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**TONGAN MOTHERS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEIR YOUNG  
CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND:  
*LUKULUKU 'A E KAU FA'Ē TONGA'  
KI HE AKO 'ENAU FĀNAU IIKI' 'I NU'U SILA***

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Education  
at Massey University  
Palmerston North  
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**2008**



*An artificial Kakala Nusi Heilala made of beads and plastic*

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the complex nature of how Tongan mothers in New Zealand contribute to their young children's *ako* (learning, and general education) in their homes, in the early childhood centre and primary school settings, and in church and the community. It argues that the mothers' contribution to their children's *ako* is based mainly on their cultural background, educational experience in Tonga, and their Christian faith, plus new knowledge they have picked up in New Zealand. Through the use of *talanoa* (conversation, questions and discussion) in Tongan and English languages, data were gathered from a small community in a town in the North Island, New Zealand and were coded, analysed, and presented.

The participants draw on skills and knowledge of child-rearing strategies and educational practices experienced in Tonga before their migration to this country. However, when implemented in New Zealand, some aspects prove contradictory to the current practice in Aotearoa. The mothers find these emerging tensions frustrating, yet ongoing, but new learning in this country and their Christian faith help enhance their practice.

The findings show that the mothers' use of Tongan language, cultural values, beliefs, and practices, with the lived experience of their Christian faith, is effective in teaching the children social and moral education, while contributing to their academic learning and still be preserving their Tongan culture, language, and identity. The mothers' shared use of Tongan language, cultural values and Christian faith enable them to create and maintain good relationships with teachers and other mothers for making worthwhile contributions to their children's *ako* in the selected contexts. Most of the mothers are involved in most activities, and nearly all participate where Tongan language is used and Tongan culture and Christianity are practised. It is acknowledged that some contributions create dilemmas and mismatches of expectations between the women and mainstream educational institutions.

The women's efforts, accessing information in Tongan, and operating in education using *faka-Tonga* ways, and creating warm relationships among the mothers, teachers, and children who contribute to one another's learning reveal the complex nature of mothers' contributions to their children's education. They shuttle from one context to another, using their *faka-Tonga* ways, views and practices to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities, while going through transformation in their participation. Based on these findings, implications for mothers, teachers/educators, researchers, and policymakers are considered, and suggestions for future research directions are made that may benefit the growing Tongan population since it is they who have the main responsibility for young Tongan children's *ako* in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

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It is my hope that this small token to Tongan Mothers and their contribution to their children's education in Aotearoa will expand to benefit all children in New Zealand.

*Malo 'aupito  
Tu'a 'ofa'eiki atu.*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction to the study

*Ko e fānau ko e me'a mahuinga taha ia 'i' māmani*□

(Children are the most important things in the world)

### Introduction

Tongan mothers' contribution to their children's *ako*/learning is the focus of this study. This research looks at the contributions a group of Tongan mothers, living in New Zealand, make to their children's educational efforts in this country. Questions about the how and what and when and where especially the why, are fundamental to the thesis.

There is little doubt that both the New Zealand government and traditional Tongan society accept the importance of focusing on the child. However there may be factors, both cultural and historical, that affect the teaching of young children in Tongan homes in terms of content and approach that result in a mismatch between New Zealand's educational expectations and those of Tongan parents. Both the New Zealand government and traditional Tongan culture agree that children are most important (Thaman, 1988; Tongati'o, 1994).

The implementation of two landmark New Zealand government initiatives – the adoption and adaptation of America's Parents as First Teachers (PAFT) policy in 1993 and with the Ministry of Education funding for language nests for migrant and English as second-language communities in 1996 – recognised the links between the home and early childhood education as well as the significant role culture plays in the social and educational development of children.<sup>1</sup>

There is little research in this area with Pasifika groups. Mara (2000) writes; 'The real gap in policy development to date has been an articulated understanding of the

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education funding for the language nests (*Anau Ako* in Cook Island Maori) became official policy in 1996 though 150 families had been involved in a pilot programme from 1991 to 1995. From 1996 Pacific Island access to these programmes increased when they switched from merely play groups to all-day care. A 1993 study indicated that government efforts lagged behind community initiatives in this area.

evaluation of quality and best practices for Pacific Island Early Childhood Education'. She adds that statistics alone are insufficient to indicate the levels of quality of provision, of training and qualifications, of cultural values and knowledge, and of linguistic skills in transmission. In an attempt to address aspects of this claim this research investigates aspects of maternal influence on Tongan youngsters currently living in New Zealand to ascertain the degree to which mothering practices and beliefs coincide with and support the education goals of the local educational system.

### **Purpose of the study**

Tongan youngsters, raised in New Zealand, are bilingual almost by default, given the strength of cultural and linguistic ties<sup>2</sup> in the home and the prevalence of English in the wider community. The specific focus of this research is on what and how a group of twelve Tongan mothers contribute to their children's education in three selected contexts in New Zealand:

- in the home;
- in the early childhood centre and junior primary school settings;
- in the church and the community at large.

The study, carried out in a mid-size city in the North Island of New Zealand, recruited a small group of twelve Tongan mothers to participate in this qualitative research. Participant observations with personal interviews, using semi-structured questions, were conducted in the specific contexts stated above.

These women grew up and attended school in Tonga, receiving instruction in their mother tongue. They subsequently migrated to New Zealand where they married and raised their New Zealand-born children. Although they had a working knowledge of English in Tonga and picked up more while living in New Zealand, their understanding of 'education' (*ako*) was, not surprisingly, based on what they had themselves experienced in the islands. This thesis, then, explores the actions these women actually take to contribute to their children's *ako* – at home, in a formal educational setting, and in the wider community. The contexts to be explored include the home within which

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<sup>2</sup> Analysis of 2006 New Zealand population census returns indicated that Tongans, along with Samoans and Tuvaluans, have the highest proportion of ethnic Pacific Island people living in New Zealand able to speak their own language.

the family is located; the early childhood education centre, which includes play groups and Tongan language nests, and the junior primary school settings; and the church and their local community. The research looks at what motivates the mothers to contribute to their children's education and what determines the type of contribution, direct and indirect, they make. There is an exploration of the strategies these women use to overcome any barriers they may face. The research also looks at how they manage these challenges while shuttling daily from Tongan norms and cultural practices to *pālangi*<sup>3</sup> ways in terms of language, and cultural expectations, practices and beliefs.

### **Importance of the study**

During the 1980s and 1990s the researcher was involved initially in assisting Tongan mothers to enrol their youngsters in early childhood education centres, and at primary school. Social and academic support for mothers and children was provided throughout the first year of attendance. Although a small number of mothers managed very well, most of these women spoke only limited English and were struggling to settle in a new country, to make contact with the school, to get to know their neighbours and to become involved with other parents at school or in the early childhood centre. In their desire to make contact with other Tongans as well as other Pacific communities in the area, they often sought help from Pacific parents who themselves appeared not to have a comprehensive understanding of the New Zealand education system, how learning takes place in the classroom, how such learning is reinforced at home and in the community, or even how to seek help from the school. There is clearly a need to understand how these mothers (and their children) struggle in New Zealand – teachers who know more about their Tongan students outside the classroom will be better able to meet their children's needs within the classroom. My role as occasional interpreter for Tongan families in the hospital and the Immigration services provides further evidence of the need for mothers and their children to be supported at an early stage of school in order to do well in education so that they help the parents in similar situations outside school.

This study investigates the 'what' and the 'how' of Tongan mothers' contributions to their young children's education in New Zealand in the three specific areas mentioned. But while the connection between mothers and their children is self-evident, this study

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<sup>3</sup> Tongan word for 'European'.

is centred on the mothers themselves, seeking to identify those factors they find the same as in Tongan society and those seen as different. Clearly familiar norms and practices will be less a source of stress but those that differ markedly from Tongan experience may well prove markedly so. Mothers will need to decide, if they identify such differences, whether to embrace the *pālangi* ways either entirely or partially, or whether to ignore them and continue in their accustomed manner. Differences in attitude and approach to education experienced by the Tongan mothers, and the ways they cope with the pressure to adapt, are a further focus of this study.

In this research the Tongan mothers have a voice. They tell their stories in their own power of speech, which "... claims authenticity and authority for their representation of an actual social world" (Atkinson, 1990, cited in Davidson & Tolich, 1999). To have their voice heard, and documented, in terms of their aspirations, desires, actions and their ambitions for their children's education and future in New Zealand, appealed to many of the study participants. New Zealand, to these women, is an unfamiliar context in which they have used the strategies and techniques they learnt in Tonga to support and even 'push' their children to succeed in an unfamiliar/unknown education system. Many sought reassurance that they were doing the right thing, and being the subject of an academic project seemed a form of validation for a number of the interviewees.

This research, in its descriptions and analyses of Tongan mothers as 'first teachers', provides an insight into the home-based learning culture and strategies of these Tongan families. Research based on the 2006 census found that at 19% Tongans were the third largest group within New Zealand's Pacific community after Samoans (49%) and Cook Island Maori (22%). With a large proportion of the Pacific population under 15 years of age this has distinct ramifications for New Zealand's classroom educators from early childhood through to tertiary levels.<sup>4</sup> Of particular importance is that if Tongan mothers felt more comfortable in the New Zealand educational arena than many would seem to be at present, this could result in valuable spin-offs for children, parents and communities alike. A stronger home-school link in which Tongan mothers frequent their children's formal learning institutions and contribute significantly to the policies

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<sup>4</sup> More than half the Tongan population was born in New Zealand; they live predominantly in urban areas, especially Auckland.

and programmes therein, could be an important way to break down the current cultural barriers many Pacific Island mothers of pre- and primary-school children appear to feel.

### **Background to the study**

Tongan women became part of the New Zealand social scene in the early 1970s when they came to work under the Government Work Scheme negotiated between the New Zealand and Tongan governments. However, it was the 1980s, and the advent of the visa-free immigration policy of the Labour Government in 1986, that saw the largest influx of Tongans (and other Pacific Islanders) (Halapua, 1998). Since then, high birth rates plus continued inflow through immigration have caused the number to grow.

Although there were already Tongans who were permanent residents, living mainly in Auckland, numbers markedly grew in the '80s and into the '90s. They came to work in factories in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, and the Hutt Valley, with a few in Tokoroa and Christchurch. After their work permits expired, many chose to stay on illegally,<sup>5</sup> and those who had young families in Tonga often sent for them and settled permanently here. Among these were families with children of preschool, primary and secondary school age, including some of the women who are now parents of young children and on which the present study is focused.

Most of these families had left behind close relatives and well-furnished homes in Tonga. Some parents had left behind secure, white-collar jobs in responsible positions to come to New Zealand and live in overcrowded conditions. Many gave their reason for doing so as simply to give their children a good education. An overseas education in an English-speaking country was perceived as of paramount importance to many Tongan parents wanting the best for their offspring. Parents often had to find jobs in factories; many took on shift-work, which meant they would only see the children for a few hours each day. Others worked in a variety of part-time jobs where they had to travel considerable distances to get to work. They all had to pay rents and buy consumables, which took a large proportion of their weekly wages. In contrast, back in Tonga, the family would have lived on their own land and been able to grow or otherwise procure a large portion of their daily needs.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The infamous police 'dawn raids' of the 1980s and 1990s tended to target 'over-stayers' of Pacific Island ethnicity.

<sup>6</sup> At the time all Tongan males were entitled to the grant of a city and bush '*api* on reaching adulthood. This meant that renting property was not a common practice in the Kingdom and also allowed Tongans access to land to grow their own food.

However, the inflow of Tongan migrants continued. Of the young adolescents, some received education and then got jobs, but those in this study all eventually got married, settled in New Zealand, and had children. It is this generation of women, now mothers aged between 25 and 44, that makes up the group on which this study is focused. The majority had settled first in Auckland but all have lived in '*Uta-mama'o*'<sup>7</sup> in the last decade. All mothers reported experiencing the 'culture shock' that is characteristic of migration (Halapua, 1998), yet they wanted to ensure a 'good future' for their children. Although their knowledge of Tongan language, and Tongan cultural values, beliefs and practices remains strong, their limited knowledge of English and lack of comprehensive knowledge of *pālangi* culture has created tensions between maintaining the *faka-Tonga* (Tongan way) for the sake of their children's cultural identity and allowing their children to learn the *pālangi* ways in order to do well at school (Helu-Thaman, 1996). These mothers constantly face this dilemma, and have to negotiate their priorities in their daily lives. This study thus explores the reason why, and the ways in which these Tongan mothers work towards helping their children to get a good education – good enough to get higher qualifications – and a better paid job (preferably a white-collar job) than they would have had had they been raised in the islands.

### **Research parameters**

The study looks at what motivates the mothers, including their cultural values on which their social construct is based. The study also looks at western theoretical models, such as those of Vygotsky (1978, 1981) and Rogoff (1990, 1991, 1995, 2003) to gauge how far they can be applied to these Tongan mothers and their actions within the identified New Zealand contexts.

This study includes a small-scale qualitative investigation employing an ethnographic approach to collect data through interviews, observations, and fieldwork on the experiences of 12 Tongan mothers who migrated to this country and live with their families in '*Uta-mama'o*' in the North Island. At the time of the research these mothers

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<sup>7</sup> This fictional place name, meaning 'far away place in the bush' is utilised throughout the research to ensure the privacy of those who took part in the interviews. This is the 'name' most Tongans in Auckland (who have never traveled outside that big city) use for towns and small cities out of Auckland.

had young children up to eight years of age. A '*Kakala Model*' of research, designed by Thaman (2003), was used as a model for the data collection.

The methodology throughout this study is primarily qualitative. Using an ethnographic approach, the Tongan mothers were approached after approval from Massey University Human Ethics Committee was received. The means of data collection included in-depth interviews that were audio-taped, participant-observations at home, in the early childhood language centre, and in school settings, as well as in church activities and community functions. Field notes were kept of the observations. For both the interview and the analysis phases, a phenomenological research method was employed to 'bracket off' the influence of the researcher's prior knowledge of both Tongan ways and the contexts involved. Denzin and Lincoln (1994, cited in Bourke, 2000) argue that qualitative researchers require multiple methods within their paradigms to appreciate fully the complexity of the phenomena under investigation. The characteristics of this study place it in the qualitative realm, according to Merriam's definition (2001, p. 25) as it includes an interest in the meaning people (mothers) have constructed, the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis, the involvement in fieldwork in various selected contexts, and the use of an inductive research method. This is further discussed in the chapter on Methodology.

### **Limitations of the study**

Despite the rigour of the research approach of this study, certain limitations must be recognised. First, the study involves only a very small number of mothers whose upbringing in Tonga, and initial experience in New Zealand may be very different from that of other Tongan mothers currently in New Zealand. While this research provides an in-depth look at the experiences and practices of the research group, extrapolation of the conclusions to the wider community must be treated with care simply because of the small nature of the sample.

The data collection and the analysis were carried out from January 2004 to December 2005, a period of 22 months. The intent was to capture the important ceremonial times for Tongans during the year, including Easter, the Special Children's Sunday in May, Mother's Day and Father's Day (in Tonga), and the family week. It also included the prize-giving ceremonies at school and kindergartens, Christmas, New Year, and the beginning of the next school year. However, activities outside this time-frame were not

covered and observations of funerals where young children perform certain tasks were not included as accounts of such are considered rude in Tongan culture. Cultural considerations, of both the researcher and those participating, have then placed some limitations on the comprehensive nature of the research.

A further consideration is the nature of the participant-observation technique. The Tongan community in New Zealand, and in *'Uta-mama'o* in particular, is close knit. With the continued importance of the extended family unit and the strong role of the church in people's lives, Tongans living in *'Uta-mama'o* tend to mingle socially particularly with others of the same church and the same ethnicity. As a consequence, it was not surprising that the researcher was known to and knew of all the participants if not personally at least through family ties, church, or other social interactions. This 'familiarity' set up expectations on both sides. The women involved in the study knew they could converse in Tongan and expected to be completely understood; they shared a common background with the interviewer and hoped for a sympathetic ear. On the other hand, the women would also take into account the interviewer's educational standing<sup>8</sup> and social status,<sup>9</sup> which could prove inhibiting: there might well be a pressure to say what one is expected to say rather than to speak candidly. To minimise this factor, discussions with participants remained open-ended, meaning that issues could be broached more than once during the interview sessions.

However, although activities outside this time-frame were not covered, some contacts with participants were ongoing to check the information for accuracy and for further elaboration by the women. Further, invitations to attend women's group activities, church functions, and family celebrations of a wedding, a graduation, and a few birthdays were accepted, and I attended. Some or most of the participants were present there too. Apart from enjoying participation in the occasions, I found my role, as a Tongan woman/mother, a guest, a researcher, and a participant-observer, shifting between the formal and non-formal atmosphere of the *faka-Tonga* ways within these social contexts in New Zealand, enriching and enhancing my study. It is my hope that this sense of connectedness through engagement with the participants in activities will

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<sup>8</sup> Her advanced education, senior academic position, and publishing history afford the researcher a marked degree of respect within the Tongan community.

<sup>9</sup> Ties to the Tongan Royal family are significant in this community.

come across in the discussion of the thesis and in my attempt to represent the women's views, perspectives, and interpretations of their own actions in the identified contexts.

### **Thesis overview**

The organization of the thesis sequences as follows. The introductory chapter highlights the key issues and reasons for investigating the topic and the limitations of this particular study. The second chapter outlines the key conceptual mindsets and cultural experiences that mould the beliefs, goals and practices of the Tongan women in the research; these, in turn, enable an understanding of the operational function of their tasks in assisting their children's *ako*. The third chapter reviews literature relevant to this still largely unexplored subject, including both research parameters and studies specifically focussed on migrant adaptations in the educational sphere and the impact of the maternal influence, in particular. Chapter four describes the qualitative methodology used and the research methods employed to generate and analyze the data in this study. Chapter five provides a detailed profile of the Tongan mothers participating in this New Zealand-based research, while chapter six focuses on the data collected in reference to their efforts on behalf of their children's education in the home context. The next two chapters, seven and eight, discuss their contributions in formal educational settings and those made in the wider community respectively. Discussion of the findings in relation to the literature and the Tongan framework, which shaped the participants' values, takes place in the final chapter. Conclusions and implications for practice as well as suggesting areas for future research and educational change are linked and drawn together to a close.

The discussion in the following chapter focuses on the Tongan conceptual framework as a back-drop to understanding the Tongan mothers – the main players in this study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Tongan Conceptual Framework

*Papata-pē-ka-na'e-lalanga*

(Despite its coarseness, roughness and uneven nature, it is a woven mat)

#### **Introduction**

This chapter begins by outlining the process of *lālānga fala* (mat weaving) as a model to illustrate the way in which Tongan mothers are committed to and participate in their children's education in New Zealand. In Tonga, *lālānga fala* is a task carried out only by women as individuals or in groups, and each step in the *lālānga* process represents an aspect of the women's effort and performance. This model exemplifies how Tongan mothers construct or make knowledge, and create meaning rather than merely discovering it, integrating the skills they have with their roles and responsibilities and the relationships they must maintain in various contexts. This, as in *lālānga fala*, demonstrates not only the nature of various elements working together in an interwoven manner to form a complete 'whole', but that the operation is carried out in a process of which the women's knowledge of the activity is meaningful to them and embedded in their lives. They perform the tasks in order to meet a need and serve a particular purpose in society.

