pathway, are able to meet the requirements necessary to enter tertiary institutions, and are supported and encouraged to complete their studies and enter the health workforce. The following section provides an overview of the efforts on behalf of the government in increasing the Pacific health workforce.
3.5 Ministerial Papers on Pacific Health Workforce Development

In 2000, the government introduced The New Zealand Health Strategy to develop the health and wellbeing of the New Zealand public. The strategy identified an urgent need to improve health and disability outcomes for Pacific people as a population group within New Zealand. The Ministry of Health argued that delivery of these outcomes was dependent on a competent and sufficient Pacific health workforce to meet the demands of Pacific communities. This argument was based on the social determinants of health model adopted in The New Zealand Health Strategy and the New Zealand Disability Strategy (Ministry of Health, 2000).

More recently the Ala Mo‘ui Pathways to Pacific Health and Wellbeing 2010–2014 report from the Ministries of Health and Pacific Island Affairs, released in 2010, outlines the priority outcomes and actions for the next five years in improving life outcomes for Pacific people. The report identifies Pacific workforce as a key priority, and identifies the areas of primary health care, child health, mental health, and oral health as key priority areas (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010).

Although the ministerial papers and reports have suggested increasing ethnic diversity in the health workforce is needed in terms of improving health inequalities for minority groups, they have not outlined a process of how to increase the number of ethnic minorities within the workforce. New Zealand, like the rest of the world, is struggling to produce health workers to meet current population health demands, let alone ethnic minority health workers. The reality of increasing the Pacific health workforce to be commensurate with the Pacific population in the next 10–20 years in New Zealand is unlikely (New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, 2006).

3.6 Health Workforce Development

Across the developed world, there is a common problem with regard to meeting workforce shortages in the health and disability workforce (Bloor and Maynard, 2003; Zurn and Dumont, 2008). The forecast of an ageing population has been identified as a primary cause of health workforce shortages. Most populations in the developed world are ageing and as age is the most prominent risk factor for disease (chronic, cardiovascular, cancer), prevalence rates will continue to increase, as will the need for geriatric and palliative care facilities. This has caused a bulge in the demand for health professionals and services that standard capacity levels fail to meet (Bloor and Maynard, 2003). Worldwide most governments are trying to remedy this situation. Declining workforce numbers are imminent as retirement becomes a reality for many health workers, whilst there is a shortage of health professionals to replace them.
The treatment of illnesses through advancements in technology, pharmacy, surgical procedures, and other methods has increased life expectancy, and the prevalence of many chronic diseases has meant that many individuals are living with increased morbidity. Diseases and conditions that were once untreatable have now become treatable but require more resources in terms of curative medicine and palliative care. This has an overall effect of increasing demand for health professionals and resources (Bloor and Maynard, 2003).

3.6.1 Short-term strategies

This section examines attracting overseas trained health workers and reducing staff turnover as short-term strategies to address health workforce shortages. These strategies are considered short-term as they require less than two years to implement and would not require structural changes to current health systems.

Most health workforces have policies to actively recruit from abroad. This has seen a flow mainly of the regulated health workforce to countries of wealth, leaving poorer countries struggling to replace their health workforce (Connell, 2008). For example Pacific nations such as Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, and Niue have difficulties in retaining health workers who tend to migrate to New Zealand for better employment opportunities. The moral and ethical issues that this has raised have generally been ignored (Brown and Connell, 2004; Connell, 2007). Similar to the United Kingdom, New Zealand relies on a large proportion of overseas trained health workers. New Zealand is reported to have a larger proportion of overseas-trained doctors (34.5%) than any other Western country and has one of the highest proportions of overseas-trained nurses. At the same time New Zealand has one of the highest emigration rates of health workers mainly to Australia (Health Workforce Advisory Committee, 2006; Zurn and Dumont, 2008). This has raised concerns in the delivery of services, especially with regard to levels of “cultural competency” and language difficulties with some overseas trained health workers. Added to this, is the turnover rate of overseas-trained health workers, many of which may come at an added expense as they generally fill locum positions.

There is limited information on the recruitment of Pacific health professionals who have been trained overseas. Professional registration in New Zealand has been identified as a major constraint for Pacific health professionals due to language barriers. Academic studies have shown that Pacific health workers more typically migrate to New Zealand and Australia than to any other country for both employment opportunities in the health sector and because of ties with family members already living in New Zealand or Australia (Oman et al., 2009; Negin, 2008). However, many Pacific trained health professionals find the registration process a barrier to practicing in New Zealand. Counties Manukau District Health Board recognised that English language skills are a significant barrier in achieving
registration. As a consequence, Counties Manukau District Health Board developed the Return to Nursing Programme in conjunction with the Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) to help Pacific nurses pass the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), which is required in order to be registered (Perese et al., 2009). As the programme is relatively new there has yet to be an evaluation to ascertain whether the programme has had a positive impact on the registration of Pacific trained nurses.

While it is possible that the New Zealand health sector could decide to actively recruit health professionals from Pacific nations to meet the need for a bigger health workforce in general and a more proportional Pacific workforce in particular, there are problems with this type of strategy. The first issue to consider is whether it is ethical to “poach” skilled workers from neighbouring Pacific countries where retention of trained people in all professions is a national problem. Second is the issue of economies of scale. The pool of fully trained health workers in the Pacific is so limited, that it could not satisfactorily meet New Zealand’s Pacific health workforce development demand. However, developing links with key regional institutions and organisations, such as the Fiji School of Medicine, may assist in understanding the potential for mutually beneficial initiatives that serve the interests of all parties involved and build Pacific health workforce development in the region (McCool et al., 2011). For example, a teaching exchange programme between health educators and trainers in New Zealand and the Pacific is one initiative that would benefit both regions (Suaali’i-Sauni et al., 2011). Educators from New Zealand would be able to provide students in the Pacific with useful and practical information for registering in New Zealand, while educators from the Pacific would be able to up-skill in New Zealand as well as provide important regional information for New Zealand students.

Reducing the turnover of staff would help keep the numbers in the health workforce staffed to higher levels (Health Workforce Advisory Committee, 2006). For example in 2004 a large scale Public Health Workforce survey was conducted with all public health providers contracted to the Ministry of Health. The results showed that Pacific providers experienced staff retention as the second leading issue of concern (behind staff recruitment) at present and felt it would be the leading issue of concern for the next three to five years (Phoenix Research, 2004). There have been a number of studies that have investigated motivation and retention issues for health workers globally (Henderson and Tulloch, 2008; Willis-Shattuck et al., 2008). Results from these studies have shown that while economic and remuneration packages were important; working conditions, supervision, and ongoing training and education were also important factors.
3.6.2 Long-term strategies

This section examines the relative merits and disadvantages of the long-term strategies modifying health roles, training auxiliary health workers and focusing on public health to address health workforce shortages. These strategies are considered long-term as they are based on training new health professionals.

The idea of introducing new roles within the health workforce is one that has been received with mixed responses dependant on the nature of the role and the perceived threat there may be for other health professionals (Bloor and Maynard, 2003; Hongoro and McPake, 2004). Supporters of this strategy have suggested these roles would potentially increase the breadth of practice that lower level health workers can do (Hongoro and McPake, 2004). For example the nurse practitioner role extends the responsibility of a nurse to include prescribing power. Ideally, the prescribing power of the nurse practitioner would decrease the workload of doctors. Some doctors have perceived this new role as a threat to their occupation and earning power. The scope for modifying existing roles and creating new ones is an area that will receive much attention in the future and will be instrumental in the provision of healthcare to future populations. Informally new roles and added responsibilities to current health occupations, especially in the non-regulated sector, have developed out of necessity (Health Workforce Advisory Council, 2006). As the need for health services intensifies over the next few decades, more changes are likely to occur as the health system adapts to these increasing needs.

The Pacific health workforce and Pacific providers generally have a multidisciplinary approach to the provision of healthcare to their communities. Many Pacific providers provide social support services, diet and exercise education, diabetes centres, and healthy family services that are not common among traditional GP practices (Ministry of Health, 2008). This could be in part due to a holistic approach to health by Pacific people and in response to a great and diverse health need identified by Pacific health practitioners/providers for their clients. The formation of new roles and responsibilities occurring in Pacific primary healthcare organisations has affected mostly the non-regulated roles as opposed to regulated health workers.

**Train more auxiliary workers**

Most training strategies that focus on health workforce development and planning tend to focus on training highly skilled but easily exportable workers (Hongoro and McPake, 2004). It may therefore be advisable to place a greater emphasis on the training and development of lower level auxiliary health workers such as nurse aides and other workers who will be less likely to emigrate and work overseas. If this was to happen, in combination with the creation of new roles and responsibilities as mentioned above, the demand on higher-level health professionals and the health system could be relieved.
This is a point that would be relevant to New Zealand generally, and relevant for Pacific people specifically. The training time associated with auxiliary roles would be shorter than that of the regulated workforce meaning a more timely contribution to health workforce needs. In 2006, the MIT Pacific Community Health Worker programme began. This programme is designed to provide students with a qualification and the practical skills and knowledge to work as a community health worker, alongside other professionals in health and social service related fields for the benefit of the health and wellbeing of families, individuals, and groups in Pacific communities (Manukau Institute of Technology, 2006). An evaluation of the programme in terms of employment outcomes for the workers and positive health outcomes for Pacific clients has yet to be implemented.

**Focus on public health**

A public health emphasis for workforce development would mean increasing training schemes in health promotion, healthy lifestyles, and disease prevention. Competing for funds with clinical services could be a challenge in developing a public health workforce. However, an increasing awareness and investment in public health from government is occurring. Outcome benefits would be the prevention of diabetes, high blood pressure, and non-communicable diseases, which currently amounts to the largest proportion of illness worldwide and especially for Pacific people in New Zealand.

In the United States there are a number of medical training programmes targeted at attracting young ethnic minorities into health careers, as a strategy to reduce ethnic health inequalities (Schneider, 2009). One programme is the Teen Medical Academy (TMA) implemented in 2003 by the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Texas Health Science Centre (Oscós-Sánchez et al., 2008). The TMA is a nine month programme promoting health careers among ethnic minority secondary students in economically disadvantaged schools. One Saturday each month, members from the family medicine faculty hold six medical workshops and three Teen Health Camps. During the medical workshops, residents and faculty members give clinical instruction with the use of hands-on diagnostic and treatment technologies. During the Teen Health Camps the TMA students then practice and teach middle school students their newly gained skills. This acts as a recruitment tool for the following year. Given the geographical region of the programme, the majority of TMA students are Latino. The rest of the students are African-American or Native American. Using quantitative data and statistical analysis an evaluation of the programme was carried out with TMA students from 2003 to 2006. The evaluation was based on a questionnaire sent to TMA students asking them to rank their interest in health careers, confidence in ability to attain a career in health, feelings of belongingness in health careers, and achievement motivation. Results indicate the programme has increased the awareness of health career pathways in ethnic communities and in schools with high levels of
deprivation. From the results the number of TMA students who have entered health related courses at university is unclear (Oscós-Sánchez et al., 2008). The importance of this programme is that the local university is actively promoting health to ethnic minority communities and implementing programmes at an early age. This provides students the opportunity to gain a greater awareness of possible health careers as well as outlining clear pathways for each health profession and providing them with a glimpse of what it means to be a tertiary health student.

Any long-term strategy for health workforce development requires an integrated systems approach that involves both the education and health sectors. School leavers need to be aware of the health career opportunities that are available to them and enter tertiary education with the appropriate science background. A clear pathway is needed from secondary school to tertiary education and finally to working in the health sector to ensure that students are guided in the right direction and are aware of the requirements needed to advance from one stage of their pathway to the next.

Increasing the Pacific health workforce is necessary but not sufficient to address all Pacific health needs. Health is socially determined and factors such as income and education are equally important to the health of individuals and communities. However, the disproportionate health burden facing Pacific people, as described earlier, provides a compelling rationale for increasing the Pacific health workforce. To develop a robust Pacific health and disability workforce Pacific representation is needed across all levels of the sector from community workers to medical specialists and general managers. At the very least the proportion of Pacific providers and health professionals should be commensurate with the Pacific population in New Zealand (that is, 6%). Ensuring that young Samoan and Pacific school leavers are attracted to health as a career option and are achieving at school is one strategy to reduce health inequalities and inequities.

3.7 Samoan and Pacific Educational Inequities

There are multiple contextual factors to take into account that affect the growth in capacity and capability of the Pacific health workforce in New Zealand. One concern is the achievement levels of Pacific learners at all levels of education. As the social determinants of health model illustrates, health and educational inequalities are linked. As with health, Pacific communities also experience educational inequalities as Pacific and Māori learners have the poorest pass rates in secondary and tertiary education. This section begins with an overview of Pacific education research in New Zealand before reviewing some of the evidence and statistics illustrating Pacific educational inequities.
Most research conducted in Pacific education issues has taken a Pan-Pacific approach. As a new area of research during the 1980s and 1990s this approach was necessary and practical. However, this body of literature has grown substantially over the last few decades so that key themes have been established. These include the opportunity cost of further study in lieu of participating in the workforce (Anae et al., 2002; Furneaux, 1973; Tofi et al., 1996); Pacific pedagogy where Pacific students respond better to collective learning styles (Airini, 1997; Benseman et al., 2006); and the importance of education by Samoan parents (Macpherson et al., 2000; Utumapu, 1992).

Pacific Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a growing area of research and has received much attention in recent times. Research has shown the importance of ECE for Pacific children and achievement throughout their learning journeys (Meade et al., 2003). This awareness has resulted in the formalising of the sector by creating pathways for Pacific people currently in the sector to become qualified and registered Pacific ECE teachers. The first Pacific ECE was established in Auckland in 1985 and the 1990s was an era of significant growth for Pacific ECEs. This growth was driven by Pacific communities and churches and based on bilingual ECE models like the A’oga Amata for Samoan communities (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010b). In reviewing the national literature on Pacific peoples, more research is needed to analyse and detail the experiences of the different ethnic groups that make up the group “Pacific”. Furthermore, there is a lacuna in the Pacific education literature as there is limited research in Pacific tertiary education. Research in ECE and compulsory education for Pacific students is well established, but in comparison tertiary education is a less developed area of research and inquiry.

To increase the capacity and capability of the Pacific health workforce in New Zealand, Pacific people need tertiary qualifications. Academic achievement and success is a progressive process where learners need to have achieved well in compulsory schooling to meet tertiary entry requirements. To achieve well at school students need strong literacy and numeracy skills, and for health education having a strong science background is beneficial for some career pathways such as in the medical field. Children need to enter primary school with the skills, knowledge and positive attitudes for learning. It has been shown that children who attend ECE centres are better prepared to enter primary schools (Meade et al., 2003).

One key issue that has been identified in Pacific tertiary students’ education research is family support or the lack of family support (Anae, 2006; Coxon et al., 2002). Such research has identified the need for family support as vital for Pacific students’ success, but inadequately described what exactly family support is in a Pacific context. Therefore gaps in research include investigating whether or not family
support does influence positively on Pacific learners outcomes, and if it does what can be done to ensure that all Pacific students receive the same benefits from family support. Research in regards to higher education for Pacific students has mainly dealt with macro structural issues such as tertiary education policy, access issues, and structural issues at a provider level. The literature has provided much needed information to inform “best-practice” in terms of supporting Pacific students at university. This will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. What is now needed is the translation of the research into policy and action. This then needs to be supplemented with research and strategies at the micro level. That is, there is a need to conduct more research into the successful engagement of Pacific families with tertiary students learning and understanding the implications of family support on their learning outcomes. This type of research needs to be extended to include tertiary education.

3.7.1 Academic Achievement of Samoan and Pacific Secondary School Learners

Adequate preparation at primary and secondary level is directly related to tertiary level success (Anae et al., 2002; Madjar et al., 2009). Preparation involves attaining the necessary qualifications, skills, and confidence at each schooling level. To increase the number of eligible Pacific school leavers entering tertiary education we need to understand the issues affecting and impacting on the achievement of secondary Pacific learners. The 2008 data on school leavers who fulfilled university entry requirements, showed that the proportion of Pacific learners meeting university entrance requirements is half that of non-Pacific learners (Ministry of Education, 2009). Qualifications for senior secondary school are based on achieving the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) at level one to three. To achieve NCEA students must have achieved the standards for a particular subject. Table 3.6 below shows the 2008 NCEA results for all subjects by standard and ethnicity.

Table 3.5: NCEA Results for 2008 for all Subjects by Standard and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>% Not reported</th>
<th>% Not achieved</th>
<th>% Achieved</th>
<th>% Merit</th>
<th>% Excellence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22 This data includes private/integrated schools and state schools.
Table 3.6 shows all levels of NCEA in all subjects. The achieved, merit, and excellence columns indicate the level of “achieved” with excellence representing the highest level of achievement. Pacific learners had the highest proportion of “not achieved” at illustrating that Pacific learners had the poorest achievement levels at all levels of NCEA. The most significant difference noted is for External Assessments where 49% of Pacific students did not achieve compared to 30% of all students. In reviewing the differences between the Pacific and Total “not achieved” percentages for all standards there is a considerable gap illustrating the inequalities in educational outcomes in senior secondary school for Pacific and non-Pacific learners.

Youth ’07, the second National Survey of the health and wellbeing of New Zealand secondary school students was conducted in 2006. Although this survey was not aimed specifically at Pacific students in New Zealand it provides the most comprehensive quantitative data on the health and wellbeing of New Zealand secondary school students currently available. The survey asked students questions regarding the factors they considered most influential on their success at school, covering engagement at school, teacher-student relationships, and parent-children relationships. This survey therefore provides a useful tool to compare the perspectives of secondary students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. An overview of the Youth ’07 survey is provided in the insert, box 1 below (Helu et al., 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pacific</th>
<th>49</th>
<th>37</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009

Box 1: Youth ’07 New Zealand’s national secondary school survey on youth health and wellbeing

**Purpose**

The Youth ’07 survey is the second wave of a national secondary school survey to provide information on the health and wellbeing of secondary school students from New Zealand. The first wave was conducted in 2001. Both surveys are part of the Youth2000 project organised by the Adolescent Health Research group (AHRG) at the University of Auckland. The survey aimed to provide information that represented young people growing up in New Zealand.

**Method**

Out of 115 randomly selected schools throughout the country that had 50 or more students in years 9 to 14, 96 schools participated. This equated to 9,107 students participating, representing about 3% of the total 2007 New Zealand secondary school roll. The survey involved students using internet tablets to fill in a questionnaire that covered health and wellbeing topics as well as risk and protective factors, amounting to a total of 622 questions. The number of questions answered was fewer however, due to the branching questionnaire design. The questions were grouped into the following 12 categories:
culture and ethnicity; home and families; school; nutrition and exercise; general health; emotional wellbeing; substance use; gambling; sexual health; injuries and violence; multiple health-risk behaviours; and community.\(^\text{23}\)

From the total sample surveyed 1,190 students identified themselves as Pacific representing 13% of the total sample. The other main ethnic groups were: European (76%); Māori (19%); and Asian (14%). Apart from Māori, all other ethnic groups were broken down into subgroups. The Pacific group included: Samoan (5.8%); Tongan (2.7%); Cook Island Māori (3.1%); Niuean (1.4%); Tokelauan (0.9%); and other. The Pacific results from the school findings are outlined below.

**Pacific school findings and results**

The questions regarding school are grouped into the following five categories:

1. **School Engagement** – these questions asked what students enjoy about school, do they feel part of the school, what activities they participate in, and whether students have been truant from school.
2. **Relationships at school** – these questions were based on whether teachers and other adults at school provide positive relationships by asking whether teachers treat students fairly most of the time, do they get along with their teachers, and do people at school expect them to do well.
3. **Families and school** – these questions asked whether family members attended parent-teacher meetings, do family members help with homework, and if family members help out at school and attend school events.
4. **School safety** – these questions asked students if they feel safe at school and if students were bullied to what extent.
5. **Plans following school** – questions were asked on students’ plans postsecondary school and whether they intended entering tertiary education, the workforce, or starting a family.

The table below presents the data reported in regards to Pacific students’ responses to school engagement and relationships at school questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pacific students % (Agree)</th>
<th>NZ/Pakeha students % (Agree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students feel part of the school</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People at school care about students</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{23}\) More details on the study and all 622 questions in the survey is available via the project’s website: www.youth2000.ac.nz
Almost all of Pacific students felt that they were a part of the school and this was higher than the New Zealand/Pakeha figure. Only a third of Pacific students felt that people at school cared about them which is higher than the New Zealand/Pakeha figure. However, a significantly lower proportion of Pacific students relative to Pakeha students felt that teachers treat students fairly most of the time. These statistics suggest that although Pacific students feel a part of the school this sense of belonging is not necessarily associated with their relationships with teachers, although students do feel that people at school expect them to do well.

**Samoan school findings and results**

Only brief findings from the Samoan participants for all twelve categories surveyed were reported. For the school findings the results showed that almost all students liked school mostly because they enjoyed hanging out with friends (92%) and only 49% reported enjoying doing school work. The table below shows the results in regards to questions relating to family and school relationships by Samoan, Pacific, and New Zealand/Pakeha ethnic groups where figures are available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Samoan %</th>
<th>Pacific %</th>
<th>NZ/Pakeha %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students who like school</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A family member had attended a parent-teacher meeting</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A family member had helped with homework</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families had helped out at school in the last year</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results show that over half of Samoan students received help with their homework, which was comparable with Pacific statistics and slightly lower than New Zealand/Pakeha students. Almost half of Samoan family members had attended a parent-teacher meeting. This was also slightly lower than the New Zealand/Pakeha percentage.

Source: (Helu et al., 2009)

The Pacific results from the Youth ’07 survey provided mixed results in regards to teacher-student relationships. Research has shown that teacher expectations impact on the learning aspirations and the outcomes of students (Gorinski and Fraser, 2006). Thus higher expectation of teachers equates to higher aspirations and academic outcomes for students. There was a significant difference in the percentages between the questions asking “do people at school care about you?” (33% agreed) and “if
people expect you to do well?” (92%). This raised the question of what exactly doing well meant to students and whether they interpreted this to mean whether teachers expected them to do well academically or whether the sports teacher expected them to do well on the playing field. There is a significant difference in doing well academically inside the classroom and doing well outside the classroom in extracurricular activities.

What is of concern is that less than half of Pacific students felt that their teachers treated them fairly. It is difficult to speculate why this is the case; therefore asking students to elaborate would be useful in future studies. Previous studies in regards to teacher and Pacific student relationships have suggested that secondary students feel ethnically discriminated by their teachers and this in turn impacts on the quality of learning and classroom engagement (Nakhid, 2003). Some researchers have argued that the low achievement rates of Pacific and Māori learners is related to their socioeconomic status; however, other research has challenged this hypothesis by arguing that it is related to ethnicity (Hattie, 2003; Rubie-Davies et al., 2006). Hattie (2003) found that by controlling for socioeconomic factors such as income, ethnic inequalities in education persisted at all decile levels. The socioeconomic status hypothesis would suggest that Māori and Pacific learners who come from middle to high income families would have comparable achievement rates with other learners. However, this is not the case with statistical data illustrating that inequalities in achievement exist within deciles and between deciles (Hattie, 2003). These results support other research that advocates for equitable teaching practices and structures so that teachers are provided with the tools to be able to engage with all students to reduce ethnic differences in achievement (Bishop, 2003; Nakhid, 2003). The literature on teacher relationships impacting on Pacific achievement has been established since the mid 1990s where positive relationships between teacher and student has a positive impact on academic success (Gorinski and Fraser, 2006), yet it remains a significant issue illustrating that the learning from previous research has yet to be applied in educational institutions.

Attendance at school has been associated with academic success. Data have shown that attendance of Pacific learners, particularly at year 11, is high for Pacific learners and that Pacific learners have better retention rates than non-Pacific learners (Ministry of Education, 2008). This is based on the attrition rates where only 5.4% of Pacific learners left school between Year 9 and Year 11 compared to 6.9% of non-Pacific learners. Attendance at Year 11 has been proven to be one of the most significant factors influencing student achievement in senior secondary schooling, but for Pacific learners this has not been reflected in their achievement (Ferguson et al., 2008). The data have shown that Pacific learners have better attendance rates than non-Pacific learners, but still have lower achievement rates compared with non-Pacific learners, suggesting that there are other significant factors impacting on
Pacific learners. These statistics also suggest that the key to Pacific learners’ success is classroom engagement and effective teaching practices (ibid.). To make the most of their time in school Pacific learners need to be engaging in the classroom context and not just in the school yard. The classroom context and the dynamic between teacher and Pacific learner are important issues that need to be understood fully.

Some schools have argued that their teaching practices are culturally inclusive; however, being culturally inclusive is more than celebrating Pacific culture through onetime events such as Pacific themed days. These are important events and show that schools are aware of the importance of cultural identity for learners but schools need to commit more to a culturally inclusive agenda. Culturally inclusive classrooms need to follow the principles of the bilingual ECEs, such as Aoga Amata for Samoan preschoolers, where there is space within the curriculum at all levels of formal education to value the student and cultural differences of the student body (Ferguson et al., 2008; Nakhid, 2003).

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

Compounding this challenge is that many Pacific adults in New Zealand do not have the literacy and numeracy skills to help senior secondary learners. Results from the 2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALL) survey that showed Pacific peoples in New Zealand had the lowest literacy and numeracy skills of all ethnic groups (Lawes, 2009; Satherley and Lawes, 2008). The ALL Survey is the second international survey of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries that investigates the distribution of literacy and numeracy skills in the adult population and how this impacts on employment and income outcomes. The first survey was undertaken in 1996 and comparisons with the 2006 survey indicate that Pacific adults were the only ethnic group that had not showed any improvement in literacy and numeracy skills in comparison to European, Māori, and Asian ethnic groups (Satherley and Lawes, 2008).
Similarly if English is a second language, this may act as an additional barrier and deterrent for Pacific parents to engage with schools. Irrespective of culture there are other factors that influence the engagement between schools and families. Children may simply not want their parents to engage with their schools and therefore fail to inform them of school events especially if learners are failing (Ferguson et al., 2008). Although Samoan caregivers may not be able to help with homework, they do provide moral encouragement and support (Utumapu-McBride et al., 2008).

One concerning issue that research has shown is the need to understand the transition between high school and tertiary education for Pacific learners (Anae et al., 2002; Benseman et al., 2006; Hawk et al., 2002). Qualitative research with secondary and tertiary Pacific students has provided data to support statistics that show one reason for non-participation in tertiary education is that students are not effectively being guided into tertiary education (Madjar et al., 2009). Pacific secondary students are often guided into taking non-university entrance standards in their personal curriculum choices and are unaware of the subject requirements needed for university entrance (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010b; Madjar et al., 2009). Furthermore, students who do enter tertiary education find the transition onerous and difficult, resulting in high first-year attrition rates. Transition from secondary school to tertiary education is a general issue for all underrepresented students in tertiary education. As a result, in 2005 The University of Auckland and the Tertiary Education Commission initiated a collaboration project known as the Starpath project, which aims to identify critical transition points at which underrepresented secondary students fail to progress along the educational pathway. Learnings of the project thus far that indicate students subject choices at secondary school are restricting their access to tertiary education, researchers have thus worked more collaboratively with schools to encourage Pacific students’ to take more “academic” subjects (Madjar et al., 2009). This infers that Pacific students have not been encouraged to take academic subjects but why this is the case, and for Pacific students in particular, is unclear. Research has shown that there are a small proportion of Pacific school leavers entering tertiary education even though a higher proportion of Pacific learners are completing secondary schooling than non-Pacific learners (Ferguson et al., 2008).

This section has discussed research identifying school engagement, teacher-student relationships, and parent-child relationships as being important influencers on the achievement of Pacific and Samoan learners in secondary schooling. The low achievement issue for Pacific learners in secondary education is also replicated in the tertiary education sector. The next section outlines the inequalities in achievement for Pacific tertiary learners.
3.7.2 Academic achievement of Pacific tertiary learners

Tertiary training is preferable to enter any health profession and in many cases particularly for clinical professions it is a prerequisite. Increasing the number of Pacific tertiary graduates will help to improve the socioeconomic status of Pacific communities in New Zealand. Pacific tertiary learners also have the lowest academic outcomes compared to other ethnic groups, even when controlling for socioeconomic status and previous academic preparation (Juhong and Maloney, 2006; Hattie, 2003). A tertiary study utilising data on a cohort of students who were enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts programme at a New Zealand university in 2000 examined academic outcomes by ethnicity (Juhong and Maloney, 2006). The researchers analysed the grade point averages and dropout rates for this cohort by ethnicity over a three-year period. The results showed that if Pacific and Māori tertiary learners achieved the same secondary school qualifications as European learners and attended the same secondary schools as European learners, they would still have the lowest pass rates. However, the data showed that dropout rates at stage three would be comparable for all ethnic groups if they received the same pass rates in stage one and two. Similarly, Scott (2003) analysed university first-year ethnicity pass rates and reported that even after controlling for differences in school achievement Pacific learners were less likely to pass all of their first-year courses. These results also support other research that shows Pacific learners are most at risk of not completing their programmes and take longer on average to graduate compared with non-Pacific students (Anae et al., 2002).

Given that only small numbers of Pacific school leavers are entering tertiary studies, increasing a Pacific health workforce requires a significant proportion of Pacific school leavers enrolling in health and science courses. In 1972, the University of Auckland established the first affirmative action programme for Māori and Pacific students in medicine and health sciences in New Zealand. The Māori and Pacific Island Admission Scheme (MAPAS) provides an opportunity for students of Māori and Pacific descent who do not quite meet the general admission criteria to be admitted to Nursing, Pharmacy, Medicine and Health Sciences programmes at the University of Auckland. In 2007 Māori and Pacific represented 7% respectively of the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences (FMHS) student body compared to Asian and Pakeha students at 37% each. Table 3.6 below show the number of admissions and graduates of Pacific health students at the University of Auckland.

Table 3.6: Number of Admissions and Graduates of Pacific Students by Health Programmes at the University of Auckland from 2001 to 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 Figures post 2006 is unavailable.
The results above are of particular importance, showing that more needs to be done in supporting Pacific students through their studies as equal access and opportunity to enter tertiary education does not necessarily equate to academic success. Table 3.6 below shows the number of admissions and graduates of Pacific students in the different health programmes at the University of Auckland from 2001 to 2006.

The difference in admission and graduation rates shown in Table 3.6 corresponds to an expected five-year lag between admission and graduation particularly for medical school. The table shows that the number of admissions fluctuates from year to year for each programme and that over the five-year period shown there was an increase in the number of admissions for all programmes except for pharmacy. It is also evident that some students are either dropping out or taking longer to graduate. For example, in 2002 there were eight admissions in the three-year health sciences programme but only four graduates in 2005.

Research has identified and provided evidence for what types of training support need to be implemented by tertiary providers in order to support Pacific students through their health education programmes (Anae et al., 2002; Coxon et al., 2002; Southwick, 2007). A summary of the recommendations from these projects include:

1. Information – Non partisan, integrated information about tertiary sector programming to be delivered systematically to Pacific senior secondary students in an interactive programme which ensures the engagement of students and includes family and community (Anae et al., 2002, Coxon et al., 2002).


3. Targeted tutorials (Coxon et al., 2002).

5. Economic support – Extend the provision of scholarships available to Pacific students and promote them through Pacific networks (Anae et al., 2002, Coxon et al., 2002).

6. Mentors – Develop and fund a peer mentoring system for secondary students to be continued through tertiary study (Anae et al., 2002).

7. Induction programmes – Programmes to provide orientation, mentoring, and study support for the different study programmes (Southwick, 2007).

The recommendations above illustrate that much research has focused on the role that universities play in the success of Pacific tertiary students’ achievement. Access, participation, and retention issues are better understood.

Tertiary providers have recognised the importance of engaging with Pacific families and communities in order to address the achievement and retention problems of Pacific students. This recognition is an important step; however, tertiary providers’ family and engagement strategies generally rely on Pacific families and communities coming to tertiary institutions. This is not ideal given that many Pacific parents work more than one job. Furthermore, because of the high concentration of Pacific peoples in unskilled and semiskilled occupations the majority of Pacific parents will be employed in shift work.

Research and statistics have shown that ethnic inequalities in education exist. Education is an important determinant of health and correlates directly with employment, income, and socioeconomic status. Improving the educational outcomes of Pacific learners has the potential to reduce all inequalities significantly. Therefore understanding why ethnic inequalities exist is an important matter. Learning is a social process, as it involves the interaction between a child and others. The social and cultural contexts of a child are therefore important places and spaces of learning, but these contexts are not the same for every child.

**3.8 Vygotsky – Social Construction of Education**

Vygotsky (1896-1934) was a Russian psychologist and theorist during the early 20th century whose theories about the self-development of children have become important for understanding education, cognitive development, and sociocultural processes in contemporary times (Moll, 1990). Vygotsky produced a vast number of seminal works in a number of disciplines such as education, psychology, literature, and philosophy (Dimitriadi and Kamberelis, 2006; Moll, 1990). It was not until the end of the Cold War that Vygotsky’s work become popularised and published widely throughout the world.
Hence most of Vygotsky’s writing was published posthumously. In the mid 1920s Vygotsky spent a decade dedicating his time to researching the areas of education, developmental psychology, and psychotherapy. One key theme that is consistent throughout Vygotsky’s theories is the importance of the relationship between learning and the child’s social and cultural worlds (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2006). This theme is strongest in Vygotsky’s social constructivism theory of education.

Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of social constructivism is based on understanding the self-development of children. Vygotsky understood that the language, social interactions, and knowledge shared within a child’s social context are influential in the cognitive development of a child. The social and cultural context that they grow up in informs the processes in which their thinking is developed (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, the home, social, and cultural environments and the social interactions in which children are engaged in provide the foundations and tools for children’s thinking and learning. Vygotsky also acknowledged the importance of the historical aspect of learning institutions and cultural aspects (ibid.). Therefore to understand the social and cultural contexts of the present we need to understand their genealogy and history. For this thesis it is important to understand and acknowledge the historical processes that shape Samoan communities in New Zealand and New Zealand universities today. This is discussed later in this chapter in the postcolonialism section.

Vygotsky argued learning is socially and culturally specific and not general, because of the differences in culture and social groups. The nature and content of learning will inevitably vary from one social and/or cultural group to another because of the differences in specific forms of semiotic mediation such as language (Vygotsky, 1964). This is evident in Samoan homes where learning for young children is within an intergenerational paradigm. For example, in New Zealand Samoan and other Pacific families are more than likely to live in intergenerational households and in accordance with fa’asamoa it is the grandparents who nurture and raise young children (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). Samoan culture is an oral culture and it is through this relationship, grandparent-grandchild, that much traditional knowledge is transferred from one generation to the next through the practice of fagogo, the telling of stories. Fagogo is a Samoan practice that is akin to bedtime stories, used to soothe the young to sleep, as well as a vehicle through which to impart spiritual, emotional, physical, mental, and cultural nurturance (Efi, 2008, p.88). These practices which are embedded in the intergenerational households of Samoans are important in the nurturing of children and in the transfer of cultural knowledge, values, language, hopes, and dreams from one generation to the next. Thus, practices like fagogo inform the cognitive development and processes for thinking and acquiring knowledge for Samoan children.
The differences in socialisation and cultural contexts of children in multicultural societies like New Zealand are important pedagogical issues that educators and educational institutions need to be aware of. This is of particular concern given that minoritised children in multicultural societies are educated with practices embedded in Western ideology. This is Vygotsky’s point, as well as the concern of indigenous contemporaries in New Zealand like Russell Bishop. They advocate for change in education to promote equality and address the issue of underachievement of indigenous and minority children through alternative models that empower children rather than through “deficit” models (Bishop, 2003). Similarly, Vygotskian academics concerned with the inequalities in education between minoritised groups and majority groups have found that Vygotsky’s approach to education and acknowledgment of the importance of culture and history can help to understand the inequalities of education based on ethnicity (Matusov, 2008). Researchers conclude that educational inequalities are indeed a serious problem and that access to quality education is a root cause of educational inequalities between ethnic groups (ibid.).

Most Pacific educationalists favour Vygotsky’s theory and this is illustrated by the dominance of Vygotskian theories in Pacific pedagogical and educational research (Utumapu-McBride et al., 2008; McIntyre, 2008; Phan and Deo, 2008). One recent study examined Samoan students’ learning perspectives and the impact on their achievement by utilising Vygotsky’s framework (Utumapu-McBride et al., 2008). The aim of the study was to determine whether the same learning strategies, barriers, and enablers to learning for Pacific students as identified by other studies, particularly Jones (1986) study, are still relevant to Pacific students 20 years on. The researchers also were comparing the learning of Samoan-born and New Zealand-born Samoan learners. The 2004 study involved using a questionnaire to interview 24 Samoan students, 12 of whom were based at the National University of Samoa (NUS) and 12 from Unitec, in Auckland. Although the two cohorts differed in ages where the NUS cohort was younger than the Unitec cohort, there was a balance in gender representation. There were some inconsistencies in the questionnaire in that students were not asked identical questions and the interviews in Samoa were conducted in Samoan, whilst the interviews with the Unitec cohort were conducted in both languages. The inconsistencies were based on the fact that there were different researchers questioning different cohorts. The questions broadly looked at barriers and enablers to successful learning, preference of learning methods, family support, and happiness in regards to studies. The outcomes of the study highlighted that the key issues for Pacific learners in New Zealand in the 1980s have persisted. These included teacher-student relationships, time-management issues, and financial barriers.
The issue of teacher-student relationships is an important one that has been identified in research. Vygotsky also acknowledged the importance of this relationship in the learning of children. What he failed to acknowledge is that in order for this relationship to be meaningful for children, there is a need for trust and rapport. Vygotsky’s theory does not examine these issues clearly; however, in analysing the outcomes of research as demonstrated by the Youth ’07 study and other studies it cannot be assumed that positive relationships exist automatically between educator and learner.

Vygotsky’s theory of knowledge construction is useful for this thesis as it places culture in the theorising of learning and development. The acknowledgement that there are important differences in the cultural and social contexts of learners is not limited to just children but to all learners and therefore all educators and educational institutions need to be aware of the cultural differences in learning and development. In providing equitable learning particularly in multicultural societies, teaching must also acknowledge and reflect the diversity of the student body being educated. For example, in tertiary education in New Zealand, small tutorials and group work have been identified as teaching practices that work for Samoan and Pacific learners (Benseman et al., 2006). Similarly, New Zealand universities have also been criticised for failing to meet the learning needs of Asian students and that current teaching practices are based on the assumption that all learners are equal (Pang, 2008). In other words, it is assumed that all learners who qualify for tertiary education in New Zealand have the same understanding and command of the English language and share the same academic traditions. However, not all tertiary students come from English speaking backgrounds nor do all tertiary students come from European or Western cultural contexts. Therefore, learning and teaching practices should not only cater for the majority but also provide room to cater for ethnic minorities to ensure equitable learning. Cultural and language differences need to be acknowledged in New Zealand’s tertiary education system to inform learning processes that empower rather than minoritise Samoan learners. Cognitive and development processes and practices may differ and contradict those that the teachers try to impart on Samoan learners that are entrenched in Western ideology.

3.9 Summary

In this chapter I have summarised and reviewed the evidence that illustrates the inequalities in health and educational outcomes for Samoan and Pacific communities. As demonstrated, the social determinants of health is a useful concept as it explains health is not only biologically determined but also influenced by socioeconomic and cultural factors. Thus we can understand health inequalities as a product of broader social, economic, and ethnic inequalities. Subsequently, in order to reduce Samoan health inequalities, society must also address the social inequities of Samoan communities in New Zealand. Increasing the Samoan and Pacific health workforce is one strategy to reduce Pacific health
inequalities. However, this requires improving the educational outcomes of Samoan and Pacific secondary and tertiary learners. At present, Samoan and Pacific learners have the poorest educational outcomes. Vygotsky argues that sociocultural contexts are important for the learning of children. In this respect we can understand the educational inequalities of Pacific learners as a consequence of the differences in the learning environments of the home and the learning environments of New Zealand schools. Although Vygotsky’s theories were formulated and based on adolescents, his theories still apply to any learner. In order to develop a sufficient and competent Pacific health workforce we need to understand the learning processes and engagement issues of Pacific learners in New Zealand classrooms.
**Chapter Four: Methodology and Method**

### 4.1 Introduction

This thesis explored the barriers and enablers to academic success of young Samoan tertiary health students in New Zealand, with a focus on family support. I decided that an inductive iterative qualitative approach was the most appropriate in addressing the research question as the nature of the study was exploratory. This chapter begins by providing an overview of qualitative research and the strengths and limitations of qualitative methodologies. This is then followed by a discussion on the specific approach that was used following the Health Research Council (HRC) Guidelines on conducting research with Pacific communities. Next I outline my assumptions and positionality in conducting this research and the implications that result. A detailed account of the data collection process and methods utilised to collect, analyse, and re-present the data are given. Finally the chapter concludes by outlining the limitations of the research.

### 4.2 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a very old and rigorous tradition where, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), the researcher studies:

*things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual lives. (p. 3–4)*

Qualitative researchers have long been debating best practice in terms of identifying rigour in qualitative health research (Barbour, 2001). Lincoln and Guba (2000) argued that qualitative research is rigorous if it has the following four principles:

1. **Credibility**
   a) Accurate representation of experiences and interpretations.
   b) The account is recognisable to “insiders” and understandable to others.

2. **Transferability**
   a) Degree of “fit” in other contexts.
   b) Researcher needs to provide information to compare the study.

3. **Dependability**
   a) Research needs to document changes and decisions made in process and provide rationales.
   b) Researcher needs to display consistency in dealing with idiosyncrasies and changes.

4. **Confirmability**
   a) The research needs to focus on both interpretation and the investigator.
   b) The findings are determined by the respondents and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the researcher. (Lincoln and Guba, 2000, p.189)

Qualitative research is used to explore research questions in depth, rather than to make broad generalisations (Rapport, 2004, p. 12). Qualitative research also emphasises multiple meanings and
interpretations of the same places, events, and structures, rather than imposing a dominant, correct, or even a representative interpretation (Creswell, 2007). In this way qualitative research merges well with the theoretical underpinnings of fa’asamoa and postcolonialism, which both respect different perspectives and interpretations. Consequently, qualitative research is appropriate for this thesis as it facilitates the exploration of the experiences of Samoan learners as ethnic minorities in New Zealand generally and at university more specifically. Furthermore, this study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of academic success for Samoan health students from the perspectives of Samoan health students past and present.

Context is also important to qualitative research. Qualitative research acknowledges how researchers’ subjective experiences and perceptions shape their world views, that is, ‘researchers’ biases and assumptions have important implications in how research is collected, analysed, and interpreted’ (Rapport, 2004, p. 2). Social construction and individual experience are important for this thesis, hence the emphasis and acknowledgement of context that I have outlined in previous chapters to situate and explain how behaviour is shaped and understood. This thesis also shows that learning and identity are embedded in contextually derived meanings and to illustrate how cultural elements of fa’asamoa impact on learning and identity. Although the study is focused on the experiences of Samoan tertiary health students some of the findings are also potentially transferable to other tertiary learners of Pacific ancestry. A few of the participants were of multiple Pacific ethnicities, although they identify with Samoan ethnicity. Similarly, the focus of this thesis is on health education and health programmes but some of the findings from this study are also potentially transferable Samoan tertiary learners in general in New Zealand.

4.3 My Approach to Research

The inductive approach allows researchers to make theoretical inferences from the data generated at the general level. Rather than testing a hypothesis, this approach works from data to refine a hypothesis and produce a theory (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). The general process of the approach involves the researcher collecting data from participants. The researcher analyses the data to form themes or categories. These themes or categories are developed into broad patterns or theories and then are compared with literature on the topic (Creswell, 2007). In health and social science qualitative research, the inductive approach has been used extensively by researchers as a way of determining frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in data without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies (Thomas, 2006). Three purposes for using the inductive approach are:

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25 Characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 later in this chapter.
1. To condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format.
2. To establish a clear link between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the data and to ensure these links are both transparent and defensible.
3. To develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes that is evident in the data

(Thomas, 2006:2).

