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The Effects of Social Policy Upon the Tongan Kainga.

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Philosophy in Social Policy at Massey University

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Abstract

In New Zealand social policies are continually developed and lived out of a democratic society. Each day the New Zealand airport is busy with a growing number of foreign migrants arriving into New Zealand prepared to start a new life. Many of these migrants are Pacific Islanders who have left their beautiful, unpolluted seaside island and have come to New Zealand with a dream to seek opportunities and resources available to ensure a better quality of life for themselves and their families. Tongan migrants are amongst the many Pacific Islanders who arrive into New Zealand with this dream. This thesis describes the fononga (journey) of Tongan-born parents to New Zealand in the 1970s and their settlement with the birth of their first generation New Zealand-born Tongan children and the impacts of social policies effecting the construction of the Tongan kainga (family).

As a practitioner (social worker) and an “inside researcher” within my own Tongan community I know and understand that the kainga (family) is who you identify with and how others identify you. For the purpose of this research, four families; seven individual parents (3 sets of a husband and wife group and one father) and twelve young individuals defined as youth aged between 15-25 years following consent participated in this research. I will present subjectively the conflicting views found as a result of intense qualitative interviewing of Tongan-born parents and their New Zealand-born children (youth) in the same family unit.

This research is inclusive of a socio-historical overview of Tongan culture from the creation myth to the introduction of Modern Tonga, the monarchy, the migration of the Tongan-born parents to New Zealand and an illustration of the conflicting worlds that exist between the New Zealand born youth and their Tongan-born parents. This research will look at how social policy development is vital to minimising the gap between the two conflicting worlds.
Acknowledgements

As I sit and begin to list the names of specific individuals who have contributed in some way towards ensuring the completion of this thesis, I reflect back to when I was 23 years old and decided to travel back to Tongatapu with the purpose of acculturating my New Zealand born self into the faka-Tonga (the Tongan) way of life. My ‘fononga’ (journey) to really discover who I am as a young Tongan woman were plans towards achieving something that was purely academic and has now become passionately personal in my heart. Some years later, I am pleased to say I have finally arrived at the end of my ‘fononga’ in this part of the study but continue to go about “my business” with the passion that the fononga of this thesis has ignited in my community.

First and foremost I give all praise and glory to God, I acknowledge the relationship I have with my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and the strength he continually brings to me as each day He greets me with His joy in the morning. I know that what I have achieved in my life is because of you my Lord. I thank you for teaching me patience, perseverance, endurance and a commitment to finishing this race. This thesis is for your glory and your glory alone Lord.

To my kainga – I would like to first acknowledge my namesake, my beautiful grandmother Grandma Emeline Frances Afeaki. Thank you for the sacrifices and the foresight that you and Grandpa Sefo had to come to New Zealand in 1966 to lay the foundations for your children (all twelve of them), your grandchildren and generations to follow so that we would receive the many opportunities and create a better quality of life that you both dreamed of. I thank you for your unconditional love towards our entire kainga both here in New Zealand and in Tonga.

To my parents Fakaloloma Patrick Sepastiano and Edith-Mary (nee Percival) you have been incredibly supportive in my adventures to find my cultural identity and sense of belonging. You both have provided me with
unconditional love and support regardless of what decisions I have made and I love you both so much, even though at times I always think I'm fia'poto and I know everything – it has always been your constant showering of love, respect, humility and support that has allowed me to be who I truly am – your daughter. To my beautiful siblings, Rachel – what can say, ‘I want to be just like you!’ and Percival – ‘wow, I’ve finally finished it!! You have both been my towers of strength by keeping me grounded and reminding me about ‘keeping things real’ throughout this ‘fononga’. Finally, thank you to my little cousin Edith who is more like my little sister, I hope you enjoy reading about our history. The Lord has blessed me greatly with an awesome ‘kainga’.

I would like to bless the founding members of the first NZ born Tongan youth group from St Therese, Mangere - Tongans In Christ (TIC). You all rock!!! I want to dedicate this publication to you, because we all share the same journey of discovery towards cultural identity as young Tongans in New Zealand. Please never forget why we started our youth group, to be a voice – but to first love the lord, and to love our neighbour. As a Tongan in Christ for life, it is the love for our Lord, our parents and each other as a church ‘kainga’ that will always remain. Bless you!!

One of the advantages of working in the community is having a collective team to contribute to and to receive from. A huge thank you to the team at Affirming Women (AW) especially to those (and you know who you are) who worked late and in some cases all night to ensure the completion of this thesis. Thank you Siautu Alefaio, Moe Sapou, Taua Amosa, Stephen Wolfgramm (who has been there right from the beginning!!!) Matele Misa, Owen Aereanga, Stan Afeaki, Jeff Matai, Mareko Sagala, Carey Thomas, Renee Haitoua, Tia Suemai, Lesi Misa, Fatima Vaaga, Faye Ioane-Hunt, Wilson Marsh, Kali Lolohea, Daisy Halafihi, Matt Epati, Moana Burling, Matangi Aerenga, Villette Haitoua, Leah Burson, Sala and Papa Tuilaepa. Thank you Fofola Consultancy - Luana Siaosi and the Community Storehouse Trust; Allan Va’a, Willie Maea, Gina Siaosi and Sarah Mcrobie and the Sanctuary Church; Pastor Luke and Marieta Kaa-Morgan. I would also like to acknowledge the support of my dearest friends Yvonne Walsh, Grace and
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Finally, to the four families who participated and contributed to the thesis, bless you for opening up your homes and your hearts to me. I am still humbled at your many pearls of wisdom shared without this information, this research would not exist. I am truly grateful. It is your stories, your dreams that will give further hope to our Tongan people – for both Tongan born parents and their New Zealand-born Tongan generations to follow.

Malo ‘Aupito.
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