A discussion of the social structure and function of Tongan society follows. Within this society, cultural values, beliefs and practices operate simultaneously and in an interconnected manner, creating social relationships that act as a framework that shapes the values and, in turn, the behaviour of Tongan mothers both before and after they come to New Zealand. Finally, the traditional role of women/mothers in Tongan society is described, since these mothers were born in the islands though they now live in New Zealand. This discussion provides a backdrop for the study while contributing to an understanding of the social world of Tongan mothers from a cultural point of view.

## Mat weaving – a metaphor

The Tongan proverb about mat weaving, a task involving only females encapsulates the theme of this chapter. To produce a *fala* (mat), the practice of weaving has to be carried out in a certain way, using separate strands of pandanus leaves. Similarly, to produce an educated child, the mother needs to collect resources through the relationships she has established, and use them with skill to ‘weave the life’ of the child. To weave in a *pālāngi* sense means ‘to form into fabric, out of threads by interlacing long threads running in two directions’ (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1978, p. 1320). Likewise, in a Tongan sense, mat weaving involves joining the individual strands of pandanus leaves together by manipulating them to hold each other, then fastening them to form a whole mat. The focus is on the ‘constructing’ or ‘doing’ of the weaving, using strands of equal width, on the process involved, using suitable pandanus leaves that have been processed to construct a whole, finished product – a mat. Good mat weaving does not have gaps, unless such gaps are intended as part of a pattern.

In traditional mat weaving, various types of pandanus leaves are prepared in different ways, following a particular process and observing a special protocol.<sup>10</sup> In modern Tongan *lālāngā*, however, pandanus materials are used together with materials such as wool, plastic and cardboard.<sup>11</sup> Preparations and weaving are collaboratively accomplished, with women working in cooperative groups.<sup>12</sup> While men may help with the planting, harvesting and transporting of the leaves from the bush allotment to town, and in the preparation of an ‘*umu* (earth oven) to provide the daily meals for the weavers, the processing of *lou’akau* (pandanus leaves), and the weaving of a mat are the domains of women alone.

The following is a description of how *tofua*, a particular type of pandanus, is processed.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The group elects a *taki* (a leader), and an *angi* (instructor); and this duo leads the group and supervises the task by giving advice, by organizing roles and daily schedules.

<sup>11</sup> Morton asserts, “*Anga faka-Tonga*, regarded as Tongan tradition, is often contrasted today to *anga fakapālāngi* in terms of the old and the new, the indigenous and the foreign. Yet the strands of Tongan and European (and Fijian and Samoan) have been interwoven to such an extent that they cannot be disentangled.” (1996, p. 22)

<sup>12</sup> It can also be carried out individually, but this lacks the ‘cultural spirit’ of togetherness and reciprocity that hold the social group together.

<sup>13</sup> Other types of pandanus include *kie*, *pāongo*, *tutu’ila*, *tapahina*; each is processed in different ways.

After removing the prickles from the serrated edge and back of each freshly cut, green leaf, these leaves are *takai fakatakainga* (rolled into bundles) of 10 to 15 leaves,<sup>14</sup> so that the leaves are spread out smoothly and stay together in the bundle. The bundles are then blanched by packing them into a large tin of boiling water over an open fire. This whitens and makes them more pliable before they are unrolled and sun-dried. After three or four days, the leaves are gathered<sup>15</sup> in loose straight bundles, tied at the ends, and hung out in the shade to soften and dry. The leaves become soft, pliable and thus easy to weave. About four days later, these are rolled in *takai faka-te'e puaka* (in corkscrew shape)<sup>16</sup> and hung until well dried, flat, and smooth. After a week, the ringlets are undone and rolled into bundles, and stored in the loft or on the floor of the Tongan *fale* (house) to be used for weaving within a year or so. It is to the credit of a woman, when the time comes, that she has made her own pandanus for mat weaving. Stored in *falehanga*, a house where women carry out their weaving, these bundles of pandanus are kept with other materials to be easily accessed when it is time for their weaving.<sup>17</sup>

When there is a need to weave a mat for a family, church or community function, and when the weather is suitable, the bundles of pandanus are brought out, unfolded, and the leaves are *ha'alo*, (scraped) using a mussel shell to make them more pliable, and separated into piles. The next stage is the *tohi fe'unu*, (split into strands) where each strand must be the same width. These strands are divided into small bundles for each woman. Starting the mat (*fatu*)<sup>18</sup> has its own traditional, rather formal protocol. The women gather together and hold a short devotion<sup>19</sup> where they sing, hear the scripture read, and chant the Lord's Prayer; this is sometimes followed by a roll-call.<sup>20</sup> A single woman, usually a chiefly person or the leader of the group, then starts the weaving by

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<sup>14</sup> The children help in counting the leaves in tens (*tekau*) for an adult to roll into bundles.

<sup>15</sup> *Tekau* is the traditional name for ten, used in counting certain items including pandanus, yams, fish, and coconuts.

<sup>16</sup> Children help with this task, while enjoying singing, telling stories and jokes, and listening to adults.

<sup>17</sup> This is an equivalent of a *feleoko* a special name for the storehouse where men store yams and other garden food, but they work in *tōkanga*, working in their land allotment in the bush.

<sup>18</sup> In this context this is a special term used only for starting a mat; it also has other meanings.

<sup>19</sup> In the prayer, the purpose of the *lālanga*, who owns the *fala*, and what it will be used for are mentioned and blessed.

<sup>20</sup> It is not known if the protocol of starting a meeting with a devotion is traditional or is an influence from the early missionaries when they first arrived, but participants told me that for them having a devotion, where they sing a hymn and hear the scripture and a prayer, sets the tone and a peaceful mood for the rest of the day.

making a few stitches, and declares the *toulālanga* (communal weaving session) will begin; the women respond by clapping. As the mat gets bigger, other members of the group join in. They come daily to weave, sometimes for just a few hours, other times for a whole day, and if a member has an important task to attend to, a replacement will always be sent to weave on their behalf until the final product, a *fala*, is completed.

Food, under the *tapu* protocol, must be consumed away from the mat. The menfolk, with the help of those women not participating in the *lālanga*, prepare and serve food from the ‘*umu*. For snacks, the women bring fruits, cakes, lollies, chips, and even cigarettes, to share. The social atmosphere is warm, pleasant and stimulating as the women are deeply engaged in the *lālanga*. If the women wear *kakala no 'o-loto* (undergarment fragrant flowers) the air becomes heavily perfumed.<sup>21</sup> As they continue the *lālanga*, the women talk, sing, dance, and joke with each other. They match-make, recite poems, and share community news and local gossip. This last can include discussing who is doing a good job and who is not, in their families, in schools, in church and in the wider community. This is seen as one of the most effective ways of sharing local information and networking among Tongan village women; it can become a political forum for women. Most of the participants in this study came to New Zealand from villages and outer islands in Tonga where these types of social interactions were carried out; they did not hesitate to publicly discuss the affairs of the church, school, community, and even of individuals or families.

This kind of inclusive togetherness and learning from each other draws the women together to actually achieve the task as a group while maintaining a sense of connectedness that creates their shared understanding of new ideas and interests. Members of the *lalanga* group include mothers with young babies or children, who bring their offspring as well as a grandmother or older child to look after them. That way the child can be breast-fed on demand and is often a catalyst for group talk.<sup>22</sup> Metge wrote about similar Māori patterns of child-raising: “Babies lived in a golden world, the focus of continuous, loving warmth and attention; they were fed on demand,

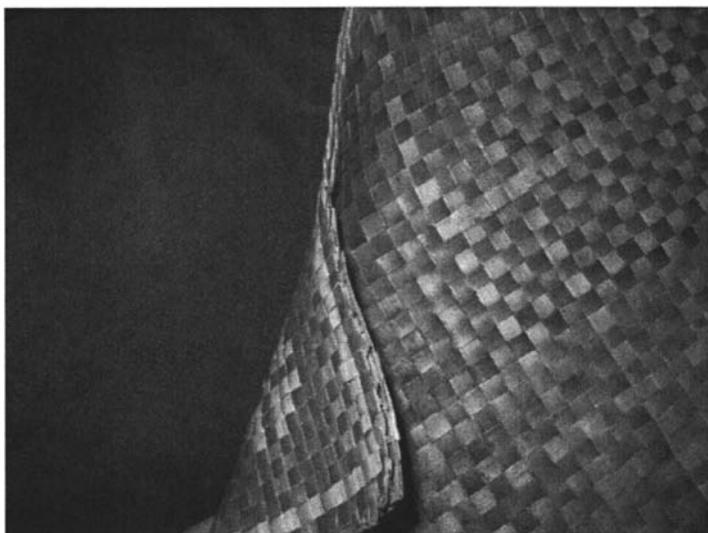
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<sup>21</sup> During a *toulālanga*, women wear *no 'o-loto* (a garland worn under clothes) made of fragrant flowers from which a sweet smell exudes throughout the day.

<sup>22</sup> Adults will use talking to the baby to bring up issues that may otherwise be too sensitive to raise. Sometimes the purpose is to get the listeners to ask questions so details are revealed and discussion stimulated.

continually picked up, nursed and carried around by parents, siblings and surrounding adults” (1995, p. 138). So, the ‘who’ of *lālānga* are the women who are proud that an effort has been made, a process followed, the right materials used, and the strands woven together by a group who *feohi*, (mixed and mingled together), interacted and collaborated with these understandings embedded in their personal and group values; This resulted in a complete product – a mat.

The ‘where’ of the *lālānga* is usually held in a *fale-kautaha* (corporate building) that becomes their *falehanga*, one big, open room where the materials and tools are stored safely – restricted to outsiders but accessible to the members. It is a place where women weavers (*kau toulālānga*) can work while they talk or sing. The product is achieved in a location where skilful women are the weavers, where plenty of food for sustenance and information are available to share, and where the atmosphere is relaxed and enjoyable. The women have a shared understanding of their purpose. In this way a spirit of commitment and a sense of belonging to a group, with an obligation to a task, are cultivated and maintained among Tongan mothers. Similar to a multi-layer mat, the many tasks required by the *lālānga* and the cognitive demands involved reflect what Tongan mothers want for their children – knowledge, skills and a cooperative work ethic that will accomplish goals in a way that is advantageous to all involved.



*Figure 2.1.* Photograph of a woven multi-layer mat – typical of Niua (Tongan) people.

### ***Lalanga mo'ui* (weaving a human life)**

The traditional role of mothers and their commitment to nurturing their infants are similar to the manner in which the women commit themselves to the process of *lalanga*: that is, their role in *lalanga mo'ui* (weaving the life) of their children. Initially, they need to ensure the proper physical and psychological development of the child. Later, the mothers will also teach them those cultural values, behaviour, and practices that are believed to make them Tongans in Tongan society (Morton, 1996). Morton further observed that a mother's "... concern for her child is demonstrated even before it is born, in the care she takes in her behavior and in the food, drink, and medicines she consumes. The responsibility is considerable..." (1996, p. 47).

During pregnancy, and especially close to the birth of her child, the Tongan mother observes certain *tapu* (do's and don'ts) and other traditional practices<sup>23</sup> in order to safeguard her baby's delivery. When the baby is born, the mother is directly responsible for nurturing the child, and for its physical and psychological development and social wellbeing. She breast-feeds, talks to the baby while checking that each part of the small body is fully formed, and sings lullabies. She verbalizes her dreams of future opportunities for the child, including her aspirations for his/her future role in the family, in education, within the church, and in the community. So her wishes and dreams for the child are embedded in her years of nurturing him or her and these are demonstrated through the roles she plays in the family and at home, in the centre and primary schools, and in church and the community. She meets the demands and obligations in these contexts, and fulfils the necessary requirements. However, some social obligations and other responsibilities to the child are performed on her behalf by her kin-group members.<sup>24</sup>

The mother and baby are not left alone, in case she feels lonely. Immediately after birth, the mother's family offers a *koloa* (valued possessions) of tapa and mats called a *pae* (to provide protection) to 'fence off' the baby from draughts and to keep the baby's head in position. These may be kept by the mother for the child or again gifted to the

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<sup>23</sup> These include keeping on good terms with her in-laws to avoid complications when she gives birth; other taboos prevent her using scissors, eating octopus, consuming cold food, and bathing in cold water.

<sup>24</sup> For example, as preparation for the birth, her mother and her sisters prepare a *koloa* of tapa and a mat, known as *koloa hapo tama* (possession with which to catch the child at birth), and offer these to the new child. It is subsequently gifted by the mother to the *mehekitanga* (baby's paternal aunt), the father's sister, who is the senior figure in the family, sometimes referred to as the 'fahu'.

baby's aunt.<sup>25</sup> Within the first few hours after birth, there is a *veifua*, which is the cooked meal prepared and offered to the new mother by her maternal uncles or her brothers and her male first cousins. Baked in an 'umu, and consisting of meat, fish, root crops, and baked green coconuts ('Ahokovi, 1983; Miller, 1983), these are the first meal for the mother.<sup>26</sup> This symbolizes the high status of the mother and her child to her own brothers and her mother's brothers and their families. Within the first few days, the *fakahingoa* (naming of the child) takes place. This is the privilege of the *mehekitanga*, who could gift a piece of tapa cloth to the child when naming him/her. She could name the child after any of the family's ancestors, or after an important place or an incident/event to be remembered.<sup>27</sup> She can name the child after anything she favours, for example, a flower, brand of vehicle, or her favourite perfume, or a place of fond memory, with a contemporary or a historical flavour. Naming the child comes with responsibilities for the *mehekitanga*, both when the child attends school, and in later life.

The next ceremonial occasion, *papitaiso*, is the christening. For the first time after birth, the mother leaves the house. Both parents, dressed in their best Sunday white clothes, take the baby to be baptized during a church service. Extended families come together, a feast is prepared, and another set of *koloa*, of mats and tapa, is prepared for use in the christening and for later distribution. Speeches are exchanged between the families, and the *koloa* and food are gifted by the mother's family to the church minister and to the father's family, especially the *mehekitanga*. Although the *mehekitanga* may be married to another family, this is her link to her own family in her role as a superior figure. Taking part in these rituals and ceremonies Tongan mothers and their families not only mark the first attendance of the child and his acceptance by the church community, but also identify the child's status relationships in his extended family. These activities symbolize the efforts within the two families on behalf of the child, and acknowledge the hierarchical relationships of individuals in relation to the child. With

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<sup>25</sup> In this case, it is the baby's father's sister – *mehekitanga*.

<sup>26</sup> The mother enjoys the food then drinks the baked coconut, which is believed to help her produce breast milk quickly. For the baby in the first few hours, and before the breast milk is ready, he/she is given 'food' from a *namoa* to suck. This is a piece of clean *feta'aki* (tapa) rolled up and dipped in the baked coconut, and held to the baby's mouth. This, it is believed, helps the baby learn to suck, and can have application later when the colostrum from the mother's breast is released.

<sup>27</sup> Boys named 'Otago University', 'South Pacific Commission', or 'Hola-ki-Sene' (Stowed-away-to-Sydney) are among the more amusing choices.

rank fixed at birth, such cultural beliefs, practices and value systems in regard to children, mothers and kin group have ramifications for all who will interact with Tongan families.

From a Tongan mother's point of view, the 'social contexts' in which they grew up have 'core social elements' that must be considered in the conceptualization of the phenomenon of Tongan mothers' contributions to and involvement in their children's education. The construction of social values, with the sense of obligation, respect, and responsibilities, give most Tongan mothers a sense of belonging that commits them to the practice of Tongan culture wherever they are.

### ***Lālānga mo'ui*<sup>28</sup> in a social context**

Mothers have responsibilities toward the whole family, even to members of the extended family who form part of the household. The family also has social obligations to other families, extended family units, and non-family groups in the community. Within the community (in the Tongan context) are the mother's kin-group, her church, her children's school, and other social groups such as the mothers' or women's groups, health committees, and volunteer or cooperative organisations to which she belongs. Some of these units will be explored to examine how the women interact with others in them, and how the function of these units shapes the behaviour of the women when they come to raise their children in New Zealand. So is the mother's responsibility in 'weaving a child's life' in her home environment is similar to the way in which *tou lālānga* (weaving group) is organised and run.

Although they form a key part of the fabric of Tongan society, there is no extensive body of literature focusing on Tongan women and mothers' social world. Academic treatises about Tongan women have been the work of Europeans who themselves grew up outside Tonga, but have made multiple visits to the kingdom, some having spent extensive time there (Kaepler, 1978; Gailey, 1980; Morton, 1996; Bott, 1999). It is possible to argue that while such foreign researchers can claim an objectivity in their observations that would be difficult for a Tongan to achieve, not being part of the society means they may not have acquired the depth of connectedness to and understanding of Tongan beliefs, values and relationships, of an indigenous member of

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<sup>28</sup> This is translated to mean 'weaving or constructing the life of a young human being.'

the culture.<sup>29</sup> Such characteristics may only be found among Tongans (and some non-Tongans) who, through growing up in Tonga, speaking the language, living and participating in the social relationships, have learned from their ‘lived experience’ practices in various Tongan valued contexts<sup>30</sup> (Thaman, 1988). Nevertheless one must acknowledge that non-Tongan academic writers have made very valuable contributions to the literature on Tonga. Today, more and more of the published material relating to the Kingdom comes from those able to combine western academic training with a Tongan birthright.<sup>31</sup>

Within the structure and functioning of traditional Tongan society, the hierarchical characteristics of social construction and the complex status relationships that are formed within it shape the behaviour of mothers who grew up in its midst. Fieldwork will determine how these formed behaviours influenced the nature of their actions and performances in New Zealand, with regard to their contributions to their children’s education in the home, in educational centres, and in the wider community.

The traditional structure of Tongan society is hierarchical, and it clearly reflects the positioning, in a pyramid-like framework (see Figure 3), of the three main social groups or ‘classes’.<sup>32</sup> At the top is the ‘*Fale’o Ha’a Moheofo*’ (House of Ha’a Moheofo kingly line) – the King and the Royal family are the social elite in the Pacific kingdom. The second tier is the *hou’eiki mo e nōpele*, (chiefs and nobles) and their respective families, each attached to a particular village. At the lowest level are the *tu’a* (commoners).<sup>33</sup> This group includes the majority of the population, since there are only 33 families within the nobility. Due to the work of early missionaries and the rapid development of western education in recent decades, two new social groups have emerged from the

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<sup>29</sup> This may be due to their lack of knowledge and use of Tongan language, and therefore limited *feohi* with and engagement in Tongan activities and valued contexts.