In collecting the data I used an iterative or spiralling research approach (Berg, 2004, p. 20). As I progressed through the initial data collection phase and analysed these data it became clear that there were important issues and questions for participants requiring further investigation. Hence I implemented new research methods to investigate important issues from previous sets of data. During the data collection and analysis phases I was continually moving between the two stages as each informed the other.

In conducting research on, for, and with Pacific communities, Pacific researchers and academics have argued that academic scholarship privileges Eurocentric research approaches, structures, and frameworks (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Thaman, 2003; Tupuola, 2004). As I have argued in the preceding chapter, Eurocentric approaches are inadequate in addressing the lived experiences and realities of Samoan communities. Likewise, Eurocentric approaches to research do not always recognise Pacific worldviews and interpretations and they are not always for the benefit of the Pacific communities. Pacific and indigenous scholars alike contend that research with Pacific and indigenous communities must provide benefit to all those involved (Gegeo, 2001; Tamasese et al., 2005). However, in making research meaningful to Pacific and indigenous communities the research needs to:

> Privilege indigenous knowledge, voices, experiences, reflections, and analyses of their social, material, and spiritual conditions... This shift in position from seeing ourselves as passive victims of all research to seeing ourselves as activists engaging in a counter hegemonic struggle over research, is significant. (Smith, 1999)

This approach resonates with the postcolonial approach to scholarship in acknowledging the voices, knowledge, and worldviews of Pacific communities need to be privileged and voiced.

To counter the lack of recognition of cultural differences in research methodologies and approaches, the HRC published research guidelines for conducting health research with Pacific peoples (Health Research Council, 2005). These guidelines are used to inform an ethical approach to research with Pacific communities. These principles are summarised in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1: HRC Pacific Research Principles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural competency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility</td>
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<td>Rights</td>
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<td>Balance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity Building</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the key themes for Pacific health research and research in general with human participants is ethics and the avoidance of harm as demonstrated by principle 1 and 8 above. Before I began my data collection, ethics approval from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee was obtained. As part of this process I provided the committee with Participant Information Sheets and Consent forms (see Appendix 1), which would be sent out to participants. This was to ensure that participants were sufficiently informed about the aims, methods, and outcomes of the study and their rights. In acknowledging that the participants held the knowledge and expertise needed to conduct my research, reciprocity was provided via a *meaalofa*. The meaalofa was in the form of a voucher that was given at the completion of the participants’ contribution to the fieldwork. As the following section shows, being Samoan, I have cultural competency in working with and researching with the Samoan community and so I adhered to Samoan values and principles to guide my research approach particularly in the focus groups that will be discussed later in the chapter. Advocates of Pacific research have argued that research with Pacific peoples must use strategies that are culturally inclusive of Pacific epistemologies (Nabobo-Baba, 2004; Sanga, 2004). The very nature of this thesis topic necessitated that the research approach be culturally inclusive, especially when conducting research with older Samoans. Thus the focus groups were conducted in the Samoan language and at the conclusion of the focus group my father, as the head of my *aiga* and as a *matai*, gave a traditional ceremonial speech to thank the parents on my behalf. I demonstrate how these principles informed the methods that I used in collecting data in the methods section of this chapter.

### 4.4 Assumptions and Positionality

The links between the researcher and the research focus of this thesis warrant explanation. Many peers and colleagues have noted that doctoral research and doctoral topics often reflect personal lives.

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26 *gift*
Personally, I agree. I am a Samoan woman but was born and raised in New Zealand. My father is Samoan-Chinese from the village of Savaia, Lefaga and from Guangzhou, China, and my mother is Samoan from Leone, Apia. I spent most of my early childhood in Samoa and since living in New Zealand I regularly make the journey back to Samoa to visit family, especially grandparents when they were alive. Thus, both places are home to me. In deciding to migrate to New Zealand it was important for my parents that as first generation New Zealanders, my brother (who was born in American Samoa), my sister and I grew up within fa’asamoa. This was made easier when my Nana decided to come live with us so we were raised practicing fa’asamoa. She was a great influence as she raised, nurtured, and cared for us while our parents worked. We lived in a Samoan speaking home, ate Samoan food and were privileged to fagogo. Thus, my siblings and I benefited culturally from living in an intergenerational household. This is something that I did not get to appreciate until I came to university and met fellow Samoan peers who had not had the same upbringing and wished they had learnt to speak and understand Samoan. Most of my aiga also lived in close proximity and so we were fortunate to grow up with cousins, aunties, and uncles, some of whom we saw every week, so there was always an abundance of laughter, tears, and caregivers.

Like many other Samoan families in my South Auckland community I was also raised within a Samoan church and this too helped my retention of language and culture as the church facilitated and encouraged participation in the cultural practices that often take place in Samoan village life. It is via the church that I learnt how to read and write in Samoan. Due to my socialisation and upbringing in these cultural contexts—Samoa, South Auckland, church, and home—I have a definite sense of place in the world of who I am and where I belong. The following extract written by Tui Atua Tupua Efi best articulates my sense of belonging:

I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share a tofi27 with my family, my village and my nation. I belong to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my sense of belonging. (2008, p. 80)

Tui Atua Tupua Efi explains that these are the reference points that define who he is, and they are reference points of other Samoans, myself included.

In the same way that it was important to my parents that our family retain fa’asamoa, it was equally important to do well at school. Both my parents had come to New Zealand to complete their secondary education and my father went on to graduate from the University of Auckland. The

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27 inheri

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importance of education was instilled in both my parents by my grandparents so they worked hard to get government scholarships to New Zealand. Getting to school, particularly for my father, was a real geographical challenge, but his parents made sacrifices to ensure that their children could get the best education possible. Consequently, my parents passed on this rhetoric that education is a key to opportunity and also ensured that we could get the best education possible. So I progressed through New Zealand’s school system, including kindergarten (although at times this was sporadic as I travelled back and forth from Samoa), primary school, intermediate school, high school, and university, determined to do well and make my parents proud. Every school I attended was in South Auckland until I reached university.

My father often shared stories of the times he was at university with peers who also came from Samoa on government scholarships. He spoke of his experience with great fondness and the friendships that he made during that time remain today. This is something that was missing from my experience of university where I felt isolated and lonely. None of my friends (mostly Samoan) from secondary school had come to university and the other Samoan and Pacific friends that I made during my first year began dropping out after the first semester of the first year. There was only one other Samoan friend I made and we came through Geography together, and in my third year I also met another Cook Island friend and two Asian friends. Up until this point my study partner and companion at university was my brother. This thesis is also an exploration of my journey and as such I feel as though I am a co-participant in the research.

My story above sheds light on my positionality in this research. I am aware that although I consider myself a co-participant in this research, my participants do not necessarily share the same view. Positionality and reflexivity have been discussed in academic research in response to the concerns of ethical research and legitimacy of knowledge. As Mohammed (2001) elucidates, the position of those being researched is always defined in terms of the researcher and the power relations inherent in this relationship. Thus there are two ways of mapping out power; difference or sameness. Difference is articulated through an objectifying distance, whereas sameness is where the researcher and the researched are in the same position and the same social location (Mohammed, 2001, p. 104). It is assumed that sameness equates to authenticity and moral authority through the shared history between the researcher and participants and this is modelled through the insider/outsider concept.

Although I agree with the sentiment that researchers who share sameness with participants are better placed to conduct the research and have greater authenticity and moral authority (Bishop, 2005), the fact that I am the researcher is a powerful point of difference. Researchers who may perceive
themselves as insiders at a community level may find themselves in a position of being treated as an outsider because of their position as a researcher (Mohammed, 2001). Consequently, the insider/outsider concept as a binary has limitations in terms of indigenous research and for an indigenous researcher. The binary fails to adequately reflect the multiply ways in which indigenous researchers can be an insider and an outsider. Consequently insider/outsider needs to be reframed to represent the fluidity in identity.

At first glance it may seem as though I have an ‘insider’ status as I am researching Samoan tertiary health learners, my insider status is more complex. My ‘insider’ status is a combination of being young, being female, being a Samoan person born in New Zealand, and being someone who has firsthand knowledge of tertiary academic life. However, my tertiary studies up until I began my doctorate had been in geography and commerce. Therefore, academic discipline distinguishes the individual experiences of these participants at university from my own.

Being an insider researcher however is not without its limitations in the process of research as it sets the tone of the research especially in one-to-one interviews. Often before interviews were conducted, to establish rapport I provided a brief personal history emphasising that I am a Samoan researcher rather than a researcher who is Samoan. I consciously make this decision that my “Samoaness” precedes my position as a researcher, as this is the way I see myself but it may not be the way participants view me. I have found this as a useful ice breaker in building rapport, especially as my name does not sound very Samoan (an issue I discuss in detail later). One example is insider knowledge; there are some taken-for-granted assumptions that being an insider I should know the jargon and the story behind the statements because of my sameness. Consequently participants may not feel the need to fill in or elaborate taken-for-granted notions. For example, in an interview with a young Samoan woman who had been brought up in New Zealand, she began by stating “well I grew up in a Samoan household”. Instead of defining what exactly this means, she cut the conversation with “you know what it’s like”. There is a lot of probing that goes on in interviews where I often find myself saying things along the lines of, “oh yeah, but what do you mean exactly?”

Thus, conscious of my position and the implications for collecting data and bearing in mind my ethical responsibilities in conducting research with my community and peers, I began collecting data at the end of 2007 and completed data collection at the end of 2009. The following section outlines the methods I used in this study.
4.5 Method

The research question which frames this thesis is; what are the barriers and enablers for academic success of young Samoan tertiary health students in New Zealand, with a focus on family support. My specific objectives were:

1. To determine the factors that influence both positively and negatively on Samoan health students’ academic success.
2. To explore why the health professions may or may not be seen as viable career options for Samoan students and, given the desperate need for Pacific health workers, what interventions can be taken to promote health careers amongst Samoan communities in New Zealand.
3. To explore the differences in the meaning of family support for students and families and to evaluate the impact that family support has on Samoan students in health programs.
4. To identify strategies to grow a competent pool of Pacific health workers to meet the needs of Pacific communities today and in the future.

To investigate the research question my research design consisted of five phases of data collection with four different groups. These four groups were purposefully sampled and included:

1. Key Informants – Alumni from the FMHS including two who had dropped out of medical school but completed other Bachelor’s degrees (see Table 4.2).
2. Current Students – Students who were enrolled in FMHS from different programmes (e.g., medicine, pharmacy, Bachelor of Health Science) and at different levels (see Table 4.3).
3. Providers – MAPAS staff and a staff member from the University of Auckland Equal Opportunities Office.
4. Parents – Parents whose children were currently studying at FMHS. There were five tama\textsuperscript{28} and seven tina.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{28} Father
\textsuperscript{29} Mother
### Table 4.2: Key Informant Participants Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group 1</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Fluency&lt;sup&gt;30&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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</table>

<sup>30</sup> Participant’s fluency in Samoan language

<sup>31</sup> Passive bilingualism
Table 4.3: Student Participants Demographics

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<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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<th>Programme</th>
<th>Level</th>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(^{32}\) Level of study
\(^{33}\) Bachelor of Health Sciences
\(^{34}\) Certificate in Health Sciences
The key informant and student demographic tables provide insight into the characteristics of the sample. For the key informant group of the 16 participants 10 identified themselves as being of multiple ethnicities and just over half (9 participants) of the sample were born in New Zealand. This group also illustrates the fluidity in language retention. The majority of participants (10 participants) are Samoan speakers, three participants noted that they could understand Samoan but were non-speak or have passive bilingualism. The remaining three participants, all of whom are of mixed ethnicity, indicated that they could not speak nor understand Samoan.

The student sample comprised of 20 participants. About a third of the sample or seven participants reported that they were of multiple ethnicities; this is less than the key informant group and interesting to note given that all but two participants were born in New Zealand. Similar to the key informant group the majority of participants (12 participants) are Samoan speakers. Unlike the key informant group the remainder of the sample noted that they have passive bilingualism.

Each phase of data collection informed the next phase. This is outlined in Figure 4.1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase One:</th>
<th>Key Informants - Alumni and people who did not finish medical school</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Groups (2 mixed)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interviews (10)</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Phase Two:</th>
<th>Current Students - Postgraduate, Medical Students, Bachelor of Health Science &amp; Certificate</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Groups (2 gendered)</td>
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<td>Time use diaries (12)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase Three:</th>
<th>Providers: MAPAS and Equal Opportunities Office staff</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal discussions (3)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase Four:</th>
<th>Parents: Two Gendered focus groups. One with tina (7 tina) and one with tama (5 tama)</th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase Five:</th>
<th>Current Students: Support diaries (12)</th>
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</table>

Figure 4.1: Data Collection Process

**Phase One** – As the data collection diagram illustrates I began my first round of data collection with focus groups and interviews with key informants as a quasi-pilot study to test my interview and focus group questions (see Appendix 2). How the focus groups were conducted will be discussed later in the chapter. I had initially tried to use the FMHS office and MAPAS office to help me to recruit but was told that the information I wanted was unavailable as their databases did not include
ethnicity. Consequently, key informants were recruited via the university’s Alumni Office and through the snowballing technique. The Alumni Office posted participant information sheets on my behalf to alumni from FMHS who identified themselves as Samoans. Participants who volunteered were given the option to participate in focus groups or be interviewed individually or take part in both. I conducted two mixed focus groups and 10 individual interviews, where two key informants agreed to take part in both focus groups and in interviews.

From the themes in this data set it was evident that one of the key issues that alumni raised and stressed as important was time-management issues. Thus, to capture and explore the issue of time-management my supervisor suggested employing a diary technique to gather supplementary data to the interview and focus group data in phase two with current students.

**Phase Two** – In phase two, 20 current students participated. I conducted two gendered focus groups with postgraduate students and 14 interviews with current students, one of whom was a postgraduate student and four each enrolled in the Certificate in Health Science, Bachelor of Health Science, Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery programmes. The students were recruited through programme coordinators and through snowball sampling, and were also given the option to be either in focus groups or interviews. The postgraduate students decided on focus groups so I decided it was best to conduct gendered focus groups, as this provided a way of discussing gender issues that had featured prominently in previous data. I also asked for 12 volunteers from different programmes to complete a weekly time-use diary from my sample (see Appendix 3). The use of solicited diaries in research is covered in more detail in the following section.

In analysing this set of data it became apparent that I needed to speak with MAPAS staff and the Equal Opportunities Office in regards the issue of support from an institutional perspective.

**Phase Three** – I approached MAPAS staff and a member of the University of Auckland’s Equal Opportunities Office staff member to discuss issues of support for Samoan students in particular and Pacific students in general in regards to how they perceive and understand “support” and their role in providing support. This was to supplement the data I received from the students, I felt it was also best to capture the perspective of staff members whose role is to provide support. MAPAS had also undergone some major restructuring at the time and this provided me the opportunity to speak with

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35 With the exception of Bachelor of Health Science where five students participated
the manager to understand the rationale behind the restructuring and how they envision the direction of the programme.

**Phase Four** – After completing data collection and the coding of the students’ and providers’ data, I organised focus groups with Samoan parents whose children were either alumni or currently studying at the University of Auckland. Given that there is a small pool from which to recruit this particular group, the participants were found using snowball sampling from key informants that had already participated in the study, and through contacts in the Samoan community. Gendered focus groups were conducted simultaneously as most parents had come in pairs to a church hall in South Auckland.

**Phase Five** – From the analysis of the first three phases and the analysis from the parents’ focus group data it became clear that support was an important issue that needed clarifying. As a way of documenting support more accurately to support the qualitative data, I decided to use another diary instrument as a way of documenting the types of support that students receive and give during the exam period (see Appendix 4).

The next section outlines the methods of semi-structured interviews, solicited diaries, and focus groups.

**4.5.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are a flexible interviewing method that allows the researcher to explore new topics or questions during an interview. Prior to the interview the researcher typically draws an interview framework in which questions are grouped by topics (Hay, 2000). This type of interview method is to facilitate a pseudo conversation that allows the interviewee to tell their story in their own way (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). However, researchers are able to refocus the interview if need be.

For my research I had developed an interview schedule with questions grouped under specific topics (see Appendix 2). There were some interviews where some topics would be covered without my having to ask the specific questions. Other times, some interviewees needed more probing, or participants would make some interesting comments or statements, that had not been included in the schedule. For example, one male participant required a lot of probing as he would give very short answers.
4.5.2 Solicited diaries

Solicited diaries are created with a distinct research purpose in mind. Participants are fully aware that the diaries will be read and analysed by researchers at the end of the study (Meth, 2003, Milligan et al., 2005). The use of diaries to record people’s use of time and events that occur in everyday life has a long history in research but is more common in economic and marketing research (Baron et al., 2010; Healy et al., 2007; Woodside et al., 2008). Solicited diaries provide an important source for uncovering the routine and everyday lived experiences of people reliably, as diaries enable participants to record events as they unfold or shortly thereafter (Milligan et al., 2005). Diaries illustrate the importance of context in which these routines and experiences unfold, allowing an examination of recorded events and experiences in their natural context (Bolger et al., 2003). Diaries provide a unique way of capturing information that is either sensitive, such as sexual and domestic violence, or involves vulnerable groups (Meth, 2003). Such research often presents challenges and difficulties for researchers when trying to engage with participants face-to-face. Diaries are a useful tool to capture and record information while providing distance between participants and researchers (Symon, 2004).

There are two main types of diary designs that researchers use. The first is time-based designs, commonly known as time-use diaries. Time-use diaries are specifically designed for respondents to record events in a chronological order, usually in hourly variations for a 24 hour day. For example researchers in Australia utilised period time use diaries to investigate the relationship between time-use and weight status with 5 year old children (Tey et al., 2007). Parents of a cohort of eighty-four 5 year old children were asked to record and detail their children’s activities, selecting activities from a predetermined list, in 15 minute blocks over a 4 day period. The results showed that, after sleeping, children spent most of their time watching television. Research using time-use diaries is often concerned with ongoing experiences or activities that can be assessed within the course of a typical period (Bolger et al., 2003).

The second type of diary is event-based diaries, where participants are asked to record details and experiences of a particular event or phenomena as they occur (Bolger et al., 2003). These diaries provide more in-depth narrative data for researchers and are more suitable when engaging with sensitive research topics such as sexual abuse, intimacy, and violence (Thomas, 2006) For example researchers at an American University utilised a web-based event diaries over a 30 day period to investigate the associations between alcohol consumption and the likelihood of unprotected sex among 116 college undergraduates (Kiene et al., 2009). This study was a sub study of a longitudinal
cohort daily diary study on alcohol use. The results highlight the need for interventions particularly aimed at young women to reduce alcohol-involved sexual risk behavior with casual partners.

**Important considerations**

Diary techniques have been credited as a more participatory research tool than other methods such as interviewing as participants have more control in during the data collection phase (Meth, 2003). Using diary techniques, however, is not as straightforward as some would think. Researchers have important considerations and decisions to make when undertaking diary techniques and designing diaries (Symon, 2004).

In order to obtain valid and reliable data, diary studies require a greater degree of participant commitment and dedication than other research methods. The burden of keeping up to date records continuously places considerable demands on participants (Symon, 2004). Researchers must ensure that diary designs are simple and easy enough for participants to understand and ensure that there is continuous dialogue between participants and researchers to deal with issues, especially with longer diary studies.

Typically, researchers have used diary approaches to supplement other qualitative methods such as focus groups and interviews as well as to validate data using experimental designs. For instance, Tulve and colleagues (2007) used an activity diary to validate results from an accelerometer to evaluate infants’ and toddlers’ activity levels in the United States. The researchers found that the parents who were recording the activity diary were fairly accurate in recording events and details when comparing the diary data with the accelerometer data (Tulve et al., 2007).

In qualitative research most researchers view diaries as a useful strategy for a multiple methods approach to research (Meth, 2003; Milligan et al., 2005). Diaries provide a useful tool to validate and cross-examine themes discussed in interviews and focus groups as well as providing a basis for initiating discussion of themes found in diary entries (Alaszewski, 2006). Diaries, when used in conjunction with other methods, can elicit in-depth and sensitive information on vulnerable groups and about complicated and delicate topics (Thomas, 2007). Diaries also allow a high degree of participant input and control.

**Limitations of diary techniques**

Despite the clear benefits of diary techniques for data collection there are some clear limitations of the method. First is the issue of participant bias or truthfulness. As solicited diaries are created for the intention of research, respondents may record events or activities which they perceive are
desirable by the researcher (Kitterød, 2001). As with other research tools, what is omitted and overlooked are just as important as what has been discussed or recorded. For researchers, judging what has been omitted on the basis of what has been recorded is difficult (Meth, 2003).

**Diary techniques in health research**

Within health and geography research the use of solicited diaries as a method for data collection is not as common as other qualitative methods such as focus groups and interviews, despite the benefits. Diaries have been used in medical research for at least the last 30 years but the use of diaries has usually been limited to nutrition diaries and patients documenting health activities (Milligan et al., 2005). Typically, data are collected through the use of checklists and other fixed response formats to reduce burden on participants, and to ensure that theoretically relevant dimensions of daily experiences are captured (Rook, 2003). This process makes time-use diaries more popular in medical research, but means that the method has been limited to regular recording of data as a log in a structured formant similar to time-use surveys (Milligan et al., 2005). More recently, health researchers have begun using event-based diaries as a source of narrative data, where respondents record and detail their personal experiences of health issues (Alaszewski, 2006; Keine et al., 2009; Leigh et al., 2008).

**Diaries in my research**

The rationale behind the use of diaries in my study was to supplement and support qualitative data from the focus groups and interviews. In order to validate the themes of time-management and support, the diary technique was deemed the most appropriate manner to document students’ use of time and support given and received. The first diary involved using a time-based diary where students were asked to record how they used their time over the course of one week in hourly blocks. Although some researchers suggest that smaller time intervals such as 15 minutes should be used to gather more quality data, I felt that this level of detail was unnecessary given the purpose of the diary in the context of my research. I also did not want my participants to feel overwhelmed by the exercise so I formatted the diary so that the information required would only take up one page. Highlighters were provided so they could colour code their events into main events or activities such as eating, sleeping, studying, church, socialising with friends, and family obligations. I deliberately chose a week that would reflect an average week (not during exam or holiday periods) for students as I was interested in understanding how they spent their time in a “typical” week.

The second diary was a combination of both time-based and event-based diaries where I asked students to record support given and support received, up to and including the exam period. This diary required a greater amount of burden on the students’ behalf as I asked them to record the
support events from the two weeks proceeding the exam period and up until their exams finished. For some students this resulted in five weeks of diary data. With the time-use diary, I tried to make the diary as easy as possible to complete so that the weekly diary could be recorded on one A4 page and would take no more than five minutes per day to complete. The reason why I decided to choose the exam period is because this was a period that all participant groups spoke of in terms of providing examples of support.

4.5.3 Focus groups
Focus groups are group discussions organised to investigate peoples’ experiences and views on a specific issue (Kitzinger, 1994). According to Kitzinger (1994) the term focus group comes from the idea that groups are “focused” on a collective activity (p. 103). The explicit use of group interaction data distinguishes focus groups from the broader method of group interviews (Kidd and Parshall, 2000). Focus groups allow researchers to observe interactive processes between participants within the social context of a group. Such processes include sharing ideas, opinions, and experiences, as well as debates and challenges (Duggleby, 2005). Group interviews focus solely on what was said, such as content and themes, ignoring how it was said (Kidd and Parshall, 2000).

Krueger and Casey (2000) provide a thorough overview of when focus groups are appropriate in research. For example, the authors state that focus groups should be considered when the research aims to understand factors that influence behaviour, motivations, and opinions (p. 24). In comparison the method is inappropriate when the research is intended to categorise or compare types of individuals and the views they hold; provide a representative view of an issue or situation; or to quantify attitudes, opinions, or beliefs (Longhurst, 2003; Wilkinson, 1998).

Focus group characteristics
There is no set standard for the number of participants in one focus group but the general consensus is between 3 and 12 participants (Kitzinger, 1994; Kidd and Parshall, 2000). Focus groups are conducted in the presence of a facilitator (and often, an observer) in an informal setting. This is an important factor to consider as this method is designed to observe participants out of their natural setting (Duggleby, 2005). Despite this, focus groups are often favoured by qualitative researchers as the method allows researchers to try and create a quasi conversation or discussion around a particular issue or event. Nondirective questions are therefore crucial to elicit spontaneous expression among participants to mirror “normal” conversations (Kidd and Parshall, 2000; Krueger, 1994).
The key characteristic of focus groups is the interaction between participants where content and expression are equally important (Hoggart et al., 2002). Group interaction allows the researcher to note sensitive issues or hot topics as well as silences that warrant further investigation. The importance of interaction in the formulation of individual perceptions and attitudes is best summarised by Krueger (1994) where he notes that “Attitudes and perception relating to concepts, products, services or programs are developed in part by interaction with other people. We are the product of our environment and are influenced by people around us” (p. 11).

In some groups there may be one or two dominant individuals who set the tone for the discussion, while other members may be shy (Morrison-Beedy et al., 2001). In these cases the facilitator plays a pivotal role in ensuring that all participants participate equally. The facilitator must also establish ground rules at the beginning of the session to ensure a comfortable and safe environment for participants to have their say, and to outline their role and responsibilities as facilitator.

To encourage all participants to contribute to the discussion it is useful to start the session with an “ice-breaker” or group exercise where everyone has a role (Longhurst, 2003). Kitzinger (1994) for example, presented groups with a pack of cards bearing statements about who might be “at risk” from AIDS. As a group they were then asked to sort the cards into different piles indicating the degree of “risk” attached to each “type of person” (p. 106).

**Facilitator and observer**

Facilitators are important to ensure that focus group narratives run smoothly. Researchers must ensure that the facilitator is well prepared. This means that the facilitator should be well versed with the goals of the study and the questions related to the topic. Adequate preparation puts the facilitator and the group at ease and allows smooth flowing dialogue (Morrison-Beedy et al., 2001).

Factors to consider when selecting a facilitator include a match between the facilitator and the study focus, personal skills, experiences, characteristics, and communication style (Morrison-Beedy et al., 2001). A facilitator should acknowledge participants’ contributions as well as ensuring that all participants participate. The facilitator must ensure that they do not dominate the proceedings but rather guide the conversation to ensure that discussions do not get side tracked.

In the evolution of focus groups it has become increasingly important to have both a facilitator and observer for focus group sessions (Duggleby, 2005). Earlier focus groups often cited the researcher as the facilitator but this meant that the researcher missed out on observing and recording
interaction between participants as they were too preoccupied with coordinating the session. This has led to a movement in employing “professional” facilitators to enable the researcher to observe.

**Recruitment and selection**
Selecting participants for focus groups is critical for success. The selection of participants is typically based on “purposeful sampling” (Longhurst, 2003) where participants are selected because they share common characteristics that relate to the topic of the focus group (Kidd and Parshall, 2000, Krueger and Casey, 2000).

Group composition is not straightforward as there are many factors to consider (Hoggart et al., 2002). Such factors include gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, social status, and age. There are no hard and fast rules on how to decide group composition. Decisions and judgements on group composition need to be driven by the research question and what exactly researchers are trying to find out (Hoggart et al., 2002).

**Strengths and weaknesses**
A key strength of focus groups is that they reduce experimental demand because the researcher can fade in to the background, letting the participants control the discussion (Hollander, 2004). Also, focus groups are able to elicit socially situated tacit knowledge, experiences, understandings, and feelings (Hoggart et al., 2002) and then potentially locate and value these within a particular social context (Dreachslin, 1999). The method also allows for a broader range of responses, the flexibility to pursue ideas, and elicitation of details that might otherwise be overlooked (Kidd and Parshall, 2000).

One key limitation of this method is the fact that it is difficult to report or represent group interactional data unless participants give consent for researchers to provide visuals of the focus group whilst in session (Hollander, 2004). Researchers are often limited to describing these data in text which makes it difficult to provide a true and full account of the group interactions, dynamics, and processes that took place. Also there is a heavy reliance on an external facilitator for focus group success. If the facilitator and interview guide are not well prepared, there is a lot of potential for sidetracking of the discussion to irrelevant issues. The facilitator must also be able to cope with difficult group situations such as competition for dominance, which can negatively impact on group discussions (Kidd and Parshall, 2000).

There is a degree of uncertainty about what participants would have said on their own compared to what they have said in the group (Hoggart et al., 2002). Their responses depend on each
participant’s own personality and characteristics as they may feel too shy or embarrassed to say what they think and feel coerced into validating the general consensus (Hollander, 2004).

Although focus groups generate rich data, the data are often complex and messy, and require a significant amount of time for transcription and analysis. The analysis in itself is also complex given that there are multiple levels of data that all need analysing. The researcher must negotiate the best procedure for analysing and reporting data, which requires a lot of time and verification (Hoggart et al., 2002).

**Analysing focus group data**

There is very little literature on analysing focus group data in comparison to the great need given the complexity of analysing the three levels of data that focus groups generate; that is, individual, group, and group interaction data. The analysis of focus group data; however, should be dependent on the methodological approach of the research (Duggleby, 2005). Duggleby (2005) reviewed published articles on focus group data analysis and found two dominant methods for analysing focus groups (p.834). The first is describing interactions to interpret findings and the second is incorporating the group interaction data into the transcripts.

Duggleby (2005) suggested that another strategy for analysing focus group data is to analyse the group interaction data using the same approach as group or individual data. Thus, if the researcher uses discourse analysis to analyse separate individual interviews then discourse analyse should also be used to anlayse focus group data for comparisons and consistentcy. Group interaction data should be analysed separately and then compared with group data (p. 836).

**Reporting focus group data**

It is important that all three levels of focus group data are reported in research. This allows readers to gain a better understanding of interpretations made through analysis as well as ensuring methodological rigour. Reporting of focus group data adheres to Lincoln and Guba’s (1995) criteria for establishing trustworthiness of focus group data by addressing confirmability and transferability.

Many authors have suggested that focus group findings should be reported with either descriptions of group interactions or detailed data excerpts (Carey, 1995, Duggleby, 2005, Stevens, 1996). Descriptions of interactions should be reported as a means to interpret individual and group findings. In providing descriptions of the interactions it is important that researchers integrate the descriptions together with other types of similar data (Duggleby, 2005).
Wilkinson (1998) suggested that detailed data excerpts of group interactions should be reported in lieu of individual quotations. Group process data show how individuals within groups find their own meanings. For example through her research on women with breast cancer, she found that group interactions were a process of co-construction of meaning:

Anne: Would you like to see my prosthesis? The size of it?
Barbara: [laughs] Well, mine’s only really tiny [laughs]
Anne: Excuse me [pulls out breast prosthesis and passes it around the table]
Feel the weight
Carole: [gasps] (p. 339)

This excerpt shows how in the social context of the focus groups, participants respond to the collaborative construction of the prosthesis as something that can be joked about publicly. This in turn influences their understandings and the shared meaning they create.

Duggleby (2005) however, cautioned that detailed data excerpts may be appropriate for some studies but not for others.

**Focus groups in qualitative health research**

There is a tradition of health-related research in New Zealand that uses focus groups to explore people’s meanings of health and illness. Some of these studies seek to understand people’s life worlds and belief systems. Abel and colleagues (2001) conducted a study to describe and compare the infant care practices and beliefs of Māori, Tongan, Samoan, Cook Islands, Niuean, and European caregivers in Auckland and New Zealand. Focus groups were conducted within each ethnic group allowing researchers to explore the cultural meanings in depth for each ethnic group. The study found key areas of similarity and areas of cultural difference in the infant care practices and beliefs of caregivers. This has implications for the effective delivery of maternal and infant health services and public health messages in New Zealand (p. 1146).

Anae and colleagues (2000) conducted a study to delineate the context of the timing and spacing of births by Samoans in New Zealand. Four focus groups were conducted with an older men’s group, an older women’s group, a younger men’s group and a younger women’s group. The focus groups allowed the research team to observe the interactions of participants when confronted with sensitive issues about the male roles and responsibilities to reproduction and families and this showed how the participants as a group sometimes used silence to respond or waited until someone spoke first and then they all began to dialogue. This study highlighted how the composition of the
Focus groups took into consideration cultural, age, and gender sensitivities given the nature of the research.

Focus groups have been used in a range of qualitative health research where they are most useful and appropriate for exploring individuals’ and groups’ experiences and meanings attached to a health or illness related phenomena. Focus groups require a considerable amount of planning in terms of group composition, interview guidelines, and the choice of facilitator to ensure a successful focus group session that generates rich interactional data. All focus group data, that is interactional, group, and individual data must then be analysed and reported clearly. Procedures must also be explained and justified in order to ensure rigour. Focus groups have many advantages for health researchers wanting to understand people’s perceptions and how they construct meaning around health issues; however, they are not without their weaknesses and disadvantages. Many of these disadvantages can be countered by researchers through careful and deliberate planning of focus group structure and sessions.

Focus groups in my study
As I have previously described I conducted six focus groups for my study. Two focus groups were with alumni, two gendered focus groups were with postgraduate students, and two gendered focus groups were with Samoan parents whose children were currently enrolled at the University of Auckland. Each focus group had a facilitator (except for one alumni focus group as the facilitator had been ill that day so I facilitated), while I observed and took notes on the interaction between focus group participants. However, the parents’ focus groups were held concurrently to fit in to the schedule of the parents and therefore I observed only the mothers’ focus group.

The facilitators for my focus groups were all Samoan alumni of the University of Auckland and were of the same gender, where appropriate, and age of the participants in the focus group. The facilitators of the alumni and postgraduate students’ focus groups were recent alumni from the University of Auckland and for the parents’ focus groups two Samoan speaking colleagues who were of similar age to the parents agreed to facilitate. This was important to ensure that the parents’ focus groups were conducted in a culturally appropriate manner. Both focus groups were conducted in the Samoan language.

The organisation and structure of the alumni and postgraduate students’ focus groups were the same. The facilitator introduced the study, and myself as the researcher of the study and as a silent observer of the focus group. The session began with an ice-breaker activity as a way of introducing
participants. Next the facilitator presented an opening question which required participants to note their thoughts and answers on post-it-notes. The facilitator collected the post-it-notes and briefly went through the responses before randomly reading out each post-it-note for participants to dialogue. In this way the exercise provided a safe avenue for participants to have their ideas and thoughts heard and provide an opportunity for everybody to speak during the first exercise as they began dialoguing with others about the shared idea. The photograph below shows the opening question and the responses from participants posted on the screen:

![Figure 4.2: Post-it-note Focus Group Exercise](image)

The next two questions were read out by the facilitator to be discussed amongst the group. The session concluded with another post-it-note exercise (see Appendix 2 for questions). While observing the participants as they wrote their responses I noticed that the participants were taking the time to think about their responses and gather their thoughts. The atmosphere was almost like a pseudo-exam situation where participants were quite guarded in writing their responses, for example in the postgraduate males’ focus group one participant physically covered his answer as his peer tried to peep at his answers, but once they were collected they would all look to each other and grin, building anticipation and excitement while the facilitators briefly read the notes. The following two photographs are of participants as they write their responses:
From the feedback from the focus groups and from discussions with facilitators, this worked well in terms of ensuring everyone had the opportunity to have their say. Also, as I was able to observe the interactions of the participants, I was able to record instances of silences and of agreement so that this could also be included in the analysis and re-presentation of the focus group data. The following section outlines my approach to the analysis as well as being a guide for reading the three subsequent analysis chapters.

### 4.6 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is common in qualitative research yet unlike other qualitative analysis approaches such as Grounded Theory, there is little concordance as to what it exactly is (Morse and Field, 1995). Generally, thematic analysis attempts to identify recurrent patterns in the data. A theme is a cluster of linked categories conveying similar meanings (ibid.). Thematic analysis attempts to represent a view of reality via systematically working through text to identify topics that are progressively integrated into higher order themes, via processes of de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation (Buettow, 2010). One caveat in utilising thematic analysis is the tendency to conflate the recurrence of themes with importance. There may be some themes that are less recurrent but are nonetheless just as important as recurrent themes. Researchers must therefore be wary not to exclude some themes due to infrequency in all data (ibid.). In this case familiarisation with data is important for researchers to not only identify recurrent patterns but also when there are outlier themes that are possibly just as important.

All interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim by myself. Although transcribing is in my experience one of the less appealing aspects of research, it is a valuable activity. I found this exercise aided my analysis procedures as I became very familiar with the data. For instance, it helped in my speedy recall of the interviews and particular themes that
specific participants had elaborated on. Once all the data were transcribed I began to further analyse and code the data with the assistance of the NVivo software. As my approach was iterative, my first attempt at coding was quite open and more descriptive as I began to build up my data set. I had already established some a priori codes in relation to the interview schedules and from previous literature on Pacific tertiary students (see Appendix 5). However, I found that after my initial analysis my coding list had doubled where half of my codes were a posteriori codes which I coded using descriptions by participants. For example one of these codes was ‘coping’ to describe times when participants spoke of the strategies used to cope with the pressures and realities of tertiary education. Once I had completed all the focus groups and interviews with key informants and with the students I began my second sequence of coding. I began to refine my codes using axial coding (Patton, 2002) to move beyond descriptive codes to interpretive codes and delineate key themes. Axial coding is the process of relating codes to each other. During this process the number of codes reduced as some codes were merged together.

This re-coding was a lengthy process but also provided an indication as to what results and analysis chapters might look like. By the time I had completed the focus groups with parents I had already established support as a core category where the data were easily coded into the different nodes within this category. For example one of the categories was spirituality. When I first began coding In-between the second and third re-coding stages I sent a copy of one detailed transcript to four research peers and my supervisor where they were asked to code the transcript. This allowed me to check and validate the codes I had established. There was good agreement although some peers questioned the use of terms such as “coping mechanisms” and asked which codes were emic and which were etic descriptions. Once I had completed all five phases of data collection I went through the codes a third time to define the key themes from the data.

4.7 (Re)presenting data

In re-presenting the data I wanted to make sure that the voices of the participants are presented accurately. In taking into consideration the HRC’s Pacific guidelines, Lincoln and Guba’s (2001) principles of rigour in qualitative research, and the process in thematic narrative analysis, I decided that I would provide quotes in the results chapters by the participants verbatim (this includes break-offs and pauses) but also to include context around these quotes in order to avoid misinterpretation. Thus the quotes that are presented can at times be lengthy. I also decided to use quotes that are illustrative of the commonalities and patterns from the data unless otherwise stated.
The demographic tables of the key informant and student participants highlighted that there was diversity in my sample and therefore I would expect divergence in views. However, after coding and analysing the data I found that the experiences of alumni and students at university were surprisingly similar. For example participants often used similar language like to characterise their learning experiences. Words such as “lonely” and “isolation” were often used to describe how participants felt during their university. This is further explored in the following analysis chapters.

Where there was divergence in the data was in relation to views on fa’asamoana and this is a reflection of the intergenerational differences particularly between the key informant and student groups. Other significant divergences in experiences are also explored, such as gender differences in experience. This is an important difference given the gendered nature of Samoan society. These issues are discussed and explored in more detail in Chapter Seven.

The differences within my sample groups did provide some interesting insights into the composition of families in New Zealand and the retention of culture and language. For example one student, Mose has two Samoan parents but is not a fluent Samoan speaker whilst Sera another student has one Samoan parent (her mother) but is fluent in Samoan. There were also two key informants and three students who had been raised in Samoa during their childhood and then completed their secondary schooling in New Zealand. Despite this difference there were converging views on their learning experiences both at high school and university were similar with the rest of the sample that again was surprising. There may have been some variation in views if I had asked questions pertaining to their earlier learning experiences during primary and intermediate school.

The quotes from the focus groups with parents are also presented verbatim and therefore are in the Samoan language. These have been tabled where I provide an English translation below the original quote. I have made every effort possible to provide an accurate translation of the Samoan quotes as I have had a fellow Samoan academic verify my translations. However, with any translation some nuances and meanings are lost (Venuti, 2008). Similarly the extracts from focus group data are tabled where the interactions between participants are provided as a side bar.

Some of the issues that my study deals with are quite sensitive such as stereotyping, racism, and stigma, and subsequently the comments that are made are emotive and at times racist. One of the key issues that I have struggled with is deciding how I would (re)present the data in a manner that empowers and liberates participants. These are important considerations in regards to my research
that warrant discussion. In dealing with these ethical considerations I decided that I would provide quotes verbatim but also outline why the quotes are important and in what context. I am aware that quotes do speak for themselves but on their own quotes out of context can be quite misleading. This is one of the real issues for my study as some of the quotes are quite powerful and could be misinterpreted as marginalising. This is one of the reasons as to why thematic analysis is useful for my study as it places these comments into context which in turn empowers participants and accurately represents their comments.

The subsequent three chapters present my findings from the data. The first results chapter examines the enablers and barriers to success from the perspective of current students and key informant focus groups and interviews. The next chapter examines the issue of support, and what this means for each of the four groups represented. The final results chapter examines the experiences of students and key informants as Samoan tertiary health students. These three chapters are quite descriptive, where I give lengthy quotes from the participants as well as some of my interpretations. To identify the participants I have used the identifiers from the participant tables presented earlier in the chapter. Thus, the key informants and students are identified by the pseudonyms I have given them. These pseudonyms are Samoan names from my extended family who gave me permission to use their names. The parents and the providers are identified by numbers, that is tina 1, tama 1, and provider 1.

4.8 Summary

This chapter has outlined the approach I took in addressing the research question and objectives. Given that the study was an exploratory study, I used an inductive iterative qualitative approach informed by the Pacific ethical principles as specified by the HRC. I have also detailed the five phase process that I used in collecting data that shows how each phase was informed by the preceding phase as well as providing a rationale for each phase and my chosen methods. In analysing the data I discuss thematic narrative analysis and why I have chosen this analysis as an appropriate method to analyse the data collected. The chapter concludes by discussing issues of (re)presentation as well as outlining the remaining chapters.
Chapter Five: Enablers and Barriers

5.1 Introduction

Samoan health students studying at university are products of fa’asamoa, Christianity, colonialism, and postcolonialism. They are formally trained and taught through Western traditional modes of learning and formal education in a colonial metropolis. However, the cultural contexts of their homes differ from mainstream New Zealand with many raised with elements of Samoan traditions and customs, some more so than others. As such, their learning journeys are unique compared to those of non-Samoans but similar to other Pacific students. Understanding and exploring the positive and negative factors that have the most impact on their learning journey will provide important insights to help Samoan health students succeed in their academic quests. This chapter outlines the key enablers and barriers that participants identified through their learning journey and experiences at university, which I have categorised under five headings: individual agency, family, university, friends, and spirituality (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Learning Enablers and Barriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enablers</th>
<th>Individual agency</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Spirituality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prioritising education</td>
<td></td>
<td>Providing motivation</td>
<td>MAPAS</td>
<td>Having likeminded friends</td>
<td>Giving purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitude to learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Study groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>Prioritising other commitments</td>
<td>Family expectations and commitments</td>
<td>University culture</td>
<td>Not having friends at university</td>
<td>Church commitments and obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez faire attitude to learning</td>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not participating</td>
<td>Distraction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These factors are insufficient in themselves to explain success or otherwise of these students. In this chapter these factors are each discussed in detail but need to be viewed as part of an integrated whole where each of the five categories contributes to the other. For example, some of the individual agency enablers and barriers need to be read in the context of family, others in the context of university as Figure 5.1 illustrates.
Thus it is important not to read these factors in isolation but to be aware that these key enablers and barriers are highly complex as they are all interlinked hence the Janus-effect of the five categories where participants considered each category as both enabling and constraining to their learning. This chapter does not cover family and university support although these are key enablers for success. The topic of support is of great importance because of its complexities and the impact it has on Samoan students’ academic success, such that it warrants its own chapter (see following chapter).

5.2 Individual Agency

In this section I discuss the enablers and barriers in relation to individual agency, that is, the individual choices, personal attitudes, and behaviours of participants. Two key enablers are prioritising education and study in terms of time commitments and having a positive attitude to learning and study. This is then followed by a discussion of the key barriers. Firstly, not prioritising study and education and secondly, having a negative attitude to learning and attitude, and bad study habits.

5.2.1 Enablers

Prioritising education

Figure 5.1: Interrelationship of Categories
Many of the participants noted that a key enabler for success was setting education as their primary priority and focus for this time in their life. Privileging education for their time and attention over other factors such as church or extracurricular activities such as sports is a multilayered issue. For instance, those participants who stated that education was a first priority also had very clear career goals in mind as well as having a keen interest in the health field. The participants that represented this group acknowledged that in high school it was clear to them that the sciences were their strongest subjects and so there was a strong connection between their preference for sciences and a career in medicine.

This focus early on in life meant that these particular participants were very much self-motivated in terms of doing well and succeeding in academia in order to reach their end goal—becoming a health professional. For this group of participants a career in health stemmed from three main causes. The first was being exposed to the health sector through illness or disability of an immediate family member at a young age. The second was due to the desire to want to help people in their community in a meaningful way, and the third was a combination of the previous two. For example, one participant shared the story of how his brother almost drowned during a family outing because no one in his family knew how to perform mouth to mouth resuscitation. Consequently the participant as a teenager was very focused on getting into medicine as the quote below illustrates:

> You know, I was very focused on going to med school, and um to the extent that I would not go in to, I remember being asked to play for the first eleven soccer and saying no I’ve got to study. And um. And, the whole girls’ thing you know (laughs) so sorry I’m going to med school (laughs even harder). And then even, dropping English because I knew that my English marks weren’t that great at, at secondary school and saying to the principal ‘look, I’m better at Maths than at English. If I’m going to get into medical school I’m going to have to drop it.’ And of course that was pretty odd thing to do way back then. And the principal said write me an englis... a, a essay ah to demonstrate that your English is good enough and then we’ll look at you doing that. And so, I wrote something, I got back from the principal his corrections (laughter) but he let me drop it. (Saeni, key informant, male, interview)

The quote above also highlights that the participants who did do well at school and at university were highly motivated and driven and had already set a clear career pathway during their early teen years. However, this meant that some of the students who had not managed to get into medicine were left disheartened and uncertain of what avenue to take next. This reveals a lack of knowledge about other health professions and their respective career pathways. For those who had not anticipated a career in health before entering university this is understandable, but for those who had already decided during secondary schooling that they wanted to enter the health sector this is concerning, especially for those who wanted to become a doctor but for whatever reason were unsuccessful.
A few participants entered into health education programs through their arts programmes where issues of health in arts subjects piqued their interest in pursuing a health career. In other cases, some participants had decided on a particular health career but then decided on a different health career after some exposure and experience in different health fields. For example, two key informants had originally wanted to become doctors and in one case they had graduated from medical school but then became intrigued in health research and subsequently decided to follow a career in health research rather than in medicine. Nonetheless, no matter what avenue participants took in venturing into the health field, those that had a successful journey attributed this success in large, to prioritising education. These students had a clear passion in pursuing a career in health and this provided them with clear pathways and goals. As noted earlier, prioritising study was a multilayered issue and some participants found it difficult to prioritise study over other competing commitments such as family and church obligations.

Positive attitude to learning and study
Participants spoke of having a positive attitude to learning and consistently working hard as a key enabler. For these participants this attitude stemmed from having a love of learning and they often labelled themselves as “nerds”. They were also driven by ambition and clear goals. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the participants who prioritised education above other factors also had positive attitudes towards learning and study where they had a strong work ethic and critically, sought help when they needed to. Participants found that if they worked consistently throughout the year instead of procrastinating and leaving assignments until the last minute their marks improved significantly and they reduced stress and pressure. Some participants had carried this work ethic through from high school whilst others came to this realisation later on in their studies at university and attributed this to maturity rather than a skill or lesson that can be taught.

Having the confidence to ask lecturers and tutors questions and to clarify misunderstandings was indentified as a critical enabler. Most participants realised by their second or third year at university that not asking questions was detrimental to their learning and so began to actively seek help from educators. The narrative below is from one key informant where the interview topic was about seeking help from lecturers when the lecture material was unclear:

R: So then do you think if you went to the lecturer, do you think you should have gone to see the lecturer more to clarify things?
L: Oh yeah definitely should have done it from the beginning
R: So when did you finally gain the confidence to finally
L: Probably not until my final year which kind of that’s not good but yeah it took me that long to finally realise. (Leilani, key informant, female, interview)
On reflection, Leilani realised that it would have been helpful to ask lecturers to clarify material she found difficult from the start of her tertiary journey considering the academic benefit. Only a few participants had no qualms about asking questions when they first came to university. When asked why they were not shy about asking questions they struggled to pinpoint exactly why this was the case. However, based on other information these students had done well in high school and had gone to high schools where Pacific students were a minority and so this could be a possible reason for their confidence to ask questions. That is, they were confident in their own academic ability and were already accustomed to being a minority in the classroom. For example, two participants who represented this group described how they had attended high schools where they were minorities also. On the other hand it may just be the nature of these students where in any setting they are not shy to question.

To summarise, the participants who succeeded at university shared a common enabler in that they were all highly motivated learners and this was reflected in their work ethic and attitude to learning. Also, pertinent to health careers was having a clear career pathway, as this allowed participants to set clear career goals. Finally, it was of critical importance that students were able to feel comfortable in asking questions during lectures and tutorials, when they were unclear of the content or material that was being delivered to them.

5.2.2 Barriers

Other commitments

Most participants stated that rhetorically, study and education were a top priority but in practice this was often not the case, especially when many participants found themselves in positions of responsibility such as an income earner, caregiver, and/or church leader. Compounding this issue was fa‘alavelave, which often required participants’ immediate attention. In the interviews, participants would often articulate at the outset of the interview that education was their number one priority. However, often later in the interview it was revealed that this was not their experience:

*It goes - like I said there’s only three of us in tertiary um, most of my other cousins are like good at sports, good at music so education kind of ok it’ll go God and then education, um. No it’ll go God, family, education. Yeah education would be like lower down the list. Yeah. (Sera, BHSc, female, interview)*

I felt that Sera was not purposely trying to mislead as she genuinely did see education as her number one priority in the long term, but during her learning journey there were other issues that came to head, which became her priority at that particular point in time. This is a common story that can lead to a cumulative effect where students would get behind in their work and struggle to catch up. Often
these compounding issues were in relation to family and church commitments and obligations. For example, some participants, mostly female, found themselves in leadership roles within the church as youth leaders and found it difficult to manage studying, working, and their church commitments. This often meant that participants would only put their studies ahead of their other commitments during pressure times like examination periods. For some students, the pressure became too much and their studies suffered. The narrative below is from an interview with a female participant who recounted her experience of medical school while juggling multiple roles:

N: And then um, but yeah and then having to work you know and um, also I was a youth co-ordinator at church, which probably didn’t help. That was probably a big factor in me deciding you know that’s enough [of medical school]... If, if I had not been involved in church, if I had no commitments, I, I would of been a doctor easily...

R: Looking back, do you think if you went to seek help for the problems you were having [managing time], do you think things would have been better?

N: Yeah, I’d like to think that it [medical school] would of been better um, but I think my main problem was, I really should of like, um, chosen between being a youth co-ordinator and work and med school. That was my problem. And um, yeah, I think if I had really - if I had sat down and discussed it with someone I don’t know how they would have got that through my head. That you need to make the time, but I think it would of taken someone special to really sit me down and go, you’ve got to give up one or the other, it’s up to you. (Nina, key informant, female, interview)

The above narrative highlights the difficulty some participants find in managing and prioritising their time. Nina took responsibility in not prioritising her time well by indicating that she made the choice to privilege other commitments over study and consequently struggled academically. In comparison, Sera would have liked to prioritise her studies, but this was at odds with the priorities set by her family, where although education is important, it was at times not as equally as important as other commitments.

Samoan tertiary students need to master a fine balancing act in order to fulfil their responsibilities both at university and at home. In this case liminality can be used to understand the position that Samoan students face where they are “betwixt and in-between”; although they are a student, they are of an age where they feel obligated to become an income earner to support their family.

Participants directly commented on this issue:

Because that whole aspect of the importance, the priorities in people’s lives and especially when we’re at a transition age, where we need to be doing adult stuff, and we’re not, we’re old enough to be starting to earn money. If you’re still at studies for a certain long. And, and I think it took me, I started in 93, it took me, I think in 98 it finished. That’s like too long, you know, and there would of been a certain time for some people like, oh yeah, this is taking too long, I gotta start earning money. (Pita, key informant, male, interview)
Ioane explicitly stated the internal conflict that some participants go through in their learning journey with the opportunity cost between attending university and entering the workforce. Ioane’s story was similar to that of other participants, where coming to university was viewed as an investment for the benefit of their family as well as for themselves. The participants had the desire and every intention to graduate because of a sense of duty and obligation to contribute financially to families. Many participants worked part-time during their studies but most of the participants were ambivalent about part-time work because firstly, the amount was seen as insignificant and secondly, it was often used to cover personal expenses. The results in Table 5.2 also show that in comparison to the hours spent on studying and in contact time at university working hours were quite small.
Table 5.2: Student Time Use Diaries Results Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>Studying</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Transport</th>
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<td>65.5</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows the number of hours spent on each category each student reported over a one week period (see Appendix 3).
From the results indicated in Table 5.2, the students who participated spent most of their time studying, and in lectures, tutorials, and laboratories. This was then followed by time spent with family and church. The diary results are not a representative sample of all health students but they do point to some interesting patterns. Students spent almost the same amount of time studying as they did with direct learning contact at university and together this took up almost half of their waking hours during the one week surveyed. Also Students 1 and 2 were at medical school in years 5 and 3, subsequently their results slightly skewed the results table given the number of rotational hours in hospitals as part of their training. The results also showed that attending church and other church activities were still an important part of this sample of students’ lives.

Laissez faire attitude to learning and study

The participants that had struggled and failed papers at university admitted that one of the key reasons for this was the lack of good study habits and their laissez faire attitude towards studying. This is similar to the findings from the report by Anae and colleagues (2004) that looked at the issue of participation of Pacific students in tertiary education. In this study, participants reported that their own personal attitude towards learning was one of their biggest barriers to trying their best at tertiary education level as they felt that the “system is out to fail them” because it did not take in to account the cultural factors (Anae et al., 2004, p. 84). Similarly, students from this study stated that their philosophy of getting through university was to do the bare minimum to pass papers or, as some students put it, a “C’s get degrees” mentality. This sentiment is also a reflection of the historical discourse surrounding Pacific students’ achievement at tertiary level where the students feel that they are only capable of getting C’s or just passing (Pacific Island Students Academic Achievement Collective, 1988). This mentality manifests itself in the way in which many students speak about Pacific students’ academic achievement at university as failure being normalised, as revealed in the extract below from one of the key informant focus groups.

| Foua: I think like um, seeing people, failing and it kind of being socially acceptable to fail, that’s kind of a barrier, Every, most like, everyone fails a year or two whereas where you see a lot of people passing then that’s an enabler. It’s become almost socially acceptable to, to just fail a year or two you know. | This grabs everyone’s attention and turn to Foua to giving encouraging looks and nods Foua gets quite passionate and more animated with her hand gestures |
| F: There’s this normalised process going on. |

36 See Appendix 3 for Student 1’s diary
The extract above provides a disconcerting insight in the academic journey of Pacific students at the University of Auckland, where all participants of this particular focus group agreed that failure is a “norm”. This response is echoed by most participants. For most of the participants, the normalising of failure for Pacific students in education was legitimised through dominant textual and media discourses, which often cited the poor health, education, and employment outcomes of Pacific communities (Loto et al., 2006). This is exemplified in the extract below:

R: Ok in the University of Auckland equal opportunities annual report for 2005 it stated that um Pacific health students have the poorest pass rates in health programmes at the university. So what do you think about this statement and why?
A: Um, I don’t, I actually, I don’t really mind that, um... I know I shouldn’t like it but um, just from what you see I don’t blame them from coming to that conclusion.
R: So it doesn’t surprise you?
A: No, it doesn’t. No.
R: Why?
A: Because that’s what’s pretty much around. We always, it’s kind of sort of got in to the norm now, do you know what I mean, like. We’ve always, like the past few years its always been we’re the lowest in education and in health and all that kind of rubbish so it doesn’t surprise me that we still, we still are. (Atamu, Cert, male, interview)

One way of interpreting Atamu’s response is that he is deeply internalising the “blame the victim processes”. From the narratives I believe that Pacific students are compelled through structures of meaning to participate in reproducing dominant New Zealand/European discourses. In other words, there is a process of self-fulfilling prophecy occurring for Pacific students at university. Students find that failing “a year or two” is an acceptable and normal practice at university, but in doing so they further entrench the normalisation of failure for Pacific students in tertiary education.

The essentialised way in which students comment about the normalisation of non-achievement for Samoan and Pacific students raises important questions warranting further investigation. For example, what is the genealogy of the normalisation process of failure as part of tertiary education? It is unlikely that the mentality of students entering tertiary education is one of failure, as other studies have demonstrated that entering tertiary education is an important marker of success for Samoan families (Macpherson et al., 2000). I expect that there would be a level of fear, anxiety, and trepidation about entering tertiary education so that failure is a possibility but not inevitable.
The normalisation of failure can also be explained by the teacher-student relationships. Research has shown that the expectations of teachers influence the performance of students. For example, a qualitative study from the United States has shown that some university students of colour would not put in much effort if they felt that their educators would not grade them fairly because of their colour (Brown and Dobbins, 2004). Similarly the Youth ‘07 survey in Box 1 showed that a third of Pacific secondary school students reported that teachers treated them fairly most of the time (Helu et al., 2009). The learning environment and relationships with teachers are important to the learning outcomes and achievements of students. Not all students conform to the dominant discourse, but those who do succeed at university are often seen as the exception to the rule. This issue of resisting stereotypes and exploring the learning environments at university will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight.

The acceptability of failure as part of the learning journey for tertiary Pacific students by the students themselves is a very real and important issue. Students themselves can unintentionally the self-fulfilling prophecy of failure at university despite feeling that failure is unacceptable at home. The implications are important because in order to increase the number of qualified health professionals students need to be aware of the impact that failing a year or two has for their future prospects in terms of completing their degree. Further, it inevitably restricts their access to postgraduate study, as entry into postgraduate study is dependent on students’ grade point averages.

5.3 Family

This section highlights the key enablers and barriers participants found in relation to their families. The key enabler is family providing the motivation to succeed at university. This motivation is three-fold. First, participants spoke about wanting to do well for their families in order to repay them for the hardships they faced in migrating to New Zealand. Second, the sense of pride they got from making their families proud when they had done well with their schooling and last, being exposed to critical health events and experiences that sparked their interest in health. The two key barriers were family commitments and expectations, which often took up participants’ time, and the family home not being a conducive environment for studying due to space limitations.

5.3.1 Enablers

Motivation

37 Refer to Chapter Three section 3.7.1
It is well established that Samoan migrant families in New Zealand came to “the land of milk and honey” in order to better the educational opportunities of their children (Meleisea and Schoeffel, 1998; Perese, 2009). Samoan migrant children recognise and acknowledge the aspirations of their parents and the reasons for moving to New Zealand. This has translated in family being the impetus for students wanting to succeed and do well at school in recognition of the sacrifices their family, and most importantly, their parents have made in order to migrate to New Zealand. Many of the participants stated that they had come to university out of both personal desire as well as out of a sense of obligation to their parents and family members. This reflects a collective mentality where most of the students who spoke about coming to university was about “doing it for them”. For example,

Nina: Um, you know, they [parents], they were first generations here in New Zealand. Um, anyway they migrated to New Zealand because they wanted a better life. Um, and you know. Like my parents worked really hard, day and night to try and get us to a certain stage where we can go on and get a better education. Um so I like to think that I carry that on.  
F: mmm yeah  
Foua: I, I really agree with that, because like, my family came here like, I was born in Samoa and like my mum had to work at night. My dad had like, they never saw each other because of us kids and so for me, when I got to med school, I, I thought to myself, I have to get through med school to show my parents that it was worth all their while.

The extract above illustrates that the majority of participants had grown up watching their parents struggle financially because they were uneducated and were in low-income employment. Witnessing these struggles provided extra motivation for students to do well, for their parents and to ensure that they themselves have better job opportunities to provide for their families. This is a common key theme that came out from all the interviews and focus groups as illustrated by the extracts below:

You know and I, and that motivated me because I just thought I’m not gona be a cleaner you know like my cousins and aunts at Auckland and Middlemore [hospitals] whatever, and you know I just wanted to do better you know and make it you know how we always say, um, we give back to our parents. They bought us here...so when we, when we come here all these promises you know, I promised my grandparents that I’ll do the best that I can. (Kone, key informant, female, focus group)

The motivation for me, was having seen where my parents, well especially my mother came from, um seeing the work she had to do which was cleaning, finding myself in that same kind of position you know when I finished school, it’s a, it’s really humbling... so, definitely seeing the experiences and struggles of, of where my family have come from. You know, that was a, was, is a strong motivating factor in my life. (Taulua, key informant, female, focus group)

Participants also identified pride as an important function for academic success. There are three main sources of pride: inner or personal pride in achieving, pride from parents and family members,
and also a sense of pride in parents providing their children with the freedom to choose their own career paths. There is a huge sense of pride in the narratives from participants about wanting to succeed for family by graduating. Participants spoke in terms of not wanting to disappoint their parents so that they could make their parents proud, but this was sometimes difficult especially when students were unable to meet their parents’ expectations at university. The quote below from one key informant illustrates how pride can have a Janus-effect for students as both an enabler and as a barrier:

Pride (laughs) although I don’t know if that’s a Samoan thing. Um, but certainly wanting to do well, and wanting to do, you know, successful. Um, you know, work at it, um but certainly I think pride can work for you and it can work against you. Um, um it can work against you if, um, you know if you don’t do well, then, then you bring shame upon your family and that sort of thing. Um but yeah I think, you know to a certain extent it can also be really useful. It can be you know a driving factor in succeeding. (Nina, key informant, female, interview)

The issue of pride and wanting success for themselves and their families provided some answers to the aforementioned “C’s get degrees” mentality. The extracts in this section support my argument that when entering tertiary education Samoan health students have high aspirations as illustrated by participants stating they want to succeed for their families. Therefore the issue is not about aspirations but about realising their aspirations. The narratives from participants about academic success and failure paint an intriguing and puzzling picture of students’ learning journeys. On one hand participants noted that failure was not an option at university because of familial expectation and on the other hand failure was the “norm” at university.

Another motivating factor in participants’ interest in the health field was close family members being diagnosed with major health illnesses such as cancer and heart disease. This exposure was often cited as a catalyst or motivation into the health field. The quote below is from one interview with a participant who unfortunately had two close family members diagnosed with cancer:

Um, it would probably be because of family. Um, family experiences... And it [health career] wasn’t really kind of, ah, goal to work towards until my mom was diagnosed with cervical... and then think I was 16 when my brother was diagnosed with cancer. And kind of pushed me a lot more to yeah towards health. (Iti, BHSc, female, interview)

This next quote illustrates how other participants had been exposed to critical health events that affected close family members, which in turn motivated them in wanting to become a health professional:

My brother nearly drowned actually at a school camp. And um I remember um I remember him being bought up on to the side of the river or the creek it was and all these adults standing around and no one knowing how to do ... And then fortunately someone came round and did the what’s called the Sylvester method. And resuscitated him. And I thought my goodness, you
know, I could of lost my brother. And, it’s just the sort of thing that colours your sort of growing up sort of thoughts. Those sort of things make you... and I think it was really more events that colour my life and growing up and um that made me determined. (Saeni, key informant, male, interview)

Only a few of the participants were not the first in their families to attend tertiary education. Those participants’ family members who had already engaged in tertiary education provided them with motivation to follow in their footsteps. They stated that knowing the fact that others before them had managed to navigate through tertiary education successfully gave them confidence, belief, and motivation to enter university.

Family members, both nuclear and extended, provided participants with the motivation to firstly want a career in health and secondly to enter tertiary education. The main motivation that participants drew from was their desire to repay their parents for making the journey from Samoa to New Zealand to help realise their dreams of their children making the most of the educational opportunities in New Zealand.

5.3.2 Barriers
Family commitments and expectations
Although students stated that they wanted to do well and succeed at university for their families, this pressure often develops into a burden and a stressor. The participants acknowledged that their successes and failures reflected on their families. Thus, for many participants failure was unacceptable. This stressed students both mentally and emotionally:

Yeah but I guess it’s more, that’s expected so it’s kind of like if you do succeed, well good on you but that’s what you should of done in the first place [laugh] you should of succeeded so it’s no biggie whereas if you fail, it’s what happen, what did you do wrong, that’s not the way it should have been... you know it’s, it’s a good thing to want success and I can understand why but it’s just an added pressure yeah. (Valelei, BHSc, female, interview)

Valelei makes an interesting comment “what did you do wrong” suggesting failure is located with the student by families. In some ways this reflects the lack of understanding of families of how structures such as educational institutions and family environments may constrain the learning outcomes for their children. Many participants felt frustrated because they want to succeed for their family and at the same time it is expected of them but many felt that they were not given the time to do so. As one participant noted, parents were often quick to claim their children’s academic success but sometimes this success was in spite of them:

Yeah I think it would help if parents were aware of time and stuff that students need for studying cause I mean sometimes your family they’re real quick to like, claim your successes and that you know when you do real well. Saying you know, oh my son did this and that but,
not really supportive in giving you the time to be successful. (Esera, key informant, male, focus group)

Fa’alavelave or family and church events are sometimes a barrier to learning. Participants acknowledged that they themselves felt it was important to participate in fa’alavelave but families tend to perceive every fa’alavelave as important. Thus, participants felt that their parents’ and families’ expectations to do well at university, as well as attending all fa’alavelave as unrealistic. Pragmatically dialogue is necessary between students and parents to negotiate study demands and attending pertinent fa’alavelave. Important family events also need discussion to define what constitutes as an important family event. One participant had managed to balance study time and family time by alternating weekends where one weekend was spent studying and the next was spent at family functions. The extract below explains:

Valelei: Um, and just things like that, wishing that you could be there when there’s toonai’s\(^{38}\) on Sunday, um, you have to skip the toonai for study and things like that, yeah.
R: So I guess it’s always a challenge when you’re trying to weigh up your time and prioritise
Valelei: And prioritise yeah. So you get pressure from your family who want you to go to uni and want you to do well and then when you’re not there for the fa’alavelaves its like, um, you’re being a fiapalagi\(^ {39} \) and stuff like that and think that you’re just using uni as an excuse to get out of your, um, obligations.
R: Mmm but it’s not that way
Valelei: Yeah (laughs) it’s not that way. So there’s a bit of a balancing challenge like I skipped lunch last week so I’ve got to be there this week which means I’ve got to do everything on Saturday, that kind of thing, yeah. (Valelei, BHSc, female, interview)

Some participants also lamented over parents’ misinterpretation of their “time outs” such as going to the movies or hanging out with friends. Participants felt that having time out was important in terms with coping and dealing with all the pressures and expectations they faced. Unfortunately this was sometimes misconstrued by parents as having too much free time and students having more than enough time for their studies. Other times however, as some participants noted, their parents were rightfully concerned when their children were having too many “time outs”. Participants confessed that this did not necessarily mean they had more than enough time for study as parents assumed, more often than not, the case was that study time became less important than leisure time.

Home environment
One of the key barriers that participants described was their home environment not being conducive to study. Overcrowding is often the primary cause. Most students find that the best time to do so is

\(^{38}\) An important traditional family event where extended family members gather for Sunday lunch after church. Toonai is an important instrument in maintaining family relations and ties and especially in migrant countries.

\(^{39}\) Wanting to be like a European
late at night when the living spaces are free and quiet to do their work. This is one important barrier that tends to affects mainly older children in families. Other participants who were the youngest in their family noted that once they got to tertiary education older siblings had left leaving more space, room, and quiet time to study. The two extracts below highlight these issues:

Yeah studying at home was tough. So you ended up at nights. My study habits were nights... So I kind of did it when everyone was asleep... So trying to study on the dining table, not conducive. And that was the only table big enough to put all our gear, our books around. And then they come in from shopping, aaw, yeah, yeah, yeah, oh yeah, yeah, yeah. (Pita, key informant, male, interview)

The quote below is in contrast where the participant expresses some of benefits of being the youngest child in their family:

Yeah and your own space to study as well...Finally got my own room (laughs) Um, we’ve just moved in to this house like four years ago I think and that’s the first time I got my own room so yeah I was like 15 (laughs). (Eva, Certificate, female, interview)

Another reason is having family and friends visit frequently. As noted earlier, being connected to extended family members, as well as nuclear family members, is important to Samoans. Consequently, family members are often visiting one another and with large Samoan families the frequency of family visits is quite high. Many of the participants noted that this was a distraction, because of fa’aaloalo and Samoan protocol they would have to be hospitable and make tea and coffee for all the elders and visitors. Sarona’s story below explains one of the disadvantages of having large families:

S: When you have people come round, you know for meetings and things like that. Very, inconvenient and so you, that was one of the things that, that I didn’t like about being at home as a student. You might be doing an assignment but the expectation would be that you dropped that, you come and do the ipu ki for instance or come and do the kuka. And you have to wait there until they leave, which could be early hours of the morning, so that yeah part of what I didn’t like.
R: did that happen quite often?
S: um, I’d say it did. Yeah, I, I figured out early on that, our house was like a, was like a meeting point, you know, it was like a halfway house too because a lot of aunties and uncles who came as singles and then stayed with us and then got married and then moved and formed their own units. But yeah, yeah, yeah it was fairly often.

Sarona’s story exemplifies the realities of migration processes for Samoans moving to New Zealand. As aforementioned, Samoan migration patterns in New Zealand followed chain migration, as new migrants would live with established family members on arrival before resettling themselves
Sarona’s story provides a personal account of how this impacted on her learning.

The home environment is a barrier that is difficult to remedy especially for older children. It requires families having enough money and income to prevent overcrowding so that all children have a quiet space to study (Callister and Didham, 2007). However, at the same time overcrowding is not necessarily a product of low income but is sometimes a protective factor for Samoan families who prefer to live with extended families in inter-generational households (Witten et al., 2009).

5.4 University

This section discusses the key enablers and barriers at university. The two key enablers discussed in this section are the MAPAS scheme and resources such as study spaces and computers. The two key barriers explored in this section are the difficulty of students adjusting to the culture of university and participation levels in lectures and tutorials. Before discussing the enabler and barriers in association with the university it is important to provide a more detailed overview of the MAPAS scheme, given that MAPAS is the main source of university support from the data. As I have outlined in the preceding chapter, the MAPAS scheme underwent major restructuring while I was undertaking this study. The inset below provides an overview of the MAPAS scheme based on information from the manager of Vision 20:20 and from the MAPAS website.

**Box 2: Māori and Pacific Admission Scheme (MAPAS), Faculty of Health and Medicine (FMHS), University of Auckland.**

**Structure of MAPAS**

In 2007 MAPAS underwent major restructuring, the first since its inception in 1972. Previously, there was a MAPAS coordinator who was in charge of the programme. Under that position there was a Māori administrator, a Pacific administrator and a Programme administrator as illustrated below in Figure 5.2:

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42 Refer to Chapter Two, section 2.9.3 for a brief historical account and rationale for MAPAS
Under the new restructuring MAPAS has now become subsumed under the Vision 20:20 Initiative. Vision 20:20 is a FMHS initiative to increase the number of Māori and Pacific graduates to 10% by the year 2020. Along with MAPAS, Vision 20:20 also includes the Certificate of Health Sciences programme and the Whakapiki Ake Project. The Certificate of Health Sciences programme is a one year pre-degree programme, which prepares Māori and Pacific students for tertiary study in FMHS courses. This programme is targeted specifically for Māori and Pacific school leavers. The Whakapiki Ake project is a recruitment programme that actively engages with Māori youth enrolled in secondary schools to promote health as a career and the Certificate in Health Sciences programme as a pathway into FMHS courses. The new restructuring of MAPAS is outlined in Figure 5.3 below:

The diagram above illustrates the new structure of MAPAS. There are four MAPAS coordinators based on the five programmes at FMHS. These are Certificate in Health Sciences, Bachelors in Health Sciences, Pharmacy, Nursing, and Bachelor in Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery. There is one coordinator for Pharmacy and Nursing due to the small numbers of MAPAS students enrolled in
these programmes. These four coordinators are all managed by the Vision 20:20 manager. The role of the coordinators is to manage the academic support systems as well as acting as an intermediary between lecturers and students when necessary.

**Objectives of MAPAS**

MAPAS’ prime objective is to increase the number of Māori and Pacific students’ admitted into FMHS. MAPAS has a level of responsibility as a support programme but currently the supports offered are limited by funding restraints. MAPAS is seen as a reciprocal arrangement between the coordinators and students where students also have a responsibility to contact coordinators when they are struggling with their studies.

**Academic support**

Academic support is provided mainly through MAPAS tutorials which run weekly. Every paper at FMHS has a separate weekly MAPAS tutorial. Currently, the 2nd year medicine MAPAS tutorials are compulsory where students must attend 80% of the tutorials. These tutorials are usually given between 5pm and 6pm due to the students’ academic timetables. The tutorials are run more like study groups and discussion forums where students can work collaboratively on assignments, go over material that is unclear to them and at the very least they provide a safe and comfortable environment for students to ask questions that they did not feel comfortable asking during normal lectures and tutorials. There are plans to make MAPAS tutorials compulsory for all students at all levels. Tutors are not necessarily Pacific or Māori but are typically postgraduate students with a strong academic background. The tutors record attendance as a quasi tracking system of students’ progress.

**Mentoring**

In 2007 MAPAS provided a peer mentoring scheme for medical students. In 2008 this initiative was discontinued due to low attendance of both mentors and mentees. However, peer support should occur naturally within the MAPAS environment where students who are the final years of their course provide advice and guidance for newer students. Knowledge sharing between peers also happens informally through the shared lunches that MAPAS provides.

**Other support strategies**

MAPAS organises a Freshers’ camp and marae cultural experience for first year students before Semester one begins. This is an opportunity for students to be introduced to the MAPAS team and to
get to know other students in their MAPAS cohort. MAPAS also provide regular shared lunches and cohort lunches in which students are given the opportunity to reconnect with peers and with the coordinators for their programmes. These lunches are typically held two to three times a year.

**Engagement with family**

Currently, there are limited opportunities for MAPAS to engage with families. The opportunities that are available are limited to interviews and graduations where families are invited to attend. MAPAS has published pamphlets which outline the MAPAS programme as one way of engaging with families. On occasion MAPAS will coordinate family conferences, but this is strictly on a needs basis, when it is warranted in the best interest of a student. In this case, MAPAS endeavours to work together with families and includes a Pacific academic as a facilitator and if the family wishes a Pastor is available for extra support.

Sources: Curtis, 2008; University of Auckland, 2010.

### 5.4.1 Enablers

**MAPAS**

As discussed in Chapter Two, the MAPAS programme is an affirmative action programme specific to the FMHS at the University of Auckland that allows a special pathway of entry to university for Māori and Pacific peoples. Many participants found the MAPAS programme great in terms of gaining entrance to medical school and health programmes; however, they also found that the onus in ensuring they attained the necessary marks to remain in their programmes was placed on students. This is exemplified in the quotes below:

*At med school we kind of got this MAPAS admission scheme that you know that you can get lower marks if you’re a Pacific Islander to get into med school but once you get into med school you have to get the same marks as everybody else you know what I mean so if you’ve got lower marks to get into med school you have to work twice as hard to get the same marks as everybody.* (Foua, key informant, female, focus group)

*I mean they think, we came through MAPAS, like I came through MAPAS and they think just because you got through MAPAS, you know, everythings going to be easy for you but as soon as you get into med everyone’s the same you know, you’ve got to work as hard as anyone.* (Aute, Medicine, female, interview)

It is worth noting that the former quote is from a key informant and the second is from a current student in the early years at medical school. Both quotes insinuate that there needs to be greater awareness by all students that MAPAS is an affirmative action entry scheme for Māori and Pacific students interested in health programmes. Therefore it is foreseeable that as an equal opportunity programme many participants found MAPAS beneficial but as a vehicle to retain students it was
found wanting. MAPAS coordinators have realised the need to ensure that MAPAS is equally as successful in retaining students as it is in recruiting students and have begun restructuring the programme to include more retention strategies. This issue is discussed further in the next chapter on support for students.

Resources
As discussed previously, student’s homes were not the best environment for studying. All the participants who noted this as a barrier found themselves staying at university longer to study and complete assignments. Students found that dedicated Pacific study rooms allowed them to have access to quiet spaces, computers, and printers but also provided an instrument for connecting with fellow Pacific students and not feeling isolated and lonely in an institution where they are the minority.

5.4.2 Barriers
University culture
The culture of university was singled out by all participants as a barrier because they found it difficult to transition to self directed learning and greater expectations. More specifically the participants found that the standards and expectations of lecturers in terms of assignments far exceeded that of anything they had experienced before at high school. They also found the time commitment in terms of lectures, laboratories, and tutorials, overwhelming. This in particular was a major learning curve for medical students and students taking science papers, where in addition to lectures there were compulsory laboratories and tutorials, all of which could take up to two hours each. In essence, some of the participants felt that they were already doing a full working week with lectures and required contact time, but this did not include study, reading, and assignment time.

They also found self-directed learning difficult as they were used to being “spoon-fed” at high school. Having to find resources for assignments was one of the difficulties that the participants faced. Participants did not recognise that researching for material, such as searching through databases and knowing where to look for material, was a skill that came with practice, and also that there were support people at the university who could help. The utilisation of support networks at university is an issue that is discussed further in the next chapter.

Certificate in Health Sciences students are aided a lot more in navigating the university system. Despite having gone through the bridging programme, they still found the transition from Certificate to the Bachelor’s programme difficult. Like other participants, they found being accountable mostly
to themselves to turn up to lectures, tutorials, and laboratories challenging. Participants acknowledged that turning up to lectures was their responsibility and noted that in some cases nonattendance at lectures was because they chose to participate in recreational activities instead but other times it was because they found the content and material in lectures difficult to comprehend or uncomfortable.

Participants found that some of the health science lectures cumbersome as these classes tended to highlight and emphasise the poor health outcomes of Pacific communities in New Zealand. For these participants sitting in these lecturers became unbearable because of the shame they felt when lecturers began speaking about the causes of major health problems for Pacific communities. Participants spoke about feeling judged in lectures by non-Pacific peers and being embarrassed:

Because I’m studying health so a lot of focus is on inequalities and Māori and Pacific inequalities um the benefit is that um you can understand the cultural aspects that they’re talking about. The cultural barriers and I feel like I’m better equipped to address them and to talk about them um but at the same time it can also be really embarrassing to sit in the class about Pacific health and be told that they’re overweight and its due to lifestyle factors and personal behaviours um. Yeah specially because my dad’s, I always think it’s really funny cause my dad’s the only person with diabetes in my family (laughs) and my dad’s European so just kinda think like, yeah it’s a bit ridiculous. I mean you can see how it’s true because um the statistics prove it (emphasis added) but at the same time you kinda roll your eyes and go here we go again when they start talking about um, yeah. Inequalities. (Valelei, BHSc, female, interview)

Valelei’s main concern was that cultural deficit theorising was used to explain health inequalities. The representation of Pacific communities in this way gives currency to Said’s theory of Orientalism, which contends that the representation of minoritised communities is perpetuated through educational institutions and that these representations often conceived and told through Eurocentric frameworks are regarded as truth. We can understand lectures on Pacific health as a product of Orientalism, where it is constituted by authorising views, representation, and teaching that is shaped by discursive formation. The discursive power of statistics as truth, illustrates that statistics are a product of power/knowledge in the university context, especially when used as a rationale and legitimate framework to establish difference. As I have reported in Chapter Three, the health statistics do show that Samoan and Pacific communities have the poorest health status. I am not challenging the validity or the usefulness of statistics. I am suggesting that statistics presented on their own can be misleading and that educators need to be more culturally sensitive in their choice of explanatory frameworks in explaining statistics.
Using the extract above we can infer that Pacific communities are represented as the “other” in which health outcomes are measured in comparison to the dominant ethnic group, Europeans. Statistics are used to validate the claims made and establish difference between mainstream New Zealand and the Pacific other. This is one of the problems with statistical data, which are often the basis for evidence in which to make assumptions and assertions about the health outcomes of Pacific groups. Statistics provide a level of evidence and are necessary but not sufficient in explaining the health outcomes of Pacific communities in New Zealand. What is further required in order to make a robust argument is a critical analysis of the contextual factors that also impact on the health of Pacific communities in New Zealand. This argument that perhaps there is a problem with the explanatory frameworks used to understand statistical frameworks is not new but is worth reiterating.

Lecturers may be unaware that the way in which they represent Pacific health to Pacific students is a problem, but this study shows that representation is a real issue for health science papers in particular. To deal with this issue many lecturers need to take more care in the way that they deliver their lectures to ensure they do not follow deficit models. One way in helping lecturers in this respect is to provide lecturers with communication training that assists lecturers in the presentation of culturally sensitive topics.

**Participation**

Attending lectures and tutorials is one issue, participating meaningfully is another matter entirely. Stigma and stereotyping are barriers to meaningful engagement in classrooms as participants explain their participation in classrooms is restricted by their fear of being stigmatised and labelled as another “dumb Islander”. The extract below is an exchange between focus group members discussing issues about asking questions during lectures and tutorials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F: What is about being asked a question, you know like, what is it about being asked a question by you know often it’s a lecturer and you’re sitting there you know, what’s going through your mind, what’s that all about do you think?</th>
<th>Everyone laughs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emi: mmm</td>
<td>Long Pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisi: you mean what’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emi: other people. Oh for me, I was just trying to think what is it actually that gets me to answer the question. It’s not really the lecturer’s thoughts it the other kid’s thoughts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisi: yeah like they’re all judging you like, we’re all going to judge the brown person</td>
<td>Laughs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emi: yeah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisi: see how you know, how well she responds to the question kind of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
thing because everyone has the general knowledge oh yeah, Pacific people they don’t stay in school as long, especially not many people get in to university and then the people that do get in to university it’s like the eye on you.

Pua: yeah

Emi: and if they do ask you the question and you get it wrong, it like oh yeah, typical Pacific people

Pua: yeah

F: so it sounds like reinforcing their own -

Emi: yeah, you can say that, yeah

As the extract above illustrates, the issues of stigma and racism are still pertinent in today’s multicultural society within New Zealand (Nairn and McCreanor, 1991). The exchange also illustrates how students create the basis of self-fulfilling prophecy by choosing not to engage in discussions for fear of reprisal. Learning environments need to be inclusive and equitable, but this is difficult to accomplish if dominant stereotypes and stigma created in wider society are replicated in the classroom. This issue can be addressed by schools, whereby there are activities that explicitly involve students asking questions in a classroom environment. This highlights the importance of different power relationships between educators and students and between students.

5.5 Friends

This section details the enablers and barriers that participants associate with friends. There are two enablers these being having like-minded friends and friends providing support. Conversely, the barriers associated with friends are being friendless at university and friends distracting participants from studying.

5.5.1 Enablers

Having like-minded friends

When speaking about friends participants often emphasised that having like-minded friends was an important enabler at university. Like-minded in the sense that they too had a positive attitude towards studying and learning and were highly motivated and driven. These friends often formed the foundation for study groups, which participants felt were extremely helpful in terms of studying for assignments, tests, and exams. Typically, these friends would also be other Pacific students. Participants noted that having other Samoan and Pacific friends was a protective factor against feeling isolated and lonely at university, as they felt that only other Pacific students could relate to their experiences at university and the struggles and challenges they faced. Pacific students also felt safety in numbers, especially in lectures when they felt that the lecture was stereotyping and judging
Pacific people. In the quote below from one interview, the participant is explaining why they choose to have only Pacific friends at university:

*Um it’s the best being around Samoans that are studying and that kind of have the same life as you. Like everyone goes to church - obligations to be at church and as well as uni. It’s kind of encouraging when you see that they’re doing it so I can do it too.* (Rosa, BHSc, female, interview).

Rosa’s preference for Samoan peers illustrates that cultural commonalities with peers also provides motivation that aids in the retention of Samoan learners. Preferring friends of the same ethnicity is not unique to Samoan learners in New Zealand. Recent studies from the United States have shown that ethnic minority students preferring to interact and mingle only with other students of the same ethnicity is a process of averting racism as well as establishing a common in-group identity in a space where they are a minority (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2005). The danger here is that in only sticking with other Samoan and Pacific students, they may isolate themselves and not engage fully in all the experiences that university has to offer. Also students can potentially normalise failure and create the basis of self-fulfilling prophecy.

**Providing support**

Friends provide an important coping mechanism for participants. Friends were able to provide a friendly and non-judging ear to air grievances in terms of dealing with the pressure of being a Samoan university student. Participants also found friends to be a great source of moral encouragement and support especially during times when they found it difficult to deal with their studies:

*Friends. Yes, people that are doing the same thing as me and who are above me and stuff. They help yeah, they’ve always offered to give me notes, and stuff and you know always want to talk about you know what’s it going to be like that...Yeah so that’s helped.* (Aute, Medicine, female, interview)

Making friends who are taking similar programmes was important as they were able to give advice and were able to relate to the realities of taking particular programmes, as well as being a tertiary student. A few participants found that friends outside of their university life were more sympathetic:

*I think my group, my, my friends outside of uni and my boyfriend have been really big support. They take me away if they know I’m stressed or if they know I’m upset about something or (pause) yeah they’ll just take my mind off uni.* (Malia, Medicine, female, interview)

Either way having a good network and support system based on friends was an important enabler that participants identified.
5.5.2 Barriers

Friendless

Some participants found being friendless very difficult. This often happened when students came to university alone or when friends became separated because of the different programmes they are enrolled in. For example, Nina found herself isolated from her friends who were studying at university as they were based on city campus, whereas she had to relocate to Grafton campus where the medical school is located. She recounted her difficulties during the beginning of medical school, where she found herself isolated from her friends:

*Um, the first year at university was great because I did a Bachelors of Science and I was with other friends and I could always link up, cause the Science papers weren’t with the Arts paper, none of my other friends were doing Science and so I linked up with my friends who were doing Arts and also we did a summer camp... having to adapt in to this whole new environment and Med school you’re far away from the main campus so I hardly see my friends. Yeah and that was another thing you know I had to make friends at Med school which I did but it just wasn’t the same* (Nina, key informant, female, interview)

Another participant also expressed how she found it difficult making friends initially, but as she progressed through her programme she eventually made good friends, which have been of great benefit to her. In hindsight, given the support she now receives from her friends at university she reflected on not having a good friend support base to aid her academically:

*And like in that first year I didn’t have many good you know like close friends to talk to and to hang out with about assignments and about tests coming up yeah so but now I have friends you know.* (Sui, BHSc, female, interview)

Friends are important resources that help to enable learning; for participants, friends offer academic and moral support. At the same time they can also be barriers.

Distraction

Some friends can be a major barrier to students’ progress at university, especially if they themselves are not in tertiary education. They sometimes proved to be a distraction not easily overcome, where students found it difficult not to give in to peer-pressure, which took them away from their studies and lectures. In this case many students found it difficult to manage these types of friends as they did not want to offend them:

*I think just the following like, like friends were drinking so I think oh ok then, like one bottle (laughs) and then like one bottle leads to too many, just things like that...and then pretty much sleep all day [the next day].* (Pepe, Certificate, female, interview)

*Like um, what I found in uni is that I made friends with a lot of people who came from Samoa. And they weren’t used to the lifestyle but. Let’s just say influences, to go, to go out a lot*
(laughs). Yeah that’s something that I had to learn quickly as well. It just doesn’t fit in with your studies. (Iti, BHSc, female, interview)

Students needed to manage time with their friends wisely and to communicate with their friends about the importance of their studies to avoid friends becoming a hindrance or deterrent. Friends were an important source, especially for students such as Iti, whose family lived in Samoa and who found connecting with other Samoan students an important resource for support. Thus, maintaining these relationships was very important and therefore students needed to negotiate their time with friends in order to maintain these relationships, whilst keeping up with their studies.

5.6 Spirituality

This section analyses the two key enablers and the one barrier that participants identified in relation to spirituality. Interestingly, participants spoke about their faith and spirituality as well as the church as being enablers.