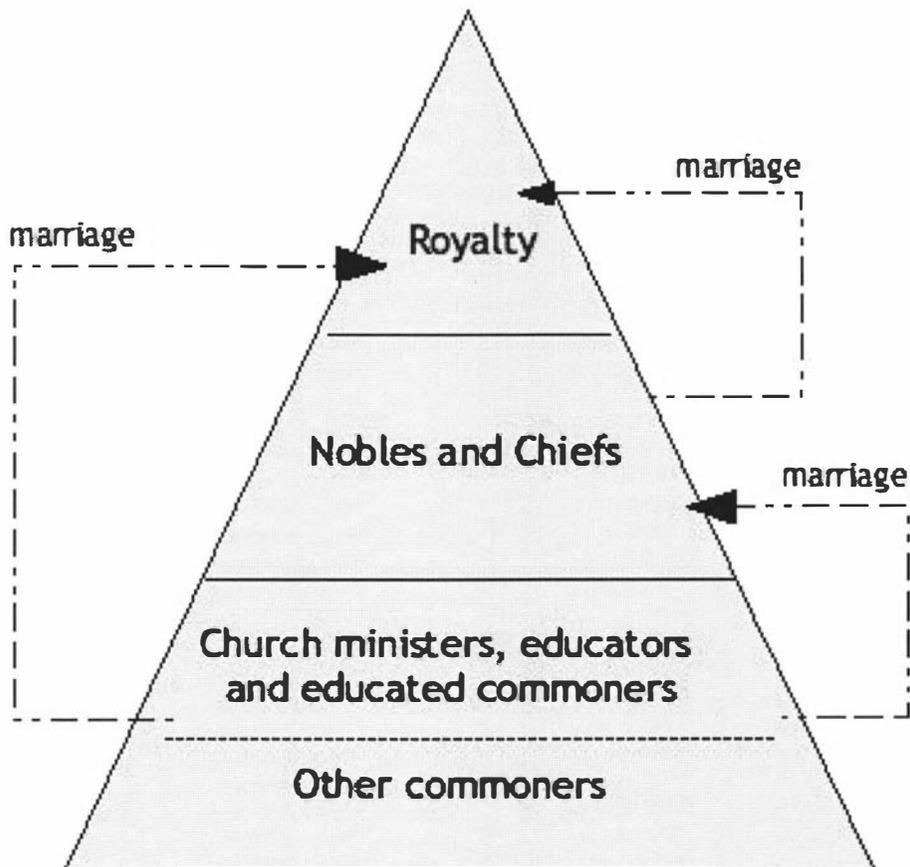
<sup>30</sup> Thaman refers to Tongan valued contexts as those such as birthdays, weddings, and funeral ceremonies within which the practice of social relationships based on genealogies, social hierarchy, and/or gender is explicated purposefully.

<sup>31</sup> Morton, H. (1996). *Growing up to be Tongan*; Bott, E. (1982). *Tongan Society at the Time of Captain Cook’s Visit*; Gailey, C.W. (1980). *Putting down Sisters and Wives; Tongan Women and Colonization*; Kaepler, A.L. (1971). *Aesthetics of Tongan Dance*, are some examples.

<sup>32</sup> However, in modern Tonga, the ‘social classes’ are no longer clearly identified. As a result of their successful overseas education, commoners now hold prominent positions both in government, and in the church. As a consequence, these commoners by birth are treated as chiefs through their professions. This is one cultural incentive that has inspired most mothers who participate in the study to seek high quality education for their children.

<sup>33</sup> *Tu’a* (commoners) and *hou’eiki* (chiefs) and the distinctions between them, have been the most written about aspects of social class in Tonga. See Morton, 1996; Marcus, 1980; Rogers, 1977.

commoners: these are the ministers of religion within their respective churches, and those Tongans educated overseas who now occupy important positions in government. Though commoners by birth, because of their positions, they are treated as ‘chiefs’. For example, in the absence of the nobles at a church function, the ministers are addressed in a chiefly language similar to that used for nobles. The same practice is found in government offices where in recent years the King has appointed commoners in ministerial roles.



*Figure 2.2.* The social structure of modern Tongan society

Women have not been left behind in this social promotion. Four distinct categories can be identified, namely, the overseas-educated women who are in prominent government positions; the locally educated women who are married to nobility, ministers of the crown, or even to the royal family; the locally educated women who run successful businesses; and finally, the successful overseas-educated women who serve as ministers in churches. Such women have played and are playing vital parts in the radical changes taking place in Tonga today. However, while these people are sometimes referred to as role models for women in Tonga because of their achievements in education and in their

professional careers, they are not directly relevant to this research, apart from being inspirations to the mothers who participated in the study.

Unlike the female royal family members, who do not often interact with commoners, the women ministers of religion or of the crown, as well as the emerging successful overseas and locally educated women, work daily amongst commoners. This gives them a chance to contribute to the construction of an ideology of knowledge of the culture, and the changes taking place in Tongan society while giving them a new social status. Defined by relationships, which are characteristics of the social structure of Tongan society, these women learn their *tauhi'eiki* (knowledge of appropriate chiefly etiquette) role in these contexts while teaching their children what it means to be Tongan within the social hierarchy (Morton, 1996). These women do this by fulfilling the social obligations required of them in these valued contexts, and enjoy the privilege of being close or even within that 'higher' social circle.

Back in the village women play their traditional role on such occasions as the birth of a child, christenings, birthdays, weddings, and funerals, as well as in social institutions such as the church, cooperative groups, and extended families activities. In short, female (and male) commoners fulfil their obligations and maintain the *faka'apa'apa* (respect) to all the groups above them, just as the chiefs and nobles respect those above them, viz. the royal family. At the village level the common people respect their chiefs and nobles, ministers of religion and of the crown, and now the politicians as well. Each organization, social group or unit has its own social hierarchy; those at a lower social level respect those above them.

As mentioned above, those Tongans born into the nobility are addressed and referred to in chiefly language, and are served with *faka'apa'apa* (respect) wherever they may be, not just at their place of work.<sup>34</sup> *Faka'apa'apa* (respect) in this sense includes using chiefly protocol to welcome them; allowing them to go first wherever they are; seating them at the front at formal meetings; and addressing them first in a speech, whenever they are present at formal functions, be that at church, a community activity, a family

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<sup>34</sup> The only place these chiefly types are treated strictly as who they really are is at a formal kava party, *taumafa-kava*. They *feohi* (mix freely) with commoners who respect them and treat them accordingly. If they and their ha'a (tribe) are socially 'nobody' in Tongan traditional society, they do not have a place in the *taumafa-kava*.

occasion, or a public function. Meanwhile the commoners *fakatō-ki-lalo* (belittle) themselves and behave in a humble manner in front of their betters to show their respect to those higher up the social hierarchy. This rigid hierarchical order is reflected in the value of material possessions (*koloa*), and in social activities carried out across all sectors of Tongan society. For example, at ceremonies and traditional functions, root crops, animals, mats and *tapa* cloths, and fragrant flowers (*kakala*) are ranked in their chiefly value of importance. Social behaviour and language are ranked as well.

Based on the hierarchical nature of the social structure of Tongan society, the principal values that determine and control the status relationships among individuals within each 'class', and between the groups of different 'classes' are common to all, but are practised in different ways. Each individual grows up and learns what is taught and practised within their family and kin group: *faka'apa'apa* (respect); *fatongia* (obligations); *mateaki* and *mamahi'i me'a* (loyalty); *fetokoni'aki* (reciprocal help/responsibility); *fakatō-ki-lalo* (humility); *ofa* (love), and obedience (Morton, 1996). Other values, it is believed, will then follow (Marcus, 1982; Latukefu, 1980). What is important in the practice of these values is the need to be seen by others to be doing the right thing and performing expected roles and responsibilities in appropriate ways while maintaining cordial relationships.

Morton, in her discussion of authentic ethnicity, claims, "This is just what occurs in Tonga, where tradition and Christianity are deeply enmeshed within the concept of *anga faka-Tonga*, (the Tongan way), which in turn is regarded as the essence of all that is authentically Tongan" (1996, p. 152). These values are taught and are reflected within the family praxis in the home, in the early childhood centre and some school settings, and in church and community activities, because they are embedded in the lives of the women who participated in the study. They make up the essence and the 'delicate core values' of Tongans, which form the moral standards in whatever contexts they may be. Educators and professionals who want to be effective in what they do with Tongans, both students and adults, must explore and 'unpackage' these concepts (variables) for their understanding (Whiting et al., 1975) and inform themselves about these concepts, which are associated with valued knowledge, teaching, and effective learning (Coxon & Mara, 2000). These concepts are apparent in the traditional *fatongia* (obligations and

responsibilities) of mothers in instilling this valued knowledge in their children so that they will behave appropriately according to the context in which they find themselves.

The early experiences of the research participants in the present study, before they became mothers themselves, indicate how strongly these social values and cultural practices are embedded in their lives – they have become so much a part of their social construct that the sense of obligation they feel toward these customs has made it difficult for the women to wean themselves off. In fact, it is possible these responsibilities, while helping maintain the women's cultural values in New Zealand, may prove barriers to their social development in a *palangi* culture, and more so in their contributions to their children's education in New Zealand.

### **Maternal role and activities in the home**

The traditional role of Tongan mothers involved performing in their set/expected female tasks in different social circles. When a man courted a woman he was said to be looking for a *toume* (coconut spathe).<sup>35</sup> This symbolized the role of a woman in the family. She was expected to hold together a young family by preparing daily meals, keeping the house clean and the *'api* tidy, making sure the family's clothes were washed, ironed and mended, and fulfilling other responsibilities on behalf of the family. These were her main tasks, besides serving her in-laws and making *koloa fakafefine* (womanly possessions) when family, church, and community social obligations needs were to be met.

Traditionally, when the woman marries, she is her husband's supporter and she lives submissively dutiful to him and his relatives. She and her children are inferior to her husband's sisters<sup>36</sup> and their children, but always superior to her mother's brothers and their children. However, in the home as a mother, the woman is perceived by society as the pivotal figure in terms of being the cornerstone, the backbone and the solid foundation of the family as an institution. The concept of *'api mo e fāmili* (home and the family) in Tonga is a home but not without a mother. When a family member

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<sup>35</sup> *Toume* (coconut spathe) is the part that holds the fragrant coconut flowers together. When it is dried, women use it for kindling a fire to cook a meal, hence the analogy here.

<sup>36</sup> She is known in this role as the *fahu* in the nuclear family and just as superior as a *mehekitanga* in her status relationship within the extended family.

misbehaves, or something goes wrong in the family, the rest of society tends to blame the home, ‘*ko ‘api*,’ meaning, ‘the mother!’ A mother is seen in the domestic context as the homemaker, the key figure on which the orderliness, cleanliness, and good nature of the home is based, and on whom well-mannered, respectful, and polite children depend. Mothers provide the foundation on which the solid unity and smooth functioning of the family are based especially once their first child arrives. “Toddlers were carried on their mother’s back, supported by a piece of *tapa* tied around the woman’s shoulder, and were breast-fed on demand when the mother took a break from work” (Kupu, 1989). Mothers play multiple roles, as Tongans perceive multiple meanings of the word ‘mother’. These are reflected in the social activities in ceremonies, as well as in the ways social relationships are operated and maintained. These include *fa ‘ē-tangata*<sup>37</sup> (status in relation to a maternal uncle); *fa ‘ē- ‘eve ‘eva* (female superior relative of the groom who, with a party, accompanies the bride, by singing and dancing, to the actual wedding ceremony);<sup>38</sup> *fa ‘ē-huki* (a maternal aunt or uncle who holds or acts as a chair to support the bride on his/her lap during the traditional formal wedding ceremony, as she drinks the first *kava* formally served to her by the groom.<sup>39</sup> The bride’s finishing of her drink of *kava* is the formal declaration that the couple have become husband and wife.

In a typical family both parents are expected to bring up the children in a Christian<sup>40</sup> home environment; children are regarded and described as *koloa mei he ‘Otua* (treasures from God). Consequently, children are taught to respect (*faka ‘apa ‘apa*) God first in everything, and then their elders including their siblings and cousins of both genders, but especially the opposite sex in the extended family. However, it is the mother who is expected to do most of the *akonaki* (moral advice) of the children. When a child is good, society praises the family and parents, but when he/she is bad, the blame is always on the mother, even though it is phrased as the ‘family’. This is why *akonaki* is considered the role of the mother; it is done both verbally in a *talatala-i-fale* (in-house advice not intended for outside ears) as individuals in a one-to-one session, or in

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<sup>37</sup> It literally means ‘male mother’.

<sup>38</sup> The role of accompanying the bride to the wedding ceremony, and later in taking the bride and her gifts of *tapa* and mats to the bridegroom’s family is called *ha ‘atu ‘ukau*, now a practice reserved only for chiefly weddings.

<sup>39</sup> This is the only occasion in which a woman is expected or allowed to sit as a member of a *kava* ceremony, she drinks the first serving of *kava* formally brought to her by the bridegroom.

<sup>40</sup> In Tonga, tradition and Christianity as concepts are so intertwined that the distinctions between the two are no longer identifiable.

a group session at home in a family context; and on rare occasion, through demonstration during social activities in public.<sup>41</sup> In a typical church-oriented family, a *akonaki* or *talatala-i-fale* is often held after the morning or the evening family devotion, which is attended by parents, the children, and other members of the household. In this context, *faka'apa'apa* (respect) between different age groups, genders, and status relationships, is strictly observed.

In such sessions the mother would ensure the girls sit properly, *fāite* (legs folded to the side and tucked under the rump) and boys sit *fakata'ane* (crossed legs).<sup>42</sup> One of the parents talks on the aspects and practice of respectful behaviour to follow, and forewarns against unacceptable behaviour in their status relationships. The parents also delegate to the children the tasks of reading verses from the Bible and a hymn, starting the singing or saying a prayer. This is a 'teaching through practice' of Christian faith. The *akonaki* based on the Bible reading also reminds them to continue to practise *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *fatongia* (obligations), *fakama'uma'u* (self-restraint), *mateaki* (loyalty), and *'ofa* (love) (Latukefu, 1980). The children listen attentively.<sup>43</sup> If a child fails in a task, be it reading, singing, or praying, the mother is expected to assist them. Skills in this area are the pride of a Tongan mother and the types of activities that are regarded by most Tongans as *ako 'i 'api* (education at home); they demonstrate the commitment of the mother to her children while reflecting the expected nurturing of the basic values that permeate the traditional Tongan family. This sample activity shows that the ideology portrayed provides the latent foundations on which most Tongan mothers operate in the family, in education, and in the community. It demonstrates the mothers' contribution to the forming of the ideology of knowledge and of culture in society (Smith, 1987). This is the preferred image of a Tongan mother within the Tongan society.

In Tonga in particular, women also contribute economically to the running of the family and carrying out the decisions made by men in their role as head of the family unit. These tasks also contribute to their children's informal learning in the home. The

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<sup>41</sup> It is acceptable for mothers to correct the child's behaviour in public so that others witness the child being *ako 'i* (taught).

<sup>42</sup> These are *faka'apa'apa* (respectful) ways of sitting for brothers and sisters when they are together.

<sup>43</sup> Children's listening (*fanongo; fakaongo*) to parents in the family context implies that they will understand and therefore obey; they will do what is required.

women make *koloa* of mats of different kinds, tapa cloths, quilts, embroidered pillowcases, and similar articles for domestic use. The making of these items is demonstrated to and involves children. Mothers, as members of a women's cooperative, also purchase sets of bedroom and bathroom linen, or kitchen utensils, as expected of a 'good mother'.<sup>44</sup> This role is known as *fefine-'o-falehanga* (proud woman of the working shed); Tongan women and mothers are proud to demonstrate their domestic preparedness and home-making skills.

### **Mothers' involvement in institutional education**

Maternal involvement in the children's schooling is not highlighted in the Tongan framework, nor has it been comprehensively researched.<sup>45</sup> It is widely assumed that the mother's role in her children's learning and (general) education is in the home, teaching cultural and domestic skills, polite manners in the non-formal and informal contexts, including Christian values, and *poto*, the knowing of what to do and doing it well (Helu-Thaman, 1988). While it is obvious that it is the mothers who provide the fundamental teaching for children of those crucial first skills – speaking, walking, eating, toilet use, washing, and affection and socialization – the depth of that home learning, grounded on Tongan beliefs, values and practices combined with Christian teaching, is often unrecognized by both modern New Zealand teachers/educators and the formal educational institutions in this predominantly western cultural society.

It is also generally believed by Tongans that since mothers are not trained teachers, the task of teaching children academic subjects is best left to schoolteachers<sup>46</sup> qualified to do the job.<sup>47</sup> This belief is upheld in most Pacific societies, where women's roles are perceived to be essentially those of mother and housewife; they are responsible for cooking, washing, cleaning, childrearing, and the maintenance of the family (Tongamoā, 1988), on which they should focus and do well. However, in Tonga, it is

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<sup>44</sup> It is said that when a daughter gets married, it is the pride of a good mother to send off her offspring with a 'glory box' of suitable articles for her new home from which the groom's *mehekitanga* can take whatever she fancies.

<sup>45</sup> An accurate record of what they perceive as their role in this area is needed.

<sup>46</sup> The researcher observed in Tonga (1987) and again in New Zealand (1994) that when mothers take their children to the early childhood centre, the majority tend to stay there for the whole session, but outside or in another room with other mothers talking and not engaging in any of the activities inside, an issue on which teachers in both centres commented.

<sup>47</sup> Mothers (and adults in general) who question, challenge or appear to be interfering with the teacher's role, are shamed by other parents, and are told to stop being '*fiepoto*' (smart Alec) and keep to what they can do, i.e. 'in the home'. This attitude is a very powerful social control.

the mother's responsibility to ensure the children's uniforms, lunches, and school materials are available.

While the mother interacts with the child, she sometimes sees this only as *fakamuna* (make believe play) and does not recognize the significance of encouraging thinking and language development in these contexts, let alone seriously participating in them, or, less seriously, preparing a suitable environment for such activities. Furthermore, adults, especially males, who tend to play with young children, sometimes get teased by other adults as *fakavalevale* (childish), as if they themselves had missed something at that stage of development. While such charges are intended as humorous, the teasing does carry negative connotations, and it is very discouraging for adults who enjoy playing with children, and even those who engage in playing with young toddlers for the purpose of stimulating their thinking process. Morton (1996) has documented her observation of young adults who use these activities to teach young toddlers a range of social behaviours.

One unique part of Tongan mothers' contribution to their children's education is their psychological preparation of the young child before they farewell them to go to school or centre (and for secondary students when they leave home in the outer islands to go to college on the main island of Tongatapu). The mother would *amohi* (stroke with the palm of her hand) the young child's forehead, face, and cheek and hand-comb his/her hair saying, "*Alu 'o tokanga*<sup>48</sup> *ki he faiako, pea ke ako ke ke poto*" (go and pay attention to the teacher, and learn to know, and become clever/intelligent). This symbolizes the close relationship between mother and child, and the consistent bond building between the two through this repetitive 'soft dialogue'. The bond is reinforced with the 'touch' from mother to child, and is said with pride and with a long-term vision of the future, on the mother's part. *Tokanga* (pay attention; be careful) is central to the process of becoming *poto* (intelligent) (Morton, 1996). This means putting into practice what it is to "understand what to do and be able to do it" (Churchward, 1959, p. 416); as Helu-Thaman summarises it to mean, to know what to do, and to do it well (1988).