5.6.1 Enablers

Coping mechanism

Participants found their faith and spirituality to be an important coping mechanism. Almost all of the participants (80%) found that their relationship with God was an essential source from which to draw strength when they were struggling with challenges in both their personal and academic life. These struggles were often because the two were so interconnected and intertwined that they were unable to separate the two. This resulted in inner conflict when both aspects of their life were competing for their time and attention and participants were unable to manage the situation. Participants noted that although at times they were not active church goers they still believed in God and this spirituality provided them with an important coping mechanism by believing in something bigger than them and that in the end everything will be fine. This is exemplified in the two quotes below from interviews:

I think it just helped me, like when I read my bible and get close to God it just gives me a sense of, of calm and a sense that everything will be alright. And I think when I have that feeling then it just has – it enables me just to focus on what I have to do instead of worrying about you know family and just you know all of that stuff. It just, it, it focuses me so yeah. (Malia, Med, female, interview)

I: Grounding, oh yeah that’s right, I just need to remember I’m serving God, and this is you know, I really, there’s a um, that sense of higher calling that we always, we kind of been driven when you were little you know. And it’s so, yeah that was good... For me and my Christian beliefs there’s something beyond what we see as Samoans you know. What’s that um, but, you know
R: Fa’atuatua

I: Fa’atuatua I le Atua, yeah, yeah. So ah, it’s, it’s ah having a firm belief in that. And I think, we’ve seen enough of that to know yeah it’s for real. You know oh yeah we can do that. And so, sometimes I think that’s, happy go lucky thing, because you know I, it’ll be all good at the end of it, at the end of the day. Umm yeah. (Pita, key informant, male, interview)

The narratives above are very important in the context of Samoan students learning in New Zealand. Literature so far has suggested that the church is seen as a contested space for Samoan students living in New Zealand (Tiatia, 1998). These studies have focused on the church as an institution but have not engaged with the spiritual aspect of church. The Samoan learners from this present study clearly placed spirituality as a key enabler for their learning.

**Giving purpose and sense of direction**

Participants found that their spirituality and belief in God gave them purpose and a sense of direction in life. This often came about when participants found themselves struggling at university and questioned whether university and a career in health was the right option for them. The extracts below illustrate:

Saeni: Um, my faith actually.
R: Oh yeah.
Saeni: Yeah, because when I failed, I remember ah, I remember having a conversation with the big guy upstairs and sort of saying, you know, you know, I thought this was what you wanted me to do, you know, why did I fail? And then I realised it was because he wanted me to be a better doctor. And that it wasn’t in my time. And so I think my faith is very important for getting me through. (Saeni, key informant, male, interview)

Gotta have the faith (laughs), gotta have, yeah I mean I’m not there physically at church but you know spiritually yeah, I’m there. (Aute, Medicine, female, interview)

From these extracts, spirituality and faith were crucial enablers for participants, and this was demonstrated by the fact that faith was very often the first thing that came to mind when asked to identify enabling factors. Even though participants may not have attended church as regularly as they had before because of their studies, they still found faith and spirituality to be important enablers that helped guide them through their studies. Similarly, the fact that during sermons ministers and pastors emphasised to ask God to help students in their congregation with their studies was important to students in recognising that their church and ministers do support them spiritually:

I’ve been to some church services in South Auckland and so the faifeau was saying a loku fai tatalo and he was saying um to the congregation please remember in your prayers our

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43 Samoan term for belief and faith
44 Believe in God
45 Minister
46 prayer
university students who are having their exams and this date and I thought excellent that’s the kind of support that you want. (Sene, key informant, female, interview)

If you come to church now everyone’s going to uni. They’re kind of like, the church is really into the education thing so I think that’s what’s really helped a lot of us, at our church yeah. (Rosa, BHSc, female, interview)

As these two extracts illustrate, growing up in the church has its benefits and advantages. First, growing up in the church was important and the relationships that were built in this particular community foster positive and supportive relationships to enable and motivate Samoan learners. Second, the church was seen as a vehicle promoting education, where cohorts as a collective group were attending university. This also provided support within the university environment.

The emphasis on spirituality and the church as enablers needs to be highlighted to demonstrate the potential that the church has on influencing academic achievement for young Samoan learners. Literature and research on spirituality, religion, and learning is quite substantial. Research concerning spirituality and tertiary learners has focused on the impact that spiritual and religious campus activities has had on learners tertiary experiences and the place of religious studies in contemporary higher education post September 11, 2001 (Fujiwara, 2010; Kuh and Gonyea, 2004; Dalton et al., 2006). Recent research has demonstrated the benefits of religion and spirituality on the behavioural, emotional, and cognitive development of adolescents (Bartkowski et al., 2008). Similarly, international research has shown that spirituality is also an important enabler for ethnic minority students in higher education (Kuh and Gonyea, 2004). As an institution, church is often seen within “cultural” and family contexts; however, on their own church and spirituality are important enablers to students irrespective of culture and family. These extracts are also important as church is often cited as a barrier to learning for Pacific and Samoan students. This present study revealed that this was not the case and that the Samoan church was also enabling. In the literature on Pacific education issues, the church is perceived as a barrier because of the time spent on church activities. This was also a concern for participants in this study.

5.6.2 Barriers

Church commitments and obligations

The only negative issue for participants in relation to spirituality was the time needed in order to meet church commitments and obligations. These were often in relation to being part of youth groups, church choirs, and being Sunday school teachers. Being an active member of the church is important for participants and this means participating in events that require dedicated time for rehearsals. The highlight of the year for Samoan churches is Lotu o Tamaiti or White Sunday (Efi et al., 2008). This is an annual traditional service that is held in recognition of the importance of
children and youth which takes hours of preparation by children and youth and Sunday school teachers beforehand. In this event, children and youth perform items such as vignettes, songs, and dances of praise and worship. This is usually held in October coinciding with the final exam period for university. This time period was especially troublesome for Samoan health students because they felt it was important to participate in White Sunday for their spiritual wellbeing, but they also needed to ensure that they spent enough time studying and preparing for their final exams. The extract below provides an illustration of the realities that Samoan students face in managing their time to be a good Samoan health student and the expectations that are placed on them in terms of being part of church:

Yeah, it has, big time and even things like church. Like if we’re having a church conference or if we’re having a church um you know rally or something, um. A good example is we just had a opening in Otara. And so, I’m stuck because my aunties and my uncles all run it and so I don’t really have a choice. And so I’m, I’m raking in practices from like starting at 7 going through to 11 and that really affects you. Like it affects my sleep, it affects my, my, I’m tired, I don’t wanna study you know. So, yeah, yeah and then if you say no you’re regarded as not putting God first and you know, it’s just that pressure, that, that extra pressure. And I, and I, had an argument with my aunty too. I was like man I’ve got tests, I’ve got assignments. And she rolled her eyes, oh what comes first, God or your tests or your assignments and I’m like oh! You know so, yeah. Little things like that. (Emphasis added) (Sera, BHSc, female, interview)

There are many significant issues in the above narrative that would overwhelm any student and her issues are anything but “little”. The time, energy and commitment required for church commitments as illustrated in Sera’s story highlights how study can become a minor priority. For Sera, as with many of the other participants, the fact that church commitments were often intertwined with family obligations provided a real barrier in trying to meet both the demands of tertiary education and being a Samoan student. Although Sera tried to negotiate her time with her aunty, it was difficult to do so if they themselves had not experienced the realities of tertiary education.

To summarise, the church aspect is an important issue that needs emphasising. Traditionally, the church has only been viewed as a constraint on Pacific academic outcomes because students are expected to spend a lot of time on church commitments. Thus, the relationship between church and Samoan students learning outcomes needs to be reinvestigated more critically. Church in the context of research needs to be deconstructed critically, as spirituality and faith are often seen as synonymous with church. This has implications, as when young people talk about “church as an institution” as a barrier, the issues of spirituality and faith in God are then ignored. Spirituality and faith are important enabling resources that students draw on especially in stressful and difficult periods. Their faith in God provides them with guidance and purpose, which in turn motivates students to persist with their studies. Therefore, just because students may not attend church or
that in one respect church is a barrier, there are other important and pertinent aspects of church that are critical enablers for Samoan learners.

5.7 Summary

This chapter has presented the key factors that participants identified as enablers and barriers to their success at university. These factors are all interlinked and connected; on their own they are necessary but insufficient in determining successful learning outcomes for students. The enablers and barriers are highly complex and are multilayered so that any strategy to improve the learning achievements and outcomes of tertiary students needs to address these various aspects in various contexts. Consequently, this may explain why current strategies have yet to provide relevant and adequate solutions as they tend to focus on one of the categories in particular. That is, some solutions only focus on university factors, while others only focus on resources. Any strategy devised to improve the outcomes of Samoan tertiary health learners needs to have an encompassing approach in which all the barriers and enablers are incorporated and fully understood. Students identified three important issues; the difficulty in managing time, having a passion and interest in a health career together with a positive attitude to learning; and families being the major motivator for students wanting success. The crucial issue identified here is the importance of time as a currency for Samoan health students. Students found it difficult to meet all the expectations demanded of them by both their personal life and their academic life. Second, it is clear from the narratives from students that there needs to an inner desire to want a career in health and to want to be at university, and this may provide the motivation students need to want to succeed, as well as providing a foundation for a positive attitude to learning and study. Finally, families are credited with being the key motivating factor for students wanting to succeed at university; however, there is a difference between wanting success and actual success. One issue that may help explain why Samoan health students are not able to materialise their aspirations is support, both pastoral and academic. The next chapter therefore presents the findings and analysis on familial and university support.
Chapter Six: Support

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the meaning of support for Samoan health students while studying at university from the perspective of students, alumni, parents, and university providers. The chapter begins by unpacking what support means from the perspectives of students, parents, and providers who took part in the study. This is then followed by a detailed discussion on students’ and parents’ views about what family support means, and how it is shown and practiced. The notion of reciprocity of support is then explored where support flows both ways between students and their family. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the students’ perceptions and experiences of the support systems available to them at university.

Coxon and colleagues (2002) conducted a thorough and extensive literature review on Pacific education issues. The literature the authors found that most studies raised the issue of support in binary terms of institutional academic support and personal support. Academic support is provided by schools, educational providers, and so forth. Personal support is support outside of educational institutions, for example by family and friends. In the same year, Anae and colleagues (2002) published an extensive study on the issues of participation for Pacific peoples and tertiary education. In both these studies, and in the academic support literature generally (see Chapters Two and Three), there is an assumption that readers know what support is. In reading the literature this suggests that support refers to any method, practice, or process that helps, enables, and aids learners to be successful academically. Thus the literature on support for learners focuses on how to provide support but often without defining what support means.

This present study addresses this gap and asks students, families, and university providers what support means to them in the context of helping Samoan tertiary learners. From the data, it is evident that support is a complex and multilayered issue. Support is seen by participants as collaborative and multidirectional. Key informants, students, parents and university providers all acknowledged the importance of each group in providing learning support. For support to have any meaning or be effective in helping students learn, students must access and use support wisely. This will become clearer throughout the chapter. The following diagram illustrates the collaborative
approach necessary where students require support from both families and the university, and also illustrates the reciprocity of support.

6.2 Support Means...

Support is a complex issue. This section attempts to address this by clarifying the meaning of support from the respective views of students, past and present; families; and providers who participated in this study. This provides a starting point to understand how different groups interpret and operationalise support.

6.2.1 Students

From the students’ perspectives there are four fundamental support structures (see Table 6.1). Firstly, academic support provides them with the necessary academic and learning skills to complete their studies. Second, is family support. Third is peer support, which includes friends outside of university. Last are resources, which include the tangible and intangible resources that students deem necessary to aid in their studies. Table 6.1 below outlines the specific support elements under the four structures as identified by the participants. These are ranked in order with the support identified most frequently at the top of the table to least frequent at the bottom.
Table 6.1: Support Structures as Identified by Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Support</th>
<th>Family Support</th>
<th>Peer Support</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>Giving time and space</td>
<td>Pastoral support</td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors and role models</td>
<td>Moral encouragement</td>
<td>Study groups</td>
<td>Financial support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral support</td>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>Sharing notes</td>
<td>Computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td></td>
<td>Study space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The support elements under academic, family, and peer support also correlate with the results from the support diaries conducted with 12 students during the final exam period in 2009. Each element except for transport and role models was recorded in all of the student diaries. The most commonly cited supports from the diaries were tutorials, transport to and from university provided by families, having meals provided, and study groups with friends. The most common non-support came from friends when students were “hanging out with friends”. The students who had participated were quite honest where some students noted that they wasted time with friends instead of studying.

Students view support as a holistic system where support structures correlate with the three relational realms of their lives during study, that is, their family, university, and friends. This reflects the importance of lagimalie, where harmony with self means keeping relations in order with all the related worlds in which Samoans move within and in-between (see Chapter Two). This aspect is explored in more detail in the following chapter but for now it is important to note that given the significance of relational arrangements for Samoans, it is important that students receive support from all three realms. The interviews and focus groups with alumni in particular identified the need to have all three support structures operating simultaneously, and that providing and accessing one type of support or receiving support from one group without other supports, will not guarantee success.

Financial support as a means of support for Pacific students is one such example as a graduate explains:

*I was just thinking something like that, um and I still think that scholarships and awards um, no on their own you know, if you just throw students money it’s not, it’s not always going to guarantee success, but money with all the support structures I think is still useful. (Nina, key informant, female, focus group)*

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47 See Appendix 4.
Other participants shared similar views, stressing that although financial support was critical and especially important for low income families, it needed to be supplemented with learning and academic support. However all participants agreed that income and financial support were very important for tertiary education. Financial support helped to counter important barriers highlighted in the preceding chapter such as time constraints due to working part-time, transport costs, and purchasing computers and laptops:

> Um ok a big difficulty for me would be the financial aspect...It’s just having to work and carry the financial burden at home... money is a massive issue like um... Like, I wish that I had the same equipment as everyone else around me and then, then I’d feel a bit more prepared and I’d be motivated and know that I could be just as good. (Sera, BHSc, female, interview)

Financial support helped in providing resources that enabled students to have more time to study and learn and also provided them with important resources such as laptops. These resources are difficult to attain for most Samoan families given that the majority of Pacific households are on low incomes (see Chapter Two). Therefore, financial support is significant in helping to overcome the practical barriers to learning, but students still need help and support with pedagogical issues and learning processes as well. For example, one alumni focus group identified that Pacific health role models are important and useful sources of support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nina: Yeah and I mean in my, my year, really had a huge lack of um, just role models for one, but people to access in terms of just help. Um, and, I’m like I was, never go to a lecturer unless I had to.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F: What do you talk about in terms of role models? I mean who are you talking about?</td>
<td>Points out other participants in the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina: people who are already working in the different fields. I would bring Taulau, and I’d bring Foua, and you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: so you’re not talking about for example, you would get Oscar Kightley⁴⁸ to come and talk about health careers?</td>
<td>Group starts laughing loudly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina: no, no, in fact I would, I would steer away from that. I would actually-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foua: he’s used a lot at health stuff</td>
<td>Other participants nod heads in agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina: yeah, well, I’m not, I’m saying it’s great, definitely include them if you were going to have you know like a great big media campaign, but if you just want um to target young people, at a realistic way you would actually bring in Pacific doctors and bring in Pacific you know nurses and yeah promoting diversity, you know you would bring in community health workers, social workers, everyone, researchers. Um, they need someone, they need role models so that they can strive for it. Not just what they see on tv.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴⁸ A Samoan comedian who is a New Zealand celebrity
An important issue that the focus group participants also discussed was the thin line between sufficient support and too much support where students were not given the space to become self-directed learners and independent thinkers. Key informants argued that it was not in students’ best interest to be supported so much that in essence they were “babied” and answers were effectively “handed” to them. Without independent learning there is no growth for students and this has implications in terms of their performance in the workplace, where those who become reliant on support structures will find it difficult to deliver expected outcomes on their own.

Self-autonomy and independence are important developmental processes for young people. However, in order to develop these processes young people need to be given the room and tools to learn how to become independent. For many of the participants in this study the cultural contexts and environments that they socialised in did not necessarily provide them with the means to develop independence. This is exemplified in the quotes below:

*I think [university] was different because you always had someone at high school, someone that was sort of putting you on track and giving you some direction. And then when you come to university you’re pretty much left to yourself to give you sort of direction. And it didn’t really work so well for me. Was too more sort of more interested in ah, you know the parties, hanging out with friends and that and there was quite a lot of bigger like freedom as well. You know, always used to sort of you know, sort of tight sort of traditional sort of control, within the families. Also - Samoan families. (Peti, Postgraduate, male, interview)*

*Samoan students come in to uni, and it’s a good first year and they get caught up with the student life and everything, their grades go down because at home in the Samoan home, they [family] probably, protect you so much that they don’t let you out as much. (Sisi, Postgraduate, female, focus group)*

In my view the quotes above are also a reflection of the majority of Samoan students’ everyday lives in that Samoan children tend to be sheltered longer than most European children, so that their life experiences are often dictated and limited by their parents. This needs to be understood in terms of the parenting practices of migrants who have come from a different culture and community. Coping with the move to a Western city which in many respects is the polar opposite from their original homes, parents have not had the time to adjust to parenting children in a Western metropolitan city. In this respect, parents try to do what they think is best and for Samoan parents this often equates to being more authoritarian in comparison to their Western counterparts (Auerbach, 2006; Meleisea, 1998; Tui Atua, 2009). It has been recognised that Pacific communities operate within a family centred model so that self-autonomy and development are considered less important than the collective wellbeing. The experiences of students at secondary school also do not provide much room for students to develop independence. It is difficult to expect students to be independent
learners when independence and autonomy have not featured significantly through their life experiences.

Many other minoritised migrant parents react in much the same way that Samoan parents do in New Zealand. For example, in a qualitative study conducted in the United States exploring the costs for Mexican families migrating to the United States, the researchers found that one of the costs of getting ahead economically was that parents became stricter in response to perceived environmental dangers (Bacallao and Smokowski, 2007). The Mexican families involved in this study had stated that their two main reasons for migrating to the United States were one, to seek better economic opportunities and living conditions and two, to seek a better future for their children through education. These are the same primary reasons why Samoan families migrate to New Zealand (Macpherson, 2004). For any school leaver entering tertiary education the transition from secondary school is daunting, but in my estimation, for the majority of Samoan students who have lived at home their whole lives this transition is arguably doubly so given that throughout their life their “hands have been held” in both their home and secondary school environments. Self-autonomy is difficult to expect from Samoan students given that in their own home they are still regarded as children and are treated accordingly.

Evidence from the literature (Anae et al., 2002; Yuan et al., 2010) and from participants in this study reveal that Samoan students find the transition to tertiary education difficult because in secondary school the accountability and responsibility for students’ learning rests largely with teachers and school administration but in tertiary education the onus rests squarely with students. Vini and Esekielu describe their personal experience in transitioning to tertiary education,

"Umm another thing that could be done at high school, it could, might have been to give perhaps give the um the students um more independence rather than um having them to um go over just them and check up them if how their work is going along. Cause that’s one of the other things that I found difficult at um university was just to learn independently without um the teacher um checking up on you all the time (Vini, key informant, male, interview)

It’s [university is] a completely different style of learning... with secondary education it was ah the curriculum was very set that um and um kind of spoon feed a lot. Um tertiary is quite ah quite self directed yeah so secondary school doesn’t prepare students for tertiary, yeah nah, not at all (Esekielu, medicine, male, interview)

Esekielu used the term “spoon feed”, which was used by the majority of students to describe their secondary school experiences. Similarly, Vini found the transition to independent learning difficult given that he was accustomed to a greater presence of educators in his learning. Students need to
become more independent and responsible for their learning as they progress through their studies. Participants tended to describe a culture of dependency at secondary school. This created problems once they entered university and experienced culture shock as they entered a self-directed and independent learning environment. At university they were treated as adults and as adults they were expected to transition into self-directed learners from year one. The participants in this study support the need for the Starpath project (Yuan et al., 2010) to understand the challenges for Samoan and Pacific learners in transitioning between secondary and tertiary education.

**Peer support**

Peer support at university is an important and crucial factor in success for students. This is acknowledged and incorporated into the Maths Workshop Programme (MWP) at the University of California (Treisman, 1992). The MWP is a first year programme aimed at helping retain African-American and Latino students in maths, physics and science programmes. The conception of MWP stemmed from a dissertation by Treisman (1985), who explored the achievement levels of African-American students in maths. From his study comparing African-American and Chinese cohorts he found that the main difference as to why Chinese students performed better stemmed from peer support. Chinese students combined both study and social time, thus study was a social event. On the other hand, African-American students separated their social life from their academic life and tended to isolate themselves from peers. Thus the MWP is a programme to help maths educators foster a network of peers for underrepresented groups as well as addressing pedagogical issues.

Treisman’s (1992) study is similar to this present study where the success and achievement levels of underrepresented minority groups in tertiary education were explored, but differed in terms of subject level and research approach. The findings from this present study show that like the Chinese cohort in Treisman’s study, participants found that having a good network of Pacific peers at university provided a lot of support. Students acknowledged the importance of having a sound network of friends, who were peers, as a support system. Students identified three valuable supports that they received from peers. These were pastoral support, sharing lecture and tutorial notes, and study groups. The value of having supportive peers is illustrated in the extract below taken from an interview with a 3rd year Bachelor of Health Science student. Here she reflects on her learning experiences and the difference that having a good support system of peers makes:

*R: So in [certificate] did you make a lot of PI friends?*
*Sera: No, not really (laughs). Just me and my best friend we just stuck together. It was hard to make friends. But then I'm, I'm friends with them NOW cause I've come through with them the last three years... mean my first year, since [my best friend] was gone I was hanging by myself (laughs) and I was like I don’t care (laughs and flips hair over shoulder)...*
R: So what were some of the other things that helped you?
Sera: Just um friends (laughs) having more friends NOW, like you know, I can, we can talk to someone and ask them you know for help...
R: what kind of things do your friends do to support you?
Sera: Um friends they, oh they give me, they share their info with me (laughs) and like they give me like a, you know, you know their outline so I can like, you know compare and see if you know that looks right... (Sera, BHSc, female, interview)

Sera continuously emphasised the word “now” when speaking about having friends and although she says “I don’t care” early in the extract, this is said sarcastically. I interpret this, together with her emphasis on “now”, as an indication that given her recent positive experiences with having good supportive peers, having friends’ does matter.

Friends also matter to students because they are a source of much needed positive affirmation and emotional support. Students described their fellow Pacific students, as well as other minoritised students, as an invaluable source of emotional support because they understood each other’s situations. The following two quotes illustrate this point. The first is from an interview with a key informant who explains the way in which her Pacific friends have provided support for her learning. The next quote is quite similar to the first, but in this instance during the interview the student also talks about a peer from Korea who shares and faces the same challenges:

Yeah, with my friends it was, having fun and ah, studying together, ah sharing notes, maybe meeting for exam [preparation]. Um, and then, it was nice to go into a lecture and, and actually sit with someone. We, we usually sit at the back but, (laughs) ... Um, and then go off and do um, other things together, go and play volleyball, or we’d go and sit in the library. Mmm, so they provided the emo, the emotional support cause they’re right there and they know and they were and they’re sharing in the experience of, of being at university. And for most of them, they were also the ones that were the first in their families to go to university so that really helped. Yeah. (Sarona, key informant, female, interview)

And a good friend of mine whose also in the paper she’s Korean and they have um, her father’s just as strict as my mum whose Samoan and she has the same, she faces the same issues as well with her Korean culture and living in New Zealand so just people like that who understand um what it’s like trying to balance the two worlds are really good to talk to (Valelei, BHSc, female, interview)

Participants were very aware of the contrast between their university life and their home life that at times competed with one another for their time. The last sentence where the participant says “trying to balance the two worlds” poignantly illustrates the reality of Samoan tertiary students in New Zealand, who find themselves in a liminal state straddling between their Samoan world at home and the Eurocentric world of university. This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. One strategy for negotiating or facing the challenge that these “two worlds” present is by
talking with peers who come from similar backgrounds, whether they are Samoan, Pacific, or from other minoritised groups. The participants found that these students understood and could relate to their struggles because they too were facing similar challenges through their learning journeys. The implication is that peers are vital in supporting students psychologically and emotionally through their learning journey. My sense is that the emotional support through having peers who understand alluded to in these quotes, is also about the comfort that students feel knowing that their apprehensions, fears, and struggles are shared with fellow students who come from the same cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. In this way, peers are a coping mechanism and provide an important collective and consolidating group in an otherwise isolating and individualistic journey. Thus, the importance of the group in terms of learning outcomes should not be underestimated as a teaching practice tool to increase the level of achievement for Samoan students.

The importance of the group for Samoans in terms of fa’asamoa and the Samoan worldview is well understood. In the Samoan home the wellbeing of the collective or the aiga is paramount so individuals work together as a team for the greater good of the aiga (Meleisea, 1998; Tui Atua, 2009). This relates to one of Vygotsky’s central arguments that learning and education is a social construction where the home environment and the culture of the student are recognised as important in creating learning behaviours. Because culture is not a given attribute but a system of knowledge, ways, customs, and values that are transferred, parents and caregivers are in fact children’s first teachers. Given this, it is understandable that Samoan tertiary students transfer the importance of utilising groups at university for learning and coping.

Friends and study groups as a learning tool are utilised in two ways. The first is through sharing lecture and study notes and the second is through study groups. Students often said that they shared study notes with friends and peers to ensure that their interpretations and understandings of lectures are comparable. The quote below illustrates this assertion:

*Um things that helped me would have been um mm that’s tricky um getting help um from your own friends when you do study groups... I felt comfortable asking them questions and stuff that I didn’t understand um yeah I guess that kind of support. (Leilani, alumnus, female, interview)*

Without exception all students and alumni noted that studying with other peers was rewarding in terms of sharing information and notes, working together to help solve a problem, and for learning when students did not find lectures and tutorials helpful. Students often found study groups useful for a number of reasons. The two quotes below are from Certificate in Health Science students who
explicitly outline why they find study groups with peers useful:

My friends, the new mates that I’ve made this year. They motivate me heaps like, we do study groups and stuff and if I didn’t study with them I probably wouldn’t study at all so yeah. Nah its real good and they always give a helping hand as well. (Eva, Certificate, female, interview)

I think it’s just like the study groups that we have, like, kind of made for ourselves which is much like beneficial to our study cause like you’re working in groups and if you don’t know it you can ask them if you can’t like, if you don’t wanna ask or you’re intimidated by like asking one of the teachers or lecturers or stuff. (Pepe, Certificate, female, interview)

The two quotes above highlight that students strategically use study groups to meet different learning needs. The nature of study groups and their usefulness varied between students, as did the level of importance that students placed on peer support as support structures. For example there were five participants that did not find study groups helpful and preferred to study on their own. All students recognised peers as important sources of support but some students received more support from their peers than from the other support structures. For example, the extract below is taken from an alumnus who found that his greatest support came from peers. In this part of the interview Sani spoke about trying to get extra academic support during his postgraduate studies:

Sani: Um I didn’t really, you know even though there was a lot of talk about support I didn’t really think that there was actually THAT much support. I was sort of like somebody give me a hand, and like the only people that really helped me like Harry was really helpful like, maybe, helped me understand statistics and the rest of the s*** I pretty much did it myself.
R: So pretty much is just mainly your peer’s like -
Sani: Yeah my peers and my supervisor and that was it. And um yeah, yeah you know, how it was you know positive he use to talk positively about doing stuff, nah you’re good man you can do this and you can do that and Harry was like actually helpful he actually sat down with me, we hooked up and I was like how do you do this? And what do you do there? Yeah (Sani, key informant, male, interview)

As the extract above illustrates, students often turned to their peers for help when all other university support interventions, such as tutorials, had failed them. The quote above is of concern, especially where the participant says “I was sort of like somebody give me a hand”, given that university places a lot of emphasis on providing accessible academic support for students. This participant clearly had acknowledged that his weakness was in biostatistics and that he needed extra help. During the interview he later recounted how he had sent emails and spoken to lecturers and tutors to get some additional tutorage but to no avail. For me it was very clear that this participant was frustrated with the little support that he received despite the advertisement of support within the university for students. Nonetheless, with the help of his peer (Harry), he was able to complete his Masters in Public Health. This is one example that provides evidence that if students are given
the right support and encouragement they are able to succeed. The quote also illustrates the positive affirmation that students find supportive.

From the students and alumni narratives, the term support refers to the four support structures that relate to the important aspects of their lives—family, university, and friends, as well as the resources necessary in order to carry out their studies. Support is viewed in the holistic sense and so students draw on many resources to help support them through their journey at university.

6.2.2 Family

In previous research it has been argued that Samoan and other Pacific parents see education and learning as the sole responsibility of teachers and educational institutions (Onikama et al., 1998; Valdez et al., 2007). The two focus groups held with Samoan tina\(^49\) and tama\(^50\) revealed that this was not always the case. Rather, these parents also had an encompassing view of support based on four support structures. Like the students, parents perceived their support structures on the four aspects which they believed were integral to the lives of their children. These were the family, university, community, and spirituality. Table 6.2 below lists the supports under each of the four structures that parents identified as being necessary in order to aid their children sufficiently through their learning and education.

Table 6.2: Support Structures Identified by Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Support</th>
<th>Academic Support</th>
<th>Community Support</th>
<th>Spirituality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giving time and space</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Moral encouragement</td>
<td>Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral encouragement</td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>Direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional support</td>
<td></td>
<td>Good friends</td>
<td>Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
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</table>

Parents perceived that the greatest support for their children as tertiary students should come from the family. Providing practical support such as transport to and from university is also important. Parents felt that it was important to provide emotional support especially during stressful times such as exam periods. Parents also felt that letting their children know that they are able to communicate freely with them is an important aspect of family support. All these issues are discussed in more detail further on in this chapter under family support. The parent focus groups were conducted.

\(^{49}\) Samoan term for mother

\(^{50}\) Samoan term for father
using both Samoan and English. Narratives that are all in Samoan have been tabled with an English translation below.

Parents did not speak much of the types of support that their children need from university, and this may be mainly because these particular parents had not been to university themselves and had not had any personal experience with tertiary institutions. What was clear is that these parents viewed education and learning as being a joint effort between educational institutions and the family. This is illustrated from the following quotes from the focus group:

| **Ia honestly ia te au la ia its a rare thing e aoga se tamatiti i university. Ia o le taimi nei ou te le malamalama i mea ia e o mai ma latou pei foi o le high school. Pou a le mea, ia avage lau homework, pei encourage tate tutu ai i talane, tatou te fia malama foi pei o le mea ia lenei e tau sau i a, ta te fia i ai, fia malamalama, ta te fia feasasoani foi. (Tina 3)** |
| **Honestly to me, it's a rare thing for children to go to school at University. Right now I don't understand the topics and school work they bring home, just like with high school. The only thing I can offer them, is to tell them to do their homework, encourage them and be there for them. I want to understand [what it means to be at University] I guess that's why I'm here [at this focus group]. I want to be there for them, to understand [their work] and to help them.** |
| **Kaimi legei e faigaka, ae a leai se malosi o le makua e kugai lui, faakaua le aoga alualu ai e ese le alu le aoga koe sausau i lalo, e le maguia, ia kaakia ga mea e faigofie ga le alu le galuega but o le kagaka e moni le alofa e le makua faigaka le economy o niusila... A e faalekonu la ia e fafo i le vai e ke kakaele i ai. Ae kaukauaga o le aoga o le aoga. E leai foi se makou akamai ma se makou – e gata kaimi a ua ai i samoai ai amua okou ua okou ola mai i le akunu, lelei le kaukala ma le gagu i lenei akunu ma ia kau kulimakai fea la le ai lea konu o le alofa o le akua lea ua saili sesi lumanai lelei ai kaumafai e gofo lelei lalo ma ia e kaumafai faamalosi i le aoga. La ai support foi makua i mea uma fai. (Tama 2)** |
| **These times are hard, [children] need to prioritise education and learn but not go to school and don't learn because then there is no benefit in going to school. If this is the case, it is easier just to go to work but the person who truly loves their parents [will go to school] because of the difficulties with New Zealand’s economy. Give precedence to your schooling, we do not have the knowledge or level of schooling – we only were schooled in Samoa but for those of you who were born in New Zealand you are blessed, you have good English and together with the love and grace of God this will also help you to get a better future so try hard at school, sit, listen and learn. And parents will support everything you do [for school].** |

*Tina 3’s response shows how important it was for her to be involved in her children’s learning and her thought that the focus group provides the forum to help her with this goal. In fact a couple of parents had nodded in agreement and had thought that they were attending a meeting not only to talk about support but also to get advice from myself on how to support their children. This provides evidence that parents would like to know and understand more about their children’s learning but do not quite know where to go to find this information. These parents were purposefully sampled and many were glad to participate and were also very appreciative of the fact that the focus group*
was held locally and after work hours. The arrangement of this focus group illustrates a potentially useful model to employ to bridge university and Samoan families together successfully in order to raise the achievement of Samoan and Pacific learners.

There are three important issues that the above quotes have raised. First, is that parents believe that university imparts knowledge and skills to provide students with the best future employment opportunities and that the families’ role is to provide the nurturing environment to ensure that students focus on studying and learning. Second, is that parents are aware and acknowledge that they do not have the capacity to help with their children’s academic work, but they wish they could. The earlier quote infers that this stems from parents wanting to provide their children with more meaningful and practical academic support but being unable to do so. Third, attending university is an exceptional and precious opportunity that should not be wasted, but should be taken advantage of. This is especially important given the financial implications that having a qualification has on income, and that parents dedicate a lot of time and resources to ensure that their children have access to these opportunities.

Parents perceived community, or more specifically fellow church members, as an important source of support for their children in providing moral encouragement as well as practical support in assisting with transport. Parents often spoke of the joy they felt when they saw fellow church practitioners providing their children with moral support as illustrated by the quote below.

Ma lesi family support e magaomia kele kakou auloku. A. O le ga foi a le community lea sai ai kamaiki nei a. ao aku i le loku faapea mai ua mai le a'oga. Ese le fiafia pe a ou faalogo i kaimi. Pe a maguia le aoga, e aku fale fainai dad, fainai siaosi po o ua mai le aoga a, fainai sei, fainai suga o le fomai. Ese lou fiafia – ese le magaia o le support o le community. The whole community lea iai. Kusa pe a ou vaai ai uma ai nei. O le community uma e owning ai, e take ownership ai e e whole community e graduate mai le kamakiki ma loga degree e le faapea o le kamaiki e le individualise o le whole community lai ua benefit mai. (Tama 1)

And the other type of family support that we really need is from our church. Because this is the other community in which our children live in today. When they go to church [congregation] asks how is school and when I hear this, it makes me so happy. When they come home and they said oh Sam said how was school, and Steve asked as well as Keith. It really makes me happy – the support from the community is wonderful. The whole community here. The way I look at it now. The whole community owns it, the whole community takes ownership for our children graduating, and it’s not just our children’s degree, it’s not individual because the whole community benefits.

This quote indicates that parents believe that the moral encouragement that their children receive from fellow church practitioners is well received by their children. The quote also provides a way of
understanding how parents see their children’s success as being a collective success. This relates to the Samoan worldview where there is more emphasis on the collective’s wellbeing, in this case the community that this *tama* is mainly talking about is his church congregation.

Getting to and from university was a major issue considering the distance between university in Central Auckland and their homes in South Auckland. Consequently, some of the families arranged carpooling so that their children were dropped off and picked up from the public transport depots to travel to and from university. For the parents this was an important resource, especially for ensuring the safety of their daughters who used public transport during the evenings. There was also an added sense of security and some relief for parents knowing that if it was their turn to provide transport and they were unable to do so for any given reason, there were a number of other parents who could be called upon to pick up the students. This too, illustrates the collective nature and sense of community in which these families live in that provides a rich resource in low income neighbourhoods as expressed in the extract below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tina 3 : ese le magaia po ou faalogologo lea ua text mai, ia lea ua ou o mai ma le alo o [Tina 5], lea matou meet ma o mai faaatsi, ae piki uma a, a o le au o [Tina 5],</th>
<th>Tina 5 : ia aua o isi taimi ua breakdown le train, ia ga o laia i kai e piki mai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tina 3 : it’s really nice when my children text I’m coming home with [Tina 5’s] children, we’re meeting up so we can come home together, and then they are all picked up together, whether it be me or [Tina 5].</td>
<td>Tina 5: Yes, because sometimes the train breaks down so we go and pick them up.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The quote supports the assertion that social support from church members is important for Pacific communities. This was also a key finding in a report on the community and family influences on children’s achievement in New Zealand. The report was focused on children in compulsory education; nonetheless, the report found that Pacific church networks provided parents and families with crucial support in raising the achievement of Pacific children (Biddulph et al., 2003).

Many of the parents did not overtly acknowledge having good friends as a support but implied this through the use of companionship. One *tina* however, explicitly identified “good” friends as an important source of support for their children. The extract below explains her view:

| Aua lai alu I toi ma mingle with friends and all that. A faapea lai o ma mingle faaatsi ma good friends o le faaupuga foi lea a uo ma le lelei ma le lelei e atili ga lelei, Ae a uo ma le leaga ma le lelei ia a vave la kele mea e |
So long as they are mingling with good friends, as the saying goes, a good friend with another good friend, fosters more goodness, but if a bad friend befriends a good friend, there are many bad things that will rub off on the good friend to push the good friend into being bad (Tina 6)

Two other tinas’ join in, in reciting the expression while others nod in agreement

As the extract shows, this tina’s sentiment was well supported by the other tinas present who all nodded in agreement and joined in, in reciting the end of the Samoan saying. This saying is referring to peer pressure, where good students are often pressured by “bad students”, which leads to unfavourable outcomes for the good student.

The parents who participated in the focus groups were all active Christian church members and professed that they were deeply religious. Subsequently, these parents have endeavoured to bring their children up in the church and believing in God. This explains all the parents’ belief in praying to God and having faith in Him to provide students with what they need to get through their studies. For the parents this was especially important during exam periods and other pressure times when students found studying challenging, as exemplified below:

Samoans are a deeply religious people whose worldview is significantly influenced by the Christian God and bible (Saada, 2008). This is reflected by the Samoan flag where inscribed on the Samoan

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51 Aoga Faifaeu or Pastors School were introduced by the London missionaries in Samoa. The function of the aoga faifaeu was to teach children basic numeracy and literacy skills. These lessons began for children as young as three and carried on until children reached intermediate level in Samoa. For a detailed historical account and discussion on the Pastors School see Tanielu (2004). See also Chapter Three.
emblem is “Faavae i le Atua Samoa”, which translates to, Samoa is founded on God. Therefore, in times of grief, struggle, and uncertainty most Samoans believe in turning to God, and putting these burdens in God’s hands through prayer. This is evident in the quotes above where parents spoke of praying to God because of the uncertainty of whether their child would succeed at university. Placing the uncertainty of study and learning outcomes of students in “God’s hands” was an important coping strategy and support for the parents. Similarly, in the previous chapter, students also viewed their faith and spirituality as an important enabler for their learning for the same reasons as their parents. Their faith was an important coping strategy for dealing with challenging times when they felt burdened at university. These views support the notion of lagimalie in that for Samoans it is important to seek harmony with the spiritual world and God for wellbeing and peace.

Clearly both parents and students view support as a holistic and encompassing concept. From the parents’ perspectives however, the different components of support are slightly different to those of students, especially in terms of the emphasis placed on faith and spirituality.

6.2.3 University

From the providers’ perspectives, support was viewed as a tricky subject. Their role in providing support is to ensure that students succeed in their studies, but this success also equates to learning to become autonomous and independent learners. Providers saw their role in supporting students as equipping students with the tools to deal with risk factors. These risk factors include time-management, family commitments, and having inadequate resources available to them such as study spaces. Many of the risk factors that the providers identified were related to families and therefore, providers placed much emphasis on the importance of family support in order for students to succeed. One provider from the MAPAS programme commented on this and spoke of the anecdotal evidence that showed there are a number of Pacific students who had had family commitments, which had hindered their progress at university compared to Māori students, especially in the Certificate of Health Sciences programme. At the same time, this provider also acknowledged that another key risk factor that was related to the university was the shortage of Pacific academics within the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences to support Pacific students.

Providers recognised the importance of family support for the success of Samoan students and tried to actively engage with families. The Equity Office at the University of Auckland runs family focused initiatives, including a “scholarships and finance” dinner held at the Fale Pasifika for Pacific parents, attending functions where they are invited to talk, and participation at the Pasifika Festival in
Auckland City. The Equity Office also provides funding and facilitation for the *Tuakana* programme, a university wide equity initiative. The *Tuakana* programme is a retention support programme where faculties are supported in providing training for peer mentoring as well as a Tuakana officer whose role is to offer academic and pastoral support for Māori and Pacific students (Evening, 2008).

The Faculty of Medicine of Health Sciences is the exception where instead of implementing the tuakana programme, the Māori and Pacific equity initiative for the faculty is the Māori and Pacific Admission Scheme or MAPAS. An insert of the MAPAS programme outlining the structure, objectives, and support strategies for Māori and Pacific students is presented in the previous chapter. As the name of the equity initiative suggests, MAPAS focuses mostly on recruiting Māori and Pacific students into the faculty but does offer support strategies which are weighted more towards academic support rather than pastoral support (Curtis, 2008).

The literature on tertiary education in New Zealand shows that significant disparities exist for minority ethnic groups and for students from low and middle decile schools. Proportionally, a higher number of Māori and Pacific students attend low and middle decile schools in New Zealand (Helu et al., 2009; McLaughlin, 2003). To increase the participation of Māori and Pacific students in New Zealand it is argued that targeted intervention and financial assistance is needed to reduce the opportunity gap between Māori and Pacific students and mainstream students (McLaughlin, 2003). Some authors however, have argued that a more systematic approach is needed if any real progress is to be made in increasing the number of Māori and Pacific graduates (Nakhid, 2006; Benseman et al., 2006). This requires tertiary institutions to couple recruitment strategies together with robust retention strategies to aid in the progress of students through their tertiary education (Benseman et al., 2003). The systematic approach in equity initiatives is best suited to increase the number of qualified Māori and Pacific students. In focusing mainly on recruitment strategies without supplementing with retention strategies, tertiary institutions are possibly setting students up to fail. This has been the experience of some of the MAPAS students as noted earlier. One other aspect that the systematic approach should take in to account to increase the number of Samoan and Pacific graduates is family support.

### 6.3 Family Support

This next section outlines what family support means from the perspectives of students and parents. Table 6.3 lists all the aspects of family support that were identified by both the student and parent narratives in order of most important to least important.
Table 6.3: Students and Parents Perspectives of Family Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giving time and space</td>
<td>Giving time and space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral encouragement</td>
<td>Moral encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>Financial support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is noticeable about the table is that the two sides are almost identical. This was certainly not anticipated. I had anticipated that there would be differences as to what constitutes family support; given that the literature emphasises the need for more family support I had assumed that there would be disconnect between the students and parents perceptions (Anae et al., 2002). Each of the supports identified in Table 6.3 are examined by presenting the views of the students and then those of the parents. The section concludes by providing a reflection on the reciprocal nature of family support in which support flows in both directions between families and the student.

6.3.1 Students perceptions of family support

This section outlines what family support means for students beginning with an analysis of what family support means broadly, followed by a discussion of the most common aspects of family support that were viewed as being important, as listed in table 6.3. Each of these is discussed in detail respectively.

What is family support?