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<sup>48</sup> The many meanings of *tokanga* include paying attention, observing, listening, obeying, internalizing information, be vigilant, not questioning, and being ready to carry out instructions.

Mothers also contribute to fundraising activities and by donating materials for school tapa making or weaving, or for food for an annual bazaar or feasts on school anniversary days. At the annual sports day parents (mainly mothers) prepare food for children (and teachers) and attend to show their support. They do the same at the opening and closing of Parliament days, again to show their support; they are *ue'i* (moved inside) and *fakaivi'i* (energised) by their *'ofa* (love) for their children and their embedded consciousness of their role as a mother in nurturing the preschool age children.

### ***Ako* for preschoolers**

Preschool education did not become a facet of Tongan life until the late King's daughter returned from New Zealand after her training in 1974 and started a private kindergarten in the capital. This was the beginning of the professionalisation of education for preschoolers in Tonga, and teachers came to face a greater role in educating local mothers. While the first kindergarten only took selected children, most Tongan mothers, under the supervision of the wives of the church ministers, saw the benefit and started playgroups for children of church members. These attracted wider interest and became well-supported nationwide when parents realized the flow-on effect for children's early learning at school. The rapid development of preschool education in Tonga was due mainly to mothers already occupying active roles in the church as Sunday school teachers. The arrival of trained preschool teachers in Tonga, through overseas Aid Programs, was a further spur to development. Kindergarten teachers, particularly from New Zealand, Australia, and the United States<sup>49</sup> taught either in the only Teachers' College in the kingdom or promoted preschool education in the villages and in the outer islands through their community work. This gradually drew those mothers and their children who had stayed away from early education, for whatever reasons, to early childhood education at the village level.

### **Mothers' role/responsibilities in the community**

Migrants, be they male or female, mothers or not, tend to operate in a new environment, on the bases of their earlier experiences and their internalised beliefs. This is

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<sup>49</sup>From the 1960s onwards, volunteers came through overseas Aid programmes including New Zealand's Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA); Australian Volunteers Abroad (AVA); US Peace Corps and Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) from United Kingdom; others from Canada (CUSO) and India also contributed.

particularly so when cultural and/or linguistic differences mean they do not know what to do and do not understand the cultural practices in new surroundings (Fitzgerald, 1970; Harker, 1983; Brislin, 1994). The traditional roles of women in the Tongan community were based on their extended family responsibilities, church activities, and the village functions.<sup>50</sup> Extended family activities such as birthdays, marriages, and funerals, when held locally, become a village function, and at this local level involve the church. These functions demanded the involvement of women in the food preparation and the contribution, presentation and distribution of *koloa*, depending on the context and on the individual woman's and her family's status relationships with outside kin groups. In each of these activities, a mother is superior within one extended family and inferior in another. In her role as a superior (*fahu*) she receives the *koloa* of mats, tapa, and food at the beginning of the function, distributing them after to the *liongi* (inferiors/subordinates) in a funeral. As an inferior she, with her family or kin group contribute *koloa* and food, and later receive a share from the distribution thereafter.

A funeral, both a family and a community occasion, serves as a case in point. First, the mother has a significant role to play as a superior figure, *fahu*. Apart from receiving and distributing the *koloa*, she positions herself at the head of the deceased, and gives approval to relatives who bring *koloa*, when they come to farewell the dead. When the wake is over, she declares the night ended and turns off the lights. When the body is finally prepared for burial; she approves all the mats and tapa to be buried with the body. Then her share of the *koloa* – the number of mats and tapa – is publicly announced. This shows that she is the *fahu* (superior figure) for whom everyone is waiting to hear. Her daughters accompany her through the night, learning who is who in the extended family and how to handle and fold the mats and tapa, while her sons stay outside with the men in a *kava* party and learn their respective roles there. After the burial, the *fahu* receives more *koloa* and food in *feitu'ui* (visiting a bereaved person with gifts) and these she distributes to relatives. A few days later (after 5 nights for commoners, and 10 for chiefs) the *fahu* cuts the hair of the *liongi*. This is to show her superiority and the inferiority of the *liongi* in their relationships to the deceased (Kaepler, 1971; Rogers, 1975). It is important to note that there is no conflict in the

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<sup>50</sup> Most of the mothers who participated in the study came from a rural Tongan background to New Zealand in 1986 when the Labour Government allowed Pacific Islanders from Tonga, Fiji, and Western Samoa to enter on a visa-free 3-month holiday.

role of a *fahu* and that of a *liongi* because a woman is a *fahu* over her mother's side of the family, and a *liongi* to her father's family.

At weddings too, the *fahu* and her children enjoy the 'symbolic and decorative' status by receiving *koloa* and the top of the wedding cake or whatever is considered the best on the occasion. She sits at the top table, and the speeches and dancing are directed at her, even the *fakapale* (dancer's reward), of money, tapa, and mats. Her children would proudly collect the rewards on their mother's behalf while learning the role of a *fahu*. By participating in these activities, the mother hopes her children will learn their role and feel the sense of belonging and the privileges that go with the status relationships in these types of contexts.<sup>51</sup>

Within the church and its activities, it is usually the men who lead the service, deliver the sermon<sup>52</sup> and make the decisions, but it is the women who carry out the work. Women play the main role in the daily upkeep of the church building and whenever a church function or feast is held, it is the women who purchase and prepare the food, set the tables, serve the guests, then eat last, and clean up afterwards. They get their offspring to help, do the *pu'i* (errands), so, by participating and observing, they receive training from the mothers. Men, on the other hand, tend to sit quietly as a group in a corner, drink kava, and wait to be invited to the table. When called, they often sit at the front, served with the best food; one of them will say grace before the meal and another say a prayer to end the feast. They make speeches and tell jokes but do not participate in cleaning up after the event. These are the occasions in which parents, consciously or unconsciously, model the division of labour, gender role, and responsibilities based on status relationships to the children. These happen on such special occasions as the *misinale* (annual church donation), and the feasts that follow when *Faka-Me* (children's anniversary day in May), and *Faka-Sepitema*, (Women's Annual Prayer Meeting day in September) are celebrated. Women contribute *koloa* of mats and tapa, and decorate the church and the hall with flowers for these occasions. It may be argued that this is a

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<sup>51</sup> One mother in the study commented that the kind of skills, knowledge and feelings one learns in these social contexts cannot be taught, especially in New Zealand, so the children must get engaged to experience what it means to be part of it.

<sup>52</sup> In 1975 the Wesleyan church allowed women to become lay-preachers but they were required to wear white with a *ta'ovala lōkeha* (white mat) round their waist and a blue cape over their shoulder. It is believed that the simple outfit was ordered to restrict any competition in fashionable clothes (Kupu, 1989).

Wesleyan practice, but it is known that the women in other denominations such as the Church of Tonga do it too.

In the wider community it is again the women/mothers who contribute the cooked food and *koloa*, and participate in community fundraising for development projects, dancing or singing that give the community functions the glamour and gaiety that characterize such occasions. For example, in a village *koniseti* (concert) to raise funds for a community project or even for a fundraising group from the outer islands, women dance like clowns not just to raise money but also to entertain the crowd. Even in a church *misinale*, they would do the same to encourage competition.<sup>53</sup> Women also work together in *toulālanga* (cooperative weaving group), *kautaha koka 'anga* (tapa making group), *kautaha tuitui* (sewing group), *kōmiti mo 'ui* (health committee group), and *kulupu fakalalakalaka 'a fafine* (women's development group). In these different cooperative groups to which they belong, the women/mothers work together making an item for one member at a time until all the members have one. It is the sense of belonging, and the strength of togetherness that hold the women together as they focus on accomplishing the group's goal. It seems that the sense of belonging, togetherness, and obligation embedded in their social construct has an intra-group power that drives the individuals to achieve. It is this powerful sense of belonging, togetherness and obligation they wish for their children that motivates their contribution to their children's *ako*/education in New Zealand.

### Summary

In this chapter the preparation and processes involved in *lālanga fala* (mat weaving) has been described as a model, a simplification of the main features of the phenomenon under study. As in *lālanga fala*, the model is used to illustrate the complex, engaging, and interwoven nature of a Tongan mother's involvement in and contribution to her children's *ako*/education. Of importance is the multifaceted nature of the role of mothers in a weaving group, the support and constraints they face, and how they adapt to enjoy the task of *toulālanga* (reciprocal weaving in a group). The Tongan mother's role in the family and the hierarchical status relationships within it demonstrate the multiplicity of functions in which they are involved in the *anga faka-Tonga* (Tongan

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<sup>53</sup> Tokelauan women perform a similar role in church (Huntsman & Hooper, 1975).

way). These set the cultural values and beliefs of the women and thus shape their behaviour before and after they come to New Zealand. The mothers' *lālanga* in the Tongan social context underscores the importance of thinking about the broader social and cultural values that may shape and constrain the kinds of relationships that mothers attempt to forge as they come together or strive individually to focus on their children's education. The discussion of the mother's involvement in church and the Tongan community illustrates how the 'adoption and adaptation' of Christianity has wrought the deepest and most pervasive changes – so much so that the elements of tradition and Christianity are now inseparable in the minds of many Tongans (Morton, 1996, p. 80). Mothers are responsible for most of these social obligations, and their young children tag along with them and learn.

The following chapter reviews the relevant literature that covers the important aspects of how Tongan (and Pacific) parents contribute to their children's education. Some of this literature is related to European models, which at this stage may be useful to consider. Of particular importance is Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural (or sociohistorical) theory, which has an important impact on the understanding of learning and teaching in the development of the individual. This will be a worthwhile consideration in the inquiry into Tongan mothers' contribution, and their everyday experiences, to their children's education in New Zealand contexts.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Review of the Literature

*Na'a ku 'alu atu 'oku nau tui au, pea u tui au ai pē au*

(I went and found them weaving sugarcane leaves for roofing so I joined them in their task)

#### **Introduction**

The literature review that follows provides an inductive approach to 'frame' the study. The discussion focuses initially on two areas – the direct and indirect contributions mothers make to their children's education. However, it is important to consider the difficulties involved in using such terms and some of the issues in categorising the literature in this way. Links between researchers are highlighted in this study. Of particular importance is a review of Vygotsky's sociocultural (or sociohistorical) theory, which raises important issues about social, cultural and historical aspects of learning (Rogoff, 1998; Moll, 2002; Wink & Putney, 2002). I had considered Helu-Thaman's '*kakala*' theory might be relevant here, but have decided it is more appropriately discussed in chapter four, since it is applied to the method of research from a Tongan perspective. These elements will form a 'pattern' that will inform the inquiry and the methodology of the research, and 'make sense' of the relationships and the connectedness of concepts that will emerge later in the study (Cresswell, 1994, p. 94).

#### **Defining the parameters: some issues**

An initial difficulty lies in determining the boundary of contribution(s) – distinguishing between the mothers' direct and indirect contributions to the children's education. The difficulty arises because there is no limit to the number of variables discussed in the literature. Many variables are interrelated, and by the time the 'findings' are reached, some aspects fall under direct contribution, others can be placed under the indirect contribution category, and still others fall under both. In other words, the degree of directness or indirectness of contributions overlaps so much that they are difficult to identify clearly. At this stage, those contributions in which the mothers are engaged that are directly academic, cognitively driven or curriculum based, and instructed, for and at school, at home, or in church and the community, will be considered direct

contributions. In contrast, those that are performed by mothers outside school, and are not related directly to school work, the school curriculum or academic requirements will be considered indirect contributions. The literature will be grouped accordingly.

### **Gender role**

Another difficulty lies in the 'ungendered' term 'parents' or 'caregiver' in academic literature, rather than 'mother' and/or 'father'. This term makes it difficult to identify clearly who plays what roles when and where, as discussed in chapter six. Furthermore, some writers refer to the whole family, without identifying any individual's role, their specific contributions and/or the role they play in the child's education. At this stage, the term 'parents' and/or 'family' as a collective entity, responsible for the success or otherwise of the child/ren, is not an issue, although it will make international comparisons more difficult to quantify. However, when the data are analysed, it is important to identify clearly which contributions are made by mothers and which by fathers or another member of the family. This is because such issues arising in the study may highlight specific aspects of cultural differences in gender role, and/or changing roles of women/mothers in New Zealand, or the role of the family in its contribution to the education of children (Scott-Jones, 1993; Seh-Ahn Lee, 1993)

Another issue is involvement in school, classroom or community activities, and the purpose of each of these in direct or indirect relation to the children's education. Then there is the difficulty of the focus of the contribution: whether it is to the children's skill development, academic, schooling or life education in general. Are these to be identified by where (context) the contribution takes place, by the nature, process or outcome of the contribution, or by the nature of others or groups with whom the contribution is made? These are all significant concerns. At this stage, the term 'education' will be all encompassing, but when the data are analysed it will be useful to identify clearly those contributions that are intellectual and cognitively based as separate from those that are manual, physical, and social, which again will differ from those that are administrative and institutional.

### **Direct maternal contributions to children's education**

Parental involvement in children's learning makes up the bulk of the research literature in this area, only exceeded by Home-School relationship issues. The multifaceted

nature of parents' involvement – at home, at the early childhood centre, at school, in church, and in the community – along with the multiple roles they play in these different contexts, is clearly demonstrated (Kerbow & Bernhardt, 1993; Muller & Kerbow, 1993):

Parent involvement – or school and family connections – is a component of effective schools that deserves special consideration because it contributes to successful family environments and more successful students. Research... has shown convincingly that parent involvement is important for children's learning, attitudes about school, and aspirations. Children are more successful students at all grade levels if their parents participate at school and encourage education and learning at home, whatever the educational background or social class of their parents. (Dauber & Epstein, 1993, p. 53)

In English-speaking school systems, the active involvement of parents in their children's education is widely recognised as a major factor in academic success (Coleman, Schiller, & Schneider, 1993; Kerbow & Bernhardt, 1993; Muller, 1993; Muller & Kerbow, 1993; Schneider & Coleman, 1993). Mertsens et al., 1996). Such involvement is generally viewed positively by the formal education system.

The IMPAC project (University of North London, 1995) showed that parents actually do want to be involved in their children's education and are interested in what is going on, and if asked, would like to be given more information about the progress of their children (Lareau, 1987); even disadvantaged parents are willing to do more to work with the schools (Moles, 1993). However, most parents are interested in their own child's progress and those aspects of school life that relate specifically to him or her, and are less interested in those aspects not directly related to their child at that time.

Parental involvement in school life depends on such factors as the child's age, curriculum areas, and the nature of the school. Much has been written about teachers and schools, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States, that has utilised direct parental involvement in the children's learning. However, while the IMPAC project described mothers as having a positive attitude to their children's education, it failed to delve further into the belief systems that motivate these women (Morton, 1996). Neither is there any discussion about other factors that support or hinder these women's involvement in their children's education, for example, their employment status, their ethnic cultural practices, and whether they perceive any racial

discrimination against them at school (Moles, 1993). Furthermore, the research makes no effort to investigate those mothers who are *not* visibly involved in school-based activities on behalf of their offspring. The reasons such women fail to participate are as significant as the factors that motivate other mothers to contribute.

### **Low parent representation in school activities**

Of course, not all parents in developed nations are keen supporters of their children's schooling. Rosen (1995) writes:

As a parent, I have sometimes thought that what we do is bring our children to school in the morning and throw them over the wall. Then in the evening, the teachers throw them back to us... there has long been a pervasive feeling that schools are essentially civilising places which compensate for middle-class parents mollycoddling their children and for working-class parents neglecting and brutalising theirs. Schools would (and should) knock the edges off the spoilt kids, lick the wayward ones into shape, introduce children to the timetables and work schedules of 'real life' and shine a little light into the lives of the backward and benighted (cited in Merttens et al., 1996).

Especially in developing nations, parental involvement in formal schooling (not necessarily in their children's learning) may be neither expected nor desired (Coelho, 1994). A number of reasons have been suggested for this situation. It has been argued that parents, in these situations, put a great deal of trust in teachers and the school administration, and assume that these trained professionals will educate their offspring. Alternatively, or equally, one could postulate that parents may not feel comfortable in the school environment, possibly for linguistic reasons, cultural difference and/or because of their own lack of familiarity with the entire process of formal academic education.

Pacific parents are not strongly represented in school activities both in their home countries and in migrant situations. For example, Fairburn-Dunlop's 1981 study of Samoan parents in relationship to New Zealand schools found that as they believed the schools had a responsibility to teach their children, they stayed away and did not want to interfere. Among the reasons given for this low rate of participation in New Zealand schools are limited knowledge of the English language (MacIntyre, 1992; Hunkin-Tuiletufunga, 2001; Utumapu, 2001), restricted opportunities for interaction with teachers at a time when Pacific parents are free (Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998; Manu'atu,

2000), and the psychological and cultural barriers or cultural mismatch between parents' and school's perspectives; often the schools fail to acknowledge the cultural knowledge children bring to school (Bishop, 2003; Nakhid, 2003). Consequently, the school's responses to those students would be inappropriate (Nakhid, 2003). Further, Gorinski (2005b) noted that Pasifika parents' obedience and respect for authority can preclude their engagement with teachers and school personnel. Parents may feel uncomfortable, inadequate, or embarrassed to be at school (Foliaki, 1993); and economic factors may also play a part (Manu'atu, 2000).

Not surprisingly, Pacific parents are also interested primarily in their own child and matters directly related to their academic progress. Among Tongan mothers, this is important because they see children as *koloa mei he 'Otua* (treasures from God) and "Children are "*me 'a mahu 'inga taha pē 'i mamani*" (the most important thing in this world) and therefore, must be treated and nurtured accordingly" (Morton, 1996, p. 44). Tongan mothers see schools as a safe place for their children, with knowledgeable and caring teachers able to develop positive attitudes to learning, and model what 'poto' (wisdom, cleverness) is, and how it is learned. Apart from corporal punishment by the teacher for misbehaviour, schools are never perceived by Tongans as a place where children are harmed (although they do expect them to be disciplined there). Instead, schools are seen as places where, it is hoped, the longer the student stays, the more learning will take place. A student who stays long at secondary school in Tonga, even to the age of 21, is perceived to be a person of high moral calibre shunning the sinful and corrupt. Occupation with school work and school-related activities is perceived by parents as keeping their children and their companions away from less desirable, possibly anti-social interests.

### **Parental participation in children's learning**

Merttens et al. (1996) discuss parental participation in children's learning of reading, writing and arithmetic. There is a consideration of the wider curriculum, and the issues involved in collaborating with parents and with utilising and drawing on both the expertise of the parents and the culture of the communities in which the children live. This behaviour is highlighted by Cummins (1994) who insists on parental support when migrant children learn English as a second language.

However, Moles (1993) takes a different stance: he focuses on disadvantaged parents, questioning whether they should be counted as part of the education team. Using results from regional surveys across the United States,<sup>54</sup> Moles argues that the term *disadvantaged parents* encompasses all those who experience social or economic limitations to full participation in American society – the racial and ethnic minority group members such as blacks and Hispanics, low income families, poorly educated parents, and those who do not speak English. He also predicted that in 2000, racial and ethnic minorities would represent over half the population of most of the big states in the country. This can be likened to New Zealand’s current growing population of ethnic minority groups (Legat, 1988), and such changing demographics demand that teachers and administrators alter preconceived notions about a child’s family experiences and structure.

Moles (1993) reviews parental involvement in education with special reference to the disadvantaged, examining recent levels of involvement in school related activities of this group. He also explores factors, including their interest in children’s learning, which may account for these groups’ low levels of contact with the schools. He describes some promising programmes to expand the skills and opportunities of parents and educators to reduce barriers to their fuller educational collaboration. Both empirical research and individual programme descriptions are used to investigate these topics. Moles, then, elaborates on parents’ involvement, in and out of school, and in the home:

On the inside (at school), ...parents may serve as paid aides or volunteers in the classroom or elsewhere ... on advisory committees or governing councils ... often, parents simply attend PTA meetings, sports events, concerts and other student performances. But parents may also come to school to learn how to become better parents and how to help their children learn more ... they may exchange information with teachers about their children’s problems and progress in person, by note, or by telephone. These contacts and assistance ... are forms of active collaboration in the education of parents’ children. (p. 22)

Mole’s work concluded by drawing on both ideas and pragmatic suggestions. The argument for parental involvement in the curriculum is grounded in a discussion of the different pedagogues at home and in school, exemplified by means of research data

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<sup>54</sup> The validity of Moles’ conclusions is open to question as it is unclear whether the survey represents *all* the United States. Given that he selects examples that fit his theory, it is not clear if the questions in the survey were standard across the country.

drawn from the author's own experiences, and from survey results across regions in the United States. Another point of relevance to this study is the collaborative work between the school and the parents in the actual tutoring of the child in the curriculum, and the utilising of the expertise of the parents and the culture of the communities in which the child lives to further his academic progress in these curriculum areas.

This study will explore similar areas in which Tongan mothers have expertise, and will examine whether they work collaboratively with the school on this, and if not why not. This exploration will inform the issue of why Tongan mothers, or parents for that matter, do or do not join school learning activities. This is especially relevant if their children are not fluent in English and need instruction in Tongan.

Another piece of research relevant to the present study is that of Lareau (1989). While the focus of this work is on mothers within particular social classes, it is nevertheless useful to explore how the 'maternal elements' and 'family aspects' in schooling and education in general are threshed out and unpacked. These may have useful implications in methods and/or contents for the present study. Based on Bourdieu's cultural capital theory, Lareau attempted to show how this reflects on maternal involvement in schooling. This empirical study has demonstrated that cultural capital is not just about the relationship of different social groupings to the educational system but also about the centrality of the family to any understanding of cultural reproduction, "... the educational system depends less directly on the demands of the production system than on the demands of reproducing the family group" (Bourdieu, 1981, pp. 142-143).

Lareau highlights the importance of the role of the family in reproducing the culture and practices it believes in and upholds. This is primarily a study of the linkages between home and school in two socially-contrasting elementary schools in America. Focussing on 12 families over the course of their children's first two years of schooling, she concluded that home-school relationships are characterised by separateness for working-class families and by interconnectedness for middle-class families. Her findings suggest that all parents, irrespective of class, valued educational success, and that teachers used similar, even at times identical, steps to involve parents, regardless of parental social class. She asserts that "differences in parental involvement are shaped

by familial cultural capital” (Reay, 1998, p. 29). For Lareau, cultural capital and resources do not automatically generate social advantage, as is implicit in Bourdieu’s own work. Rather they need to be activated. Accordingly, she claims to modify the passivity in Bourdieu’s thesis through her insistence that activity underpins cultural capital (Lareau, 1989, p. 145, cited in Reay, 1998). In particular, Lareau challenges assertions of working-class devaluation of schooling and acceptance of failure. However, while the working-class parents in her study were far from inactive, they lacked confidence, both in helping their children educationally, and in questioning teachers’ professional judgements. Believing that they lacked the resources to help their children improve educationally (Nash, 1983), they were far more dependent on the teacher than were the middle-class parents.

This last point is in contrast to Jones’ findings (1991) that Pacific girls at Auckland Girls’ Grammar did not rely on their Pakeha teachers for information, apart from copying notes from the board and the handouts they were given. As for Pacific parents, they rarely had chances to communicate with their daughter’s teachers. Fusitu’a and Coxon’s (1998) study of a Homework centre in Auckland observed that parents attended to supervise students and to make supper but made no mention of in-depth discussion with teachers, although Manu’atu (2000) in her study of suitable pedagogues for secondary school students emphasised the importance of parents interacting with Pacific teachers in their ethnic language about ways to support students in their study.

While Lareau’s work points out the reproduction of cultural capital through the family, it basically focuses on social class differences. She describes a process in which, in middle-class families, cultural capital is activated in interaction with external organisations such as the school. However, because it is a social class-based issue, the focussed question would be more on the father’s employment and the professional status on which the social class type is based, rather than on the family. In other words, she works with a male model of social class that is influenced by the nature of the father’s employment. Such an analysis denies the centrality of women to an understanding of home-school relationships, as well as the importance of the work they undertake (Reay, 1998). Lareau does not modify this underpinning tenet of her theory in both social classes. However, she does develop her analysis to explore the role middle-class mothers play in the cultural capital reproduction, and suggests that it is

predominantly these mothers who are managing their children's school careers. She writes of two types of parent-school relationships: 'his and hers', since women also organise father's involvement at school.

Relevant for the present study is Lareau's suggestion that cultural resources need to be activated in order to generate social advantages. Exploring what Tongan mothers do in regard to their children's learning, both inside and outside the home, is not to compare them with the actions of New Zealand mothers, but rather to identify their 'habitus' and note how they are practised in the 'field'.

### **Parents help with children's homework**

Assistance with homework has long been a means for parents to help directly with their child's learning. Cummins, a leader in the ESOL field,<sup>55</sup> sees the benefit of parents' involvement in children's education: "... the academic and linguistic growth of students are significantly increased when parents see themselves, and are seen by school staff, as co-educators of their children along with the school" (1994, p. 43).

In other words, parents need to feel positive about themselves, and about their ability to assist their children's schooling and education in general, and that any skill they may have to contribute will be valued. They need to have self-worth in order to work effectively alongside the school staff. Weiss (2003) notes that the mothers' own initiative and efficacy appeared to be central in their negotiation of work and family educational involvement. Cummins (1994) advocates that schools should therefore actively seek to establish a collaborative relationship with minority parents, a practice that is encouraged in New Zealand. This relationship encourages them to get involved with the school in promoting their children's academic progress. Cummins emphasises that the successful parental involvement is likely to depend on the extent to which parents see themselves, and the school as a welcoming environment rather than the intimidating environment it often is for many parents with limited knowledge of English.

The presence in the school of staff who speak the language of the minority group parents will greatly facilitate parental involvement. The persistent lack of bilingual and

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<sup>55</sup> English to Speakers of Other Languages

multilingual staff conveys an unambiguous message to parents and students about the power relations that operate in the school and society. Cummins cites an experiment in India by Tizard, Schofield and Hewison (1982) where one group of parents listened on a regular basis to their children read (English) books sent home from school, while the other group of parents did not. Both sets of children were given instruction several times a week by a reading specialist at school. Both groups of parents were illiterate in English as well as in their first language. The research team found that children who read to parents made significantly greater progress in reading than those who were given additional reading instruction by the teacher.

Cummins' (1994) work is relevant to this study in that it highlights the academic and linguistic needs of migrant and minority groups, within which grouping Tongan mothers in New Zealand fall. The need to pay attention to these characteristics in formal learning institutions, and the response Tongan women may make based on cultural barriers they may face, is an important aspect of the present study.

Furthermore, Cummins' work and the sample research he quotes mirror practices in Tongan homes in New Zealand. Cummins, however, makes no mention that, in most Pacific homes, parental involvement may take several forms, depending on obligations to family members and guests, family practices, and community involvement.

The interconnectedness of the mother and her children with homework (Lareau, 1989), and the interface between the mother and the teacher at school, based on race and immigrant social status (Reay, 1998), are of significance to the present study. However, it must be pointed out that not all cultures value reading, let alone reading in English. In some cultures there are no written language materials. Instead, they tell stories in the evening, sometimes of genealogy, myths, and legends, other times of crafts, skills, traditional knowledge, and cultural practices (Fanusua, 1975; Filihia, 2002). Furthermore, in some families religious practices may take precedence over academic activities. In many Muslim homes, as well as Pacific Christian groups, family reading sessions may focus on the Holy Word, and secular, school-based reading requirements may be assigned for completion at an unspecified 'another time' (Tiatia, 1998).

Furthermore not all Polynesian homes will have a range of materials that children and parents can share to enhance reading skills. A study of 59 Pacific families with school

age children in Palmerston North, aimed to ascertain the availability of reading materials in the ethnic language available in the home.<sup>56</sup> It was found that in most Pacific family homes, the only reading materials available in their own respective ethnic languages were the Bible, hymn books, and a few of the local papers from their island home country, mainly Tonga and Samoa.

### **Family practices**

Moles (1993) reminds us that, at the most basic level, are family obligations to insure preparations for school, such as sufficient sleep, punctual attendance (Epstein, 1987), appropriate behaviour and manners, and attention to homework (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987; Van Galen, 1987). Parents also transmit their skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values to children by modelling acceptable behaviour, guiding their activities, and giving direct instruction. They may also join advocacy groups to press for educational change and may exercise a choice of schools for their children in a number of localities. Sometimes schools help parents to support academic learning with information to strengthen the home learning environment, for example, home-school collaboration (Dauber & Epstein, 1991; 1993).

Rogoff (1993) examines caregivers' involvement with toddlers. Touch, physical positioning, verbal interactions, and body language and gestures are important parts of adults helping young children to develop their self-esteem, sense of belonging, emotional security, physical comfort, and security among familiar figures. This is important for Tongan mothers in relation to their physical contact with their young children. Physical contact between mothers and their young child begins with the mother sleeping in the same bed with the newborn baby till the child walks, or, if he/she is an only child, he/she is likely to sleep with the mother (and father) until the age of 5 or 6 or even older (Morton, 1996). When the mothers simply want to 'feel' her child she will kiss, stroke or gently shake his/her hand. The present study will further explore this factor during an in-depth interview to establish how Tongan mothers feel about the effect of such a practice in their children's learning. It must be pointed out however, that within some cultures, contact between mother and child in public is not socially acceptable. Within the royal family in Tonga, for example, a mother seen to be carrying

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<sup>56</sup> (MacIntyre, 1992) *Pacific Island Children and their Access to Learning Media: The Case of Palmerston North*. Unpublished Research, Massey University, Palmerston North.

or holding her own child implies that mother does not have relatives or subordinates to do this for her; touching, kissing, and carrying are therefore expected to be done in the private domestic milieu for mothers in this particular social class.

### **Contribution to children's language learning**

Another aspect of parental involvement at home is that of modelling good functional language to their children. This happens in both home country families and in migrant families with English and Tongan. It is especially important for parent-child conversations in bilingual families. These conversations not only strengthen the child's language but also the parents'. Goodz's (1994) study on 'bilingualism as a first language' found that children who were exposed to a second language during their first three years engage in simultaneous bilingualism, while those who are exposed to another language only after the age of three are said to be engaged in sequential bilingualism. "The mother repeats the child's words and corrects them in the language that the child understands" (Goodz, (1994, p. 91). Also parents may request that children translate letters from school, homework, and printed materials for them to rehearse functional language skills other than those of the home culture:

[here], they uncover the meaning and social functions inherent in a piece of written text. Children and parents therefore are key players in one another's language socialisation – parents perceive themselves to be deliberate and central participants in their children's language development... but children too, are responsible for helping adults negotiate transaction with outside institutions. This language socialisation is a mutual endeavour, with adults and children taking responsibility for one another as they negotiate language and culture. (Pease-Alvarez & Vasquez, 1994, p. 90)

Mothers could behave as their children's teachers. Ochs asserts (1982, cited in Tharp & Gallimore, 1988):

One of the most distinctive characteristics of middle-class Anglo caregivers is their willingness to engage in communicative exchanges [even] with the smallest infants... Long before the child has actually produced its first word, it is treated as if it in fact does have something to say... When young children actually begin producing words, this set of assumptions by the caregiver continues. The caregiver, typically the mother, considers the young child to be expressing somewhat imperfectly a communicative intention. (pp. 88-89)

The first of these works highlights the usefulness of the mother's constant presence at home, while the second depicts her directly engaging in reinforcing the child's language learning with the correct words, structure and meaning, almost instantly as the child needs it.<sup>57</sup> Children born in New Zealand, whose parents want them to learn Tongan, have their language reinforced by their mothers in this way. There is fear among some Tongan parents that if this is not promoted, the amount of Tongan they learn at Tongan language nests will be lost when the children enter primary school (Morgan, 1993; McNaughton, 1996). Muller and Kerbow, in a study of different contexts in which parents were involved with their children's learning activities, support this point. They argue that parents who communicate with different 'actors' at home, at school, and in the community, find the characteristics of these 'actors' in these contexts will either constrain or encourage involvement in that particular arena (1993).

As Ochs (1982) explains, it is also important that parents need to reflect and see themselves as learners of language or culture by engaging with the child in dialogue – by doing this they are at the same time supporting the child's learning. This study explores parents asking children questions in order to learn, given what Shoefel et al. (1996) found with South Auckland parents. They concluded there was little dialogue between parent and child. Rather, instructions were issued and no discussion was expected thereafter. However, this had ramifications in some families. Among those families where children were asked to translate notes, messages and reports from school for their parents, children were known to sieve information. Comments on school reports were censored by the child, and parents were only informed of those meetings the child believed would be productive of a positive image for themselves. While understandable, this practice perpetuates the mismatch of knowledge and understanding between parents and teachers/school, which can result in a different set of problems.

### **Contributions to children's learning in primary schooling**

Little has been written in this field with regards to Pacific mothers, let alone Tongan, so the focus here is on more international research. Reay (1998) conducted a study in the UK of mothers' direct contributions to their children's primary schooling. Based on

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<sup>57</sup> Work as a voluntary interpreter for a Tongan family in a local primary school proved this correct. Asked about an issue by educational personnel, a Tongan child will explain this to the mother in their vernacular. The mother will usually reinforce the child's sentiments, though often using a different emphasis and slant.

Bourdieu's notion of class in his cultural capital theory, Reay set out to test the degree of reproduction of social inequality among different social classes, working and middle class, in education. Studying two primary schools in metropolitan London – one in a working-class neighbourhood, the other in a middle-class area – Reay interviewed 33 mothers. The work aimed: “to reassert the centrality of social class, as gender and radicalised, in an explanation of the maintenance of educational differences and the reproduction of social inequality...” (Reay, 1998, p. 1).

In her review of the academic literature, Reay shows how it falls short in explaining the real-world practices and in interpreting the lived experiences of those involved in the study; how the ‘construction of mothering as caring’ is hidden behind assumptions of mothering as natural but far from what counts as real work; and how black women's writing are rewritten by the dominant culture; and finally how the contributions of mothers are perceived as part of the equal partnership of ungendered parents. She advocates a specific focus on the detailed mechanics of what women actually do on a daily basis in order to uncover their labour. Working with women in two types of social class, Reay described the geographical and physical locations and characteristics of each school and how one with a non-conducive nature to learning, and the other with a favourable attitude to learning affected their respective learners differently. This relates directly to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory based on a comparison of a working-class area with mixed ethnic groups with a white middle class with professionals (Lareau, 1993).

Reay's study highlights not only the diversity, but also the ways in which such diversity is rooted in inequality. Differences in race and class and how they affect the mothers and children in each camp are hidden by normative constructions of the system:

Mothers are shown to be engaged in class- and ‘race-differentiated ways of monitoring and repairing their children's education. [This] shows how some activities generate cultural capital, while others are far less productive. In particular, activities complementing, compensating and modifying children's educational provision produce very different outcomes. Compensating for, and modifying, state education often requires material and educational resources disproportionately located within middle-class, rather than working-class families. (p. 5)

The study clarifies the mothers' complex, subjective understandings of their class position and how these are intersected by ethnicity and marital status, a point also highlighted by Jones (1991). Reay further examined the race and social class of migrant women in her study, and pointed out that it is often argued that their cultural capital is in the 'wrong' currency. The mothers' own educational experiences impact on their involvement in their children's schooling, while their 'race' does the same on their treatment by the school; teaching one's own child becomes a process of doing what comes 'naturally' (Bourdieu, 1984).

This study reflects a number of barriers faced by Tongan mothers (and other races too) in New Zealand – belonging to the non-dominant ethnic group, living in low socio-economic neighbourhoods, and facing the argument that their 'cultural capital' too is in the 'wrong currency' to ensure educational success in their new country. But unlike the UK, New Zealand society is less rigidly hierarchical. In Britain, class infuses everyday practices and social interactions. In contrast, the population of Polynesian societies, from small Pacific islands, often consists of a whole kin group (Larner, 1983). As a consequence, these kin groups do not compete with each other but rather share or barter their resources, their time, and their labour. Those members who hold prominent positions in the social group are interrelated, and today many may also be related to the school decision makers. Accordingly, many will live in extended family settings, and work collaboratively in activities in and out of the school/centre – collectivism is their main philosophy (Ritchie, 2001).

To a degree, Reay's model can be applied to Tongan society. However, theorising about social inequalities can become problematic within a contemporary educational marketplace underpinned by a rhetoric of classless society. Further, Reay's study is social class specific; it does not explore in depth the practices of individual women based on their class, culture and race; instead the study is of a group with a specific residence in common.

Finally, in reference to migrant mothers, it is well documented that when migrants first arrive in a country they expect, in general, to be treated differently from the host country citizens until they become familiar with the cultural parameters of that country. Ogbu (1981) argues that children from such a background ought to be studied and

understood from a cultural ecological perspective. The understanding of Tongan mothers' contribution to their children's education will be more comprehensive and meaningful if it is from their point of view, their world view, and from an understanding of their own cultural practices (Helu Thaman, 1992).

The Weiss study (2003) on the involvement of low-income American working mothers in their children's education also has aspects relevant to the present study. This study explored the complex relationship between employment and family involvement in children's elementary education for low-income women. Mixed-method analyses were used on data drawn from a longitudinal investigation of an early intervention programme for low-income children and their families from birth to kindergarten age, in 21 sites across the United States. Participants were from the Hispanic, African American, and European-American populations because they represented cultural and geographical diversity. Twenty-two children were selected, and ethnographers collected interview data from mothers of these children. The findings showed paid employment as being both an obstacle to and opportunity for involvement at school activities. Mothers who worked or attended school full time were less involved than those mothers who worked or attended school part time. Yet subtle and positive associations between maternal work and educational involvement also emerged. Working mothers described several strategies they used for educational involvement.