One of the primary questions that was put to the students and alumni in both interviews and focus groups was “what does family support mean to you?” This provided a base from which to start unpacking what family support actually meant to students and how they understood it. The answers to this question revealed the similarities and differences of students’ understanding of family support from their experiences. The following quotes are the answers from some of the participants:

*I would say family support is... I would say mental, physical, emotional support I guess. Yeah. Having all those different aspects of life, oh I mean like. Yeah that’s what family support is to me like the emotional support that I receive, the physical love that I get. Being able to talk to them, that’s what I think family support’s about* (Aute, Med, female, interview)

*Um yeah family support is when you’re living overseas and basically all my family all lived back home [in Samoa] yeah it’s things like you know we are a religious family. It’s their prayers they always call us say ok when are you having your exam? When do you have this test? They say all right, we’ll say mass so there’s things like that there’s a spiritual side. There’s calling up you know, telephoning you know, calling up to see how things are so it’s the regular contact. I used*
to write letters to my mum all the time yeah so that was that as well and calling up and um also oh they would try and schedule a visit when they knew we were on a break or something that they could spend more time with us so that was greatly appreciated and um yeah those are the main things not being physically there with you but you knew that spiritually, mentally they were right behind you so it’s that feeling of getting that security um and of course love but also gives you that sort motivation as well that they really backing you up yeah, yeah, yeah (Sene, key informant, female, interview)

The two quotes both emphasise the emotional support received from family through communicating with family and the love they feel and receive from their family. The latter quote is from a key informant who was an international student attending university together with three other siblings at the time, while the rest of the family was still living in Samoa. During the interview she revealed that her parents had in fact bought a house in Auckland so they could attend university. What is interesting to note here, is the significance she placed on the emotional and spiritual support received from her family in comparison to the practical support in providing a house for her and her siblings while attending university. She did relay that she greatly appreciated the convenience of having a “home” to go to but this was secondary to the emotional support and encouragement from her parents back in Samoa. This is worth noting to demonstrate that intangible support such as words of encouragement are equally, if not more important to students than providing for them through buying computers and so forth.

The emphasis on active engagement in students’ learning whether it is verbalised through moral encouragement or taking interest in the students’ learning was a central feature in all the narratives from graduates. This is exemplified by the two quotes below:

Um I guess it’s just being available. Um, being willing to listen to another point of view even if it’s a bit conflict to what you think and yeah maybe having you know having an open mind. Maybe having a bit of involvement too like in any way they can. Um, supporting things if you ask them to come along and have a look sort a...Um, I guess, I guess yeah, showing, maybe showing an interest in discussions and things. So, if there’s something that they might be able to help you with then yeah, being able to, yeah. (Esera, key informant, male, interview)

Oh gosh, yeah, where to start (laughter) ah definition of family support. Um, it’s um a very good thing to have. Um, the family support, I think it’s a necessary part of doing any tertiary course. Um, it becomes like a um, a cornerstone in your, your life having the family support and, and you realise that from early on, then as you, take a turn and go down the university route um, it, it either becomes more pronounced or lessens. Um, but it becomes more pronounced because everyone in the family knows about it and then, just not the family here, but the family in Samoa as well. Um, and so they will do what they can with the limited knowledge that they have. (Sarona, key informant, female, interview)
It is clear that family support for students means families actively and positively engaging with them and their learning. This is demonstrated through means such as moral encouragement, taking interest in the students’ learning and trying to help with studies even with their limited knowledge of tertiary studies. The quote above presents an issue that other students raised and this is the issue of the level of family support given to students once they enter university. The participant’s reflection that family support for students once they “go down the university route...it either becomes more pronounced or lessens,” articulates this issue perfectly. For some students, like the participant above, family support was more pronounced once they reached university, but for a number of others, this was not the case.

**Decline of family support**

A number of students found that as they had progressed to university from secondary school the level of family support had declined. The reaction to this varied between the students, where some students reminisced and compared the support they received during high school and it was obvious by their tone of voice and body language that they were disappointed, in the quote below taken from an interview with a recent graduate:

> **Probably through high school there was a lot of support from extended [family] but by the time I got to uni, I think everyone was like oh ok she made it to uni, ok you know. It’s a different story once you enrol into uni, I don’t know what happens after that but I remember high school when you used to get those results at the end of the year, [you] get aunties and uncles call up, what did you get? What did you get? It was funny, then by the time I got to uni I just didn’t get that call anymore... It was like, oh ok, yup she made it in ok yeah. (Leilani, alumnus, female, interview)**

I noted a hint of sadness expressed by Leilani in regards to the loss of interest of family members in her educational achievements once she had reached university. The participant interpreted the silence from family members once she entered university as her family thinking that she no longer needed their support. However for students, admission into university is relatively straightforward, progressing through and graduating is the most challenging experience and this is the time when students need family support the most. Silence in this context is deafening, in that the sense of loss in support can make the student feel more isolated in an alien space. Feeling isolated as a Samoan tertiary student at university is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

For some students the lack of support at university was more frustrating as evidenced by the following quote from an interview:
I don’t think there was a lot of support and my parents didn’t really push me... every now and then they were sort of like did you pass? ... There wasn’t really much recognition for passing... And my siblings didn’t really know what I was doing a lot of the time even though I told them every second month as well! They are like oh are you still doing that university thing? (Sani, alumnus, male, interview)

This particular participant’s parents had never really encouraged schooling even from a young age but they did get actively involved at times. On one occasion the participant’s father had given a mathematics test to help him with his mathematics. However, once the student progressed to university the level of support went from minimal to non-existent. Adding to this frustration was the fact that he had to keep informing his siblings that he was still at university.

For a number of students the support and encouragement from their family slowly declined once they entered university. This may be for a variety of reasons, such as families not understanding and being aware of the level of support that tertiary students need, because of their lack of experience with tertiary studies. Tensions also arise because students are at an age where they could be earning an income. It is difficult for any person to comprehend the support needed from families when engaging with tertiary studies without having personally experienced tertiary education. The waning of support may also be attributed to families’ perception that tertiary students are adults and no longer teenagers so are of an age where they no longer need family support. This may be one plausible explanation for Leilani’s experience outlined previously.

**Time and space**

Many of the students found that one of the greatest supports they received from their families was being given enough time and space to dedicate to their studies:

*Um, and sort of understanding, they, they yeah, they definitely given me a lot a, a lot a leeway to what, to what I do nowadays. Um, cause they kind of understand you know, that, I have a goal and I want to finish. So they kind of give me you know, a little bit of breathing space, which is, which is really good so we, you know, from that side of things, um that’s really good. (Mose, Med, male, interview)*

From the quote above one of the best supports is having the time and metaphorical space from their family to complete their studies. The quote also points out that parents also need assistance in understanding the importance of students having sufficient time for studying. Many students complained that their parents and families did not understand the time commitment required in order to succeed at university. This is exemplified in the quote below taken from the focus group with female postgraduate students:
Family support to me is um having my family understand the workload that I have to put up with. You know I do like, explain to them oh look I have classes, you know during these times and you know they think oh when you have that break you should be studying you know, why do you have to stay late nights you know, they thinking oh, where are you going during those times, yeah it’s just having them understand like what the pressures like you know, they always say you know, there’s that Samoan saying toaga you know, toaga le aoga. That’s what we’re trying to do but they don’t understand that we’re trying to put in the hours (Sisi, Postgraduate, Female, Focus Group)

It is clear from this quote that although parents express their support through moral encouragement it is equally important for parents and families to follow this up by providing the students with the time to complete their assignments and study. However, as argued previously, it maybe unreasonable to expect parents to understand the amount of time needed for tertiary studies if they themselves have never experienced tertiary studies. Participants who were alumni also appreciated the need to guide parents in understanding the practicalities of tertiary education. Their sympathy is represented by the two extracts below. The first extract below is taken from one of the key informant focus groups, where one participant begins by specifically pointing out that parents need help in understanding tertiary education so that they can provide the necessary environment and support for their children,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kone: So it’s helping the parents as well to understand so they can allow their, children, you know to give them a space in the garage to go and study. Or, wherever. Mmmm, cause it they don’t understand what their child is doing, what’s, what’s their priority would be, oh look after the kids while I go and do my shift you know, like working a shift, shift work. So yeah. Its, its helping them understand so they can provide the environment and the time for their kids at home...</th>
<th>Other participants look appreciatively to Kone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Esera: yeah, so they have all these expectations of you to do well and stuff but they don’t really realise how much effort it takes you know, so.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kone: yeah cause you’re their, investment. Cause when you graduate, you’re a doctor, you’re going to, come up here son and you’re gonna pay off my mortgage!</td>
<td>Everyone erupts in laughter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As part of the iterative inductive approach of the research design the following quote is taken from an interview where a key informant was asked to comment on the extract from the focus group outlined above:

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52 Try hard at school
It’s very true so ah they don’t give you the space they expect you to do things. I, I think part of they don’t understand how difficult um some of these courses are. They think oh well it’s like going to school and but it’s another level and another level and another level as you as you... progress through your studies so I, ah a lot of it is because parents don’t understand where students are actually coming from. And, because also they haven’t been to that level. Now if you have Samoan parents that have actually gotten to that level they’ll be far more understanding and give you the space for your studies whereas if they haven’t they want you to succeed but they haven’t been there and they don’t know how difficult it is so um and that’s why they don’t they still think you can do both [meet family and university commitments]. Yeah and they don’t give you that space. (Ava, key informant, female, interview)

This participant also provides another rationale for parents not giving students enough time for their studies. These participants attribute this to parents’ perception that university is similar to secondary school and so think the time commitments and pressures are the same. This is perhaps not the case given the comments of the parents explored above, but parents can only know this if it is explained to them. This is also referred to in the quote, where the participant makes the distinction between Samoan parents who have been through tertiary education and those who have not. From the extracts above it is clear that parents and families want their children to succeed but they do not realise how much their support and actions impact on their children’s success. These participants believe that in helping parents to understand the time commitment needed by students to succeed at university, they will then be able to ensure that students are given enough time to devote to their studies.

Moral encouragement

Moral encouragement is also an important aspect of family support for students. This encouragement is especially appreciated during challenging times for students and thereby motivates the student to keep advancing with their studies. This is demonstrated below beginning with two quotes taken from separate interviews with two current students and then in the following extract from the focus group with male postgraduate students:

I mean they basically let me do my – I mean they don’t force me to do my work. Um they’ve always – they’ve never forced me to do anything they just let me do my own thing regarding like academic life and stuff like that. And so I think yeah, they’ve just been they’re encouraging me and stuff so that’s the main form of support (Malia, Medicine, female, interview)

And just encourage me to keep studying and like not give up, cause like there were times when I was like I don’t wanna go you know, I don’t wanna go uni anymore. I’m just so poor and I hate it (laughs) yeah and yeah and they tell me to you know keep going and they’re like, when do you finish? And I’m like soon and then they’re like ok, keep going (laughs) you don’t know how hard it is yeah. (Sui, BHSc, female, interview)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>luti: oh for me, it’s because they show interest in what I do</th>
<th>F: yeah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| luti: so that’s how I reckon they support me, like other than financially which is huge. But yeah they just show interest. Ask how my day’s going, normal stuff like that. It just motivates you to go on. And like, the fact that my brother’s going to graduate next year. The fact that like family like all over the world want to come? to his graduation, just shows how much, like how much behind they are, support. Yeah like how much the family like supports you kind of. Its like international, which is your own little immediate. | Opi looks up and nods in agreement  
The other two participants murmur in support |
| F: its kind of like going to the Malua\(^\text{53}\) graduation or something aye | Everyone laughs  
Everyone laughs again |
| Opi: yeah its true cause um, like, um, I’m doing health science but like all my relatives think I’m doing medicine and like always asking me, oh so how’s um being a doctor going and I’m going oh I’m doing health science oh but I mean like they show interest | |
| F: yeah | |
| Opi: and they, they ask so, sort of motivates you | |

These extracts reiterate the argument made earlier that moral encouragement is just as important as practical and financial support. The above extract was from the narrative on what is family support. luti was the first to provide his thoughts on the meaning of family support, but then luti’s comments triggered Opi to rethink his understanding of family support and realise that family members showing interest in their studies, no matter how misguided, is also a form of family support.

One participant provided a caveat for parents encouraging their students. She noted that some parents encouraged their children in order to gain a higher status within the Samoan community and out of pride. This type of encouragement was viewed by the participant as not being an enabler but rather as a barrier for student success. What is enabling is genuine encouragement in which parents want their child to succeed for their child’s own benefit rather than for themselves. This is outlined in the quote below taken from the focus group with female postgraduate students:

> If they want to push their kids so they can be at a higher status say, oh yeah, my kids are doing this, they’re at uni now, out of, out of pride then I don’t think they will do very well. But if, you see your family struggling and your family actually encourages you with a humble heart and stuff like that, you will do well. (Emi, postgrad, female, focus group)

The quote above presents an interesting dynamic to the issue of moral encouragement. In taking this participant’s view, it can then be argued that some encouragement should be discouraged,

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\(^{53}\) This refers to the Malua Theological College in Samoa, where the annual graduation is well attended by thousands of Samoans from the EFKS from around the world.
which counters some of the points made earlier in regards to the decline of family support during tertiary studies. From those quotes, it would seem that any encouragement is better than no encouragement. Nevertheless, from the students’ narratives, moral encouragement is an important resource in supporting students through their tertiary studies.

**Financial Support**

One other important family support that students appreciated was financial support. This has already been referred to in many of the quotes presented so far. All students agreed that any financial support from families was a great help to their studies. This was mainly because of the opportunity cost involved if students had to work long hours in order to pay for their education. Students were therefore grateful that their parents carried most of the costs for their education, as one participant discloses:

> Um, well, they, they, they buy me stuff, the stuff that I need for school and everything. Um, they’ve always worked hard to like, to give me what I need and like they just, they just support me with whatever I want to do. (Aute, Medicine, female, interview)

Almost all of the students spoke about financial support in terms of not having to pay rent or bills, and this was also the main advantage of living at home while studying. The two narratives below illustrate this. The first narrative is from an interview with a Certificate student and the second is from the focus group with male postgraduate students:

> Well I don’t pay rent, everything’s done for me. Yeah I mean, you know some families you have to like, you know do certain chores and stuff whereas at home with me I don’t have to do anything. I just, I’m just left to concentrate on my studies and stuff. I know it sounds a bit selfish and stuff but it’s always been that way with my parents and our family. So, yeah. (Atamu, Cert, male, interview)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F:</th>
<th>Um, what is family support and what does it mean to you and what impact do you think being a Samoan male has on your learning and study experiences compared to Samoan females? So I guess you can go for the first one, um the first part of that question.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tone:</td>
<td>when you pay no bills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone laughs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F:</td>
<td>is that from the family side?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone:</td>
<td>yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F:</td>
<td>yeah?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone:</td>
<td>like I don’t pay any bills or any rent like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone laughs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F:</td>
<td>so that like makes it easy for you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone:</td>
<td>yeah cause that’s like a big support cause yeah.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Not paying rent and bills made life easier for students so that they could devote more time to studying and less time in employment. In many of the cases parents were the principal source of financial support, but in some instances older siblings were the primary financial supporters. Samoan families are very tight close-knit families and in keeping with Samoan philosophy of contributing to the wellbeing of the aiga, it is commonplace for older siblings to be financially responsible for younger siblings once they have secured full-time employment. Two particular examples are detailed in the quotes below:

Yeah just mum and dad helping and my sister supporting me financially, just making sure that um, yeah she, her, my brother who both work full time um, cover most of the fa'alavelaves - like financially, yeah. (Valelei, BHSc, female, interview)

So [my brother] sort of supported us through like when I was at [college], like he would be the one to help us with ah tickets, bus, bus fares and, and ah lunches. Yeah, very indebted to him. He’s still kind of doing that now. (Ioane, alumnus, male, interview)

Older siblings are important sources of family support, especially in terms of assisting the family financially as highlighted in the quotes above. The importance of elder siblings in caring and nurturing younger siblings is an important Samoan value. This aspect of family financial support resonates with the findings from a review of intergenerational family relations based on the experiences of Asian migrant families, mostly from China and Vietnam, in Canada and the United Kingdom. This review found that migrant families maintained healthy intergenerational relations because socioeconomic hardship necessitates collaboration of family members (Kwak, 2000).

Communication

Being able to communicate with parents was considered an important family support for students. This is a complex issue as discussed in detail in Chapter Three, where in the Samoan home fa’aaloalo or respect means that children do not speak unless spoken to (Efi et al., 2008; Meleisea and Schoeffel, 1998). This is the practice of children respecting their elders as well as recognising and respecting the status of parents and elders. The degree to which this is adhered to varies between families, but from the students’ narratives it becomes apparent that by the time they have reached tertiary education the power dynamic between parents and children evens out. This means that there is more dialogue and communication between parents and children, which is viewed as an important support from families. The following quote provides further explanation:

And then you begin to communicate with your parents a bit more cause you’re older and a lot more interested and wiser. And of course the whole, the whole area of parents and children communicating and talking with one another discussing and being able to have that um, that opportunity to do that yeah, so the family support. (Sarona, key informant, female, interview)
The participant above uses the word “opportunity” to describe communicating with parents. This is reflective of the notion of respect, as well as reflecting the fear that Samoan children have of reprisal if they are thought to be speaking out of turn or being outspoken. Once the channels of communication are opened up, students begin to understand the benefits of communicating with parents. This is especially pertinent when students are trying to negotiate the need for time and space to complete their studies and to make this idea comprehensible to parents.

From the students’ narratives, family support was paramount to their success. This included financial support to equip students with the resources necessary for their education, together with moral encouragement to motivate them as they progress through their studies. The students’ narratives illustrated the comparison between the absence of, and having, these supports.

6.3.2 Family perceptions of family support

The following section outlines the views and perceptions from parents in regards to their understanding and practice of supporting their children in education. This begins with a discussion on what family support means to them and the issue of the decline in family support as raised by students. This is then followed by a discussion and description of the support practices that parents employ in assisting their children through their education.

*What is family support?*

Parents were also asked what family support meant to them as parents of children who had been through university or were currently at university. Similar to the students, parents also viewed family support as an encompassing construct that included both practical support, such as financial support and providing transport, and intangible support, such as allowing their children the time and space for their studies, moral encouragement, and communication. For example:

*There is three types of support. There’s the moral support that you give, ah and then there’s the financial support and what was the other one I had. There’s another support I had which all differ. But support that you give... it should be all the same. Whatever, you have to give it both all to both or all. I have three kids, two are working and one is still at uni. I’ve given the same support. There’s no difference. Financial support will differ ah but the unwavering for that model thing for all your children has got to be equal (Tama 2).*

Similarly to the narratives from students, parents also believed that moral encouragement was equally important as financial support. One other similarity in regards to family support that both parents and students raised was being present throughout students’ learning. Both *tinas* and *tamas* noted that being there physically for their children was another type of family support practiced. The following narratives from the respective view of a *tina* and *tama* illustrate this point:
The two narratives above show that being present even if it is for simple things such as picking up their children from university or sitting with them while they are doing their homework is important and parents believe that children recognise and appreciate the presence of their parents and “being there”. Parents also believe that having good family support is critical for their child’s academic success. This is demonstrated through the exchange during the tama focus group offered below:

**F:** o lai manaomia tamaititi tatou lagolago.
**Tama 1:** ioe e pei selau pesoge pe selau lima sefulu pesoge (ata) a lelei lagolago o makua, e lepi fanau, talitonu i mea ga
**Tama 2:** i agree
**Tama 1:** ia pei o le uso nei
**Tama 2::** totally

**F:** do you think children want our support?
**Tama 1:** Yes, like 100%, more like 150% (laughs). If the parent’s support is excellent then children will just fly through, I believe that -
**Tama 2:** I agree
**Tama 1:** just like my brother here
**Tama 2:** totally

Without exception all parents acknowledged that family support was given on the basis of an implicit agreement that their children also took responsibility for their academic success by working
diligently, completing their assignments, and attending lectures. The following quote is from one tina who elucidates the reciprocal nature of family support poignantly by sharing her story of her two sons who have been through university and the differences in their attitude to learning. It is worth quoting her at length:

Speaking from my own experience e seese tamaite. E toalua lau fanau tama lea ua o’o i tai. Ua iu lesi a o lesi lai ga i tai. O le tama lea ua iu, he is so focused, so determined. E faafiofa, a ou tilotiloil le tamaite ai lai toaaga e fai mea aoga. Me as um, parent, as a Tina, you go out of your way, e fai a, e fai - au a e fai chores o le au alii ia a. A faapea ia e sau i le fale le alii matua lea ua iu pei o lai ai le assignment lai due, ia o au le tina, o au e fai ana chores. A faapea o le po e fulu ai e ia le ipu a, ao le isi. E faatafafoa lava e ia lana mafaufau. E le toaga. I suppose that’s the word I’m looking for. E le toaga e fai ana mea aoga. E tafao tafao sei iloga e faapea o tae ao e due ai le assignment, ia pei ta le fa I le vave ao, lai lava saofai. O le uiga o lau faamatatalaga o isi foi taimi, ou te le fia faia ai, ma ou te le fia feasosaoani ai oua lai lava tafaofoa ana ia mafaufau. Ua fiu foi faamatalaga, ua fiu, ua alofo atu ai lai fai lava mea lai fiafia ia e fai. So o le uiga la o lou faamatatalaga, I’m just speaking from my own experience because I’ve got the two sons, e matua esesese a ea. Lea ua vave na iu le ali lea toaga, e toaga ia e faia mea aoga ia ma faaoso lau itu fiafia e feasosaoani, e fai ia, e feasosaoani foi l lea i mea tatau ona fai, pe a le vili mai o tai, ua tapuni le library i afa le sefulutasi le po, tate fiafia e alu e piki mai, oua ote iloa, la te fiafia aua la te vaai lai toaga lava ma focus e fai mea aoga. La o lau fasi matalaga lena. (Tina 4)

Speaking from my own experience all children are different. I have two sons who have been to University. One has graduated, the other is still there. My son who’s graduated, he is so focused, so determined. I am so happy when I watch him and he’s studying diligently. Me as um, a parent, as a mother, you go out of your way, to do, to do – because these two boys have their chores. So like my son who has graduated comes home and he has an assignment that is due, me as a mother, I will do his chores. Like if it’s his turn to wash the dishes, but the other one. His mind is elsewhere. He is not diligent. I suppose that the word I’m looking for. He doesn’t study diligently. He just goes out and it’s not until he has an assignment due the next day that he’ll work, so 4am he is still working. The point of my story is that those times I don’t want to do it, and I don’t want to help with chores because he’s not focusing. I’ve tried explaining it to him, I’ve really tried, I love him and all that but he still does what makes him happy. So the point of my story, I’m just speaking from my own experience because I’ve got the two sons, they are so different. So one’s graduated faster because he’s a diligent student and so then I’m more than happy to help him out, to do things, to help out when I can like when he rings for me to pick him up at 11.30 at night when the library closes, I’m happy to pick him up because I know, I’m happy because I can see he is trying hard and is focused on his study. So that’s my little story.

As this tina shared, parents were more than willing to offer their support and help when they could but this was premised on students demonstrating that they were taking responsibility for their success at university by studying diligently, not procrastinating, and spending less time on recreational activities in lieu of studying. For parents it is anticipated that by supporting their children through their education the likelihood of success increases. This in turn can lead to employment opportunities that will enable their children to have a better future. The desire for a
better future for their children is the foundation of parents’ drive to support their children in any way they could. Parents consider degrees as the key to unlocking a better way of life for their children in New Zealand as a couple explain:

with me, [I tell them in New Zealand there are many different people, Chinese, Indian], if you don’t have the qualification you have nothing. This is what I tell them. Education is power. If you don’t have your piece of paper you will go work in the factory [but you’re New Zealand born and someone who doesn’t have good English will end up managing you]. (Tina 4)

It’s very important and I think nowadays it gets even worse for us and our Pacific Island people because um the level of education now needed for job’s is getting up and up and up and if you just don’t have it you’ll just be left behind you know. (Tama 2)

The end goal for families was to ensure that their children have a better way of life comparative to their parents. To achieve these parents provided their children with as much support as they could. The specific supports that parents identified as being within their capacity and capabilities are outlined and described in more detail below.

**Decline of family support**

As discussed previously, some students voiced their frustration and discontent with experiencing a decline in family support once they had entered into university. However, from these parents’ experience, there was a resounding disagreement. Some parents had the complete opposite experience in that their children at university were given more support than during their secondary education. This is because these parents realised that the time commitment required to achieve at tertiary level is much greater than for secondary school. The following quotes illustrate this:

I was going to say e esse e ai le aiga. Because with my lot we’ve spent more time with them with support [now they’re at] university, [At] high school [during] exams we support them with doing support and stuff but with university um the workload’s a lot more, there’s more assignments, it’s like an ongoing... with their assignments and stuff. But at high school it was once a year. (Tina 4)

All families are different
During the time they were at secondary school, or college, there wasn’t much emphasis on schooling. So when results came that was that. But moving up to the next step and then the next step [university] it is a lot stricter now. This is the challenge for parents.

The challenge to which the tama above is referring to when he says “this is the challenge for parents” pertains to parents needing to give their children the time and space for their studies. This is a central issue in terms of family support for both students and families.

**Giving time and space**

Students had complained that their parents just didn’t understand the practicalities and realities of university and what this meant in terms of demands on their time. However, as some students acknowledged, parents would never be able to understand the time required to meet the demands of university if they themselves had not been to university. In this case, parents needed to be informed of the time considered necessary for students to be successful at university. From the tamas’ narratives, their children informed and explained to them how crucial the time factor was in completing their studies and aiding in their learning. Consequently, parents came to understand the importance of prioritising education above other commitments and so protected their children’s time so that they were given plenty of opportunities to do their work as exampled in the narratives below:

this is what children say, prioritise education, yes, for them they want to prioritise education, so we give them enough time to do it, and leave everything else to later. Even when it comes to church services, they just come to the service but don’t attend other things like youth. They need to be given the time for their study so that they don’t miss lectures, but this is their thing, to prioritise their schooling just in case when comes time for their assignments that haven’t had enough time to do it... and in regards to chores and all that, well the parents are there to carry out those duties.

I give them their space, I give them their space because I know this is what is really important and wanted by my children. They get more benefits from staying at University to study than if they were to come home.
Their main duty is study, it is really nice to open the bedroom and they are doing their homework, it’s nice to see them pursuing their studies and so it’s ok if they don’t do their chores but pursue their education. What you’re saying is right, students need a lot of time to do their studies, to do their studies – it’s good when you open the bedroom door and they’re doing their homework but it’s bad when you open the door and they’re texting – texting their (imitates texting on mobile), this is not acceptable but prohibited. If this is the case then don’t bother with going to school.

The key message from the tama’s quote above resonates with Tina 4’s story in that parents will give their children opportunities in terms of time and space needed to fulfil their university commitments, but this time should be seen as strictly an opportunity for study and is not to be used for other activities like texting.

**Moral encouragement**

One of the key supports that family offer their students is moral encouragement. Parents often spoke about *unai*, or encouraging their children to try hard at school, to work diligently, to attend classes and listen to lecturers, and to use their time wisely. This moral encouragement was the main support that parents could offer their children who had now progressed to university. Parents recognised that despite their limited capability in helping students with their academic studies, the next best support and advice that they could provide is to encourage and motivate them to do the best of their ability. The narratives below provide examples of how parents view encouragement:

*It all comes from the upbringing at home you know encourage [children]. You know [encourage them to do their school work]. Because [I] encourage [my children]. (Tina 2)*

The narrative above reflects one of the tina’s mix of tough love and reverse psychology approach in trying to motivate and encourage her daughter, who by her account, has the aptitude to succeed at university but has a casual approach to her studies. In the narrative the mother explains that
although she is harsh on her daughter, she feels that as a mother, this is what is needed to spur her daughter to become more industrious.

Another form of encouragement that parents feel is especially appreciated by their children is giving them the freedom and autonomy to choose their own career pathways. Parents are conscious that all children have different abilities and passions in career choices and so these choices should be nurtured and encouraged. Parents thus spoke of steering clear of trying to persuade their children to follow prestigious career options such as law and medicine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tina 2: pei o lesi mea na mention ai tamaiti, o au fanau pei o lesi mea ua tau, ua, ua, put off tamaiti, o matua ua alu ave lau loia, alu ave lau faafomai, but its not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tina 5 : e le manao ai, ia, ia, ia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina 2: but it’s not what they want. That’s what we want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina 5: Sao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina 2: it’s not what they want, we’re not the one that are gonna go and sit there and do exam so that’s the other thing. So that’s why we say to our kid’s just do what you want to do. What makes you happy. Whatever job you’re doing now, whatever you want that’s what you have to do. Tasi la mea lea tele ga faaletonu tatamaiti ona o lea ave le magao o tatou, ave le faa-especially loia, faiaoga, fomai, so and so and so. Ae e lemafai e le tamatiti, e le mafai lona mafaufau le mea le manao ai le matua so you know e both ways e alu ae le mea. Depends a i le tamatiti, depends foi matua i le auala e encourage ai le tamatiti mo lona lumanai manuia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All tina nod in agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All tina murmur in agreement</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Tina 2: another thing the children mentioned, that my children think is the reason why kids get put off from going to school, is parents wanting them to be lawyers or doctors, but it’s not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tina 5: it’s not what they want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina 2: but it’s not what they want. That’s what we want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina 5: True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina 2: it’s not what they want... I think that’s one reason why [Samoa] children fail is because they’re doing the courses their parents want like especially, law, education, medicine, so and so and so. But the child does not have the ability to fulfill their parents’ wishes, so you know in both ways it goes. Depends on the child, depends also on parents in the pathway in which they encourage their children for a better future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tamas also acknowledged the importance of letting children have the freedom to pursue their career aspirations and that this in turn led to success. Tamas rationalised that it was the children who had to sit the exams and prepare assignments and so if their children were to do well and succeed then children needed to choose the subjects that they had an affinity to. This is highlighted in the narrative below from:
Give them the opportunity to choose the subjects that they enjoy. It’s not like I’m the one who is going to study that subject so I give my children the choice to pick the subjects that they enjoy and then as a parent, I’ll support that choice.

Giving children the freedom and opportunity to choose their own pathway is one support that both students and parents recognise. This is an important support and enabler for Samoan students’ success, as they are not forced into subjects that they do not enjoy. Parents from this study realised there was no worth in pushing students into subjects and courses that they had no passion for, and inevitably this would only result in poor learning outcomes for their children.

Financial support and transport

Another important role the family plays is providing financial support for their children, while they are studying at university. Parents commented that the cost of their children attending university was quite significant; one tama disclosed that transport costs alone added up to $100 per week. Despite this, parents were willing to spend the necessary amount for education expenses as the perceived benefit of a better future for their children outweighed current costs. Tamas spoke of the willingness to do whatever it took, even extreme measures, to provide for their children’s education as indicated below:

money comes, money is, a big huge thing [everyone laughs] and it’s definitely a huge thing in it but I’ve always maintained and I’ve always said this to my wife that um, if I have to mortgage my house to put my children through school so be it. I would I would have no, no problem. (Tama 2)

Parents were also prepared to provide their children with transport to get to and from university despite the inconvenience that this may cause. There is a sense from the focus groups that although parents were tired after a long day at work, followed by fulfilling their chores and duties at home and church, they were still willing to stay up late to wait for the time when their children were ready to be picked up from university. The following narrative is representative of other parents’ feelings and attitudes about picking up their children from university:
There are other nights where after choir practice when I’m waiting for my child to come home and then she rings to say she is trying to finish her work and she won’t be done till 9 or 10... To me no matter how tired I am from work and chores for the day, I cannot be weary. I tell them, give me a time and I will come and pick you up. So I sit and wait, and wait till she is ready – it makes me happy because at least she’s rung. Even though it is far I want my daughter to have a bright future, so that is one support.

Once again, this quote shows that parents are more than willing to provide whatever support is necessary in pursuit of a better future for their children. This support is not just limited to parents but also includes church members and other family members as one tina describes:

... we communicate foi taimi e o ai, e both e take the train. O fea e piki mai ai, we always have to be there e pick up. So ia au la ia, lea ua halfway through the year o le tausaga, ta te iloga o lea appreciate le tamatiti lea ou te alu atu, pe o le ita, po o le tama, po o tuagane, po o le sister in law. (Tina 3)

We communicate in letting know what time, they both take the train. Where to pick them up from, we always have to be there to pick them up. So I know, know that its halfway through the year, I reckon that the children appreciate that I’m there to pick them up, if it’s not me, then it’s their dad, or their brother or their sister-in-law.

Financial assistance and transport solutions are two modes of support that parents are able and willing to provide for their children in the hope that this will help them to succeed at university. The account above also conveys the necessity of communication between parents and children as a form of support.

**Communication**

Parents believed that keeping, and more importantly, having open communication with their children was one support that was important for their children. In the tina focus group this form of support was raised early in the discussion:

Tina 2: We have to give them the opportunity for them to have their say. Because sometimes you know like we’re always right and they’re always wrong, kids are always wrong so it’s a good, opportunity for them to have their say, you know e le mafai ga talagao latou e le tuu se avanoa e o mai latou. Po o le tasi ga mea le tele ai, e put off tamaiti ma, ma a foi, e le uma latou aoga, or just give up. O le au na malamalama. That’s the other major issue with the a tamaitis a, island people. Aua lai alu tatou, mataulia, tatou aganuu, le aganuu ga a foi ga taofi le avanoa mo tamaiti aua le faaaloloalo, they have to respect the, the elders or the older. You know, that’s where I’m coming from, so if we give them a chance to let them have their say I mean because we got to have the,
communication anyway.

Tina 3: Po o le job ga o taita nei, le, give them the differences between the faaaloalo ma le speaking out, ia au la ia. I think o le majority o tamaiti nei, aua tatou uma a tatou aoao tatou fanau I le mea e taumafai, o lai, lai, tatau ona malamalama latou i le taimi i le fai i latou say, ma le taimi e faaaloalo, cause theres two different things. E ese le faaalo, le faaaloalo, e ese le au mai o le mea lai manao ai which, tatau ona let go le Samoa, le tagata samoa, i le. I think lei lava le seperate, differentiate le, le, le, two meanings. Mea ia e lua. Lai ese le faaaloalo e tau na iloa le tamaiti ia e faaaloalo i tagata matua. A e savali i luma o, e tulou. Ai e fai mai foi ia e loa e tali i le, a, e iai le eseesega. E tele le eseesega o le faaaloalo ma le outspoken. Or not outspoken, but feasoasoani mai i nisi um ia ia au ia, tate loa e tatau ona fai i le tamaiti Samoa ai ona tatou foi na malamalama pei o le vaega lea ua iai le universite ua tatau ona i iai le latou malamalama i le eseesega o mea ia e lua.

Tina 2: We have to give them.....opportunity for them to have their say, you know they cannot communicate with us if they're not given the opportunity. I think that is one thing why children are put off, and, don’t finish their education, or just give up. This needs to be understood. That is the other major issue with children of island people. Because bear in mind we come with our traditional Samoan ways, and one of this is limiting children’s right to speak because of respect, they have to respect the, the elders or the oldies...

Tina 3: That's my job, give them the differences between the fa’aaloalo and the speaking out. I think, I think the majority of children now, because we all taught our children about how to go about things, so we should teach them when it is appropriate for them to have their say, and when to exercise respect, cause they're two different things. Respect is different, and having their say is different and so Samoan people should know when to let the Samoan way go. I think there is enough differentiation in the two meanings. Children know when to apply respect. Like when they walk past, they say excuse me. There is a huge difference between respect and being outspoken. Like I know I have to make the distinction clear for my children, but children are at university now so they should understand the difference.

The above discussion on communication gives rise to an intriguing issue pertinent for Samoan tertiary students and that is the exercising of fa’aaloalo. Tina 3 believed that Samoan tertiary students should have a clear understanding of when to exercise fa’aaloalo; however, from the students’ accounts this was not the case. As the mothers mention in the narrative above, children have been taught to conduct their behaviour in accordance with Samoan tradition or aganu’u. These behaviours are ingrained in the child and impact their engagement with educational institutions and their interaction with others. Other researchers have noted that non-Samoans often mistake silence by Samoans as a sign of agreement as they do not understand that silence is analogous to respect (Fletcher et al., 2009). The mothers do show that in the context of the Samoan home that there is a fine line between speaking out and being disrespectful. The exchange above describes the assumption by some mothers that children are able to contextualise themselves that is “when to let the Samoan way go”. However, this is not easy for students especially at university, where lecturers and tutors are in positions of power and prestige. In the Samoan home students have had the experience of knowing when they are being “outspoken” but at university these boundaries have yet to be tested and students do not know what the consequences are if they are found to be
disrespectful. This ambiguity can possibly lead to some students feeling too intimidated to speak out at all if they fear reprisal and are unclear of the boundaries between respect and disrespect. In this case, it is understandable if students would prefer to remain silent. In accordance with Vygotsky’s philosophy it is important to recognise the impact that learning from the home environment has on children’s self-development and learning (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2006; Moll, 1990). This is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

6.3.3 Reciprocity and family support
Family support is not a unidirectional construct but is reiterative where the flow of support is bidirectional between families and students. While parents maintain that they will endeavour to support the education of their children to realise the aspirations of both parties, students also provide support for their families when needed. Keeping family relations intact and being a part of the family in a positive and meaningful way is important for Samoan students and for their wellbeing. This is one of the key findings from the New Zealand Youth 2007 survey, where over 90% of Samoan secondary students surveyed reported that maintaining family relationships was very important to them compared to 71% of all students (Helu et al., 2009). At times, the time commitment needed to maintain family harmony can be a struggle coupled with the time commitment needed for university, but students try their best to meet both these time demands.

For example:

>We as Pacific we have big families and each person has a role within the family. And me being the eldest daughter that’s, that’s a lot of responsibilities and um they rely a lot on you having to be at university as well as being at home having to do all the chores and making sure everything’s right. Um, (pause) and if, I didn’t have family as the motivation or have that family mmm (pause) if I didn’t-if my dad didn’t tell me the importance of education and having all that responsibilities on me I probably wouldn’t finished um undergrad. (Emi, postgrad, female, focus group)

The quote above epitomises the complexities and multilayered nature in which university, family, and students relate and intersect. This quote aptly illustrates how the two separate worlds of the student can impact on one another. In this case, the benefit from tertiary education is for both the student and their family, and family provides the impetus and motivation to go to university and succeed. The quote also shows how reciprocity of support operates between family and students.

One other way in which students support their families is by being caregivers to younger and or elder family members:

>Sui: Oh sometimes [my sister] needs help so I have to go out all to their house and, and like if their kids are sick then I have to, or if they’re sick then I go out and help them cause you know I got no dependants or you know (laughs)
R: Does your sister rely on you a lot to help out with her kids?
Sui: Yeah, um oh yeah they do but they sometimes they understand like today she wants me, she just came out of hospital, she had gall stones and she asked oh sorry I’m studying you know cause I’ve got to get back into it since the wedding’s over and all that stuff (Sui, BHSc, female, interview)

“I’m trying to look after my mum because she’s so stressed out and you know Pacific Islanders’ high blood pressure, you’ve got to look after them aye and so I’m trying to keep my, trying, unstressed but she’s a typical mum. She’s, she’s saddened that her girls have to work and that her husband’s you know not doing as good as he could yeah. (Sera, BHSc, female, interview)

Although being a caregiver for family members has often been cited as a risk factor for students’ academic success, there are ways in which families negotiate the amount of time students spend on caregiving. Family members are not so demanding, but are reasonable as illustrated in the quote above, where the participant had already given up time for family commitments and now needed to focus on her studies. Along with caregiving, having to provide financial support and assistance has also been identified as a risk factor for Samoan and Pacific tertiary students (Penn, 2010; Curtis, 2008).

In some circumstances, students were the main source of income for families. This is related to the above issue of caregiving, especially in circumstances where parents are unable to work due to health issues. Following on from the previous quote Sera explains some of the financial costs of caregiving for parents:

Yeah, like I have to kind of pull my weight, for example my dad um, my dad’s been sick the last 2 weeks and he’s kind a like the, he puts the bread on the table and so because he’s been off work for 2 weeks me and my sister have had to work. And so that’s kind of a strain on us because like working more hours. Like for me working for more than 3, 3 days is really hard. It’s like a struggle. (Sera, BHSc, female, interview)

Working to provide for their families was a problem when students had to forego lecture and tutorial attendance, and study to work. This can be managed if students only have to work the extra hours on occasion, but if this becomes normal practice then students will obviously find it difficult to continue studying. Some students tried to contribute to the family household budget with the little money they received through government assistance. For instance:

Especially when you’re not eligible to get like student allowance and then you have to resort to the living cost and then you know. One fifty isn’t enough. I mean, because you, even when you stay at home in the western world that’s considered like a cheap option but for us, island students, oh I know from my experience you know that’s, that’s not a, that doesn’t help at all. One fifty that, cause I’m pretty much paying you know, whatever, you know some of the bills
um, going towards um transport, that one fifty’s over within 2, 3 days and you’ll be lucky to have 20 bucks for the weekend. (Sisi, postgrad, female, focus group)

Although government assistance is greatly appreciated, in Pacific homes where the number of people living in the household is greater than in other homes; the financial assistance disappears quite quickly. For Pacific students, being able to contribute financially while studying is important, as often they are at an age where they feel they are obligated to provide some monetary assistance. The government assistance for tertiary students is one way, albeit minor, that students can contribute financially whilst focusing on their studies.

As migrants, language and communicating with providers is a real issue for Samoan parents. As New Zealand-born Samoans, children often act as interpreters and cultural brokers for their parents, especially when having to deal with government and health agencies as detailed below:

   Both my parents, they, they’re not very educated and so I have to go liaise for them and take them to the doctors and stuff like that. (Emi, postgrad, female, interview)

Acting as cultural brokers is one way in which students maintain strong family cohesion especially for students who come from non-Western countries and migrate to Western countries (Bacallao and Smokowski, 2007; Kwak, 2000), such as this case with Samoans living in New Zealand.

For Samoans living in New Zealand, the practice and maintenance of fa’asamoa that includes the core cultural values of family embeddedness is demonstrated through the reciprocity of support. Despite the onerous time requirements of tertiary studies, Samoan learners strive to maintain strong family cohesion and relations which includes but is not limited to caregiving, financial support, and acting as cultural brokers.