The findings reframe current ecological conceptions of family involvement and call for policy and research consideration of the dilemma of work and family involvement in their children's schooling. While the study allows the low-income working mothers to reveal some of the strategies they use to negotiate the multiple demands of employment and parenting, it does not foreground the factors that made it advantageous for the mothers to work and still get involved in children's school activities. The study analysis focuses more on successful, part-time working mothers, and less on the stressful, time-constrained, full-time working or studying mothers. There was almost no reference to the unemployed mothers, with the claim that this last group may have experienced mental health problems that impeded educational involvement. Weiss avers:

There is, in fact, substantial evidence that unemployment is associated with high rates of depressive symptoms, which in turn interfere with parenting and parent-child relationships (Conger, Wallace, Sun, Simons, McLoyd, & Brody, 2002; Dooley, Prause, & Ham-Rowbottom, 2000). What may make part-time working mothers unique, therefore, is that they are less likely to experience the time constraints associated with full-time work and the mental health risks associated with unemployment. (2003, p. 896)

Of these low-income mothers who work part time in small local communities, most have qualifications, and speak English fluently, and enjoy a close local network, with informal contacts with others. While this situation is not stated explicitly in the report, it can be inferred. Similarly, unemployed Tongan mothers in New Zealand who speak English fluently tend to talk to their children's teachers frequently, to participate in school activities, and have little need to call on community interpreters. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), in their theoretical work, argue that the "mothers' own initiative and efficacy appeared to be the central factor in their negotiation of work and family educational involvement" (Weiss, 2003, p. 896).

Additional reasons for parental involvement in children's schooling include their belief about the meaning of being a 'parent', and the invitations both from the school and from the children for them to come to the school. Further, structural features of work – flexible schedules, communication resources, accessibility, a safe workplace environment for children – may facilitate educational involvement, to "strike a balance for families between work and early childhood education" (Podmore, [with Sawicka], 1996). Finally, although Weiss does not seem to consider the importance of children's emotions, these would influence Tongan mothers in their effort to become involved in school activities, whether they are part or full-time employed.

### **Indirect maternal contributions to children's education**

The above discussion, then, has pinpointed a number of key areas where mothers make a direct contribution to their children's early learning. These include homework, family practices, language learning, and participating in the primary school. The following paragraphs will focus on the mothers' indirect contributions and it will become clear that the delineation between the two categories is not always sharp; there is a considerable degree of overlap. It is difficult to measure or identify those contributions

that are made directly to children's education and those that are not. The demarcation made does, however, enhance understanding of how these many variables do impact.

Coelho (1994), focussing on migrant parents, categorises those parents who do not become effectively involved in their children's education as 'low involvement'. One reason for the low involvement of this group is that many immigrants find themselves working more than one job or doing shift work. As a result, they have little available time to interact with their children and help with schoolwork or attend school events (Onikama, 1998).

Many also feel handicapped either by their lack of fluency in English or by their lack of knowledge of the educational system in the new country (Ogbu, 1981). In some countries, the involvement of parents in their children's schooling is neither expected nor desired; the role of the parents is to send the children to school, to provide the books and uniforms, and to exhort the children to success; the teacher and the school are entrusted with the rest. Coelho (1994) states that this is why when host country teachers call immigrant parents about a concern over their child, the teachers are surprised and somewhat indignant when the parents seem to hand the problem back to the teacher. On the other hand, some immigrant parents wonder what kind of 'soft' system the schools are running if the teachers are unable to care for the children without advice from the parents.

Factors such as poverty, shifts of power within the family, school culture, cultural conflict between home and school, and refugee experience may all lead to low involvement in their children's education among new migrants. Coelho's (1994) work points out the needs and worries of newly arrived immigrant parents to which they must attend, and such neglect of their children's education has been noted among newly migrant Tongan mothers arriving in this country. This study will explore mothers' personal experiences in these situations.

### **Parents' contribution through non-school roles**

Epstein (1995) has created a typology based on levels of family (parental) involvement, including parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community, concluding, that family involvement has 'many

faces'. Migrant women, like their male counterparts, will perform different roles for the sake of supporting their children's education. Limited involvement may derive from a lack of time, exhaustion, divided loyalties to different groups, and even from racial discrimination (Onikama et al., 1998). In some cases, women just want to:

move away from the exclusive preoccupation with domestic and child rearing responsibilities, into the world of employment ... for personal fulfilment ... or out of a wish to make a contribution to the family finances. It is likely that...many wish to supplement the somewhat isolated state of being a mother at home with small children with the stimulation and enjoyment of adult company. (Smith, 1992: 239–240)

For Tongan mothers in New Zealand their multiple roles could include holding down two jobs to pay for school materials, trips, camps and other similar commitments; involvement in the Christian Education programme at church to receive moral education; or taking their children to extra-curricula activities, such as sports, arts and crafts, or to visit their out-of-town relatives. Like most parents, these women play multiple roles in their holistic contribution to their children's education. However, unlike the established New Zealand parent, there is the need for the migrant mother to develop a new set of support networks in the host country. This requires the Tongan mother to be pro-active in her new environment – one where she may not have the tools and skills to access easily. As she makes headway in this area the benefits will come both for child and mother, but again the constraints mentioned above may mean the progress is slow.

### **High parental expectations**

Jones's (1991) study of Pacific Island girls in an Auckland secondary school focused on learning styles and teaching methods. The influence of Pacific parents' attitudes on their children's learning was of particular significance. Jones found that Pacific parents had high educational expectations of their daughters. Equally, the girls were expected to be obedient in class, to listen carefully and unquestioningly, to copy notes from the board as good students do, and generally to do well at school. These expectations, however, proved unrealistic and difficult for the Pacific students to achieve. While there was cultural pressure not to question the authority figure in the classroom, the learning culture in the New Zealand secondary school encourages one to ask questions,

discuss and debate issues, research information, and think individually and critically. Pakeha girls faced no cultural inhibitions with this academic norm.

Furthermore, at home, academic concerns were not always paramount. Many Pacific girls were expected by parents to perform domestic tasks outside school hours; to complete chores in the house before and after school; host visitors or look after younger siblings in the weekends, and spend a lot of time *ako* (studying). The girls were also restricted from going out with their friends (Shoeffel et al., 1996) because Pacific parents are very much more protective of their daughters than of their sons. The freedom to explore their world was far greater for the female Pakeha students than for their Polynesian classmates. Jones' study showed a mismatch of expectations about learning between the New Zealand education system and that of Pacific parents. Divergent views on the relative importance of learning in contexts and ways other than in classrooms and with books, and about 'education' in general are apparent. On a personal note, Foliaki wrote about her father's expectation for all his children to become medical doctors, which did not match her personal desire to become a social worker (Foliaki 1993).

A number of studies have been conducted on home-school relationships, which involve Pacific parents and communities in New Zealand. From 1997 to 1998 Mara was contracted by the Ministry of Education to evaluate the Pacific Islands School-Parent-Community Liaison (PISPCL) project. The project was implemented in 37 schools during 1997 and 1998 funded as part of the *Ko e Ako 'a e Kakai Pasifika* Project. Aimed at primary and secondary levels, Pacific communities were set up, attached to schools, and offered Government initiatives to participate. These initiatives aimed to: "support and carry out initiatives that will raise the achievement levels of Pacific Island students in the essential learning areas" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 16).

Grouped into six clusters, and located in Auckland, Wellington and Tokoroa, each school negotiated its own programme to enhance home-school liaison with their Pacific Island parents and communities. Each cluster had a mix of initiatives, but essentially all projects aimed to raise the level of Pacific Island students' achievement and self-esteem (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 2). Mara's evaluation illustrates the type of support the Ministry of Education gives Pacific parents and communities in their relationship with

schools, where specialists are provided, and meetings of community members, parents and schools are resourced, facilitated, and monitored. This provides a framework and mechanisms through which parental involvement at school for their children's education can be enacted in a purposeful manner. The present study will examine how Tongan mothers are supported to be able to work with the school and contribute to both the school, and to their children's learning.

Other research (Fairbain-Dunlop, 1982; Fusitu'a & Coxon, 2000; Manu'atu, 2001) is also of significance. Manu'atu's work focuses on the psychological, emotional, and cultural elevation of the morale (*māfana*) of Tongan secondary school students when they perform in the *Kātoanga Faiva* (cultural festival). The spiritual elevation is achieved through the many hours of practice by students, with the help, support, and commitment of their Tongan parents. Another area in which the support and contributions of Tongan parents stand out is in the *Pō Ako* (night school) in Auckland, where teachers tutored the students while parents supervised and provided supper for students two to three times a week. These interactions between parents, teachers, and students were a significant factor in the success of Tongan students from the night schools (Fusitu'a & Coxon, 2000). Although it has more to do with parents' support for the homework centre and their secondary school children, rather than an involvement in their young children's learning and education, such interaction may be of relevance to the present study.

### **Vygotsky's sociocultural theory**

The notions of mothers' direct and indirect contributions to their children's education provide the basic description of criteria under which the actual practices of the Tongan mothers (collected from the data) will be pragmatically organised. To view the practices of Tongan mothers, vis à vis their young children's learning, from a western (*pālangi*) 'framework', Vygotsky's sociocultural theory will be considered.

Vygotsky's theory provides a paradigm through which the elements of the major themes forming the structure of the mothers' functions and actions in contributions can be explained. Because of its congruence with Tongan beliefs and practices, a discussion of the sociocultural theory will also provide a foundation on which the understanding of Tongan mothers' traditional role in contributions to their young children's education

could be placed. The focus of Vygotsky's work tightly links children's learning and development on one hand with the adult's guidance on the other, and therefore makes the two parties inseparable. The emphasis on the part of 'adults' as experts, 'caregivers', and more knowledgeable than children, gives way to a mothers' role in collaborative learning as being the party on which the stage lights are focussed in this study.

Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, focused on social interaction as the major determinant of human development. English translations of his work only appeared in the 1960s and 1970s and began to influence psychology greatly in the subsequent decades. Rather than focussing solely on the child developing as an individual in its own survival nature, Vygotsky asserted that "it is people, especially adults in the child's world, that influence the child's cognitive development" (Marsh, 2000, p. 27). He emphasised that "thinking develops in a social context and that there is a 'unique form of co-operation between the child and the adult that is the central element of the educational process'" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 169). The light shed by Vygotsky's theory will be shone on Tongan women's contributions or *lukuluku* to illuminate the nature of their contributions to their children's education in the New Zealand context.

The most fundamental concept of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is that the human mind is mediated, and among other things, language as a cultural tool plays a major part in it (Lantolf, 2000, p. 3). The interaction between a child and an adult is fundamental to the adult's output and the child's input. Vygotsky's theory made a difference to the explanations of human mind and behaviour in social contexts, and his illustrations of the interplay of variables between both natural and physical phenomena and the cultural tools that cause changes reflect the social and political climate of his time. As Wink and Putney (2000, p. 60) put it, "We live and work with our own families and those of our students, with our local state, and national governing bodies, with all the accepted norms, beliefs, and behaviours of society, and with ever-changing demographics".

Vygotsky believed that life experiences affect and influence development, a point developed by Rogoff (2003), who asserts, "Vygotsky's theory helped connect individual's thinking with cultural traditions such as schooling and literacy" (p. 42). Our use of language determines our learning: and our learning determines our use of

language. None of this takes place in a vacuum. According to Vygotsky's theory, Berg (1999) reaffirmed, "the child and the social environment in which adults and knowledgeable peers ... (interact with each other) ... play a big part and collaborate to mould cognition in culturally adaptive ways" (p. 337).

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is based on the premise that humans do not act directly on the physical world but rely on tools and labour activities that allow them to change the world and certain circumstances within it (Lantoff, 2000). Humans also use tools or symbols to mediate and regulate their relationship with others and themselves, thus changing the nature of these relationships. Mediation involves individuals, and human actions on the one hand, and the cultural (tools), institutional, and historical situations in which these actions occur, on the other. The interplay of these 'elements' demonstrates "the structuring of human activity is of a sociocultural nature" (Wertsch, 1995, p. 11).

The present study will identify those tools and labour activities used by women and mothers to change the world of learning, development, and education in general of young children. It will also identify both the tools and the ways in which the mediation and regulations of the mother-child relationships are happening, with the help of cultural, physical and symbolic tools.

Physical and symbolic tools, Vygotsky says, are artefacts created by human beings over time and passed on to succeeding generations, which can modify these artefacts. Included in these symbolic tools are numbers, arts and language, and culture; and the task of psychology, in Vygotsky's view, is to understand how human social and mental activity is organised through culturally constructed artefacts. Roopnarine et al. (2000) write: "To Vygotsky (1962, 1978) the source of knowledge comes from tools that adults (through culture) have already invented, such as language, and for that matter blocks, toys, television, and so on, but primarily language" (pp. 157-158).

Although Vygotsky did not explicitly formulate his ideas in terms of a theory of activity, as Leont'ev did (1959, 1975, 1981), Vygotsky's analyses of mental functioning, semiotic mediation, and other issues consistently focus on processes that have most, if not all, of the attributes of what was later called 'action' by his followers – a type of activity that is magnified through speaking, thinking, and remembering,

guided and assisted by adults. This process is referred to by Bronchart and Wertsch (1995) as “externalisation of the biological characteristics of an organism” (p. 76). Vygotsky’s theory has helped to explicate the process involved in children’s learning and development, from a very young age. Although a child’s learning process, by itself, falls outside the scope of this study, nevertheless, the mother’s output and the child’s input are directly linked. Its insight has the most profound implications for how psychologists think about development and teaching:

From the very first days of the child’s development his activities acquire a meaning of their own in a system of social behaviour and being directed towards a definite purpose, are reflected through the prism of the child’s environment. The path from object to child and from child to object passes through another person. This complex human structure is the product of a developmental process deeply rooted in the links between individual and social history. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 30 cited in Tharp & Gallimore 1988, p. 28)

Vygotsky argues that since we inherit cultural artefacts from our ancestors, who inherit them from previous ancestors, the only approach to the study of higher mental abilities was historical. He therefore proposed four domains (phylogenetics, sociocultural, ontogenetic, and microgenetic)<sup>58</sup> for the proper study of higher mental functions (Rogoff & Scribner, 1988, cited in Lantolf, 2000).

Within Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory is the sociohistorical approach to the operation of these elements over time to produce the nature of a cultural practice or practices. These last two aspects of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory are related closely to both direct and indirect contributions of mothers to children’s education. However, all are parts of the bigger picture of the sociocultural theory. The last two aspects of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory will be explained in the work of Barbara Rogoff and collaborators, where the interaction activities of children and adults are magnified to show in great detail and in logical sequence the contributions of adults to the learning of children that actually occur among Tongan mothers and children – the type of *tō’onga ngāue* (actions or performance) carried out by these women and their offspring.

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<sup>58</sup> Phylogenetics, is the contribution of knowledge arising from the evolving history of the human species; sociocultural refers to the different symbolic tools developed by human cultures through histories, affected the kinds of mediation favoured and kinds of thinking valued by these culture; ontogenetic refers to the ongoing products of individual’s learning throughout their lives through interaction with the social world; and microgenetic refers to the moment by moment learning of the individuals.

Within Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is his activity theory on the nature and development of human behaviour, which addresses the implications of his claim that human behaviour results from the integration of socially and culturally constructed forms of mediation into human activity. Luria refers to the system that results from the integration of artefacts into human activity as a 'functional system' (1973, 1979, cited in Lantolf, 2000). This is a functional system formed when the brain processes come under control of our cultural artefacts; the foremost of which is language. Some aspects of the activity theory are reflected in the discussion of both the Tongan women's traditional contribution or *lukuluku fakaono'aho* to their children's learning of and through cultural practices, and in mother-child interactions in daily informal situations, at home, and in other places.

The last element in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to be briefly discussed is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky's definition of this is: "What the child can do in co-operation today he can do alone tomorrow. Therefore the only good kind of institution is that which marches ahead of development and leads it..." (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 188).

Tharp and Gallimore (1993, p. 30) talk about the assisted and unassisted performance of the child within the zone of learning. Marsh (1996) points out that "Vygotsky uses the term (ZPD) to indicate the difference between unsupervised and supervised levels of cognitive development in a child" (p. 25). "It (ZPD) refers to a range of tasks that the child cannot yet handle alone but can accomplish with the help of more skilled partners", is the way Berk puts it (Berk, 1999, p. 229).

The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. The zone of proximal development defines these functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state. These functions could be termed the "buds" or "flowers" of development rather than the "fruits" of development. (Vygotsky, 1978: 86, *italics in original* (cited in Tharp et al., 1988, p. 29)

It seems clear that people working jointly in a ZPD are able to co-construct contexts in which expertise emerges as a feature of the group, or the pair. This is important in explaining how expertise arises. It seems clear also that ZPD as a concept has been

extended to a more general statement in which “problem solving” is understood to mean performance in other domains of competence (Cazden, 1981; Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984). This mention of ‘other domains of competence’ is relevant for the present study, because for Tongan mother–child relationships, there are numerous other [cultural] domains of competence in which they perform well and with great abilities. Some of these domains are so unique to Tongan women and mothers that a description of them deserves a thesis of its own. For “... any domain of skill, a ZPD can be created. There are cultural zones as well as individual zones because there are cultural variations in the competencies that a child must acquire through social interaction in a particular society” (Rogoff, 1982). For example, boys and girls in Tonga, where weaving of *kafa* (sinnet; string or rope), made from coconut fibre is a practice, will have a ZPD for skills in twisted plaiting, created in interaction with and observation of adults with expertise in this craftsmanship. A girl in the outer islands in Tonga where preparing of *feta’aki* (mulberry bark) for making tapa cloth is practised will have experiences in a zone not quite like any made by girls in Nuku’alofa, the capital. These and similar examples will be discussed in more detail later.

Vygotsky’s work principally discusses children, but, according to Tharp and Gallimore (1988), “identical processes can be seen operating in the learning adult. Recognition of this fact allows the creation of effective programs for teacher training and offers guidance for organisational management of systems of assistance” (1993, p. 32). No doubt discussion and exploration of the role of adults and mothers in children’s learning could fall into this ‘system of assistance’.

Tharp and Gallimore (1988) go on to discuss four stages of the ZPD. The first stage is ‘Where performance is assisted by more capable others’. While the other three stages are useful to know, they are not as directly relevant to the present study as the first stage. Here the discussion focuses on the fact that children rely on adults’ help and expertise. Before children can function as independent agents, they must rely on adults or more capable peers for outside regulation of task performance, depending on their age and the nature of the task. The child may have a limited understanding of the situation, in which case, the parent, teacher, or more capable peer, gives instructions, and offers directions or modelling that the child could imitate. This implies that whatever the child learns from the adult or expert is superior.

In a Tongan context, however, child's imitation of an adult is important because the person from whom the child learns could often be anyone of the extended families, male or female. The directions set, and what is modelled are not necessarily screened to separate the good from the bad. Rather, a humorous way of addressing subtle issues that may be awkward or unacceptable to talk about in front of others may be acceptable; if such talk comes from an innocent child (who has been taught by an adult), this is forgivable, and adults laugh it off (Morton, 1996). Understanding develops through 'instructional conversation' (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) during the task performance, and "when some conception of the overall performance has been acquired through language or other semiotic processes, the child can be assisted by other means – questions, feedback, and further cognitive structuring" (Tharp et al., 1988, p. 33). Such assistance has been described as 'scaffolding' (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

Scaffolding as a metaphor fittingly describes the role of an adult in contributing to a child's learning. Greenfield (1984, 1994) notes that scaffolding is similar to the concept of 'behaviour shaping' except in one important way, – shaping simplifies a task by breaking it down into a series of steps toward the goal. Scaffolding, on the other hand, holds the task difficulty constant, while simplifying the child's role by means of graduated assistance from the adult who is the expert (Tharp et al., 1988, p. 33). If 'scaffolding' is translated into Tongan, the term *tanumaki*<sup>59</sup> would be appropriate. This connotes a sense of 'caring', 'protecting', and 'adding on, in order to strengthen, or provide support' to an object, a project or a belief. It conveys 'a sense of importance' to whatever is being scaffolded. So the notion of the scaffolding of children's learning provided by adults fits well with both Tongan traditions and modern ideologies of the role of women and, in particular, mothers. The notion of *tanumaki* (scaffolding) of a family, of children's learning, of the individual's role in various contexts among Tongans is based, to a large extent, on the mother's effort. The present study illustrates some of these efforts both in and outside the home.

### **Learning tasks and the role of the adult/mother**

In addition to grading manipulanda, as discussed by Tharp et al. (1988), the assistant provides a 'grading' of tasks, by structuring them into sub-goals and sub-sub-goals. For

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<sup>59</sup> Similar in spelling and meaning to the Maori word. It originated from the gardener's action of piling up soil to protect the young bulb/tuber of kumara when it starts to grow.

example, assisting children to learn to count is an example of structuring a teaching situation (Saxe, Gearhart, & Guberman, 1984). During stage one, a child may not conceptualise the goal of the activity in the same way as the adult. During the interaction process, different goals and sub-goals may emerge and change as the participants work together. The adult may shift to a subordinate or super-ordinate goal in response to ongoing assessment of the child's performance. The child's goals will also shift in response to adult help and their growing intersubjectivity. In such intra-action Saxe et al. (1984) concluded that because the goal structure is located

...neither in the head of the mother nor in that of the child, their goal structure is negotiated in the interaction itself. Thus, the emergent goal structure simultaneously involves the child's understandings and the historical achievements of culture as communicated by the mother.... (Saxe et al., 1984, p. 29 cited in Tharp et al., 1988, p. 34)

In the context of Tongans in New Zealand, the interaction process is further complicated by many factors related to cross-cultural thinking and communication, conflicting social values, and bicultural issues associated with Tongans as first generation immigrants in New Zealand.

Within the ZPD, the shifting of goals to achieve subjectivity is required of teachers who seek to assist performance. Rogoff (1991) defines some of these assisting performance issues in terms of 'structuring situations': before interacting with the child, a parent or teacher assists by an age grading of manipulanda, that is, the choice of puzzles, the selection of kindergarten tasks, and the selection of appropriate tools and materials for an apprentice are all important features of assisting performance. These preliminary choices can be seen as indirect contributions to children's learning or long-term scaffolding of their cognitive development within the ZPD, and although they may appear to differ, it is useful to view them on a bigger scale.

### **Vygotsky's sociocultural contexts**

Another important aspect of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is his interest in sociocultural contexts. In the community, and in centres and schools, all teachings – including the teacher–child dyad, the adult–student dyad, the student–student dyad, and the mother–child dyad – are embedded in complex organisations, which is fundamental to neo-Vygotskian theory, as Minick stated:

If Vygotsky's insights concerning the role of social interaction in psychological development are to be effectively incorporated ... the links between dyadic or small group interactions and the broader social-cultural systems must be recognised and explored ... actions are at one and the same time components of the life of the individual and the social system will be defined and structured in certain respects by the broader social and cultural system (Minick, 1985, p. 257).

Rogoff (1982) supported this by affirming that the social context of the interaction must also be considered. For a ZPD to be created, she asserted that there must be a joint activity that creates a context for teacher or adult and student interaction. A theory of education must not deal just with the interaction,

but must also simultaneously address the social context of that interaction ... for without analyses of the context of teaching ... we can never hope to achieve that ideal of teaching we seek: assisted performance in children's ZPDs. That ideal can only be achieved when the context provides for joint activity by expert and apprentice, parent and child, teacher and student (Tharp et al. 1988, p. 73).

Tharp et al. go on to discuss two concepts that help with the understanding of the social context of assisted performance – 'activity settings' and 'triadic analysis'. Activity settings are contexts in which collaborative interaction, intersubjectivity, and assisted performance occur. These are described as

... the social furniture of our family, community, and world lives. They are the events and people of our work and relations to one another ... the who, what, when, where, and why, the small recurrent dramas of everyday life, played on the stages of home, school, community, and workplace ... We can plot our lives as traces of the things we do, in dissolving and recombining social groups and energy knots. These are activity settings (Tharp et al., 1988, p. 72).

Within the ZPD, under the 'who' of activity settings, Tharp et al. (1988, p. 74) note that personnel present in activity settings are not there by accident but rather are there as a function of the opportunities and constraints of the eco-cultural niche in which a given social group lives and to which it adapts. They also point out that differences in urban and rural eco-cultural niches produce different combinations of family members present, with different scripts and roles to play (Weisner, 1984, cited in Tharp et al., 1988). In Tonga there is a perceived marked difference between 'bush people' and 'townfolk', *kakai 'uta*, and *tamaiki kolo* respectively.

The ‘what’ of the activity setting involves two dimensions: a description of the things that are done, and a description of how they are done, that is, the operations themselves and the scripts by which the operations are orchestrated. Next, the ‘when’ of the activity settings refers to the patterning in time of activities in the community, family, and work life. In a Tongan context, such events as the *Faka-Mē* (children’s white Sunday); *Sāpate Fa’ē* (Mothers’ Day), *Sāpate Tamai* (Fathers’ Day) or *Uike Lotu* (Holy Week), *Uike Fāmili* (Family Week), *Sāpate Tamai* (Fathers’ Day) and ‘*Apitanga Pekia* (Easter Camp) are scheduled at particular times of the year, and it is important for both mothers and children to attend these ritual ceremonies. This is where the interactions take place that allow for learning the religious faith, and reinforcing cultural practice. The ‘where’ of activity settings “... is where the tools, the materials, or the uses of the product dictate” (Tharp et al., 1988, p. 76).

Finally, the ‘why’ of activity settings refers to the activity setting itself as a unit of analysis consisting of individuals engaged in goal-directed behaviour in a framework of implicit cultural assumptions and expectations, within which actions and operations are carried out (Cole, 1985); this last ‘why’ of the task can have substantial impacts on the scripts that influence how the actors behave. This may form the core of the investigation from the point of view of the participants. Thus we must add the ‘why’ to the other four descriptive dimensions of an activity setting. Why an activity exists and functions may be described in terms of two facets: “the motivation and the meaning” (Tharp et al., 1988, p. 77). Culturally, once the motivation is established and the meaning of the task revealed, based on the ‘why’ of the operation, the ‘what’ of the activity may vary substantially from one culture to another. However, over time, those from two different perspectives will come to understand each other as they are willing to work jointly in a social context, because the tendency of joint activity settings is to develop a mutual meaning structure, and evolving, developing, and eventually converging common shared understanding – this is known as inter subjectivity. Intersubjectivity is the act of constructing common meanings and mutual agreement between speakers; it is a mutually recognised shared understanding (Crook, 1994). This particular issue is outside the scope of the present study, at least at this stage.

### **Critique of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory**

While the concepts in Vygotsky's social cultural theory are useful in explaining those aspects of learning-teaching in context – namely, the individual's interaction with the social environment, the concept of ZPD, and the concept of sociocultural contexts – there are issues that raise questions when the practice and operation or function of these concepts are examined closely. The process does not take into account the fact that in order to interact most effectively, humans need to have a common language in which to communicate. With some cultures and countries there exist so many languages or dialects that for the 'significant' other, parent, teacher, adult or peer to be effective in scaffolding the learner, they need a common language through which they can interact. When this concept is applied to Pacific mothers, and Tongan mothers in particular, it is clear that one reason they tend to avoid New Zealand schools and centres is because they are not fluent in English, and feel embarrassed to speak (Ogbu, 1981). This is why some do not attend the teacher-parents interviews or visit the mainstream school casually. Schools are not a familiar or meaningful context for them, and are not 'valued contexts' in the Tongan way of thinking (Helu-Thaman, 1988). Although the theory talks about 'speech', it does not talk about 'ethnic language'. Wells (1999) asserts, 'Learning and teaching in ZPD is clearly dependent on ... face-to-face interaction mediated by speech' (p. 4).

Second, the concept of interaction in 'interpersonal' and then 'intra-personal' or internalisation, fails to consider the span of time needed to build rapport between two individuals, especially if they are from different cultures, before any effective interactions take place. It also fails to consider the cultural constraints individuals may feel about each other in a new territory. When in school contexts, for example, Tongan mothers face not just the language barriers but also the lack of appropriate context in which they can interact, and express themselves and how they feel about certain issues. One reason why some of the New Zealand government initiatives to support Pacific peoples have not been successful is that some of them are manned and managed by Europeans who do not speak Tongan, Samoan, Cook Island Maori, Niuean or Tokelauan. As a result, during the interpersonal phase of the interaction, Pacific people may misperceive the information, and when it comes to the intra-personal phase, may misunderstand the information, and thus act 'wrongly'. However, this type of inter-ethnic interaction may work well with Tongan women because they process this

repeatedly among themselves through *pō-talanoa* (talk, converse), *lau* (gossip), *fehua'aki* (joke with each other), *fakapāngopango* (tease each other), and the more they do this the more they are expected to understand. Despite this repeated interaction, if the women process the wrong information, it is still not accurate. Like any others, this sociocultural theory is based on the underlying assumption that individuals are active agents who are purposefully seeking and constructing knowledge within a meaningful context.

Further, one wonders if Vygotsky's theory is meant to apply only to intellectual development. Was the assistance that could be given by an adult restricted to deliberate instructions of the kind described in the theory? Did such assistance necessarily have to be given in face-to-face verbal interaction? Should the account he offered of learning-and-teaching in the ZPD be taken as universal and normative or as merely descriptive of the practices of a particular stream of the society in which he lived (Wells, 1999).

Within the concept of an individual's interaction in the social environment, there seems to be great emphasis on the purpose of interaction for intellectual development – to learn more, to develop intellectually, and for advanced development. The process of interaction of the learner with an adult/peers or parents is an attribute of the student in relation to the activity setting; this is assumed to result in the learner using the tools of language, thinking and interacting, and thus reaching the upper limit of his or her capability. If this is the case, the Tongan participant learners and instructors who interact 'in a cultural zone' in any ordinary context, to co-construct learning activities about art, weaving, tapa making, preparing a feast, making an 'umu, or even at a funeral, may not be regarded as within Vygotsky's social cultural theory. As Rogoff puts it,

"... there are cultural variations in the competencies that a child must acquire through social interactions in a particular society" (Rogoff, 1982, cited in Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 31). We do what we do, not just because we need and want to, but because sometimes it is our way of coping with the situation, not necessarily to learn new intellectual knowledge. However, although it appears too prescriptive, perhaps we can still use Vygotsky's theory to provide guidance or as a starting point for rethinking the purposes of our social interactions, and the way in which we analyse and reflect on these.

Further, because our social interaction often results in a combination of intellectual and emotional development, the two are inseparable. Vygotsky himself, however, draws a sharp distinction between social (inter-mental) and individual (intra-mental) functioning – this is one of the most contested aspects of his theory. Tongan mothers' interactions with others in their social environment could involve a range of combined 'inter-mental' and 'intra-mental' practices, from sharing good and bad news, learning about domestic activities from each other, saying prayers for each other, confiding in each other, gossiping, shedding tears of joy – there may never be intellectual development involved. At other times there could be Bible studies where they learn about faith and gain some intellectual experience and knowledge.

Looking closely at the concepts discussed in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, it appears that within the concept of ZPD much emphasis is placed on the 'individual' nature of learning with an expert, an adult, a parent, or a significant 'other' – all highlight the role of the individual as a single figure in the process either of learning or instructing and guiding – rather than on 'collectivism', group learning, collaborative tasks or problem solving. Within the ZPD context, while the discussion and explanations of the role of the 'significant other' in the learning process through which the learner goes is sequential and comprehensive, they fail to address the 'preferred style of learning' among most Pacific groups. There collaborative effort in most activities is preferred, and group learning is appealing. Most activities are organised in or occur within social groups. Ritchie (2001) recounts how 'individualism' in preparing morning tea in a childcare centre is rejected in favour of 'collectivism' in the same activity. Pihama (1993) supports the same interpretation.

Another aspect of Vygotsky's theory that has been challenged is his lack of specificity about the nature of instruction, at least in the context of his discussion of the ZPD, given by the adult. Vygotsky does not treat the nature of instruction itself as problematic, seemingly accepting the current practices with which he was familiar as adequate, provided they were appropriately in advance of development (Wells, 1999). But each culture has its own way of instruction: some ask questions; others give instructions combined with humour; yet others raise their voice or whistle first in order to get

attention before speaking, when giving instructions; in still others instructions are given sternly; and others with gestures and explicit facial expressions.

Most Polynesians, including Tongans, have dialogues, with questions and answers, gestures, touch, facial expressions such as raising the eyebrow for saying yes, proximity, clearing and varying the voice, humour and many others depending on gender, mood, and the issue with which the instruction or interaction is involved. Further, Vygotsky's use of the word 'appropriate' in his explanations of the concepts he used, although unspecified, allows for variations in cultural practices. Finally, the interactions that Vygotsky advocates assume face-to-face verbal interaction mediated by speech, and can be explained in most Polynesian societies as above. However, to maintain eye contact is not a common practice in Tonga. To focus exclusively on face-to-face interaction mediated by speech is seriously to limit our understanding of the range of modes of semiotic mediation that play a role in both interpersonal and intrapersonal thinking and problem solving; it also limits our understanding of the variety of ways in which learning in the ZPD is facilitated (Smagorinsky, 1995, cited in Wells, 1999, p. 5).

Another point to consider is the implicit assumption in Vygotsky's discussion of the 'awakening' role of instruction that the development that results from learning can be treated unequivocally as "progress". This assumption is apparent in Vygotsky's discussion of scientific concepts, where it is presented and aimed as making a higher mode of 'achievement' than with 'spontaneous concepts'<sup>60</sup> alone. 'Higher' does connote a superior mode of functioning. When the same assumption is transferred to the plane of cultural history, therefore, it could be seen as creating an assumed criterion for distinguishing between 'primitive' and 'advanced' societies (Luria, 1976, cited in Wells, 1999), and hence, becomes the dominant perception for the planning of any educational interventions designed to bring all societies to the advanced level of intellectual functioning of which they are potentially capable.

The assumption of this superiority in all situations of thinking based on scientific as opposed to everyday concepts, has also been challenged by cultural anthropologists

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<sup>60</sup> This concept is related to Vygotsky's notion of scientific and spontaneous concepts. He discusses the 'scientific' concepts which develops spirally downward from the teacher/expert to the learner/novice, and 'spontaneous' concept which develops spirally 'upward' from the learner to the expert in development/progress of learning (see Mertens et al., 1996, Chapter 6).

whose studies of non-western cultures have led them to reject the view that treats the trajectory of European cultural history as the point of reference for evaluating other cultures. What such arguments have overlooked is that the influx of immigrants from different cultures has led to a de facto multiculturalism that is demanding a reevaluation of assumed superiority of white, male, middle-class values.

### **Sociocultural theory – perspective of mothers and their contributions to children’s education**

According to Tharp and Gallimore (1988), the Vygotskian notion that development occurs through sociocultural activities has profound implications for teaching, schooling and education. A key feature of this view is that higher order functions develop out of social interaction, and despite the shortfalls of the theory, it is imperative to consider, and Vygotsky himself argues, that a child’s development cannot be understood by a study of the individual alone. We must also examine the external social world in which that individual life has developed through participation in activities that require cognitive and communicative functions; children are drawn into the use of these functions in ways that nurture and ‘scaffold’ their learning – mothers are a part of this. Kublin et al. (1998, cited in de Valenzuela, 2003) succinctly state that “Vygotsky (1934/1986) described learning as being embedded within social events and occurring as a child interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment” (p. 287). Mothers and their role in their contributions to children’s learning reflect this. Further, when the notion of group interaction is applied to family situations, mothers may consider investigating the potential of other, non-linguistic, semiotic modes for mediating learning within the home as an equivalent context to ZPD. Also, the emphasis on a community of learners and collaboration with others to socialise, learn from each other, or to solve problems, may enlarge the repertoire of strategies available for supporting the mothers’ learning. Equally important, the mothers transform their own identities as ‘first teachers’, as they take greater responsibility for their own learning as well as for the learning opportunities they provide for their children (Wells, 2003).

Considering the contributions of mothers to their children’s education, Adamson and Chance (1998) argued that there are two particularly noteworthy important aspects to a Vygotskian approach to social interactions. First, it is fundamentally cultural. Here

caregivers or adults are agents of culture whose interactions with young learners are deeply informed by their own cultural knowledge. They cannot help but view learners' expressions as meaningful within the human sphere of their own culture. Learners, in complement, are "quintessential cultural apprentices" who seek the guided participation of their elders (Rogoff, 1990). Second, the notion of a ZPD development does

reveal a pattern of developmental change in which a phase of adult support precedes a phase of independent learner's accomplishment .... After many experiences of supported expression, the child gradually masters an action that is qualified with cultural meaning. The act has passed through the ZPD during which the adult has educated the child in its use (Rogoff, 1990, p. 21).

What the above quote illustrates is that a child's learning depends to a great extent on his interaction with an adult – in this case it could be the mother – and the manner in which the adult responds with cultural knowledge in the context. Further supporting this notion are Bodrova and Leong (1996) who point out that the role of the adult/teacher is to engage in educational dialogue in a give-and-take between all participants.

By educational dialogue, Bodrova and Leong (1996) argue that the teacher has a goal in mind, and using questions to guide the student to the goal, they go on to say, that it is the children who must discover the meaning, but the teacher gently leads them to it, helping them correct the misconceptions. They also say that adults set rules that children apply to a range of other situations. Since the mother plays the role of a teacher (at home), she would also be playing this role. What is crucial is that mothers must allow children to discover knowledge for themselves, instead of totally transmitting the knowledge to them. According to Vygotsky, cognitive construction is always socially mediated and influenced by present and past social interactions. Those things a mother points out to her child will influence the child's constructs in what Bodrova and Leong (1996) call the three levels of social context, namely, the immediate interactive level, the structural level (home, family, and school), and the general cultural or social level (language, numerical system, and the use of technology).