6.4 University Support

Support strategies for Samoan health students at the University of Auckland are facilitated and administered through the MAPAS scheme as outlined in the insert in Chapter Five section 5.4. This next section focuses on students’ experiences and perceptions of academic and pastoral support at university.
Students had varying experiences of academic support; in some cases they found the university support structures such as tutorials, laboratories, and lecturers’ office hours useful, while others did not. The following extract is from one alumnus who did find tutorials helpful:

Leilani: Yeah I go to some of the tutorials I think if anything it wasn’t till a couple of weeks till exams you started having to rethink ok I should be attending but also the tutorials were compulsory to attend cause you know those were probably the ones I went to I don’t think I took advantage of the idea of tutorials but now I think I should have now I’m think back cause it’s like I had never took advantage of it
F: The tutorials that you did attend though were they helpful?
Leilani: Yes they were, yep yeah I think they were helpful should have gone to more of them but I don’t know what happened (Leilani, key informant, female, interview)

The alumnus described finding tutorials helpful and with hindsight regretted not making the most of attending the tutorials that were on offer to help students. Compulsory tutorials were only helpful if students engaged with the tutor and the discussions, as inferred by the participant’s comment that she never “took advantage of the idea of tutorials”. As the insert suggests MAPAS has compulsory tutorials for MAPAS students, but for non-MAPAS students there are the general tutorials and the tuakana tutorials, which run along the same lines as MAPAS tutorials. This next extract from the female postgraduate students focus group explains:

Emi: There is a lot of help out here at the university for Pacific people it’s just us utilising them. For example, the tuakana tutorials they run, they run extra tutorials for tuakana after the tutorials for general and not everyone, not every Pacific people attend. Um,
Pua: yeah
Emi: and what else is there?
Pua: yeah because they also have a MAPAS tutorial as well
Emi: and they also have a MAPAS tutorial on top of the tuakana tutorials.
Pua: yup so it’s just a matter of people, aye
Emi: utilising it yeah
Pua: yeah

From this exchange it is evident that some students feel that the issue is not whether there is enough support, but that Pacific students are not accessing and utilising them. Making tutorials compulsory is one avenue to ensure that students attend tutorials; however, the challenge for course coordinators and tutorial staff is trying to get students to engage with the tutorial, as just being present is not enough. Tutors and lecturers are important because they are delivering the material to students. Some tutors and lecturers are more effective in delivering course content and academic support than others. For instance:
Esekielu: And like yeah there’s couple of doctors that are brilliant at it, that kind of teach it ah quite like on purpose like Dr [Name] teaches, I remember a bunch of us failed, a bunch of MAPAS students failed something and he took us aside and just taught us that, tutorials on how to think.
R: So you know, how- what was that paper?
Esekielu: Oh that would have been, I think coz I think I failed, I failed ma last exam my 4th year so we had to repeat a year um yeah
R: and that was a group of you MAPAS students?
Esekielu: A group of us yeah (Medicine, male, interview)

Having lecturers and tutors who are able to deliver material and support in a way that students are able to absorb the content and grasp ideas is an important enabler for students. As the extract above highlights, some lecturers irrespective of ethnicity go out of their way to provide students with the necessary academic support, which makes a significant difference in the learning outcomes of students and their grades. One related issue that MAPAS coordinators raised was the fact that there are not enough Pacific academics at the university to take responsibility and lead support strategies for Pacific students. Increasing the number of qualified underrepresented lecturers, such as Pacific, has been identified as an important strategy to reduce the disparities in academic achievement between underrepresented students and mainstream students (Maton et al., 2006; Rogers and Molina, 2006). The student’s narratives also support this argument, as they view the experience of engaging with Pacific lecturers and coordinators as beneficial. For example:

It was good when like, well we had like a Pacific co-ordinator and like. Because we had a Māori one and a Pacific one. And the Pacific one was just like the Pacific coordinator and like she was really good. She was really supportive um but then she left and then the other one left and like MAPAS has kind of like disintegrated and it’s kind of like we don’t have any support at all... But yeah kind of feel like when they left MAPAS kind of fell apart yeah (Malia, Med, female, interview)

This student was referring to the pre-2007 MAPAS structure where she found that the Pacific administrator at the time, who was Pacific, was helpful and supportive. The value and benefit of that particular Pacific coordinator is reflected in the student’s expression of sadness in the restructuring of MAPAS and changing of roles. Many current students felt the same way about the restructuring and reflected on the differences in their experiences with the “old” MAPAS and the “new” MAPAS as exemplified by the extracts below:

Aute: Um, (pause) you’ve heard of MAPAS?
R: Yeah
Aute: Well, at the moment I haven’t heard anything. To be honest it’s just, well actually we’re just like doing it ourselves. We don’t really have – well that’s my experience like. Before MAPAS used to be you know, something, like an organisation where we could go and ask for help but now we don’t have the support people. And we can’t like- it just seems different now
R: Oh yeah
Aute: Yeah, to be honest, it’s like every man for himself. Yeah, yeah that’s what I noticed.
(Aute, Medicine, female, interview)

Back in, back in maybe 2nd year MAPAS was really strong. That was really good that doesn’t really exist anymore. I suppose in terms of students and stuff that was really good they had all the text books and stuff there and it was just somewhere you could go just have yarn with anyone. There was always the girls were always in offices and yeah always a feed going that was good. (Esekielu, Medicine, male, interview)

The comments presented here are from second and third year medical students and these interviews were taken a year after the restructuring. It is obvious that they had close relationships with the previous MAPAS staff, who had offered them a lot of support over the years. As MAPAS has recently changed significantly, the programme was understandably going through some growing and teething issues as the “new” MAPAS had only been in place for a year when the fieldwork for this study was taken. It is uncertain whether the restructuring of MAPAS is really the issue, or whether students have yet to form a relationship or bond with the new MAPAS coordinators. Further research would be needed to investigate. The benefit of having MAPAS tutorials; however, still remains the same as one student explains:

Um oh cool so um academically what’s helped me is just little tutorials held just for Pacific Islanders, the MAPAS ones, they’re really good, and then but like right now I don’t have time to turn up to them but when I did go to them they were good, they kind of just lay it down for you till, gave me what I really needed to know. (Sera, BHSc, female, interview)

Academic support is clearly important for the progression of Samoan health students at university. Students felt that university provided sufficient academic support but the key issue now is students utilising and participating in tutorials. Students identify that having effective tutors and lecturers is an enabler for student participation in tutorials. Students also felt that having Pacific coordinators made a positive difference in their university experience.

6.4.2. Mentoring
One contested issue for MAPAS and in the literature is mentoring within university. In the literature on underrepresented students in tertiary health education, studies have suggested that mentoring and peer mentoring in particular are important strategies to help students succeed in tertiary health education. These studies are based mostly on the experience of Asian and Caribbean medical students in the United Kingdom, and Hispanic and African-American medical students in the United
States. These studies found that peer mentoring helps to alleviate stress and provides tools for dealing with challenges at university. Also, students are more likely to turn to peer mentors when they are struggling than to lecturers and tutors (Radcliffe and Lester, 2003; Wass et al., 2003; Yates and James, 2006).

MAPAS staff explained that there had been mentoring systems in place in the past, but they were discontinued due to the low numbers of attendance by both mentors and mentees. The system is only successful if both attend mentoring sessions. Furthermore, mentors need to be given training in mentoring skills and techniques, and they also need to be adequately remunerated for their time. Students also commented that although the idea of mentoring is attractive, it is only beneficial if mentors were accessible. For example:

Yeah in, when we were doing the disease state management diploma we did allocate mentors umm I suppose how useful that was umm I suppose it was ok but it depended on availability of that person as well ok... our mentor actually worked at [hospital] they had different people from, it wasn’t just people from the University of Auckland and um and I didn’t find it particularly useful and also because we can’t access her when...because it’s got to because she also worked as well and so it needed to be a time she was available (Ava, key informant, female, interview)

The quote above also provides an argument for why peer mentoring is more effective at university. With having mentors who are professionals, it is very difficult to find a time that matches both the mentor’s and mentee schedules. Peer mentors on the other hand are on site, and subsequently managing a time when both are free is comparatively easier.

The views from participants in the male focus group supported the idea of having peer mentors as shown through their discussion on mentors below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F: do you think that there’s like, you need mentors and it would help you?</th>
<th>Participant begins to get animated with hands. Other participants nod in agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tone:</strong> yeah like, they may not necessarily have to be Samoan but like um, just mentors who can, who are really, have interest in developing your skills and um, just to bring the best out of you. I think that’s because in high school my teachers were like my mentors too. Because they were interested and just wanting you to succeed and all. And it really encourage you and just reassure well that you know I matter to the world, so it’s kind of cool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F:</strong> do you have an example on what sort of person you would like to be as a role model or mentor, or even if it doesn’t from health science or elsewhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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55 Peer mentors are current students who are in the later stages of their degrees
These students had a clear idea about the characteristics and qualities a good mentor should have. From their suggestions these included having a passion to help others to succeed and having knowledge about university. Although mentoring systems have been in place and found ineffective by MAPAS coordinators, the quotes from students suggest that providers may consider reviewing mentoring more rigorously as a support strategy for students.

The Certificate in Health Science programme under MAPAS has recently taken part in a university wide Ministry of Education funded Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) known as the Success for All project (Tarawa and Ulugia-Pua, 2009). The aims of the TLRI were to improve and establish effective support initiatives outside of lectures and tutorials to improve success levels of Māori and Pacific students. The Certificate in Health Science study involved three phases of qualitative research. In the first phase 13 participants were interviewed in regards to effective or best practice teaching methods, preparation for year one, and good study habits. Based on the data of phase one, interventions were conceived, and implemented in phase two to enhance lecture teaching. These interventions included one on one mentoring with academic staff and the encouragement of good study habits and time management. Phase three involved interviewing students to assess any differences from phase one. This study focused only on Certificate students, who take part in a one year pre-degree bridging programme, so it would be difficult to evaluate effectiveness with different cohorts of certificate students. However, the study does highlight the need for students to foster good study habits and the need for mentoring. Also, in terms of mentoring it would be interesting to see what the results are in regards to the effectiveness of mentoring from academic staff for Certificate students, to make comparisons with participants from this study that prefer to have peer mentors instead of academic staff.

6.5 Summary

By understanding the complexities of the lives of young Samoan students at university, we can begin to formulate and implement meaningful support structures within families and universities to raise
the achievement levels of Samoan students in tertiary education. Family support has been identified as paramount for Samoan students’ success and this chapter outlined the ways in which parents have and can provide support for their children from the perspectives of students. This is coupled with parents’ perspectives on family support and their understanding of what support is needed and how they practice and show support for their children. From the two perspectives, it is apparent that both students and parents are aware of the important support factors that are necessary to help students with their studies. However, the understandings and basis of these factors differ to some degree.

Although academic support through tutorials at university is provided for students, students need to engage and utilise these supports to benefit. One area in which the university needs to reconsider and implement more strategies is mentoring. Students’ experiences of learning support show that peer mentors are a key support strategy utilised at university. Peer mentoring has been phased out of the MAPAS support system but findings from this present study have illustrated the positive difference that peer mentoring has on students learning, especially for medical students. Friends and peers provide important learning and academic support sources, particularly if students are unable to approach tutors and lecturers. The caveat however, is that learners need to think wisely as to who they are sourcing information from to ensure that their friends understand the academic content. As with most reciprocity-based societies, family support is a complex issue. While families are happy to provide the space and time for children to study, this is based on the condition that students use the time and space wisely. Furthermore, students also find it difficult to prioritise study time if they are required to support their families during extenuating circumstances, such as when parents become sick or when the main income earner of the family is unable to work. Given the age of university students, they feel obligated and responsible to put the needs of the family first even if this does mean sacrificing their studies. This chapter has showed that support is not as straight forward as the literature has suggested. Instead, this chapter has attempted to reveal and address the intricacies of support.
Chapter Seven: Lagimalie – Balancing two worlds

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is primarily concerned with the issues of identity and place and how these influence Samoan learners at university. In this chapter I explore what being Samoan means to Samoan learners and their experiences at university by using the Samoan concept of lagimalie or harmony as a frame of reference. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Tupua Tamasese Efi (2008) interpretation of balance for the Samoan self, lagimalie, is used to understand balance and harmony from a Samoan worldview. For the Samoan self there are four key harmonies or worlds (Self, other people, cosmos, and environment) that hold the balance of peace and wellbeing (Macpherson, 1990; Efi et al., 2008). Elsewhere, Alefaio (2009) used lagimalie in psychological practice (p. 173). For the purpose of this thesis lagimalie is used as a metaphor to describe the everyday “worlds” of Samoan tertiary learners. These are depicted in the diagram below:

![Diagram of Four Worlds of Samoans Tertiary Learners in New Zealand]

For this thesis the four worlds of lagimalie have been reframed for Samoan tertiary learners in New Zealand and are oneself, other people, spirituality and home and university environments to reflect their everyday experiences.

In this chapter I use lagimalie as a metaphor for Samoan students’ search for harmony and balance between the cultural contexts of fa’asamoa and university. In the preceding two chapters I outlined the importance of spirituality, faith in God, and the church for the learning outcomes of Samoan
learners. In this chapter I discuss the balance with oneself by presenting the perspectives of participants in terms of what it means to be a Samoan tertiary student, beginning with what it means to participants to be Samoan. I then examine the balance with other people by discussing the participants’ experiences as Samoan learners in the university context. I conclude the chapter by examining the geographies of Samoan learners, illustrating how the way in which they construct their environments is informed by their experiences in the Samoan home and university.

7.2 Being Samoan “It’s a way of thinking and a way of living”

One of the questions asked during interviews was “what does it mean to be a Samoan?” The quote above reflects the majority of the participants’ responses, in this case the participant replies by stating that:

*being Samoan, it’s a way of thinking and a way of living. It means um, understanding how Samoans think, understanding Samoan way of life. (Saeni, key informant, male, interview)*

The purpose of this section is to explore the understandings and meanings of what “thinking” Samoan and “living” Samoan means for participants and how this impacts on their learning.

Students who were raised in Samoa found it difficult to articulate what being Samoan meant to them while living in Samoa, as exemplified by one student:

*Cause its weird cause when you’re living in Samoa, like when I’m living there I don’t feel like I’m surrounded by like all this fa’asamoa stuff. I think I get like acclimatised to it and then I don’t realise it. It’s just everyday life. So, I really don’t know how to explain it yeah. (Malia, Medicine, female, interview)*

Malia was born in New Zealand and moved to Samoa with her family when she was a child, returning to New Zealand for tertiary education. There were three other participants who shared a comparable story. Many parents living in Samoa, if they have the financial means to do so, choose to send their children to New Zealand for their senior secondary schooling in order to ensure access to tertiary institutions. A better education for children is not only a migrant dream for Samoans living in New Zealand but also for Samoans living in Samoa. The above quote illustrates that students are very much aware of the nuances between what it means to be Samoan in Samoa and to be Samoan in New Zealand. In other words, the student is referring to how important context is to culture and vice versa, as she has become more acutely aware of cultural differences since moving back to New Zealand. Those students who were raised in New Zealand also recognised the interdependent relationship between culture and context:
Peti: It’s definitely a New Zealand born Samoan. Even though I’m Samoan I can’t deny the fact that I was raised and born in New Zealand and that’s something that’s quite significant as well.
I: Why’s that?
Peti: Cause at the same time as the culture of my family has impacted and grown and where the traditional values [come from]. My education, social norms has always been in the environment in the context of New Zealand. (Peti, Postgraduate, male, interview)

Peti stressed the importance of both the Samoan worldview and the culture of New Zealand. From the quote it seems that Peti’s exposure to New Zealand culture and social norms had mostly been through his experiences in New Zealand’s education system. Peti’s position on identity is one that was shared by many of the participants, who described that they affiliate strongly with their Samoan ethnicity and the traditions and customs of fa’asamoa, but within the context of living in New Zealand. This discussion resonates with the work of some Pacific scholars who have argued that there is a unique New Zealand-born Pacific identity, which is constructed through the discourses of both Pacific culture and New Zealand culture (Anae, 2006). Similarly, Keddell (2006) examined the construction of identity for young people who are of Samoan and Pakeha ethnicity. Keddell argued that the construction of identity is informed by the dominant discourses operating in the macro contexts of their local community (such as schools) and the micro contexts of the nuclear family (Keddell, 2006). This differs from Pacific scholars such as Tupuola (2003), who contend that Pacific young people construct their identities on a global scale based on the emulation of coloured Americans in particular. The stories from the participants in this study show that for the construction of identity, place of upbringing, rather than place of birth, matters to identity construction.

As discussed, fa’asamoa is an important feature in the students’ lives. The family and home is the first place of learning and teaching for the majority of students. Despite living in New Zealand, the traditions, customs, and social protocols of Samoa were practiced and taught in Samoan homes and passed on to students by elder family members, whether it is parents, grandparents, aunties, or uncles. One student believes that even though Samoans live in New Zealand they should not turn their backs on their culture:

I think it’s understanding your culture um, and your responsibilities. When there’s fa’alavelaves and things like that um, you can’t just say ‘no. I’ve lived in New Zealand for how many years I’m not part of that anymore’... The traditional customs and things like that, you still get informed about it so I think you need to know about your customs and preferably be able to speak the language as well because a lot of the traditional um, stories and things get told to you rather than written - like it’s really hard, to, find books about Samoan culture and stuff because it’s all quite verbal. (Valelei, BHSc, female, interview)
This highlights a number of key issues pertaining to Samoans living in New Zealand. In the first part of the quote Valelei says Samoans living in New Zealand can’t say “they are not part of [fa’asamoa] anymore” because they have lived mostly in New Zealand. In this statement, I think Valelei is referring to assimilation models for migrants, where migrants forego their culture and subscribe to the culture of their migrant homes. This is an important geographical issue, as Valelei describes, moving from one cultural context to another, migrants are not moving out of cultural systems. Rather, people take their cultural systems with them to their new environments. This has been the case for Samoan migrants in New Zealand (see Chapter Two), where initially churches became the site for replicating the village structure of Samoan society. In moving to New Zealand, the spatial affiliations have changed to adapt to New Zealand society, where Samoans are bound more by religion and the churches rather than by village. Thus, Samoan families in New Zealand will continue to attend the same church even if they move out of the community in which the church is located:

_I was raised catholic so yeah like. Even after we moved over here [North Shore] we used to still go back to, travel to Manurewa every weekend to go to, be in the um, church that I went to over there._ (Mose, Medicine, male, interview).

Valelei’s comment also infers that one of the reasons why Samoans may prefer to choose an assimilation model in New Zealand is because of _fa’alavelave_. In most of the literature on Samoan families in New Zealand, _fa’alavelave_ is perceived as the bain of _fa’asamoa_, as it places monetary and financial pressures on Samoan families (Meleisea and Schoeffel, 1990). This is understandable given that _fa’alavelave_ literally means disruption to everyday life. These disruptions in contemporary New Zealand are usually events such as funerals, weddings, and on occasion, title bestowals. Not only do these events require time and planning, but they can also burden families financially. The socioeconomic position of most Samoan families in New Zealand means they often barely have enough income to live, subsequently _fa’alavelave_’s are often perceived negatively. Compounding this issue is the fact that Samoan families, as with other Pacific families in New Zealand, are larger than the average New Zealand family, therefore these events would occur more frequently compared to non-Pacific families. I can understand the value and desire for Samoan families, especially for parents, to want to contribute to every _fa’alavelave_, as maintaining familial relations is crucial for Samoans in keeping harmony with others. _Fa’alavelave_ from this perspective is still an important practice that should continue. However, I echo the sentiments of other Samoan researchers who caution that families should only give what they can afford. In traditional Samoan culture the principles of _fa’alavelave_ need to be reiterated where the concept was based on the principle of sharing the burden and of love (Efi, 2008).
The media in New Zealand have taken the concept of fa‘alavelave together with tithing for churches as the main reason as to why Samoan families face economic hardship. As previously mentioned, the Muliaga case is a recent example. The media outrage and subsequent poll on whether the electricity company or the victim was to blame showed that twice as many people who took part in the survey blamed the victim (Roughan, 2008). This type of discourse adds to the cultural deficit theorising discourse by locating financial hardship squarely in Samoan culture I could debate the merits of the survey but my point is that media discourses are influential in terms of representation, and perpetuating stereotypes and otherness. Valelei’s quote, to me, challenges other Samoans living in New Zealand to resist assimilation models.

Another important issue from Valelei’s quote is the value of language and the oral culture of Samoa. Like many other Pacific cultures, Samoan culture is based on oratory rather than written documentation. For example, the fa‘alupega is seen as an oral account of not only genealogy, but also of Samoan history and mythology (Salesa, 2008). Language is deemed a necessary vehicle to pass on Samoan knowledge from one generation to the next. Being Samoan matters for the participants because the traditions of fa‘asamoa are not only practiced in New Zealand homes but also inform students’ worldviews and behaviours.

7.2.1 Raised in Fa‘asamoa: “I identify as Samoan, because of how I was raised…”

All but one participant acknowledged that they had been raised within the traditions of fa‘asamoa. The three common elements that all participants acknowledged as important aspects of being Samoan were family relationships or the aiga, language, and the practice of fa‘asamoa. Of the three, the aiga and familial relationships were paramount to all participants. Students emphasised the value of being part of the family collective and felt that this was one of the ways in which Samoan and Pacific cultures were distinguished from Western or European cultures. Students noted that the family culture was based on sharing. This notion of sharing is encompassing as it includes hardship, burden, prosperity, and success. This translates into students feeling a sense of obligation or duty to ensure the wellbeing of their aiga. The following two quotes illustrate this point:

*I think when I think of Samoan I always think to my family and the traditions, and the, and the culture th- where I learnt and what is imprinted in me, that sort of, that environment you know like the values of family. There’s definitely a family culture of sharing everything, of sharing hardships as well, sometimes my partner she doesn’t get it when I go give money to my parents or go pay the bill. Sometimes she doesn’t really get it where her culture is quite sort of individual sort of* (Peti, Postgraduate, male, interview)

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56 See Chapter Two, section 2.5.1 for more details
57 Participant had previously stated that his partner is Palagi
But there’s still something about our Pacific culture that is about looking out not just for yourself, not even just for your immediate family, but, for your community and your extended family you know... makes our lives better, it enhances our life but doesn’t necessarily make you successful, in the, in the traditional sense of the word, so yeah (Nina, key informant, female, focus group)

Towards the end of the quote Nina remarked on the different measures of success, in that success for a Samoan might look very different to that of a New Zealand European. In assuming that by “traditional sense” Nina was referring to a Western definition such as the Oxford Dictionary (2008) definition of successful “as having achieved popularity, profit, or distinctions”, her comment can be interpreted that being successful is not about achieving any of these but instead ensuring that the aiga is nurtured and looked after. Being successful and what this means to individuals is deeply rooted in their beliefs and value systems, and for Samoans who were raised within the practices of fa’asamoa success is intrinsically linked to the aiga. This can become a site of tension where the value of education in a Samoan sense and non-Samoan sense can at times be at odds with each other, where in a non-Samoan sense success in education is more individualised than the Samoan sense. Thus, there is extra pressure and responsibility for students to perform well, not just for themselves, but also for their family.

The second key element that students identified as being important to fa’asamoa was language. This was a highly contested issue for participants. Most students’ views fall in-between two schools of thought. First, that you were only Samoan if you could speak and understand the language; and second, that language in itself did not define a person’s ethnic identity, it was only one of a number of identifiers. The first quote illustrates the types of comments that were made by those students who felt that “genuine” Samoans can speak Samoan; the second quote exemplifies the thoughts of those students who acknowledged that language was important but not the most important identifier:

Like language is a big part of it, if they hear you speaking the language, they can see that you are genuinely a Pacific Islander and not, not those afakasí58 ones that can’t even say ‘talofa’.59 (Sera, BHSc, female, interview)

like I was born here and, I have had trouble in the past, like I took some Samoan language papers down at uni. And like one of the, one of the um, we had to do like oral presentations and one of the other people’s was ‘if you can’t speak the language then you’re not Samoan.’

58 Literal translation is half-caste but also includes anyone who is not full blooded Samoan
59 Hello. Here Sera makes a point to pronounce it incorrectly as ta-low-fa mimicking how non-Samoans typically pronounce the word.
Then I was like, well, hang on a bit (laughs) wait a minute. So I identify as Samoan, because of how I was raised um because of where my parents have come from. Um, and because I'm familiar with, I guess the culture, cause that's how I was brought up that sort of environment um. Me being sort of, well, angry about, not being able to speak the language, that is something that I have a problem with as well. (Mose, Medicine, male, interview)

Both Sera and Mose illustrated that language was important in terms of retaining one’s culture, but Mose argued that for those who were not fluent in the Samoan language; this did not in any way denigrate their Samoan identity because culture was more than language retention.

Other students, such as Sani, have made a conscious effort to ensure that they retain the Samoan language. For Sani, this has involved listening to Samoan radio programmes as a way of immersing himself in the Samoan language. Although this may seem simplistic, it is a strategy that Sani has found to be both practical and significant in language retention:

I was born in Samoa and I spent some time growing up there when I was a young kid so fortunately when I look retrospectively I’m thankful for that, I can speak Samoan, you know I went back and learnt it. It’s really important to me and it basically guides, being Samoan... I still listen to Samoan, radio um it’s not very interesting but it’s about the language and it is cultural you know, like just listen to the language cause it’s cultural. (Sani, key informant, interview, male)

As Sani reflected, language was an important ethnic identity marker, and he felt privileged and fortunate in being fluent in gagana Samoa. Sera, Mose, and Sani’s quotes above contribute to the ongoing debates amongst young Samoans in New Zealand about authenticity of who is a real Samoan. One of the highly contested determinants of being a Samoan is fluency in gagana Samoa. These findings indicate that retention of indigenous languages is a critical issue in the construction of ethnic identities, particularly in migrant enclaves.

For many of the participants, fa’asamoa almost always equated to funerals; when asked “what does being Samoan mean to you?” their responses almost always included a phrase along the lines of “and I attend Samoan funerals”. This may be because funerals are one event in which the cultural differences between Samoan and non-Samoan cultures are more distinct, and where students are exposed to a number of Samoan rituals and customs throughout the duration of the funeral, which is typically one week. In terms of the practice of fa’asamoa, this is an event in which Samoan students participate in Samoan traditional rituals, and observe the difference between Samoan funerals and non-Samoan funerals, such as si’i.\textsuperscript{60} Given that Samoan families are still well connected with

\textsuperscript{60} Formal gift giving ritual with strict protocols
extended families (Anae, 2006), students would be more than likely to attend a number of traditional family Samoan funerals through their lifetimes. The quote below demonstrates:

_We’re so connected with, with each other that not to be there, you know, I couldn’t picture not being at you know, a family funeral. But, what stage of the funeral, like the actual service itself or you know where we might have five nights where you’re hosting everyone, you know being there those nights depending on how close you are (Taulua, key informant, female, focus group)_

Taulua acknowledged the importance of being present and attending family funerals, but quantified the amount of time and commitment spent at funerals by how close you were to the deceased. For example, attending only the funeral service would suffice if the deceased was an extended family member whom the student had only seen on rare occasions, but if the deceased was an aunty or uncle whom the student saw regularly, this would warrant attendance throughout the whole funeral process. The rituals associated with funerals are ornate and elaborate as they include very strict cultural processes and protocols (Meleisea, 1987a). The practice of fa’asamoa in students’ everyday life and their understanding of being Samoan; however, were often described by students in terms of the principles of alofa (love), fa’aaloalo (respect), and va (relationships).

7.2.2 Understandings of Fa’asamoa

According to Tupua Tamasese Efi (2008), the cultural idea of fa’asamoa is that if it is not based on love, then it is not fa’asamoa. This message has been instilled in students by their parents and elders. In terms of education, the parents who participated, and some of the students, believed that if children love their parents, then they will endeavour to succeed at university. This is demonstrated in the two quotes below, the first is from one tina speaking in a focus group and the second is from an interview with key informant:

_Ae e iloa le tamaititi le alofa ma le tepa ai tua i lona aiga ma matua ia e maua le agaga nai e finau e tini le faamoemoe e taunuu i se taunuu lelei ia o lesi tamaititi ae e fiu e tuitui ai le ago mai ia, ona tatou fanoanoa lea, ona tatou fesili lea, ona toe foi mai le tali, o ta ita lava o le mafuaaga lava. (Tina 5)_

If the child loves their family and parents then they will strive to complete their endeavours successfully, but other children, you can try and help them as much as they can but they don’t care, and so then ask yourself why? and then I think it’s my fault.

_I was, you know, you’re going to be a minister, a lawyer or a doctor type of thing you know how it is and um and my son’s going to be a doctor and so [my parents are], so very proud. And I guess it’s knowing that I always had their support. And I was doing it for them as well as for myself. Um, that sort, I guess you know it’s your, you know just the love that you have [for your parents]. (Saeni, key informant, male, interview)_
Both participants acknowledged that children show and demonstrate their love by doing well at school. Tina 5 expressed how she shouldered the blame for her children not achieving even when she was trying her best to help them. This counters the view offered by Valelei in Chapter Five where she felt families’ located failure as the student’s responsibility. Saeni’s quote also illustrates the perceived status of career pathways where in Samoan families, being a religious minister, lawyer, or doctor is considered the ultimate career (Anae et al., 2002; Coxon et al., 2002). With the interviews I found that participants would use the phrase “you know how it is” on numerous occasions. In the focus groups, participants did use the phrase, but given the number of participants in the group they tended to elaborate to ensure everyone understood what they meant. Equating love with academic success has some significant implications, especially if a child finds scholarship challenging. For students who do find learning difficult, aiming for prestigious careers in law and medicine and failing can possibly have negative effects on their self-esteem and motivation.

Fa’aaloalo or respect is a broad concept; within the Samoan worldview this is typically defined as respect for elders. The importance of fa’aaloalo came through as a strong and common theme for students as being inherent to fa’asamo. They recognised that fa’aaloalo was practiced in everything they did and was so entrenched in their being that they were unaware of when they were exercising fa’asamo. This has implications for students in tertiary learning environments, which will be explored further in the chapter. It is important to note that fa’aaloalo, as with other Samoan principles, is an important part of Samoan students’ worldviews and socialisation, and as such it influences and shapes how students think and behave. Thus, fa’aaloalo is not only practiced in cultural communities, but in all things that they do, including school and the workplace. The quote below is from one key informant, who at the time was also undertaking postgraduate studies and spoke of how fa’aaloalo had influenced both his work practice as well as his approach to assignments:

And, I guess the respect you know, the fa’aaloalo for the customs and people’s ways I think that, that helped me, especially my post grad stuff... mental health and addictions it isn’t a precise science. You do need to incorporate the cultural aspects. I think I was able to do it, yeah (Pita, key informant, male, interview)

Pita explained how he utilised fa’aaloalo as part of cultural competency practice assignment. A student-centred approach to assignments is important for all students, as Pita found, where he utilised cultural knowledge and ideas in his learning. This needs to be harnessed more by students by realising that their culture provides an important and relevant view in which to interpret and
approach academic study. This is the crux of Vygotsky’s (1978) argument that culture has a place in learning. Rather than learners trying to to assimilate and overlook their cultural contexts, learners should embrace their cultural viewpoints and use it as a tool to critique scholarship. For example, students should feel qualified to talk about their culture as they are living the culture. Thus, when discussing health issues or topics like health promotion, students can show how general public health promotion strategies may not work for all communities because of different worldviews, thereby critiquing the “one size fits all approach” to solutions. The implication though is that educators need to recognise that the critique is from a cultural perspective and thus should not be dismissed but acknowledged. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

Va is a contested concept within Samoa academia as explained in Chapter Four, but the participants who spoke of va had a clear and collective understanding. Participants described va as an ethical framework, which guides family and gender relations. This is in line with Tupua’s assessment of va, in which va is a construct of ethical relationships (Suaali’i-Sauni et al., 2009). Parents and students emphasised the importance of va in terms of being physically present. For students, being present at family events and occasions is their way of showing their respect for va, and in turn being present in their children’s academic activities is parents’ way of showing va. As I have discussed in the preceding chapter, parents show their support for their children in ways that they know how to, such as by providing transport. Although they might not be able to provide academic support they can provide important practical and emotional support.

Va is also important as it provides parameters for the roles and responsibilities of individuals in relation to family members and those of the opposite sex. In recognising va and fa‘asamo, the differences between the roles and responsibilities are accepted and are taken-for-granted by some of the students. The excerpt below is from the male students’ focus group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone: I don’t know, I reckon it’s all about time management. It’s just we have more time on our hands for males, females just have more to do, and have less time to study</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F: so do you feel sorry for your sisters?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iuti: ohhhh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone: hey man everyone has their own role in life yeah like, in that kind of way, cause most girls I know are just used to it. Just, it’s just life. Like it’s how they were brought up but in that kind of way they don’t have enough time to study but yeah I guess I feel sorry for them then.</td>
<td>Everyone laughs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants recognised that there are notable differences in the roles between males and females which could potentially equate to females having “less time to study”. Tone acknowledged that females have less time to study and when the facilitator asked “so do you feel sorry for your sisters?” luti’s hesitance and Tone’s response “hey man everyone has their own role in life” caused general laughter. As the observer and as a Samoan female this interaction was interesting as it seemed that the facilitator’s question was one that they had not thought about before and participants were having trouble in knowing how to respond. The room was very quiet until Tone’s comment broke the ice and in a way, from my perspective (as the Samoan female observer), and the group relaxed in expressing that they did not feel sorry for their sisters. Although gender inequity in this context is acknowledged, the ambivalence in the manner in which they spoke of this inequity as a given is bound in their understandings of fa’a Samoa. The matter-of-fact manner in which inequities in gender differences were seen as way of life for Samoan girls, were also shared by females. When comparing the excerpt above with the excerpt below from the Postgraduate females focus group, the similarities in narratives on gender differences is evident:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F: ok and I’m just curious to like um, like um, sorry ladies yeah do you feel that the Samoan males in terms of learning environments do you think they get away with a lot more? Than</th>
<th>The use of apologetic language by the facilitator is interesting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teuila: yeah definitely, yeah</td>
<td>General cries of yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: you see it? You feel it?</td>
<td>General laughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teuila: we see it, we feel it, we hear it, we smell it</td>
<td>Pondering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: how do you handle it, because sometimes it’s that kind of feeling of unfairness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teuila: mmmmm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: how do you guys handle it when you see it, or when you hear it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teuila: oh for me I just understand like, um, my parents raised us in a real traditional typical Samoan culture. And, we understand the, we call it the va, what do you call it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pua: the feagaiaga</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisi: the va fealoai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teuila: yeah, I don’t know how to say va in English?</td>
<td>Looks to other participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisi: Relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teuila: yeah the relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pua: cultural relationship yeah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teuila: between a brother and a sister and so um, if I was to go in to his room I would have to knock, it was just stuff that we knew and we just understood if that he would get away with a lot more stuff than I would</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interestingly in the extract above the facilitator began the question of gender difference apologetically and used the word “unfairness” to describe the gender inequities. However, the female participants themselves did not describe gender inequities as unfair.

Both excerpts provide examples of essentialising Samoan culture by Samoans through comments on gender differences and the specific responsibilities and duties that are ascribed to gender. These gender differences were accepted by the students because for them, it was the Samoan way. To summarise, both groups noted that there were specific gender differences which they “have to deal with” and accept as a “way of life”. However, the female focus group extended this narrative by also commenting on the extra pressures that Samoan females, particularly for the eldest female, in their household had, and how this impacted on their studies. Although some may comment that having good time-management skills is very important (as luti from the male’s focus group remarked), in reality even those who have the best time-management skills would find juggling many differing roles challenging. This is exemplified in the narratives below:

... like I said being the oldest girl and the first one in the family and the extended family to make it into uni and to complete an undergrad degree that’s a lot of pressure. Everyone comes to you, and also at church um, being the youth leader and, so the youth, I’m the oldest youth member and so all the younger ones who are still at secondary school they come to you for help so I have to put time aside to help them and then family commitments. Both my parents, they’re not very educated and so I have to go liaise for them and take them to the doctor’s and stuff like that. So it’s a lot to take on board plus your studies. (Emi, Postgraduate, female, focus group)

... my dad suffered a stroke like a month ago and so you know everyone’s like, dad comes first kind of thing, I do as much as I can, at the same time it’s like ok look, um, you have to understand I’ve got my, I’ve still got my papers to complete and all that stuff and it’s like oh, it’s not like I’m being shunned upon but it’s like oh I’m the eldest I should at least do more you know, because you know, that’s what’s expected from me, you know. (Sisi, Postgraduate, female, focus group)

The expectations and standards of the eldest female within the Samoan family can induce intense pressure during tertiary study, and even more so when a family member experiences an unexpected illness. More often than not, the eldest female is expected to take on the role of primary caregiver and to prioritise this role over any other. Feminist literature in general discusses the issue of women having multiple responsibilities to manage in comparison to men and this is a common gender issue (Liki, 2007). For Samoan women, there are even more responsibilities to be negotiated (Perese, 2009). Although this may seem like a negative aspect for Samoan females, it can also be interpreted positively. It is my contention that having these extra responsibilities and duties builds resiliency for
Samoan female students. At the same time I am not suggesting that this is an ideal situation for all women.

This section has outlined how participants understand and negotiate the expectations and demands of being a Samoan tertiary learner in the Samoan home. There are cultural expectations that can intensify pressure for students to achieve academically. These results also support the constructivist understandings of identity given the importance that culture has on the identity formation and understanding of self for these Samoan learners. Striving for lagimalie in the Samoan family home by meeting expectations and obligations is difficult for Samoan tertiary learners given the demands and expectations of university educators. The following section explores the experiences of Samoan tertiary learners in the university context.

### 7.3 Being a Samoan Tertiary Learner at University

This section examines how Samoan tertiary health students make sense of being a Samoan tertiary student in a Western university, their perceptions of the University academic discourse, and finally their experiences in lecture rooms and tutorials. The University for many of the participants is a social space where they are made fully aware of their “otherness” as Pacific students. Despite most of the participants having been educated in New Zealand for all of their lives, they still felt alien at university. Many reflected that at high school there was a sense of place and belonging that was missing once they entered university, and this was mainly because their high school reflected the community in which they lived in. That is, there were many Pacific and non-Europeans at their high school contra to university where in 2009, 9% of the student body were of Pacific ethnicity (University of Auckland, 2010). This is reflected in the quote below:

*We had Palagi’s at our [high] school, so it wasn’t you know, it wasn’t like it was like, remarkably different but it was you know, when all of a sudden you don’t have anyone who’s like you, you know [chuckles] it’s just, so yeah. It’s just like going to the moon, that’s what it felt like. (Nina, key informant, female, interview)*

Nina’s metaphor of attending university as “going to the moon” illustrates how alienating the university experience is for many of the participants. Nina’s metaphor also highlights the lack of sense of belonging at university by evoking images of foreignness. Rose (1995) reminds us that places are infused with meaning and feeling, and are constructed by underlying structures of power. These ideas provide a spatial dimension to postcolonialism by illustrating how spatial structures mimic and reiterate dominant discourses of power (Sidaway, 2002). At university the underlying
structures of power is evident in the privileging of Western values and culture which marginalises minoritised groups:

The concrete jungle at medical school I really hated that... the brown faces there stuck together because we were a small group... I hated my University experience. I really did... so I didn’t really enjoy the University... I didn’t really like the environment at all. (Saeni, key informant, male, interview)

Similar to Nina’s description of medical school, Saeni’s use of the “concrete jungle” invokes feelings of exclusion and harshness. These images are illustrative of the challenges in trying to fit in the university environments. Subsequently, it would be difficult to achieve lagimalie in a space that you feel is alienating.

The physical location of university provides an interesting place to examine geographies of power and dominance. Collins’ (2006) geographical study on the representation of international Asian students in the New Zealand media also illustrates how dominant discourses come to represent other minority groups. Collins contended that media representation has fixed a diverse group of individuals within a singular racial identity that is known by stereotypical economic, cultural, and social characteristics. As a result, these representations have further problematised the interaction between international students and Auckland communities, while simultaneously implicating a cohort of young Asian New Zealand citizens and permanent residents who are of similar ethnicities and communities. This process of othering Asian students, regardless of citizenship, has consequences not simply for the practice of exporting education in Auckland but also for the future of a multicultural Auckland and New Zealand. Citizenship issues are pertinent for minoritised students at university as many are citizens yet still because they look different to mainstream New Zealand they feel that they do not belong in New Zealand learning space.

Another geographical study focused explicitly on the changing geographies of access to medical education in London (Brown and Garlick, 2007). This study focused on where future doctors came from and the spatial inequalities of who had access to medical education in London. The authors were involved in a participation project based in the King’s College London School of Medicine to increase the numbers of medical students from state schools in 10 inner London boroughs. The main concern for the authors and for the College was the underrepresentation of working class students. The study was based on focus groups and informal discussions with working class students from the 10 boroughs. One of the key themes from this study was that students who succeeded best were those who saw themselves as belonging to the College regardless of their social cultural
backgrounds. However, these students also had parents who were able to negotiate the British educational system well. For other students, the fact that the College was physically and socially separate from their lives hindered their performance. The authors concede that although the participation project has yet to make a significant difference in increasing the numbers of working class students, it has increased the ethnic diversity of the student body, mostly by increasing the number of Pakistani and Bangladeshi students.

Although the context of the participation and purpose for this study differs to this present research, some of the findings from both studies are similar. Spatially, university can be seen as an inaccessible place for working class students and in New Zealand the majority of Pacific tertiary students would be categorised as working class. Also, there is a high degree of ethnic segregation in Auckland, where the majority of the Pacific population reside in suburban communities on the city fringe. Medical school and the university are located in inner city Auckland where neighbourhoods that surround the inner city have a higher proportion of European communities (see Chapter Two).

7.3.1 Geographies of Samoan Learners

The way in which students conceptualise space is very much bound in perceptions of ethnicity. Most participants spoke of Auckland city in binary terms where Auckland is divided into South Auckland and Central Auckland, where the university is located. Vini believed that those who lived in Central Auckland found the transition to university easier because of social norms:

*Vini: I came from an area where there is a lot more Samoans and, and the non-Samoan, a lot of came from schools where there is a lot of non Polynesian people. So I think they might have found the transition from high school to university easier...I think one of the other difficulties I had was relating to um people in my class... I’m used to um mixing with students in South Auckland area um which behave differently from students in Central Auckland.*

*R: So how do they behave differently?*

*Vini: Well they um they, they were a lot more competent and they were they had different um their, their um (pause) their social norms their um their social um schemas if you could call it were sort of different from, from that of the people that I was used to mixing with. (Vini, key informant, male, interview)*

Similarly, Nina believed that students who attended schools in Central Auckland such as Epsom Girls Grammar found medical school easier compared to those students who attended South Auckland schools:

*But when, I mean at Med school you know, you’re just in a whole new, if you went to King’s College or you went to Epsom Girls, those students say from De La Salle, McAuley or Mangere College or whatever you know, you just find you know like, the things they talk about [are]*
maybe similar, the way they talk about it and the way they joke about it is totally different. Yeah, so even just those sorts of things you know, just having a conversation, yeah, it’s different. (Nina, key informant, female, interview)

According to Nina and Vini, there were differences in behaviours and social norms of students who attended Central Auckland schools and South Auckland schools and therefore students from Central Auckland schools were better equipped to transition to university. To me, there is the assumption then that the culture of Central Auckland schools is the same as university.

Perceptions of space are also bound in class divisions where suburbs outside of South Auckland were associated with privilege in comparison with South Auckland that was deemed non-privileged:

| Kone: you know, I mean cause we’re not privileged like some of these people from Browns Bay, Herne Bay | Everyone nods in agreement |
| Naisa: yeah | |
| Kone: get their own study room, their own computer, laptop, drives a, BMW to school sort of you know, but I won’t hold that against them | Everyone laughs |

The exchange from one alumni focus group above, illustrates the way in which students conflate suburbs with privilege. Privilege was an important issue for students as it tied in with socioeconomic status and the differences in the availability of resources which can enable students with their studies, such as laptops and vehicles for transport to and from university. Thus, difference was also delineated in terms of finance and economics. Even though participants felt strongly about differences between students of particular areas and of different classes, articulating exactly what was the difference was more troublesome:

*Obviously being, not so rich, that’s all part of my background you know, I can’t separate any of that and, and, I was still different, I mean I was still the same as everyone else and that, I could still learn and do just as well as they did but, yeah, but the differences were always so obvious* (Sui, BHSc, female, focus group)

While the quote from Sui may seem contradictory as she talked about being the same as everyone else but differences being so obvious, I think what Sui is trying to articulate is that they are *all* students. However, Sui found that there were apparent differences between privileged and non-privileged students. This is one reason why Emi found it easier to socialise with other Samoans:
Emi: and in terms of socialising with the other ethnic, I would, for me personally I would find it a bit intimidating, because I would think that they are so up there with their grades and their status and everything and we’re like way down there we just don’t click, we don’t talk to them
R: yeah
Emi: yeah. Well that’s my perspective like I don’t even try (laughs) I didn’t (laugh) try back then but now I do (laughs). (Emi, Postgraduate, female, focus group)

One other common theme in terms of imagined geographies is the essentialising of students who come from European and Chinese ethnicities as being ‘natural’ scholars. Emi alluded to this essentialism where she said “they are so up there with their grades”.

The geographies of Samoan learners construct an interesting sense of place dynamics in terms of Auckland. The spatiality of inequalities is demonstrated by how participants described locales in Auckland in terms of areas of privilege and poverty. University was regarded as “central” Auckland, and thus took on the identity and status of being a powerful Western construct through the perceptions of participants. On the other hand, “south” Auckland was regarded and spoken of as analogous to the participants themselves, whose identity was characterised by being the Pacific Other and poverty. Thus identity of place mimics the identity of those who inhabit that particular place. For students who felt a deep connection and sense of place with South Auckland, conversely, at university there was a lack of sense of belonging, subsequently in the university context it was difficult for students to achieve lagimalie as they felt as though they did not belong in that environment.

Although students were aware of their lack of sense of belonging at university, they felt that this should not impact on their performance but were unable to explain why it did in fact impede on their learning and was in fact a constraint on their achievement. One explanation perhaps, is the effect that not feeling a part of the university community and continuous low expectations does play a part in the psyche of Samoan learners. To use the metaphor of lagimalie, if students are unable to feel comfortable in their surroundings this impacts negatively on the balance with oneself:

Even, even knowing that you stood out like a sore thumb in the way you look because you’re brown, even that is something to cope with. I mean, I don’t cope with it anymore, when you’re just coming out of school you’ve always had that support it is just so hard. It was really hard, yeah but the work was fine, I mean, I would knuckle down and do the work but it was still you know, I mean it was still hard (Sarona, key informant, female, interview)

Sarona’s quote illustrates how not feeling comfortable in her environment affected her psyche and was another issue to deal with at university because, being “brown”, she felt out of place. This section highlights how the experiences of students at university leads to an interpretation that
Pacific learners are not associated with university but Asian and Indian students are. This interpretation also supports the postcolonial thesis that contends ethnic stereotypes and dominant discourses are replicated through institutions such as university (Said, 1978).

7.3.2 Feeling Out of Place in the Classroom: “hey, I’m not you know, dumb…”

Learning is embodied and contextualised. Bodies are a discursive text on which dimensions of class, ethnicity, and gender are inscribed (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1980). Therefore, in classrooms students are not all considered equal because visible bodily markers such as skin colour establishes difference. Our social and cultural identities are very much a part of how we teach and learn (Vygotsky, 1978). Many students experience themselves being minoritised in the classroom as they feel themselves being made acutely aware of their differences, whilst paradoxically feeling that what makes them different is ignored. For example, Pacific learners describe feeling as though they have to prove themselves because of their skin colour whilst also talking about their sense of isolation in the classroom:

You’re isolated, you’re isolated so I mean, I’ve been in so many Palagi classes you know, look for my brown colleagues, so I could sit near them and you know and talk about everyone in class you know... you just feel so isolated and lonely and your confidence sort of just like melts away... I sat at the back is because I just did not want to be judged that I wasn’t good enough to be in that class compared to all the Palagis and, you know, Asian the real scholars and the Inkia’s (Indians), you know in the health papers. I just, I just thought I wasn’t good enough, I wasn’t brainy enough. (Kone, key informant, female, focus group)

Participants constantly found themselves in a position in which they felt the need to prove they were at university legitimately and prove their authenticity of being a university student. That is that participants were at university based on meeting university academic requirements and not to make up an affirmative action quota. These findings illustrate that the respectability of attending university is not afforded to Pacific students whom, like professionals of colour in the United States, must prove their respectability in daily exchange (Young, 1990 p.81). That being “brown” equated to “feeling out of place” in the lecture room was a familiar metaphor in the narratives articulated by students. The genealogy of this metonymy can be attributed to the colonising era of the Pacific in the 19th century where the embodiment of Pacific peoples was seen as physical beings as opposed to intellectual beings (Hokowhitu, 2003). The representation of Pacific peoples in popular theory as “natural athletes” who do not have the mental faculties and discipline required to succeed in other more serious areas of life, has been examined closely in recent times in the body of literature on Pacific peoples and sports (Grainger, 2008; Loto et al., 2006; Te’evale, 2001). As with the scholarship on Pacific peoples and sport, Pacific learners in university illustrate how dimensions of social difference, such as class, race, and gender, are inscribed on the body (Foucault, 1980). Learning is
embodied, and as a discursive text we can understand the ways in which Pacific bodies are socially understood and marginalised at university.

In lectures and tutorials students reported that lecturers were likely to have less expectations of them because of their ethnicity:

*Maybe sometimes the lecturers know you’re an Islander so they kind of like downgrade a bit like they may, you know not talk to you a certain way or um may not think you’re competent enough to talk about a certain issue. But I think once you speak your mind and let them know hey I’m not you know, dumb or whatever then they kind of like just treat you like anyone else so yeah. (Malia, Medicine, female, interview)*

*so they [educators] wouldn’t really expect you – they were quite surprised if you could speak English and things like that so that kinda affects um how you participate in classes and in tutorials and in stuff like that. (Valelei, BHSc, female, interview)*

The narratives here mirror that of Pacific students experiences in secondary schools in New Zealand, where results from the 2007 National Secondary School Youth Health Survey showed that Pacific students were significantly less likely to report that teachers expected them to do well (see Box 1, Chapter Two). Significantly, Valelei explicitly stated that the perceived expectations of educators impacts on the participation of Samoan and Pacific learners in the classroom. The interaction between educators and learners is an important dynamic that can explain in part the non-participation of learners in the classroom as patterns of Western dominance and subordination are played out in the classroom (Bishop, 2003). The low expectations of lecturers based on the assumptions and stereotypes of Pacific peoples in general have a profound impact on students’ aspirations and sense of self. The stories of learners from this study are similar to those reported in a newspaper article of a group of young Pacific secondary students who won a national secondary school enterprise competition. The judge made a patronising comment that the students “can all read and write”, and the students responded that they did not mind the comment so much as they were used to hearing it (Gilbert, 2010). If learners feel that educators both at secondary schools and at university have low academic expectations because of their ethnicity, it is foreseeable that learners will continually question their academic abilities.

Some participants actively tried to subvert the identity of a Pacific low achiever. Thus, the lecture rooms can become a place of resistance in which Samoan learners are aware of the stereotypes and consciously try to subvert stereotypes:

*Because there’s so many of us [Samoans] in New Zealand and yet just knowing the stats and knowing the figures and seeing that, look, how come I don’t have as many Samoan lecturers as...*
I do European lecturers. Just little things like that kind of pushes me harder...kinda inspires me to be like oh man, make a difference (Sera, BHSc, female, interview)

especially my dad, he’ll be, he’ll be like, ia vaai ‘au saiga ia, (look at the Chinese) and you know, and other ethnic groups he’ll just um motivate me. If they can do it, look at them, they’re migrants and yet you’re New Zealand born and you know you could do it as well (Pua, Postgraduate, female, focus group)

Making it to university and graduating can be seen as an act of resistance to dominant stereotypes, thus, entering university should be seen as the beginning point rather than the end point for academic success. All student participants recognised the negative stereotypes of Pacific New Zealanders as low achievers in dominant discourses. The prevalence and persistence of these stereotypes, I think, led to the way in which participants themselves had an essentialist view of Pacific peoples as underachievers:

In terms of brains and stuff... I think you know it’s not a common surprise you know we are constantly bombarded with the message through the media that you know we are failing, we have poor pass rates. (Taulua, key informant, female, focus group)

Samoan stereotypes created and perpetuated in New Zealand’s wider society are also replicated in the university teaching rooms. As a micro context and cultural community, the university is a prime space in which we can explore postcolonial identities and how the colonial past is still present.

7.3.3 University Academic Discourse

University academic discourse potentially institutionalises difference and perpetuates othering through language and discourse. The power relationships within university create a barrier for Samoan learners attempts to dispel dominant stereotypes:

Um, when they [lecturers and tutors] say, when they make generalisations about Māori and Pacific Island people um I think it’s a lot harder to disagree with them because I feel like I’m disrespecting them because they’re older than me um and they’re more senior to me. Yeah so it’s hard - it can be harder to stand up for yourself um, because you feel like you’ll be disrespecting (Valelei, BHSc, female, interview)

Valelei’s quote highlights the sense of powerlessness she feels as a Pacific student in challenging lecturers and tutors who hold positions of seniority. This brings in to question the power relationships between student and educator, and between ethnicities. University is viewed as a critical space where students are encouraged to feel free to critique and challenge ideas. Although the rhetoric is sound, in practice it is difficult to do so, especially if students feel they lack the authority and status to question educators. Adding to this barrier is the fact that lecture content and material can also be marginalising:
Well for [paper] yeah... Like, say statistics wise I know our people are generally big and they’re got (laughs) um they’re generally big you know, sick, um, generally a lot of unhealthy things um. It’s hard to hear and sometimes that’s why you sit at the back because you feel like people are judging you because you’re Pacific (Isti, BHSc, female, interview).

Like the past few years it’s always been we’re the lowest in education and in health and all that kind of rubbish. Yeah sort of like that yeah just from like basic stereotypes that you’d associate with Māori, Pacific Islanders outside. It sort of like brought it inside to the university (Atamu, Certificate, male, interview)

Academic discourse can marginalise Samoan learners through language and discourse as illustrated in the quotes above. Participants felt that the curriculum reinforced the images of Pacific communities poor positioning in New Zealand’s society and caused embarrassment for learners. These situations can potentially lead to high nonattendance to lectures and for those who do attend, students would be less inclined to participate and engage in the classroom. Attendance and engagement in classrooms have been identified as determinants for academic success (Anae et al., 2002; Coxon et al., 2002; Pinel et al., 2005). Yet, in some classrooms, the environment and lecture content creates barriers for engagement let alone attendance.

Overcoming this barrier is very important as it can facilitate meaningful engagement at university and aids in increasing confidence and motivation for learning. Lecturers and tutors need to be aware that for Pacific students, speaking up in class and asking questions requires courage, and even if they do not agree with the student that they are careful to respond in a way that is encouraging. If students engage in discussions, but are then told they are wrong this would make them less likely to participate in any other lecture or tutorial out of embarrassment.

University can provide an opportunity for Samoan students to embrace both Western and Samoan culture. The one notable difference which distinguished participants who had successfully completed university from those who had failed or dropped out, was that they had managed to integrate the two cultural contexts into their learning. Integration is using their cultural Samoan knowledge in the university classroom, as Pita had done with fa’aaloalo in his mental health assignment. The process of integrating the two world views is not necessarily the same for all students. For example, for Samoan international students, integration was necessary on the basis of practicalities. Sene’s story below about finding alternative ways of diagnosing patients explains:
When I was in Medical school I didn’t realise it until the very end of my training the way I was learning was trying to remember ‘now if I was in Samoa would they have had this fancy machine or this fancy test’ so what alternative would you use. Yeah you were trying to teach yourself that there are ways of looking after people with a lack of resources to still practice good medicine. It was really odd and I remember talking to, a couple of other Pacific Island students in my class and they laughed, yeah we all doing the same thing cause we keep you know having this wonder lecture this beautiful CT scan of the... You go through clinical years and we said yeah, we used to laugh and said oh CT scan oh would be lucky if you get the x-ray of the skull and so you had to think what’s the way I can diagnose this person’s tumour, what other signs would I be looking for if I didn’t have a CT scan. (Sene, key informant, female, interview)

Alternative discourses or ways of knowing can be beneficial for students’ learning as Sene illustrates, although she was not consciously aware that she was in fact learning by integrating her two world views until the end of her studies. Sene was able make sense of the lecture material by relating what she was learning in the lecture room in a Samoan context. It is my contention that this learning process is knowledge-in-context. That is, students become active learners and are better able to understand and digest the material which is presented to them by attaching meaning and sense, which is relevant to their everyday experiences. This concurs with the concept of “knowledge-in-action” derived from the practice of narrative pedagogy in compulsory schooling, where children are encouraged to share stories and re-tell stories (Applebee, 1996). This process promotes active construction of knowledge as opposed to the artificial abstraction of “knowledge-out-of-context” that is common in classrooms (ibid.). Samoan students need to be active learners to translate lecture material to relate it to what they know in their own lives. In this way, students would be able to better understand the material and concepts that are presented to them. The narratives that many participants shared of their learning can be characterised by Applebee’s (1996) concept of knowledge-out-of-context.

Some participants, like Sene, were able to integrate their two world views to aid their learning and understanding of lecture material more easily than others. Others found it difficult to integrate the two world views. For example, some participants lamented that despite understanding the lecture material they had trouble making sense of the material:

Like sometimes I found the lectures boring. It wasn’t that I couldn’t understand the material and that but it’s just, I couldn’t make sense of it and then in our assignments we’re told to like um, like, critique and stuff so I just end up writing what the lecturer said in the first place. Like how do you critique? I wasn’t taught how to do that in school! (Rosa, BHSc, female, interview)

It is difficult to expect students to be able to critique material if they are unable to make sense of the material or attach meaning. The material in this sense is an artificial abstraction. More often than not, students learn through knowledge-out-of-context throughout their university experience. It is
not until some students are out in the workforce and with added maturity that they realise the importance of learning through knowledge-in-action and integrating their cultural context to the material delivered in university:

I learnt that the aim is to recognise that we contextualise ourselves in various environments. Concepts like fa’aaloalo, va fealoa’i and fa’afaletui are relevant here [University]. So too is the gerontocratic nature of Samoan society. It is Samoan students that need to be aware of the nuances of relevant cultural concepts that may impede formal learning in an institutional environment. (Sarona, key informant, female, interview)

Sarona was quite articulate in inferring that students need to take more agency in their learning by contextualising themselves and being able to interpret Samoan concepts in a way that fits within university. As Sene’s story has illustrated, alternative discourses and ways of knowing are just as valid and at times necessary. Learners need to ask the same questions as Sene in regards to what are the alternative ways of solving problems. Thus, cultural difference need not be a negative or disadvantage as suggested in deficit theorising that is common in the discourse on minority underachievement in education. Integration illustrates how the metaphor of lagimalie can describe the sociocultural processes of learning at university.

Many students found university a place in which they found themselves constructing a liminal identity as a Samoan-New Zealander. Some students were able to strategise and use the liminal identity to their advantage, while others found the cultural divide between the two world views too great to reconcile. The two narratives below illustrate ways in which students negotiate such liminal identities:

Um, and I think when you’re in your 20’s for a Pacific or a Samoan, or maybe even New Zealand born if I could say that. You find that you’re the bridging generation... you’re exposed to this world view and then you’re exposed to another world view and sometimes there are multiple world views inherent in that. And um, it was um making, it was shifting gears basically. So, its learning to be appropriate. Is it ok to do this in this context and it’s not, so ok, but it’s ok to do it in that context, yeah. (Sarona, key informant, female, interview).

Um, definitely from the beginning where you’re initially sort of, your early years where you’re learning through a different language and different sort of perspective as a Samoan and all of a sudden that changes when you’re put in a different dominant culture where you have to adjust to English speaking and that and then you get conflicts of um speaking English here and what you learn here and then you go home and a totally different context and culture and, and value system there as well. And, I suppose there’s the adjustment there of how I fit into that and then, the years of losing a bit of my culture because of, because of being enforced, you have to speak English to adjust and learn and then. I, I think I lost a bit of my identity there and

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62 Connections between people
63 Samoan mentoring model of education
sort of emerged a little bit later on. I am Samoan you know, and sort of getting back in to that sort of tradition and culture and just finding a balance (Peti, key informant, male, interview)

The two accounts draw attention to the challenges that Samoan students face when having to adapt and negotiate between two different cultural contexts. Interestingly, Sarona used two metaphors in referring to the adaptation between Samoan and New Zealand culture. The first metaphor she referred to was Samoan-New Zealanders as the “bridging generation” who are exposed to both Samoan and New Zealand culture and are therefore responsible for “shifting gears” or in other words knowing when to change from one cultural mindset to the other. The danger in moving between the two cultures is that there can sometimes be too much separation creating a binary that suggests the two cultures are conflicting opposites; students find themselves caught between two cultures. However, another strategy that Peti offered was finding a balance between traditional and dominant culture. In this strategy students find themselves undergoing a liminal transformation at university in which they position themselves somewhere “in-between” Samoan and New Zealand culture. In other words, students do not have to move between being black or white; rather, they can choose different shades of grey in-between.

Turner’s (1968) anthropological construct of liminality is primarily concerned with personal identity rather than social change. As such, liminality as a framework offers a way to understand the micro context of Samoan students’ experiences of university, but needs to be embedded within wider social and cultural contexts. Turner (1978) also contended that liminal individuals experience a sense of equity, since past statuses and privileges drop away, but for Samoan tertiary health students this is not always the case because of wider structural issues that constrain Samoan learners from gaining a sense of equity at university. For example, some Samoan learners at university do not see themselves as being academically equal with their Palagi and Asian peers,

You’re challenged by so many like there’s Palagis, Indians and sometimes you feel like oh they’re too, they’re so brainy. Especially when you have class discussions and you got nothing to say (laughs) (Rosa, BHSc, female, interview)

Rosa’s comments reflected those of other participants who often associated Palagi, Indian, and Asian students as being intelligent and gifted. In interpreting Rosa’s argument that she has nothing to say in class discussions, I think that at times she does have something to say but chooses not to. Her comments also reflected other participant’s comments, who found asking questions or participating in discussions overwhelming and intimidating. Liminality, similar to postcolonialism, I suggest, can also demonstrate how wider structural power issues impact on an individual’s political
identities and transformations. The use of liminality in educational research is not new and in recent times has been used in the development and inquiry of the first year experience in tertiary education research (Gourlay, 2009; Palmer et al., 2009; Scanlon et al., 2007). Prevalent themes from international literature using liminality and transition theory to understand the first year experience include description of this time as a period of transition, students’ feelings of not belonging, and high attrition rates. Similarly, my study has found participants experiencing feelings of not belonging, but these feelings extend beyond the first year, where in some cases students never achieve a sense of belonging throughout their entire university experience.

### 7.4 Summary

This chapter has shown that identity and learning for Samoan tertiary health students support constructivist theories. Both identity and learning for Samoan tertiary health students is co-constituted by fa’asamoa and Western cultural contexts of educational institutions supporting the liminal model. This is important given that most of the participants’ lives involved moving constantly between these two contexts.

Fa’asamoa is still an important identity marker and provides a strong element in how participants create their identities. However, language as a determining factor for being an authentic or real Samoa is a contested issue mirroring current language and ethnicity debates internationally. The importance of fa’asamoa in the lives of participants also shows that despite many participants having spent most of their life in New Zealand, fa’asamoa is still practiced in the home and replicated in churches.

University as both a cultural and physical space was also unsettling for many participants. Their lack of sense of belonging stemmed primarily from the small numbers of Pacific faces in their classes. For many participants, this had an impact on their learning, as they often felt they needed to prove their authenticity as a tertiary student. At the same time the classrooms and the curricula can inadvertently marginalise Samoan learners. This has a significant impact on the attendance and engagements of students, particularly if they felt educators had low expectations of them and educators were unconsciously replicating dominant discourses of ethnic stereotypes in the classroom. However, the classrooms also become important sites of resistance in which participants make a conscious effort to disprove statistics and achieve. Those students who were able to achieve more successfully than others were better able to integrate both their cultural contexts in their learning. In this way they were better able to understand and make sense of the material by applying the content they learnt in the lecture room to their real life experiences.
Participants also felt very much at home and more comfortable in their home environments and local communities than they did at university. This may be a reflection of the location of university as it is placed in Central Auckland. The participants’ perceptions of the geographies of Auckland indicated that there was a strong sense of gentrification, where Central Auckland suburbs are seen as European, Asian, and privileged spaces, while South Auckland suburbs were viewed as Pacific and underprivileged spaces. In this sense, participants did not feel a sense of belonging in Central Auckland. In order to combat this lack of sense of belonging, the university needs to be integrated into all communities to be seen as part of wider Auckland and not just Central Auckland.
Chapter Eight: Discussion

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the barriers and enablers for academic success for Samoan tertiary health learners. Chapter Six has shown that the barriers and enablers to success are multilayered and complex. Some of the critical factors of success are individualistic, whilst others are broader at the family, community, and institutional levels. Underlying the enablers and barriers for academic success is the key theme of ethnic social inequities. Subsequently, this chapter begins with a discussion on social inequities in light of the findings. This is then followed by a discussion on the concepts of lagimalie, liminality, and integration as a tool or strategy for Samoan learners to integrate their two cultural contexts to improve academic achievement. The chapter concludes by unravelling what success means for Samoan learners and why this is an important aspect in understanding what it means to be a Samoan tertiary health student. The structure of this chapter also resembles that of the thesis conceptual framework in Figure 8.1.
Figure 8.1: Conceptual Framework
8.2 Social Inequities

Current New Zealand research and literature has demonstrated that health and educational inequalities are based on ethnicity (Hattie, 2003; Haynes et al., 2008; Jatrana et al., 2010). As a consequence, patterns of inequities in New Zealand show that Pacific and Māori communities have the poorest health and educational outcomes in comparison to the rest of New Zealand. In reviewing the literature, racism and poverty are often cited as the root causes of ethnic inequities (Wilkinson and Marmot, 2006). Racism stems from the privileging of one culture over another and in this case, it is New Zealand/European culture over Samoan culture. In New Zealand, the normalisation of New Zealand/European culture through political and social systems has resulted in ethnic inequities between New Zealanders of European descent and ethnic minorities. In reviewing New Zealand’s social statistics, Palagi continue to have greater socioeconomic, employment, educational, and health outcomes in comparison to Samoan, Pacific, and Māori communities (Borell et al., 2009). The participants from this study provide compelling narratives explaining how European/New Zealand culture is privileged, as Samoan and Pacific communities are continually compared to European/New Zealand communities in New Zealand. This is illustrated by how participants spoke of the spatialisation of privilege in Auckland suburbs based on ethnicity.

Education literature demonstrates how racism impacts on the learning of ethnic minority learners by constraining their participation in the classroom (Ferguson et al., 2008; Woolf et al., 2008). Similarly, the narratives from participants in this study contribute to this discourse. Participants felt that at times they were stereotyped as low achievers. Consequently they felt the need to prove themselves as authentic university students. Many participants were therefore disengaged in university classrooms, as they felt too afraid to participate for fear of being incorrect, further contributing to the discourse of underachievers.

At the same time, some participants also explained how Samoan and Pacific tertiary learners internalised ethnic stereotypes. This is one possible explanation as to why the “C’s get degrees” mantra at university is so profound. In only aiming for C’s, Samoan learners are at greater risk of failing. These results build on those reported by Pinel and colleagues (2005) who argued that African-American and Latino college students feel stigmatised in tertiary institutions. From their qualitative study, the authors found that students with high “stigma consciousness”, that is the extent to which individuals focus on their stereotyped status and believe it pervades their life experiences, internalised stereotypes within their institutional discourses and as a result were more disengaged leading to lower achievement rates (Pinel et al., 2005). This is a reflection of institutional...
racism, and how Western institutions, such as universities, can replicate negative stereotypes of ethnic minorities (Said, 1978; Sharp, 2009).

Comparable to the United States, affirmative action has also increased the numbers of ethnic minority tertiary students, but inequities in achievement still remain (Tinto, 2005). The numbers of Samoan and Pacific students entering university has increased and is comparable to the total Pacific population (6%), however the achievement rates have yet to become commensurate with the general achievement rates. In this respect, MAPAS can be seen as working as an effective university access programme for Samoan learners. More attention is now needed on improving retention and graduation rates. If Samoan and Pacific communities are to improve their socioeconomic status they need to be engaged in socially equitable learning environments. Samoan learners need to build their confidence in public speaking and need to understand that the classroom is one place in which they are free to express their ideas without fear of reprisal or of being disrespectful. To overcome engagement barriers and to create a learning environment so that Samoan learners are confident speakers, educators need to create classrooms that are culturally inclusive. I suggest that a culturally inclusive classroom needs to be established at the beginning of the paper in which educators in the first two or three lectures, or tutors, utilise student-centred learning practices. This is more suited towards tutorials; however, in lectures with large numbers, educators can acknowledge that they are aware of the diversity of student body and are happy to e-mail or talk to students during their open hours regarding lecture materials. Some educators also need to take more care in the delivery of lecture material in order to increase engagement in the classroom.

As well as increasing the health workforce simultaneous efforts are needed in increasing and retaining Samoan and Pacific academic staff at university. Pacific educators are best placed to provide the teaching and learning environments that participants in this study describe. They would be able to better engage with Pacific students and provide role models that students can aspire to. More Pacific academic educators and healthcare workers are required to meet the needs of Pacific communities.

University engagement with Pacific communities is important for Samoan learners to attain a sense of belonging at university. The previous chapter highlights that university is an exceptionally alienating space for Samoan learners. Although university can be daunting for any new tertiary learner, for Samoan students, the small number of brown faces tends to accentuate their anxiety. Compounding this issue is the physical location of the university in central Auckland. Findings
revealed that student participants, in particular, had a strong sense of who belonged in what space based on ethnicity. From some of the participants’ accounts Pacific peoples are not associated with central Auckland. Subsequently, with university placed in central Auckland this restrains the ability of Samoan learners to foster any real sense of connectedness with university. Cultural and geographical literature reminds us that the connections we feel to particular places have a strong impact on our identity (Rose, 1995, Gruenewald, 2003). From this study, students do not feel a strong sense of connectedness to university and this impacts negatively on their learning outcomes. Literature and research has shown the benefits that improving school links with Pacific families has on the learning outcomes of Pacific adolescents (Gorinski and Fraser, 2006). The results from this study also indicate that further research and community outreach projects between universities and Pacific communities have the potential to impact positively in their learning. These projects specifically for health, could model the Teen Medical Academy project in Texas that focuses on increasing the number of Latina tertiary health students (Oscós-Sánchez et al., 2008). This project has been successful reaching communities by sending University students as educators and mentors to high schools with high numbers of Latina students. One of the fundamentals of the project is to provide an avenue for early exposure to the culture of university. Exposure to university at an early age has proved beneficial as evidenced from the stories of participants whose siblings had previously attended university.

The decile system of schools and zoning reflects the spatialisation of inequalities. Educationalists in New Zealand have been particularly scathing of the policy with Professor Hattie recently commenting at a conference that the decile system is only good for increasing property market values (Young, 2010). Other educationalists support this argument, calling for reforms to be made with the decile system. Thrupp (2008) argued that low decile schools had greater needs given that these schools were located in areas of high deprivation. In urban cities like Auckland, high deprivation neighbourhoods have high numbers of Pacific and Māori residents. These schools are vastly under-resourced as families are unable to make significant contributions to schools. Furthermore, these schools find it difficult to retain permanent long-term staff causing negative consequences on quality teaching (Thrupp, 2008). Participants also remarked that because of the inequalities between secondary schools and the areas in which they lived, they felt that they were not as equally prepared for university in comparison to other students who had come from privileged neighbourhoods. The secondary schools that students come from play a significant role in the career pathways that students choose and impact on their ability to feel adequately prepared to meet the demands of tertiary education. The government has attempted to create a level playing
field with the implementation of school zones, but the desired outcomes have yet to materialise given schools’ power to exclude low socioeconomic neighbourhoods from being classified as in-zone. If the government is to commit to creating equal opportunities in education they need to take more control over the zoning issue, but this would be seen as politically risky (ibid. p. 116).

8.3 Lagimalie, liminality, and integration.

The identities of participants in New Zealand are informed by both fa’asamoa and New Zealand/European culture. Liminality as a concept explains how Samoan learners continually contextualise themselves in different contexts. Samoan families and communities respect and accept the importance of Western knowledge, and so encourage their children to do well and attend tertiary education given the potential that tertiary qualifications have for increasing social mobility and socioeconomic outcomes (Macpherson et al., 2000). However, the same level of respect is not afforded to Samoan indigenous knowledge by university institutions in general. This is the criticism of Said and other indigenous postcolonialists, who argue that universities fail to recognise the importance of alternative knowledges thereby imposing discursive knowledge on to others as truth (Gegeo, 2001; Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Said, 1978; Smith, 1999).

The university is a community comprising a diverse range of groups and individuals. Universities not only comprise of academics and educators that is lecturers, tutors, and teaching assistants but also administrators. Like other established bureaucracies it is difficult to change the system and culture of how universities are run. The culture of university is embedded with New Zealand/European culture. However, there are individuals and groups of educators such as Samoan and Pacific academics but also including educators of European descent who actively acknowledge the importance local and indigenous knowledges. For example as Ezekielu acknowledged the positive influence that one European lecturer had in helping a group of struggling Pacific students with passing their final exams. Similarly, some European academics also place emphasis on the social construction of identity and learning, Vygotsky (1974) being a prime example in this instance. Thus, I acknowledge and recognise that within universities there are groups and individuals who are sensitive to the needs of minoritised learners and acknowledge the importance that in creating equitable learning environments for minority learners but this group remains a minority.

Nahkid’s (2006) article provides a recent example illustrating the need for more culturally sensitive individuals in New Zealand universities. Nahkid describes how the majority of staff members from her University department declined a proposal to provide Māori and Pacific tutorials on the basis
that it was unethical to favour one group or groups of students over others (2006, p.300). This raises important ethical questions. For example is it ethical to expect minority students to be able to perform the same as mainstream students given that the curricula are typically based on the mainstream culture (Cooke et al., 2006)? Is it ethical to expect minoritised students to accept mainstream culture that renders it the marginal status in the first instance? Postcolonial thinkers such as Bishop (2003), Said (1978), and Smith (1999) would suggest that it is unethical and given that New Zealand is supposedly a multicultural society it would be unethical for educators to ignore the ethnic educational disparities that exist and continue to persist in New Zealand classrooms. These questions are important questions in light of the results from this study that illustrate the paradoxes of being a Samoan learner at University. The experiences of students from this study demonstrate that at university Samoan learners feel minoritised by educators because of visible racial markers whilst at the same time what makes them culturally different is ignored.

I find liminality an apt framework to describe the experiences of Samoan learners as they are in a constant state of flux in-between the two cultures rather than being caught between two cultures as previous literature suggests for young Samoans in New Zealand (Tiatia, 1997; Southwick, 2001). Students are constantly repositioning their identities in response to their contexts. The implications of this study for the theory of liminality is to illustrate that liminality can potentially be a site of resistance in which students’ identities are informed by two cultural contexts rather than being a site of transition to move from one identity to another as envisioned originally.

University can provide an opportunity for Samoan students to embrace both New Zealand/European and Samoan culture. This was one key difference between the students who were able to negotiate university more successfully compared to those who had struggled to integrate both worldviews in their learning. This negotiation is a process where students integrated the two cultural contexts of their everyday lives by reframing the material that was delivered to them in a way that made sense to their social contexts as well. Samoan learners need to attach meaning to the concepts that they are learning so that it makes sense in their everyday lives. It is my contention that integrating the two worldviews through the learning process of knowledge-in-action has the potential to significantly influence the academic achievement of Samoan learners positively. Students become active learners and are better able to understand and digest the material which is presented to them by attaching meaning, which is relevant to their everyday experiences. It is difficult to expect students to be able to critique material if they are unable to make sense of the material or attach meaning.
Many students are New Zealand born Samoans and it is important to recognise the recursive relationship between the two cultural systems. Samoan and Pacific cultures influence New Zealand culture just as New Zealand culture influences Pacific cultures through everyday interactions and the exchange of information and values. The influence of Samoan and Pacific cultures is most visible in the sports (Teevale, 2001), music (Bennett, 2002), and art landscapes of New Zealand (see Chapter Two, section 2.2.3). How New Zealand born students of Samoan and Pacific ethnicity identify themselves and understand New Zealand culture in the next fifteen to twenty years will be of interest given that presently half of the Pacific population are now New Zealand born.

Alternative discourses or ways of knowing can be beneficial for students’ learning, as it provides Samoan learners a different lens to critique and challenge scholarship. One barrier that prevents Samoan learners from fully integrating their Samoan worldviews in the classrooms is their reluctance to raise questions because of perceived ethnic prejudices and stereotypes. Educators need to create classrooms at university that enable Samoan learners to have the confidence to speak up. This may require a programme similar to Treisman’s (1985) Maths Workshop Programme, where students in the first year are given more training in public speaking. This could be a noteworthy exercise particularly in MAPAS and Certificate in Health Science tutorials. These tutorials could be structured to ensure everybody has an opportunity to debate and critique a topic in a friendly environment. I argue that developing these skills in the first year is crucial to Samoan learners’ success, as the narratives from this study have shown the benefits that having these skills has on learning. Liminality offers a counter discourse that respects differences in knowledges and places Samoan culture in learning by allowing students to learn and construct knowledge meaningfully. In moving between the two cultures lagimalie provides a metaphor that illustrates how students negotiate the demands of tertiary education and of the Samoan home. Thus, although it may seem simplistic to move between two cultures, students must also be able to master a balance between the two.

Although liminality was originally used to describe the transition or space from one status to a new status (Turner, 1969), in the context of this study there is no definitive “new status” or “old status”. I contend that Samoan learners living in New Zealand and particularly for those born in New Zealand, will continually define themselves in ways that incorporate both Samoan and New Zealand culture. They will explore new identities and ways of being dependent on the context, thus how they define themselves and act at home differs to their ways of being at university. The transformative possibilities that the liminality framework offers is and can be empowering as Buckingham and colleagues (2006) found in their research with mothers in training spaces. The women in this
research found the training spaces and sites in which they ‘suspend’ their identities as wives and/or mothers and try on new roles as professionals. In the same way, Samoan students at university can actively subvert the typical stereotype of Pacific students as low achievers by achieving and being successful as many Samoan and Pacific students have done. The key informants of this study are a prime example. Although most spoke of their tertiary journey as isolating and abhorrent, during the interviews and focus groups they were less verbal in celebrating their successes. This may be because as they reflected on their experiences in a chronological order there were many obstacles and challenges that by the time it came to relaying the final stages of their university experience graduation seemed almost anticlimatic. Liminality can therefore be seen as a site of resistance and empowerment as students can recognise and understand how they are defined and stereotyped by others and then actively subvert these subjectivities. Thus this liminal space as site of resistance offers Samoan learners a place to formulate new positive subjectivities within the university context.

8.4 Samoan Learners’ Success

The body of literature on enablers and barriers to tertiary health academic success is mounting. The underachievement of minority tertiary students in general, and medical students specifically, is an increasing global concern given the workforce shortages in all health professions internationally (Oscós-Sánchez et al., 2008; Radcliffe and Lester, 2003) and growing ethnic health inequities worldwide (Wilkinson and Marmot, 2006; World Health Organization, 2008).

The findings from this present study mirror those from previous research investigating the academic achievement of ethnic minority health students (Radcliffe and Lester, 2003; Rogers and Molina, 2006; Wass et al., 2003; Yates and James, 2006). Like the medical students of Asian descent in the United Kingdom and Latina and African-American students from the United States, Samoan and Pacific students as ethnic minorities have the poorest pass rates in health programmes at the University of Auckland (University of Auckland, 2010). The participants from this study shared similar experiences to students of Asian descent in Yates and James’ (2006) study, where students tended to seek help only once they had reached crisis points. Seeking help is an important issue that Yates and James (2006) raised but was not discussed in detail, raising questions as to whether not seeking help is a general student body issue in the United Kingdom and why students do not seek help when they need to. In this thesis I have attempted to address this issue by stressing the significance that learning environments and the expectations of educators have on enabling Pacific learners’ attitudes towards seeking help. As the data from this study has shown, most students, and in particular medical students, tend to seek the help of peers rather than access support services offered by their
university. This is because participants felt more comfortable to ask peers rather than ask educators in the learning environments or support staff such as MAPAS. The issue of seeking help from peers and learning environments will be explored in more detail later in the chapter.

Rogers and Molina’s (2006) review of exemplary institutions in recruiting and retaining ethnic minority students addresses some of the structural issues at tertiary institutions in the United States. From an institutional level, their study provides useful information in terms of programmes that work in recruiting and retaining ethnic minority students. Their findings provide an interesting comparison to the MAPAS programme at the University of Auckland. The MAPAS programme only provides a targeted Māori recruitment programme under Whakapiki Ake, which is financed through Māori funding (Curtis, 2008). To implement a Pacific recruitment programme requires additional funding and resources. This raises the question of where funding can be sourced from and if funding is available, would it be best to attach this programme to Whakapiki Ake or create a separate Pacific recruitment programme under MAPAS instead.

Pacific student success in tertiary education is becoming a popular topic of interest in both Australia and New Zealand (McPherson et al., 2003; Singh and Sinclair, 2001; Kearney and Donaghy, 2010). The majority of literature on Pacific learners has generally focused on ECE and compulsory schooling (Gorinski et al., 2008). Thus, to date research on Pacific learners in tertiary education has been comparatively limited. However, there have been a number of recent publications and studies investigating the enablers and barriers to success for Pacific learners, coinciding with increased Pacific enrolments in tertiary institutions (Kearney and Donaghy, 2010; Penn, 2010; Utumapu-McBride et al., 2008). Most research on Pacific tertiary learners has come from New Zealand and is based on Pacific tertiary learners’ experiences in New Zealand. Australian research so far focuses on Pacific learners in secondary schooling (Singh and Sinclair, 2001), but there has been one recent study on Pacific learners at university in Australia (Kearny and Donaghy, 2010). In this study the authors addressed the issues that students from Pacific communities in Australia face during their first year experience in higher education by conducting a grounded theory study with two Samoan alumni from Griffith University in Australia. Despite the very small number of participants and the fact that the authors suggest these two accounts are representative of the “Pacific Islander community” in Australia, some of the findings are similar to the findings from Pacific students in New Zealand. These include the importance of family support for education and bridging courses at university. The study highlights that there is a growing awareness of the importance of understanding academic achievement for Pacific tertiary learners outside of New Zealand.
In New Zealand there have been some recent studies investigating factors influencing the academic achievement of Pacific tertiary students (Anae et al., 2002; Coxon et al., 2002; Utumapu-McBride et al., 2008). What is interesting is that this study identifies the same barriers and enablers for Samoan tertiary learners that have been identified in studies conducted since the 1980s. For example, students not feeling comfortable in asking questions, the affordability of tertiary education, and time-management issues. The academic underachievement of Pacific learners will continue to remain a pertinent issue if the learning and recommendations from previous studies are not acted on. This implies that the learning from previous studies has not been translated into policy to improve the success of Samoan and Pacific tertiary learners. Institutions like universities are able to respond more quickly to evidence-based research compared to governments, and the fact that most of the research is carried out within universities in New Zealand raises questions of the effectiveness of institutions in responding to research.

Samoan tertiary students also have a different interpretation of success. From this study, narratives described how they tried to negotiate the different meanings of success. Academia requires students to be successful individually and praises those who achieve higher grades. However, the Samoan family has different understandings of success; while grades are important, success for Samoan families is based on reciprocity and a collective sense in that those who are successful are able to gain a tertiary qualification, but also use the qualification in order to benefit the family and the wider community. The success of sporting celebrities in New Zealand gives all Pacific communities a sense of pride (Grainger, 2008). This provides a welcome change from the typical Pacific stories of crime and poverty (Loto et al., 2006). Lagimalie as a metaphor also describes the ability of Samoan learners to meet the university’s criteria of success in order to gain their qualification, whilst at the same time meet the success criteria of the Samoan family. For Samoan families to be successful, it is not only about academic success but also being a positive role model and active member in families and church. In this sense being successful is multilayered for Samoan learners.

8.4.1 Fa’asamoa and Family

Fa’asamoa remains an important feature in the lives of migrant Samoans in New Zealand as evidenced by the data from participants in this study. Fa’asamoa is important for the construction of identity of participants as well as guiding their behaviours and beliefs. Participants’ understandings of fa’asamoa are very much in line with the principles described by Samoan academics (Efi et al.,
The most common principles recited by participants are aiga, alofa, fa’aaloalo, fa’alavelave, feagaiga, and va. The importance of aiga and familial relationships was discussed in detail during most interviews and focus groups. Participants acknowledged that in their own lives the wellbeing of the collective as paramount. The collective nature of Samoan communities has been well established. In this context the importance of aiga was viewed in the sense successes and failures of students reflected on their entire families. In essence this meant that failure was unacceptable and created a burden on students to succeed. Conversely entrenched within this notion of the collective are the values of sharing and reciprocity. Sharing was an important concept as it meant not only were successes shared but also hardships. This was evident during the discussions in terms of older siblings financially supporting younger siblings when they could. For example older siblings would provide bus fare and lunch money for their younger siblings. These familial relation findings are similar to that outlined in a study investigating the familial relationships of non immigrant and immigrant Asian families in Canada and the United Kingdom where older Asian siblings would take more financial responsibility over the family as they grow older (Kwak, 2000).

Reciprocity was also referred to often and this was usually in the context of support. Both parents and students acknowledged that support is multidirectional in that parents would give their children the time and space to study while on the other hand students would also support their families through caregiving and providing transport when need be. Reciprocity was also evident in the way in which participants spoke of attending university as an “investment”. Participants often agonised over the opportunity cost of attending university in lieu of entering the workforce. However, this was reconciled with the acknowledgement that a tertiary education was in the best interest of the entire family as it allowed greater income earning power in the jobmarket. These tensions and challenges are similar to the experiences of Latina students in the United States who have similar cultural values (Auerbach, 2006).

Fa’aaloalo was commonly referred to as showing respect for elders and deference to authority. In the classroom setting this was perceived as both beneficial and detrimental to their learning. Participants felt that growing up with fa’aaloalo instilled in them had made them more respectful of other people’s points of view, but it also restricted them from challenging tutors and lecturers and asking questions. To some extent this illuminates possible behavioural reasons as to why some Samoan students do not participate and engage in classroom discussions (Anae et al., 2002).
The concept of fa‘alavelaves also received much attention in interviews and focus groups. Students and parents agreed that fa‘alavelaves can be time consuming but are important to nurture familial relations and ties. Students themselves often felt the need to be present at important fa‘alavelaves without family or parental encouragement and could easily distinguish between important and less important fa‘alavelaves. Tensions arise for some participants when family members feel that all fa‘alavelaves are equally important and should be prioritised over other commitments including study. This particular aspect of fa‘asamoā is often cited as the common cause of the low achievement of Samoan students under the guise of family commitments and obligations because of the time issue (Utumapu-McBride et al., 2008). However, this is only one aspect of fa‘asamoā and studies should equally acknowledge the benefits that fa‘asamoā has in influencing and improving learning outcomes for Samoan students.

The findings from this study also add to the debate as to what is culture and what are the associated markers of cultural identity (Kobyashi et al., 2009; Woodward, 1997). Unlike the Samoan principles outlined above there was less agreement as to whether language was an important marker of identity. For some participants being able to speak and understand gagana Samoa is a vital identity marker whilst other participants argued that it is one of a number of important markers. Although students debated the merit of whether the ability to speak Samoan should be privileged over other identity markers all students agreed that being able to speak Samoan is an important tool in retaining cultural values.

Without exception, in the literature regarding Pacific tertiary learners in New Zealand, family support features as an important and critical enabler for Pacific learners’ success. However, to date the majority of the literature offers the perspectives of family support from that of students and institutions (Penn 2010; Utumapu-McBride et al., 2008). Thus, the voices of Samoan and Pacific families are missing from current literature. Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) noted that educational reports cited parent involvement as crucial in education; however the voices of parents in regards to their ideas about schooling had yet to be clearly understood. In compulsory education, efforts have been made to address this gap in regards to including the voices of Pacific parents (Gorinski and Fraser, 2005), but this has yet to be mirrored in tertiary education research. The importance of Pacific parents’ involvement in supporting their children in tertiary education has been well established and this has resulted in a number of recent studies, mostly academic theses, investigating the importance of family support for the academic success of Pacific tertiary students (Bensemann et al., 2006; Penn, 2010; Utumapu-McBride et al., 2008).
This present study provides the voices of some Samoan parents as a starting point in which researchers and educators begin to dialogue with Samoan parents in understanding what educational support means from the perspectives of students and parents. The data from this study show that this is not the case but rather that both parents and students perceptions of “what is family support” are analogous. This was one of the most surprising results from the study as I had anticipated that parents and students might be talking past each other given the way in which families are often portrayed in previous literature as not understanding the realities of tertiary study (Anae et al., 2002).

The data from this study also support the assertion that parents and families do not understand the realities of tertiary study, as many have not been through the experience. Thus, it is difficult for parents to understand these realities if they themselves have not experienced it. This can also be true for mainstream New Zealanders who cannot understand the realities of being marginalised if they themselves have never experienced marginalisation. To mitigate the inexperience of Samoan parents in tertiary education there needs to be clearer communication between students and families so that students can convey the expectations of university to negotiate with their families time-management issues. The narratives from the students in fact illustrate how after explaining the demands of tertiary education for parents who had not been in tertiary education, parents were more understanding and willing to give their children the time and space needed for their study. In this sense space is both literal and metaphorical, where especially during exam times parents will make a point of ensuring that other children or they themselves take on extra duties and chores so that students have more time to study. Furthermore, students are given more flexibility in meeting other church and family obligations. Parents however are also quick to provide a caveat that in return students are expected to use the study time and space wisely and not to take it for granted, as one father illustrated by taking a mobile phone off his daughter who would always be texting when he would check to see if she needed anything while studying.

To some extent parents often felt out of their depth and did not know how to support their children in tertiary education. Thus, parents acknowledged that by this stage they were unable to help their children with assignments and the mechanics of their studies. Parents emphasised and stressed the need for them to show their children that regardless of not being able to provide them with academic support, being present in their academic lives was still important and so they provided support in ways that they knew how to. Often this was in terms of providing emotional support, transport, and if they could, financial support. Being present was identified as a crucial element of
support by both parents and students. Some students acknowledged that parents showed their support by being involved and interested in their studies and this was just as important as providing financial support.

Support and pastoral staff from university could also assist in this issue by presenting the expectations and realities of academia to parents in different communities. As one mother noted, she was delighted at the opportunity to participate in my focus group as she thought the aim of the focus group was to provide her with more understanding on how to help and support her child in tertiary education. For many Pacific families, transport and time constraints are barriers to engaging with the University of Auckland as many of the information sessions are held during week days and during working hours. As I have done with the parent focus groups, University’s could try to conduct some information sessions after work hours in different local communities. Such outreach initiatives would be beneficial for universities, Samoan and Pacific communities, and tertiary learners.

8.4.2 Church and Spirituality

The findings from this study show that spirituality is an important enabler for Samoan learners. Samoan learners continue to draw on their faith and spirituality for inspiration, guidance, and a source from which to draw strength during enduring and challenging times. These times are often quoted by students as crisis points in which they begin to doubt their academic journey, but they find praying to God provides them with a renewed sense of direction. The importance of the Christian religion in the lives of Samoans is well established in Samoan scholarship and is often cited as one of the three pillars of Samoan society together with the matai system and fa’asamoa (Thornton et al., 2010). The changing nature of religion in contemporary times for Samoans has seen the increase in a number of different Christian faiths, including Seventh Day Adventists, Church of the Latter Day Saints, and the Assembly of God church. Over time, religion still remains an important aspect for Samoans; what has changed is the place of worship where the Congregational Christian Churches of Samoa (EFKS) had previously been the primary church of worship. This is reflected from the findings of this study, where all but one participant was a member of a church but half of the participants who did go to church were members of EFKS and other participants attended a variety of different churches ranging from Salvation Army to Catholic Churches.

One of the significant findings of this research is the importance of church in the lives of students in regards to academic success. Previous literature on young Samoans in New Zealand suggested that the church was no longer seen as an important place in the lives of young Samoans and that in fact young Samoans were leaving the church in high numbers (Anae, 1998; Tiatia, 1998). The experiences
relayed by students challenge this assertion, as participants often spoke of attending church regularly and that church was an important institution in providing both emotional and spiritual support for their studies.

In Pacific communities the church is often used as a health promotion vehicle and this is most evident in South Auckland, where church-based health promotion programmes are becoming common. For example, some of these programmes include Counties-Manukau DHB initiatives such as the Lotu Mou’i and Let’s Beat Diabetes initiatives (Te’evale, 2009). The church has been tested and evaluated as an effective means of promoting healthy eating and physical activity in Pacific communities.

Churches can therefore also be effective in promoting education. As participants noted, the church in an informal sense already promotes education in individual congregations. However, in following the health promotion strategy a more coordinated approach in integrating Pacific churches can be used to promote education. Samoan churches, and in particular EFKS churches, are active in promoting education, but this has been limited to ECE with the bilingual ECE centres attached to churches (Tanielu, 2004). Some churches therefore already have resources with their bilingual preschool centres to provide after school homework centres for tertiary learners. This would be more effective if universities and tertiary training establishments also engaged with churches and provided tutors to help facilitate the homework centres.

8.5 Reflections

It would be interesting to compare the stories of these Samoan participants with peers from other Pacific ethnic groups. The level of depth required for such a study would require a group of Pacific researchers. On reflection it might have been helpful to conduct follow up interviews with students to see whether they were still in their programmes or not and if there were any significant changes, discuss some of the reasons for these changes.

Understanding who holds what information and has access to student demographics was a challenge. I had not anticipated that accessing Samoan students and alumni would turn out to be such a barrier to this study. As a student myself, I knew that the university had information on students by ethnicity and programme. Subsequently I had assumed that MAPAS and FMHS co-ordinators would have databases with records of students by ethnicity. However, this was not the case and finding out who had this information was a challenge. Although this was a situation that
had caused some frustration and time delay in accessing participants, the Alumni Office and snowball sampling worked just as well.

One of the limitations of this study is that my sample only represents those who had come through the university system. Thus it is missing the voices and perceptions of health workers who had not engaged in tertiary education to understand why. Also, it would have been useful to find more participants who had not completed their studies. Although, there were a few participants who had failed medical school they had still managed to complete other undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

Similarly, there were only two parent focus groups. Given that these focus groups were purposefully sampled where only parents with children either attending or had graduated from the University of Auckland this limited the number of eligible participants significantly. I had made a conscious choice not to invite the parents of students who had already participated in the study to protect the students’ privacy and avoid any tensions and conflicts if parents did happen to ask about some of the findings from the student interviews and focus groups. In this case the voices of parents whose children have not attended any tertiary institutions are missing from this thesis. The perspectives from this group would be of interest to compare with the perspectives from the parents in this study.

This thesis however does represent the voices and perceptions of key groups. Furthermore, this present study has extended the use of the liminality framework as well as utilising the *lagimalie* concept in a novel manner. The findings from this study will add to the literature on Pacific health workforce. This thesis also contributes to the literature on social inequalities for Samoan communities in New Zealand and postcolonial theory. Postcolonialism has been used largely by Māori scholars to describe the position of Māori in New Zealand (Bishop, 2005). This present thesis contributes to this literature by using postcolonialism to describe the positioning of contemporary Samoan communities in New Zealand.

### 8.6 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed some of the key findings from the data in relation to existing literature. The factors that constrain and enable the academic success for Samoan tertiary learners are complex. For example, issues of family support and the church in regards to the success of Samoan learners. In my view these issues have not been critically assessed in previous literature.
Thus, in providing the voices of parents in this study I hope to have provided a more meaningful understanding of family support. Through my assessment of the importance of the church and spirituality for Samoan learners, I hope that others will begin to re-read some of the critiques of church more critically.

In this chapter I have illustrated the importance of the place of fa’asamoa for Samoan learners in New Zealand. The principles and values of fa’asamoa are still operationalised in Samoan families in New Zealand and consequently shape and influence the behaviours of Samoan learners. It is important to recognise that the Samoan cultural system that values the collective, reciprocity, and deference to authority contradicts the teaching and learning practices of educational institutions. University for example typically rewards students on individual merits and encourages students to openly critique and challenge ideas. At the same time Samoan communities must also recognise that fa’asamoa has also had an impact on New Zealand culture as well, particularly in the sports arena and music domain.

Liminality is used in this thesis to show how Samoan learners contextualise themselves and form positive subjectivities. This thesis extends the use of liminality by illustrating that in some cases, liminal individuals will always be in a constant state of flux moving between two worlds, but this does not necessarily equate to individuals being marginalised. Rather, it illustrates how individuals strategically use both their cultural contexts in order to place themselves in their context. Thus, this study also contributes to the constructivist approaches to identity. Lagimalie is a useful metaphor to unravel how Samoan learners negotiate the demands of university and the home and what it means to be a successful Samoan learner. It also facilitates and provides a vehicle in which we can appreciate the different social and cultural contexts of learning in the lives of Samoans.
Chapter Nine: Recommendations and Conclusions

9.1 Introduction
In this chapter I provide some recommendations for further research, along with recommendations for educators and for educational and health workforce policy at government and institutional levels. I also outline some strategies that may help in recruiting and retaining Pacific tertiary health learners so that they can meet and address the health needs of Pacific communities. The remainder of the chapter provides some conclusions by reviewing the theories used in this thesis and the findings from the data.

9.2 Recommendations
This section provides some recommendations for future research in the area of Pacific health workforce and education, strategies to recruit young Samoan and Pacific students into health careers and education, and strategies to retain Samoan and Pacific tertiary health students.

9.2.1 Future research
This thesis has demonstrated that there are still many questions that need to be answered in addressing the inequities and inequalities in health and education for Samoan and Pacific communities. Although robust health outcome studies internationally (Lau and Zane, 2000) have shown that an ethnically diverse health workforce provides better outcomes than mainstream providers for the health of ethnically diverse communities; there must also be research in New Zealand to evaluate the effectiveness of Pacific health workers in improving health outcomes for Pacific patients. Such a study for example could employ the same quantitative method as Lau and Zane’s (2000) using the Global Assessment Scale (see Section 3.4) supplemented with qualitative data. Interviews with patients and service providers would enable researchers to gain a better understanding in the differences in treatment outcomes, if any.

From this thesis it is evident that there is a need to increase the Pacific health workforce, which requires a critical mass of Pacific school leavers entering tertiary health education for a long term health workforce solution. Results from other New Zealand research (Yuan et al., 2010) and the
student narratives in this study on their preparation and transition to tertiary education from secondary schooling indicate that one area stifling this progression is that Pacific learners are not meeting university entry requirements. Educational researchers and experts have cited that there is a strong correlation between attendance and achievement. Yet statistics and data have shown that despite having some of the highest attendance records by ethnicity at secondary school, Pacific learners still have the poorest academic outcomes. Therefore there are other constraints in compulsory schooling that impact on Pacific learners warranting further investigation.

9.2.2 Recruitment Strategies
A key strategy is to provide dedicated and targeted Pacific health recruitment programmes, similar to the MAPAS Whakapiki Ake scheme, to promote health careers in secondary schools and Pacific communities. This will require additional funding and resources led by Pacific academics and health professionals.

Results from this research and supported by previous research in New Zealand have also shown that more awareness and promotion of diverse health occupations is required in Pacific communities and this needs to be coupled with clear information for health career pathways. At present, students still know relatively little about health occupations outside of medicine and nursing. This will aid in increasing the visibility of all health occupations and will help Pacific learners to plan their future educational prospects. The narratives from key informants and the students state that the most ideal people to promote health careers are in fact New Zealand Pacific health professionals.

Universities need to strengthen their outreach and recruitment programmes to engage more with Pacific communities. Firstly, this is to help Pacific parents understand the realities of university life and second, reach Pacific families who would otherwise find it difficult to attend University based functions due to time and transport restrictions. Currently, Pacific community engagement programmes implemented by university staff is limited to a few targeted events that require Pacific communities coming to university or providing stalls at the few Pacific events. There needs to be a greater commitment by universities to be more visible in Pacific communities. What would be beneficial in this regard is further research to provide strategies for the effective engagement between Samoan and Pacific communities and universities. One strategy could be to use resources currently available within Pacific and Samoan churches. Most Samoan churches have ECE centres attached, thus, during after school hours these centres could provide spaces for homework centres where the university students would provide homework assistance, while promoting tertiary
education. Pacific students would be ideal and their time would also need to be rewarded preferably through university funds. This collaboration would begin to see a closing of the cultural gap between university and Pacific communities.

9.2.3 Retention Strategies

Retention in university is a key issue for universities and researchers. From this research, it is clear that educators are key enablers for learning. To improve the achievement levels of Pacific health learners this research has shown that educators need to be more sensitive to the way in which the curricula can further marginalise Pacific students in their classrooms. Educators also need to take more responsibility in ensuring Samoan learners feel comfortable to express their opinions and engage in classroom discussions. Although wider society may not perceive Samoan communities as citizens, it is important that educators at university at least try to create equitable learning environments. This can be accomplished by incorporating activities or programmes during the first year of study to teach public speaking and asking questions in a public forum. Once Samoan learners conquer their initial fear and reluctance to speak in classrooms they are more likely to engage and participate in classrooms. At present, the majority of students only discuss academic issues with their friends until near the end of their programmes when they finally come to realise the importance of asking questions and seeking help from educators.

Mentoring has been identified as a key strategy to help increase participation in health studies and retention. The data showed that ideal mentors are people who are, as the participants stated, “just like me”. Thus, peer mentors featured significantly as key enablers for retention. Currently, peer mentoring is occurring on an informal basis for Samoan health learners. Faculties across the university, except the Medical and Health Sciences faculty, provide peer-mentoring, therefore I suggest that the faculty also needs to reassess the viability and effectiveness of peer-mentors.

Finally there needs to be more visibility of Pacific educators in health programmes. A critical mass of Pacific educators to lead and implement support services as well as teaching is needed. It is difficult to understand cross-cultural challenges in health settings from reading cultural competency articles, books, or training manuals. Pacific educators are better able to articulate and explain to non-Pacific students’ strategies in negotiating potential conflicts that arise from cultural differences in health beliefs and practices.
Students in this study singled out a few lecturers and support staff who offered both academic and pastoral support and made a significant positive contribution to the learning of Samoan learners. The majority of the lecturers and staff in this case were Pacific. Consequently, this suggests the need in the short term, for current Pacific educators need to be more visible and effective by teaching more papers and providing academic support. In the long term, as with the the health workforce, there needs to be an increase in the capacity of Pacific educators to lead studies and investigate health research with their communities.

9.2.4 Education and University Policies

Education policy needs to address the current ethnic inequities in compulsory education. Current zoning policies contribute to the spatialisation of inequalities in academic achievement of Samoan and other Pacific communities, and communities from low socioeconomic neighbourhoods. Education policy should promote and create equitable learning for all New Zealand children. This thesis has demonstrated that the cultural transition from local and community based secondary schools to regionally based culture of university is hugely overwhelming for Samoan learners. Educational policies, such as zoning policies, need to be revised and re-examined to mitigate and address current inequities.

University administrators and policy makers need to ensure that all students are benefiting from attending their institution and recognise that institutional racism may exist. Although, some institutions actively promote the recruitment and participation of Samoan and Pacific students, through affirmative action, these initiatives need to be supported and supplemented with appropriate retention strategies. For example, universities could look at introducing a role that tracks and monitors the progress of Samoan, Pacific, and Maori students particularly for those students who have entered university through affirmative action programmes.

9.3 Conclusions

The inequities in health between Samoans and mainstream New Zealand are not a new phenomenon, but evidence shows that health inequities are growing despite advances in medicine and curative care (Harris et al., 2006; Haynes et al., 2008; Ministry of Health, 2002a; Ministry of Health, 2002b; Ministry of Health, 2004a). I have used a social determinants of health approach to understand the inequities in health to illustrate that health outcomes are complex issues not limited to biomedical frameworks, but also shaped by the association between socioeconomic status and health. The root of many inequities in health is often attributed to the lack of access and quality of
healthcare for migrant and ethnic minority groups, and consequently, this is one area that can possibly reduce the inequalities in health in New Zealand. In accordance with international literature, increasing Pacific participation in the health workforce has recently been recognised by various government agencies as a strategy to reduce the gaps in health inequities and inequalities between Pacific and non-Pacific communities in New Zealand.

A representative qualified Pacific workforce across all levels of the health sector would benefit Pacific communities and patients. An increase of Pacific health workforce would lead to an increase access to quality healthcare for Pacific patients and increase the likelihood of Pacific peoples seeking medical advice before their illness deteriorates necessitating hospitalisation. This is particularly relevant in reducing the mortality rates of noncommunicable diseases like cancer given that Pacific patients often present late with cancers (Haynes et al., 2008). Patient-doctor relationships would also improve for Pacific patients as they would be able to communicate and interact with health professionals who would understand their cultural needs and beliefs. Pacific health researchers are also better placed to research health issues relevant to Pacific communities and formulate effective solutions that are Pacific-based. In general, increased Pacific participation can lead to improved health outcomes and reduce the health inequities that Pacific communities currently withstand. Pacific participation at all levels and across all professions of health is not only beneficial to the health of Pacific peoples but also for their socioeconomic status. Attaining a tertiary qualification increases individuals’ incomes and earning power and subsequently improves Pacific peoples’ socioeconomic status, leading to better health and educational outcomes.

This thesis adopts the premise that increasing the Pacific health workforce has the potential to reduce Pacific health inequalities and subsequently addresses the broad question of how can we increase the Pacific health workforce capacity and capability in New Zealand by understanding the enablers and barriers to academic success for Samoan tertiary health students. In this thesis, I have specifically examined the factors that constrain and enable the progression and retention of Samoan learners into tertiary health education and through to graduation, through the use of qualitative techniques that involved Samoan alumni and current students studying in FMHS at the University of Auckland, staff responsible for support services for Pacific students at the university, and Samoan parents whose children are currently engaged in studies at the university. By drawing on the experiences of students who have previously encountered tertiary health education and training this thesis identifies the barriers, challenges, and risks that they faced and consequently presents some solutions to mitigate the risks and barriers. Moreover, by identifying the enablers, it is hoped that
these enablers can be replicated and implemented to facilitate the timely graduation of future Samoan and Pacific health learners.

Rather than adopting a Pan-Pacific approach, I have undertaken an ethnic specific approach based on the experiences of Samoan learners. This is because ethnic specific approaches provide a nuanced view for exploring the key issues in regards to health and education outcomes. The majority of research on Pacific peoples in New Zealand has taken a Pan-Pacific approach. The migrant experiences of Pacific communities are not necessarily the same in New Zealand due to differing immigration policies and relations between Pacific nations and New Zealand. Thus, Samoan learners were chosen to address the research questions given that I too identify as a Samoan learner.

Postcolonialism provides a theory in which we can describe New Zealand as a product of European cultural frameworks. Postcolonial concepts and ideas such as power and difference are useful to understand the sociohistorical minoritisation of Samoan communities through the hegemonic dominance of New Zealand/European culture. These postcolonial ideas including Said’s (1978) idea of Orientalism are also valuable for understanding how patterns of social inequities for Samoan and Pacific communities in New Zealand are associated with socioeconomic factors and institutional racism. By understanding the wider macro contexts of Samoan tertiary learners we can better understand the micro processes that influence their identity and learning processes. Similarly, the concepts of power and difference highlight how institutional racism is created in university through the replication of stigma and stereotyping in classrooms causing the disengagement of Pacific learners.

The data collected from the four key groups in this study has been (re)presented in the three analysis chapters of enablers and barriers, support, and lagimalie: harmonising two worlds. In Chapter Five I presented the key factors that participants identified as enablers and barriers to their success at university. They are grouped in; individual agency, family, university, friends, and spirituality factors. These categories are all interlinked and connected; on their own they are necessary but insufficient in determining successful learning outcomes for students. Current students and key informants from this study identified three important issues; these are the difficulty in managing time, having a passion and interest in a health career together with a positive attitude to learning, and finally families being the major motivator for students wanting success.
The enablers and barriers identified by the participants are highly complex and multilayered. As such any strategy to improve the learning achievements and outcomes of Samoan tertiary health students needs to address these various factors in various contexts. For example the retention of students requires pastoral and academic support at university as well as support for parents to understand the realities of academia. These supports would be supplemented with financial aid to enable students to dedicate most of their time to study. Consequently, this may explain why current strategies have yet to provide relevant and adequate solutions to improving the academic success rates of Samoan learners’ as they tend to focus on one of the categories in particular. That is, some solutions are university based whilst others are focused on financial assistance. These solutions are all important and are needed but as stand-alone measures they are not as effective if they were all integrated together. Any strategy devised to improve the outcomes of Samoan tertiary health learners needs to adopt an encompassing approach that attends to all or most of the barriers and enablers.

The Samoan learners in this study have highlighted that they have multiple contexts and places of learning; thus, Vygotsky’s theory of education recognises the importance and influence that these social and cultural contexts have in the development and learning of children. These contexts are based on fa’asamoa and New Zealand culture that is predominantly Eurocentric. Learning and education are not limited to the spaces and places of New Zealand classrooms, but also include the homes and cultural communities that are an important part of Samoan learners’ everyday lives. Liminality is a useful concept to explore how students move in-between cultures. For example some participants noted that during their early formative years their experiences were based solely on the Samoan culture. Once they entered formal education they began to move in-between the Samoan culture at home and the New Zealand/European culture of school and university. In this respect, liminality is used as a temporal and spatial concept to illustrate and understand how Samoan learners negotiate the two cultural contexts.

Fa’asamoa continues to have a place in New Zealand as Samoan communities through continue the practice of fa’asamoa in New Zealand. Most young Samoans are New Zealand born however; the rights that are assumed through citizenship are not easily afforded to Samoans. This is perhaps on the basis of discrimination. Samoans in New Zealand are still considered migrants and foreigners, rather than citizens. The construction of identity remains a complex issue for Samoans in New Zealand, who are by birthright New Zealanders, but are still treated and marginalised as others. As a
consequence, this impacts on their sense of belonging in New Zealand and more importantly in educational institutions.

The experiences of students’ learning support from university, friends, and family outlined in Chapter Six illustrates the complexities in supporting Samoan tertiary learners. Importantly, this chapter provides parents’ perspectives on family support for tertiary learners, and reveals and addresses the intricacies of support such as the reciprocity of support. Family support is viewed as bidirectional where the flow of support between families and students. While parents maintain that they will endeavour to support the education of their children to realise the aspirations of both parties, students also provide support for their families when needed. From the two perspectives, it is apparent that both students and parents are aware of the important support factors that are necessary to help students with their studies. These include providing students with the time and space to focus on their studies, managing fa’alavelaves so that students attend only those that are important to students, and parents showing interest in their children’s’ studies even if they themselves do not understand the topics. Parents and students both noted that the emotional support and moral encouragement was just as important as parents providing material resources. This chapter also highlights the need for clearer communication between parents and students. Open and coherent communication between parents and students clarifies misunderstandings and assumptions in terms of what support students need to meet both family and academic demands and expectations.

In regards to academic support students tend to rely on their peers, more so than on academic staff. However, some students singled out lecturers, both Pacific and non-Pacific, who were extremely supportive and helpful. Students also indicated that the most helpful support that universities can provide is in gaining a better sense of university culture. Within universities providing support requires mastering a balancing act to ensure learners are well supported but are also enabled to develop into independent learners.

In Chapter Seven I have shown how lagimalie and liminality illuminates the complexities of academic success for Samoan tertiary health learners in Chapter Seven. Lagimalie provides a metaphor to understand the complexities of cultural identities as opposed to the colonial binary assimilation model. In the Samoan literature, lagimalie is often used to describe the process and state of wellbeing. Lagimalie and liminality together provide a strategy for Samoan learners to contextualise learning so that they are better able to understand the material, which is presented to them by
integrating their two worldviews. Although some students are able to learn through this process for other students, it may not be as simple.

In this chapter I also outline the issues and implications in relation to Samoan learners in university through the use of lagimalie. Firstly, I use liminality to illustrate how harmony with oneself by merging the two different cultural contexts and geographies of Samoan learners can influence learning outcomes positively. Being liminal is not necessarily the same as being marginalised. Rather, instead of viewing cultural difference as a binary, that is, Samoan or New Zealand, students can position themselves somewhere in-between where they fuse the two cultures together. Thus, university can be a space of resistance in which Samoan students subvert stereotypes that are produced through the binary model of culture. Second, lagimalie can also show how some Samoan students have assimilated into New Zealand culture to some extent. Relationships with educators are currently a constraint for Samoan learners at university as they continue to feel marginalised. Said’s (1978) concept of Orientalism shows how the body is a discursive text and thus learning is embodied. For Samoan learners this impedes their learning as the stereotype of Samoan learners as underachievers are perpetuated in classrooms. The findings from this study shows that students often experienced institutional racism and therefore restrain from asking questions or engaging in discussions. One of the major challenges that Samoan tertiary learners face is achieving a sense of self and belonging at University. For Samoan learners, they do not feel as though they belong at university as situated in central Auckland, whilst most Samoan communities live in suburbs in South Auckland. The distance and space between Pacific learners at university and non-Pacific learners is both literal and metaphorical. By using Vygotsky’s concepts and lagimalie I have shown that culture matters and in describing the realities of Samoan learners, indigenous knowledges are still relevant in contemporary multicultural societies.

The education geographies of Samoan learners show that they do not feel the same sense of belonging at university that they felt at their high schools. New Zealand’s secondary schooling admission systems are based on zoning in order to provide equal access to state schooling. However, neighbourhoods are not all equal. Samoan and Pacific communities tend to clustered in neighbourhoods of high deprivation. Schools mirror and reflect neighbourhood characteristics and given that most Pacific communities live in high areas of deprivation, Pacific learners are likely to attend poorly resourced schools. Therefore, the spatial inequalities in education exist due to education policies and neighbourhood gentrification. This thesis provides a study that addresses the
gap in the geographies of educational literature by focusing on the geographies of Samoan learners who are characterised as both ethnic minorities and low income communities in New Zealand.

This thesis also contributes to the literatures on health education issues for ethnic minority groups, cultural identity issues for contemporary Samoans, and health and educational inequities of Samoan communities in New Zealand. In addition the three perspectives of students, parents, and providers presented in this thesis also enhance the knowledge base and literature on supporting Samoan and Pacific tertiary students. The voices of Samoan parents presented in this thesis provide a missing perspective from previous literature on supporting Samoan tertiary students.

This study provides a deeper insight into the cultural, social, and environmental contexts of Samoan tertiary health learners and how these impact on their learning outcomes. The findings reveal the cultural complexities to academic success that are relevant to Samoan and other Pacific communities in New Zealand. The implications outlined as to what it means to be a Samoan tertiary health learner in New Zealand provides a greater understanding on how and why culture and ethnic identity impacts on the learning journeys and learning outcomes of Samoan tertiary learners.

The Samoan cultural insights into the academic success of Samoan tertiary learners suggest that effective policies and strategies to improve the academic success of Samoan learners are grounded on culturally contextual evidence. The importance of familial relationships and *faʻasamoa* outlined in this thesis demonstrates that any strategies and/or interventions to improve the academic success of Samoan tertiary learners must be embedded within *faʻasamoa* and encompass both the family and academic dimensions of Samoan learners. Addressing the learning needs of Samoan and Pacific tertiary health students now will lead to better health and educational outcomes for Samoan communities in New Zealand in the future.
Appendices

Appendix 1 – Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms

Participant Information Sheet – Interviews

You are invited to be in a study conducted by myself, Roannie Ng Shiu, for the purpose of a PhD thesis for the department of Social and Community health at the University of Auckland. This study is about Pacific health workforce development in New Zealand. I want to contribute to our understanding of the barriers and enablers to Samoan students successfully completing tertiary health education programmes in a timely manner. An award from the Health Research Council funds this study.

I will come and talk to you at a time and place, which is convenient to you about your learning experiences as well as life experiences while you were studying at the University of Auckland. You do not have to take part in this study. It is your choice. If you do agree to take part, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason. You may take as much time as you like to think about whether or not to take part. Please feel free to discuss this with your aiga, family, or friends.

What are the aims of this study?

- To investigate what the enablers and challenges and barriers are for Samoan health students graduating in a timely manner.
- To identify strategies to grow a competent pool of Pacific health workers to meet the needs of Pacific communities today and in the future.

Who can be in the study

Alumni, past and current students from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at the University of Auckland who self-identify as Samoans will be eligible to participate in the study. Eligible participants have the opportunity to choose whether they wish to be a focus group participant or an interviewee or potentially both.

How many people will be in the study?

I hope that up to 35 people will take part in the study.
What happens if I do decide to take part?

If you decide you would like to take part in an interview, I will come to talk with you for about one to two hours. The interview will take place at a quiet and private venue of your choice such as your home, university or office and at a time that is convenient to you.

If you agree, I would like to record these discussions. You do not have to answer all the questions and you may stop the interview at any time, and withdraw your recorded information at any time. You do not have to give a reason for withdrawing.

If you wish, I will send you a copy of the transcript from the interview. You have the right to delete or change any portion of the transcript you do not want included in the study before returning it to me. I will provide a stamped self-addressed envelope.

If you later decide to withdraw completely from the study, you may do so up to the 30th August 2010.

If you would like, I can send you a short report of the findings from the study. You can also be invited to come to a meeting to hear about the findings of the study.

How long will the study take?

The study will start in March 2007 and will go until the end of March 2010.

The risks and benefits of the study

I do not believe there will be any risks from being in this study. In any information we present about the study, we will not use your name or places that could compromise your identity, unless you specify otherwise. We will not use the names of any people you mention.

I hope that this study will help Samoan students entering tertiary health education programmes to successfully complete their studies in a timely manner. Although we cannot guarantee that you will benefit directly from being involved in this study, I do hope to develop information for policy makers and tertiary providers.

Confidentiality

Nothing that could identify you or anyone you mention will be used in any reports on this study unless you specify otherwise.

When the study is finished, the interview records will be stored for six years in a secure place at the University of Auckland. All computer records will be password protected. All future use of the information collected will be strictly controlled under the Privacy Act.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 87830
Participant Information Sheet – Student Focus Groups

You are invited to be in a study conducted by myself, Roannie Ng Shiu, for the purpose of a PhD thesis for the Department of Social and Community Health at the University of Auckland. The study is about Pacific health workforce development in New Zealand. I want to know what are the barriers and enablers for Samoan students in successfully completing tertiary health education programmes in a timely manner. This study is funded by an award from the Health Research Council.

You are invited to take part in a focus group, a meeting of about 5 people, to talk about your life and learning experiences while studying at the University of Auckland. You do not have to take part in this study. It is your choice. If you do agree to take part, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason. You may take as much time as you like to think about whether or not to take part. Please feel free to discuss this with your aiga, family, or friends.

What are the aims of this study?
To investigate what the enablers and challenges and barriers are for Samoan health students graduating in a timely manner.
To identify strategies to grow a competent pool of Pacific health workers to meet the needs of Pacific communities today and in the future.

Who can be in the study
Alumni, past students and current students from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at the University of Auckland who self-identify as Samoans will be eligible to participate in the study. Eligible participants have the opportunity to choose whether they wish to be a focus group participant or an interviewee or potentially both.

How many people will be in the study?
I hope that up to 35 people will take part in the study.

What happens if I do decide to take part?
If you decide you would like to take part, you will be asked if you could please fill in a time use diary for one week. This involves filling in a one page table for one week in which you will be asked to record your main activity or activities that is. eating, sleeping, study, family time, church and so forth. An example will be given as a guide to help participants. This is strictly voluntary but is beneficial for the study.
The focus group sessions will take one to two hours of your time. You will be asked to come and meet with 3 to 4 other people to talk with them. The focus group will take place in at the University of Auckland Tamaki campus. I will pay for any travel costs and provide some light refreshments. I would like to record these discussions. You do not have to answer all the questions and you may leave the group at any time. If you do decide to leave, however, I cannot withdraw any recorded comments you have made. Because this is a focus group, your participation and what you say will be known to other members of the group. We ask that you agree to not to discuss with anyone else what is said by other people in the focus group.

How long will the study take?
The study will start in August 2007 and will go until the end of March 2010.

The risks and benefits of the study
I do not believe there will be any risks from being in this study. In any information we present about the study, we will not use your name or anything that could identify you, unless you specify otherwise. We will not use the names of any people you mention. I hope that this study will help Samoan students entering tertiary health education programmes to successfully complete their studies in a timely manner. Although we cannot guarantee that you will benefit directly from being involved in this study, I do hope to develop information for policy makers and tertiary providers.

Confidentiality
Nothing that could identify you or anyone you mention will be used in any reports on this study unless you specify otherwise. When the study is finished the interview records will be stored for six years in a secure place at the University of Auckland and then destroyed. All computer records will be password protected. All future use of the information collected will be strictly controlled under the Privacy Act.
Participant Information Sheet - Parent Focus Groups

You are invited to be in a study conducted by myself, Roannie Ng Shiu, for the purpose of a PhD thesis for the Department of Social and Community Health at the University of Auckland. The study is about Pacific health workforce development in New Zealand. I want to know what are the barriers and enablers for Samoan students in successfully completing tertiary health education programmes in a timely manner. This study is funded by an award from the Health Research Council.

You are invited to take part in a focus group, a meeting of about four to six people, to talk about your experience as a parent of a student studying at the University of Auckland. You do not have to take part in this study. It is your choice. If you do agree to take part, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason. You may take as much time as you like to think about whether or not to take part. Please feel free to discuss this with your aiga, family, or friends.

What are the aims of this study?

- To investigate what the enablers and challenges and barriers are for Samoan health students graduating in a timely manner.
- To identify strategies to grow a competent pool of Pacific health workers to meet the needs of Pacific communities today and in the future.

Who can be in the study?

Alumni, past students and current students from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at the University of Auckland who self-identify as Samoans and their parents will be eligible to participate in the study.

How many people will be in the study?

I hope that up to 35 people will take part in the study.

What happens if I do decide to take part? The focus group sessions will take one to two hours of your time. You will be asked to come and meet with four to six other people to talk with them. The focus group will take place at the Manurewa EFKS Church Hall, 1 Gibbs Road, Manurewa. I will pay for any travel costs and provide some light refreshments.

I would like to record these discussions. You do not have to answer all the questions and you may leave the group at any time. If you do decide to leave, however, I cannot withdraw any recorded comments you have made.
Because this is a focus group, your participation and what you say will be known to other members of the group. We ask that you agree to not to discuss with anyone else what is said by other people in the focus group.

**How long will the study take?**
The study will start in August 2007 and will go until the end of March 2010.

**The risks and benefits of the study**
I do not believe there will be any risks from being in this study. In any information we present about the study, we will not use your name or anything that could identify you, unless you specify otherwise. We will not use the names of any people you mention. I hope that this study will help Samoan students entering tertiary health education programmes to successfully complete their studies in a timely manner. Although we cannot guarantee that you will benefit directly from being involved in this study, I do hope to develop information for policy makers and tertiary providers.

**Confidentiality**
Nothing that could identify you or anyone you mention will be used in any reports on this study unless you specify otherwise. When the study is finished the interview records will be stored for six years in a secure place at the University of Auckland and then destroyed. All computer records will be password protected. All future use of the information collected will be strictly controlled under the Privacy Act.
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

This Consent Form will be stored for six years in a locked cabinet, separate from data, on University premises, before it is destroyed.

I have read and I understand the Information Sheet and have had the details of the research explained to me.

My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to decline to answer any particular question.

I know that participating in this study is my choice and that I may leave at any time.

I know that up until 30th August 2010 I can ask to have the recording of my interview withdrawn.

I know that my name will not be used in any report or the interview and that anything I talk about will be reported in such a way that I cannot be recognised unless I specify otherwise.

I have had time to think about whether to take part.

I know whom to contact if I have any questions about the study.

Yes / No I agree to have this interview recorded. I know the recording will be cared for respectfully by the researcher.

Yes / No I want to be sent a copy of the transcript of this interview, and know that I have up to four weeks to take out or change parts of the text.

Yes / No I want to be sent a short written copy of the overall results when they come out.

Yes / No I want to be invited to come to a meeting where the researcher will explain the overall results of the study.

Yes / No I consent to my information in this study being used for other studies in the future, only if the researcher gets approval from an official New Zealand Ethics Committee.

I, _________________________ (name), of _____________________________ (address), consent to take part in the Building the Pacific Health Workforce Capacity study.

Signed: _________________________

Date: _________________________
FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

I have read and I understand the Information Sheet and have had the details of the research explained to me.

My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand I may ask further questions at any time.

I know that participating in this study is my choice and that I may leave at any time.

I know that if I leave the focus group early it will not be possible to withdraw any of my comments

I know that my name will not be used in any report of the focus group and that anything I talk about will be reported in such a way that I cannot be recognised.

I have had time to think about whether to take part.

I know whom to contact if I have any questions about the study.

Yes / No I agree to take part in the focus group knowing that it will be recorded.

Yes / No I agree that I will not discuss the participants of the focus group or anything that could identify them.

_____________(signature)

Yes / No I want to be sent a copy of the transcript of this interview, and know that I have up to four weeks to take out or change parts of the text.

Yes / No I want to be sent a short written copy of the overall results when they come out.

Yes / No I want to be invited to come to a meeting where the researcher will explain the overall results of the study.

Yes / No I consent to my information in this study being used for other studies in the future, only if the researcher gets approval from an official New Zealand Ethics Committee

I, ________________________ (name), of _____________________________ (address), consent to take part in the Building Pacific Health Workforce Capacity Study.

Signed: _______________________

Date: ________________________

This Consent Form will be stored for six years in a locked cabinet, separate from data, on University premises, before it is destroyed.
Appendix 2 – Interview and Focus Group Schedules

Interview Questions

Learning History

1. Can you please tell me about what interested you in a health career?
   - When was it that you decided that this is what you wanted to do in life?
   - Who were your main influences?
   - What motivated you?
   - Did you go to University straight after school?

2. What was your experience studying at the University of Auckland like?
   - Workload and expectations
   - Were you living at home while studying?
     - What do you think were some of the advantages?
     - What do you think were some of the disadvantages?

3. Based on your experience do you think that secondary education adequately prepares students for tertiary education?
   - Why or why not?

Enablers

4. Based on your experience what were the things that helped you while you were studying?
   - Social
   - Educational
   - Other

5. Who do you feel are the key people or groups that provide you with the most support while you were studying?
   - Why do you feel this way?
   - What did they do to support you?
   - Based on your experience how would you define family support?

Barriers

6. Can you please tell me what difficulties or problems you experienced while studying?
   - Institutional problems?
   - Family problems?
   - Financial problems?
   - Health problems
   - Cultural barriers? What do you think are cultural barriers?
   - Language barriers?

7. Did you ever seek help to deal with these problems?
   - Why/why not?
   - From who and where?
   - Was this help beneficial?
What could have been done to help you?
Who do you think would have been able to help you the best?

Social attitudes / view points

8. If someone were to ask “what ethnicity are you?” how would you answer them?

9. What does being a Samoan mean to you?

10. Do you think that your learning experiences differed from your non-Samoan counterparts and if so how?
   - What impact did being a Samoan have on your learning experience, if any?
     - Fa’asamoa
     - Church
     - Fa’alavelave’s
     - Other
   - What aspects of Samoan culture do you think are or would be helpful for learning?
   - What aspects of Samoan culture do you think are unhelpful to learning?

Opportunities

11. In the University of Auckland EO annual report for 2005 it states that ‘Pacific students have the poorest pass rates in health programmes at the University of Auckland’. What do you think about this statement and why?
   - What strategies would you implement in order to help future and current tertiary health students succeed and graduated in a timely manner?
     - Services
     - Social
     - Schools

12. Do you think many Samoan young people are interested in a career in health? Why or why not?
   - How do you think we could increase the number of Samoan tertiary health students?
   - How would you promote a career in health to Samoan communities and why?
**Focus Group Questions**

1. Tell your neighbour about your shoes you are wearing today and why you decided to wear them?

**POST IT 1:** In the University of Auckland EO annual report for 2005 it states that *Pacific students have the poorest pass rates in health programmes at the University of Auckland*. What do you think about this statement and why?

2. a. What do you think are the things that helped or aided Samoan health students’ graduate in a timely manner?

    b. What do you think are the barriers for Samoan health students graduating in a timely manner?

    **University environment**
    - Learning environment
    - Tutoring
    - Support – Peers, mentors, tutors, lectures

    **Community environment**
    - Obligation/commitments
    - Church
    - Sports teams / community groups support

    **Home environment**
    - Fa’alavelaves
    - Obligations/commitments
    - Family Support

    **Financial barriers/opportunities**
    - Scholarships
    - Working
    - Student Loans

Would you promote a career in health to Samoan communities, why or why not?

- How would you promote health careers?
- How do you think we could increase the number of Samoan tertiary health students?
3. What impact do you think being Samoan has on Samoan students’ learning experiences, if any?

- Your perceptions
- Your experiences
- Aspects of fa’asamo

What are some of the things that motivated you while studying?

- How do you think these motivations compare with other Pacific classmates?
- How do you think these motivations compare with non-Pacific classmates?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POST IT 2: What strategies/ plans/ courses of action that would you implement in order to help future and current tertiary health students succeed and graduate in a timely manner?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Services
| • Social / Community
| • Institutional – Universities, secondary schools |
### Participant Questionnaire:

Please answer the following questionnaire. Tick boxes where applicable:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Age:</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Gender:</td>
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<td>□ Female □ Male</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Occupation/Profession:</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Qualification(s):</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Specialty/Level of seniority if applicable:</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Secondary School(s):</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Place of Birth:</td>
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<td>□ New Zealand Born</td>
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<td>□ Samoan Born</td>
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<td>□ Other (please specify):</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Ethnicity:</td>
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<td>□ Full Samoan</td>
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<td>If multiple ethnicities please specify:</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Are you fluent in Samoan?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Can understand the language but can’t speak it</td>
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<td>□ No</td>
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Focus Group Questions for Parents

1. What do you think are the priorities or important things for university students?
   * Do you think students have enough time for family commitments?
   * Do you think students have enough time for study?

2. What does family support in general mean to you?
   * Is this different to how you perceive family support during high school?
   * What do you think parents should do to support their children while at university?

3. How do you support your children while they are at university?
   * What do you do to support them?
   * Do you think they need your support? If so in what way?

4. Do your children come to you when they need support with university?
   * What things do they need support with? (Finance, transport, work?)
### Appendix 3 – Time Use Diary Template and Instructions

**Samoan health students time use diary for the week 28 July - 03 August 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
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</table>

**Instruction:** Please record your main activity/activities for each block e.g. eating, sleeping, studying, exercising, church, socialising with friends, family obligations.
Time Use Diary Example from Student 1 (5th Year Medical Student)

Instruction: Please record your main activity/activities for each block eg eating, sleeping, studying, exercising, church, socialising with friends, family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday 28</th>
<th>Tuesday 29</th>
<th>Wednesday 30</th>
<th>Thursday 31</th>
<th>Friday 1</th>
<th>Saturday 2</th>
<th>Sunday 3</th>
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Instruction: Please record your main activity/activities for each block eg eating, sleeping, studying, exercising, church, socialising with friends, family.
Appendix 4 – Support Diary Template and Instructions

Instructions:

- Please fill in the date for each entry starting from Monday 19th October until the last day of your exam. An example has been provided as a guide.

- In the shaded area for each group record all the supportive actions that you received from Family, University, Friends and other groups for example Church. Supportive actions include anything that you found supportive in terms of helping you with your studies such as moral, practical, verbal and financial support etc. For example: Family – provided transport, lunch money; University – extra tutorials for exams; Friends – moral support.

- In the white areas record actions or practices that you found unsupportive, in other words things that did not help you in terms of your study. For example: Family – you had to look after younger sibling; University – tutor did not have time to meet with you; Friends – wanted you to go movies.

- If you have any queries please contact me, my details are above.

- Once you have completed your diary please email or phone me and I will come and collect them from you.
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Transport – dropped off &amp; picked up to Uni</td>
<td>Got train fare from older brother</td>
<td>Mum did my chores so I can study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Got lunch money</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-support</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Extra tutorial for exam preparation for FOPHLT 101</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Had to spend the morning looking after sick sister</td>
<td>Met with lecturer who helped me with a tricky topic</td>
<td>Had to go to family lunch for 4 hours</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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Support Diary Example from 1st year Bachelor in Health Sciences Student

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Got home after a long day, dinner was already prepared.</td>
<td>Got dropped off and picked up at the train station</td>
<td>Got my little brother to shop me off at the train station</td>
<td>Dad died my home, I was on my way to school</td>
<td>Parents through the house, they had already made dinner</td>
<td>Mum in Dad's car, off to uni today</td>
<td>Had evening prayers, said a prayer, wished us luck for exams, got a hard in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>University work for ‘MEDSCI 142’.</td>
<td>Helped put me up to the room, ‘MEDSCI’ taken Thursday.</td>
<td>Had friends that helped me with my ‘CHEM’ pre-lab.</td>
<td>Learnt a lot about ventilation today, lab, had fun.</td>
<td>Got exam heads up from HUM, ‘APCH’ tutor today</td>
<td>Came to the Library with a friend to study for exams.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Met with my mates and we all studied up in the library.</td>
<td>Missed my lab because I missed the train (nearly left it).</td>
<td></td>
<td>End of days at work, students are drinking so I got distracted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Came back to town and went for a feed for 2 hours.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Went shopping today with friends and wasted time instead of studying (exams are near).</td>
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</table>

The trains were 10 mins delayed today.
### Appendix 5 – A priori Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Codes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Style</td>
<td>Collective learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wrote learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cognitive construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary School Preparation</td>
<td>Low decile schools perception</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High decile schools perception</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic ability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career guidance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teacher support</td>
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<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Access to services/lecturers</td>
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<td>Awareness of services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Participation in lectures/tutorials</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mentors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scholarships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fa’asamoa</td>
<td>Fa’aaloalo (respect)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pride</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Obedience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Perception of family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aiga/Familism</td>
<td>Importance of education by parents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Supportive actions</td>
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<td>Moral encouragement</td>
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<td>Tensions in priority</td>
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<td>Liminality</td>
<td>University self</td>
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<td>Home self</td>
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<td>Community self</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discourse</td>
<td>Power relationships</td>
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<td>- Lecturer</td>
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<td>- Parents</td>
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<td>- Tutorials</td>
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<td>Content of courses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teaching style of lecturers</td>
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</table>
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