In short then, sociocultural theory has implications for teaching, schooling and education. It seems that from a sociocultural perspective the role of the mother in the complicated web of interactions with the social environment in any context is vitally

important both for her learning and for that of the child. The interplay of the concepts and the mechanisms involved is complex but fascinating. For example, mothers play important roles in these social environments, and they affect these institutions or notions, and are affected by them. Mothers are an essential part of the social environment with which the child interact; mothers, who are the ones who scaffold the child's learning, must be examined if the child's development and learning are to be well understood; mothers are seen to practise social interaction at home, by collaborating with others (such as siblings and extended family members), and by learning for themselves as well as providing (cultural) knowledge for their children. These make up their contributions to their children's learning. Mothers' interactions with their children are fundamentally cultural – they transmit cultural knowledge from the birth of the child. Although mothers have 'educational dialogue' with the child within the ZPD, they must allow the child to discover knowledge. Finally, through the community of learners, and collaboration with others, mothers enlarge their repertoire of strategies for supporting their own learning as well as providing the same for their children. This in turn transforms their identities as mothers as first teachers, perhaps reaching another level of achievement within the ZPD.

Having reviewed Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to identify the relevant elements that could be useful to construct the 'guiding pattern' to 'frame' the present study, it is apparent that the basic principles that underpin Vygotsky's sociocultural theory are congruent with Tongan beliefs, values, and practices. These principles, namely that children construct knowledge under the guided participation of an adult or advanced peers; that development cannot be separated from its social contexts; that learning can lead development to another level; and that language plays a central role in mental development of the individuals, will form a guiding pattern for the present study.

Although these concepts construct a western framework using Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, such a framework is nevertheless a useful theoretical tool with which to explore the factors that make Tongan mothers contribute to their young children's education from their own Tongan cultural perspective but within New Zealand contexts. However, the mothers are operating within their own cultural values and beliefs coupled with those strategies they have so far acquired in their new country. Identifying a research method to collect data that will provide evidence of what and how Tongan

mothers contribute to their young children's learning and education will be the focus of the next chapter.

### **Summary**

This review of the literature has defined the perimeters of the study, and identified dimensions of parental contributions, in general, to their children's education. Selected literature on the characteristics of direct and indirect contributions of parents in general, to their children, is discussed, followed by a discussion of a few examples of migrant parents' contributions to their children's education in their new country. This is in relation to the parents' representation at school activities, help with children's homework, and their English language needs – similar issues to those faced by Tongan mothers when they migrated to New Zealand – and how both parents and children coped. Examples of literature on Pacific as well as Tongan parents' contribution to their children's education are reviewed in relation to parents' perceptions of education, their involvement (or non involvement) in their children's education, their commitment to church activities, and their high parental expectations of their children's achievement, and the home–school relationships.

The second part of the review focuses on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, as a paradigm worth considering as a framework against which the explanation of what and how Tongan mothers contribute to their children's education could be placed. While acknowledging the ongoing debate about sociocultural theory, a central tenet of the present study is that the mothers' contribution is to a large extent influenced and affected by their life experiences. The emphasis on the part of 'adults' as experts, 'caregivers', and more knowledgeable than children, gives way to a mother's role in collaborative learning, which is very relevant to the present study; that thinking develops in a social context and that there is a 'unique form of cooperation' between the child and the adult is a central element of educational process in this study. Finally, the theory provides explanations of the human mind and behaviour in social contexts is pertinent to this research, while Vygotsky's illustrations of the interplay of variables between both natural and physical phenomena and the cultural tools that cause changes could reflect how the Tongan mothers face challenges in New Zealand. Vygotsky's theory is critiqued, its limitations explained, and the relevance of the literature to the present study is also discussed. Chapter four discusses the methodology and methods employed in designing the data collection method, and coding and analysing the data.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Methodology and Research Methods: Perspectives, Method, and Design Process

*Potopoto- 'a – niuumui (the maturity of a young coconut*

(Although one may appear clever, it is the cleverness of a young novice)

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses the perspectives, methods and design process employed to investigate the research questions in this study. It also explains the purpose of the research, and addresses the rationale for adopting the qualitative paradigm used. While the approach is basically ethnographic, it also includes elements of other inquiry strategies – although this is not a claim that a mixed method approach is being used. This chapter also discusses the data collection methods and the procedures followed and the validity, reliability and limitations of the methods being addressed. Finally, there is a discussion of human ethics considerations, those raised before and those occurring during the implementation/operating process of this study.

#### The research purpose

The intention of this study was to investigate what and how Tongan mothers contribute<sup>61</sup> to their children's *ako/learning*<sup>62</sup> in the New Zealand society. Tongan-born women who were raised and educated in the Island kingdom, but have since migrated to Aotearoa and are now raising their own children in New Zealand are the focus of this research. It is felt that it is important and useful for parents, educators and classroom teachers to understand how a small group of Tongan mothers assist their young children in their learning during this phase of social and intellectual development of childhood, to understand what is going on outside the classroom, a different environment from that in which the parents grew up. What is unique about this study is that as the Tongan-born mothers want their children to grow up to be “Tongans” in New Zealand, they

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<sup>61</sup> To 'contribute' means, work to help, provide, chip in, assist, lead, support, subscribe, be instrumental, be partly responsible for, and more. This term is used because there are other factors, beside mothers, that contribute to children's learning and education. And, of course, mothers also make contributions to other family responsibilities beyond what they make to their children's learning and education.

<sup>62</sup> In Tongan, the term *ako* is used for both 'learning' and 'education' so they will be used interchangeably in this thesis.

teach the children traditional Tongan cultural values and beliefs, Christian<sup>63</sup> principles and practices, and some Tongan skills. At the same time, however, they also want the children to do well academically in the New Zealand education system, given this is the primary purpose in coming to Aotearoa.

Evidence indicates that these twin desires will often conflict and consequently challenge Tongan mothers who try to make it work in New Zealand in the same way as they saw it work in Tonga. That is, they endeavour to employ the same strategies to assure their children of educational success in New Zealand as they themselves experienced from their Tongan parents during their own childhood. In Tonga commoners can improve their economic, and consequently social status, through education. In the rigidly stratified traditional Pacific society educational success was the only means open to those not born into the nobility. It is this desire for family betterment that is perhaps what drives the mothers in this study to support, assist, contribute or even *teke*<sup>64</sup> (push) their children to do well in (western) education.

These aspects will be discussed further in this chapter, but the key question and initial focus remains ‘how do Tongan mothers contribute to their young children’s *ako*/learning and education in New Zealand?’

### **The research question and definitions**

To find answers to the research question, the investigation focused on three main aspects and contexts:

- how Tongan mothers contribute to their young children’s education in their homes,
- how Tongan mothers contribute to their young children’s education, in early childhood centres and school settings,

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<sup>63</sup> Since the early missionaries taught Christian beliefs to Tongans at a time when Tongan values and practices were not documented, the only records available are those written by missionaries from the 1850s to the 1930s and from that perspective, there is no clear demarcation on what were traditional Tongan cultural aspects and what were Christian principles. Consequently the two belief systems have become interwoven and overlap in a ‘cultural creeping manner’, with one enriching the meaning of the other. Most Tongans see these two strands as one integrated phenomenon, but academics attempt to peel one from the other, which clarifies but also marginalizes the nature of each.

<sup>64</sup> Tongan parents use this term in a positive manner; it connotes a sense of ‘convincing’ and ‘unconsciously, gradually directing’ a person to do ‘something good and worthwhile’ for their own benefit.

- how Tongan mothers contribute to their young children's education, in their church and local community.

It soon became evident that there was a need to define the term 'family' in terms of Tongan reality. Unlike the more usual *pālangi* situation of parents and dependent children, most Tongan households include the extended family. If the 'head of the house' is not a high income earner, it is very common for others, usually blood relatives, to live in the Tongan home. As a consequence the number of people living within the household will include considerably more than the parents and their own dependent children. This large number of permanent and semi-permanent household members impacts on economic issues as well as on the time spent and persons involved in rearing the children in that same household. The mother's role and responsibilities, in direct relationship to her offspring, are significantly affected by this situation – in terms of household duties, time available, sharing of errands, discipline, guidance, and so forth. In this research, then 'in the home' will refer sometimes to the nuclear family unit and at other times to the entire household.

The Tongan community in the city where the research was undertaken comes together for such events as funerals, weddings, graduations and similar social occasions. Often these will be family or village based but equally often the church is the focus of organised communal events. Interviews indicated that most Tongan women perceive the church to be the community and vice versa. This is reflected in this research.

### **Brief overview of the study method**

The study focuses on 12 Tongan-born mothers who migrated to New Zealand within the last twenty or so years, and who, at the time of the fieldwork, had children born either in Tonga and/or New Zealand and under eight years old. Two women also had older children in the family. These mothers and their families were among the approximately 450 Tongans who lived in '*Uta-mama*'o (pseudonym), a town of about 84,000 people of different ethnicities in the North Island of New Zealand.

In 2001 the New Zealand Pacific population was 231,800, of which the largest group was Samoan (50%), followed by Cook Island Maori (23%). Tongans (18%) made up the third largest Pacific ethnic group, while Niueans, Fijians, Tokelauans, and

Tuvaluans made up the rest. The geographical distribution of the Tongan population in 2001 showed that, 78% lived in Auckland, 5% lived in Wellington, 2% in Hamilton, and the remainder were spread over the rest of the country (Statistics New Zealand, 2001). However an increasing number of Tongan families had moved from Auckland's busy lifestyle and disruptive social environment to *'Uta-mama'o* where they had relatives already established, to allow their children to focus on education and enjoy a more peaceful lifestyle.

### **Integrated nature of mother and child**

As this research focuses on how these Tongan mothers contributed to their offspring's learning, it was essential to recognise the natural connectedness and relative inseparability of mother and child. Consequently, although the focus was on the mothers, both parties were 'main players on stage' in many contexts. The complexity of interactions with and for their children made the parent/child involvement in the study so integrated, that one party's role could not be separately identified from the other's; often one informed the other and vice versa.

Of course, Tongan mothers may not be the sole care givers in the household. Fathers, partners, siblings, grandparents, and other members of the extended family are frequently involved, particularly in the multi-generational households that frequently characterise Tongan homes. However, contributions and activities undertaken by other household members, in relation to the children's learning, were only important to this research if the mother was also involved at the same time.

### **The need for qualitative approach**

The nature of this study, in terms of the topic, methodology, the process of data collection, and the analysis involved, places it clearly in the qualitative realm. The use of a qualitative approach enables the researcher to understand the operation and action that take place in the context, and the nature of the phenomena involved in the social setting under study. The qualitative research approach contains inquiry strategies, which include ethnography, case studies, life-history method, cross-cultural research method, and participatory action research, among others.

The use of such approaches and strategies in qualitative studies is well documented in the literature (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Wolcott, 1994; Bouma, 1996; Maxwell, 1996, 2005; Creswell, 1997, 2003; Davidson & Tolich, 1999; Janesick, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The general characteristics provided a broad enough framework within which to weave together the essential knowledge, concepts, values and practices of some of the relevant aspects of Tongan culture needed to facilitate an understanding of Tongan educational concepts and values of thinking (Thaman, 1988, p. 11), with *tauhi-fānau* (childrearing), *ako 'i* and *akonaki* (teaching and learning, counselling), as well as educational expectations in/of New Zealand society.

Qualitative design is holistic – it looks at the larger picture, the whole picture, and begins with a search for understanding of the whole, where “... the social world is comprised of ‘complex and interwoven variables’ that cannot be isolated from one another” (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p. 28). For this reason, the researcher had to move between absorbing the activities and events and interpreting or making meaning of them within context, to stepping out of them and considering the bigger picture, and how these activities fitted. This occurred after every interview/*talanoa* or after observing the participants in a function. Immediate detachment from the psychological engagement in each scenario proved difficult, as did switching from viewing the scenario from a Tongan perspective to a *pālangi* viewpoint and back again. The status relationships (as discussed in chapter two) created by the hierarchical nature of the Tongan social structure, and the complex nature of the cultural activities in these functions, created a web of complexities in the roles of the mothers, as well as that of the researcher in observation and note taking in this social construction.

The focus of qualitative research is neither to prove something nor to impose control. For this reason it allows qualitative researchers, as Janesick (2000), states, “... to have open minds, but not empty minds. They formulate questions to guide their studies, but those questions are under constant revision and are continually taking new shapes” (p. 384). Questions have been asked in this study from a *pālangi* point of view initially, and then from a Tongan perspective in order to ascertain the details and meanings cross-

culturally for both audiences.<sup>65</sup> This was found to be neither always successful nor a complete failure. Davidson et al. (1999) notes that:

qualitative researchers are forever changing their data collection instruments – not because their methods aren't as well developed as those of quantitative researchers ... but simply because flexibility is valued more in qualitative research. This ability to adapt method as the subject changes is seen as a key strength<sup>66</sup> (p. 29).

'Qualitative' presumes 'inductive', allowing the patterns that emerge from the inquiry to be guided by the inquiry problem rather than imposing a pre-fixed pattern on the data. This is an integral part of the present study.

Furthermore, qualitative design looks at relationships within the system in the culture, and is concerned with the personal, the face-to-face, and the immediate – another reason why this approach is suitable for a study of this kind. The vernacular was used in the data collection and in conversation. The more discursive *talanoa* was selected rather than questioning the participants in an interview format. *Talanoa* is focused on understanding given social settings, namely the mothers in their homes, in the centre and school settings, and within their church and community. It does not necessarily make predictions about those settings but rather explores the women's experiences within each of them. Smith (1987), working from a feminist sociologist point of view, states, "a sociology for women must be able to disclose for women how our own situations are organized and determined by social processes that extend outside the scope of the everyday world and are not discoverable within it" (p. 152). Tongan women then, feel the pressures to help their children achieve in the educational sphere. This will reflect well on the entire family and give the child better life opportunities. What mothers often have difficulty with is recognising the essential steps that will lead to the child achieving those goals. Within what is essentially, a foreign culture, they particularly lack an understanding of key strategies, but still strongly feel community pressures.

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<sup>65</sup> For example – (from the interview questions).

<sup>66</sup> A clear example of this was the expansion of the interviewing method to include *talanoa*, not solely to enrich the interviews but also to allow the mothers to respond in a context of which they and the researcher share a common understanding of meaning and the procedures.

Because all qualitative research is interpretative and guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied, the approach requires the researcher to spend time in the field, and demands time in analysis equal to the time spent in the field (if not more), and “it sometimes requires the researcher to develop a model of what occurred in the social setting” (Janesick, 2000, p. 386). After being in the field, the researcher has developed simple models to be used as tools for different sections of the study, and has also become the research instrument herself in some parts of the investigation. This was especially evident in the face-to-face interview in Tongan with the participants, and in the ability to observe the women’s social behaviour within the selected contexts, while incorporating the negotiation skills in obtaining the informed consent in response to ethical concerns throughout the study process. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) point out that qualitative researchers always think reflectively and historically as well as biographically; they seek strategies of empirical inquiry that will allow them to make connections among lived experience, larger social and cultural structures, and the here and now. In so doing they self-consciously draw upon their own experiences as a resource in such inquiry. These aspects will be discussed later.

Qualitative design expects a description of the positioning of the role of the researcher and any shortfalls, biases, and ideological preferences. Some of a researcher’s beliefs may be taken for granted, invisible, only assumed, others may be highly problematic and controversial. In this instance, the value of education, formal western education is taken for granted. The researcher also assumed that many Tongan mothers were struggling to provide their children with the keys to academic success in New Zealand. Conversely, the participants also displayed assumptions. For example, the interview situation made clear that many mothers assumed the researcher would not support their teaching of Tongan and Tongan culture to their youngsters. This was an assumption the mothers made based on the researcher’s ‘success’ in the English-speaking academic world.

Each interpretative paradigm makes particular demands on the researcher, including the questions asked and the interpretation brought to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 19). They remind us that qualitative design requires the construction of an authentic and compelling narrative of what occurred in the study and the various stories of the

participants; it requires ongoing analysis of the data. Value-free inquiry (or report of the inquiry) does not exist, and in qualitative research this premise is presented with clarity, allowing the value commitments of the researcher to be transparent. That the researcher had worked (but not closely) with some of the participants in the community, as well as the issue of her (educational) status and those of the participants became at times problematic. This stemmed from a consciousness of the mismatch between the mothers' expectations and the likely outcomes. There were initial suspicions that Tongan mothers' contributions to their children's learning in these contexts required investigation. That the women desperately wished their children to achieve and were prepared to make every effort to help was not in doubt; that their efforts did not always meet with success was equally evident.

Tongan mothers seem self-driven, a consequence of the influence of their traditional cultural beliefs and values, of their natural aspirations for their children, of the effects of barriers to education they had seen and experienced in Tonga, and of any educational opportunities they now perceive in New Zealand. Gubrium and Holstein (2000) state that human consciousness actively constitutes objects of experience, and that consciousness is always consciousness-of-something. They add that human consciousness does not stand alone, over and above experience, more or less immaculately perceiving and conceiving objects and actions but, instead, exists ever already – from the start – as a constitutive part of what it is conscious of (p. 488). It will be interesting to see if the participants in the present study become conscious of what they experienced in Tonga, especially if they keep in touch with their relatives in the island kingdom.

So, within this framework, qualitative research methods allow the researcher to clearly identify and pin-point the specific issues investigated as part of a complex whole, to perceive the specific as part of this whole, and also to value the meanings of these multiple realities (Fonua, 2004). Within the qualitative research method are ethnographic inquiry strategies that give details of the fieldwork and data collection methods including interviews, observation, participation, participant-observation, story

telling, narratives, conversations and many others that are culturally based.<sup>67</sup> The researcher used some of these methods to answer the research questions (Maxwell, 2005). That is, these were used to ascertain the details about these Tongan mothers' contributions to their children's learning and education, in selected contexts in a town in New Zealand. The ethnographic approach, with elements of case study, and of phenomenological study built in, was employed in the 'operationalisation' of the research. Within the use of ethnography, the nature of interviewing, *talanoa* and asking questions in Tongan and in English are important and will be discussed later in this chapter.

### **The ethnographic approach**

According to Tedlock (2000, p. 455), ethnography involves an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events and understanding into a fuller, more meaningful context – the larger picture. It is, she says, the way in which information and data collected are transformed into a noteworthy written or visual form. As a result, it combines research design, fieldwork, and various methods of inquiry to produce historically and personally situated accounts, descriptions, interpretations, and representations of human lives. The researcher, as the ethnographer, spent a considerable amount of time in the 'field' with the participants, both in structured interviews and also in informal gatherings with the participants and others in a range of contexts, sometimes not prearranged. Further, her role as a 'key data collection instrument' included setting up the meeting venues and times. Snacks were prepared for both the mothers and their children, and the researcher organised toys and games so that the interviewees' children were occupied during discourses. All discussions were audio taped, and notes made of important points. Tedlock (2000) warns that "... the ongoing nature of fieldwork connects important personal experiences with an area of knowledge; as a result, it is located between the interiority of autobiography and the exteriority of cultural analysis" (2000, p. 455). She goes on to say that experience is meaningful, and human behaviour is generated from and informed by this meaningfulness. As a Tongan woman who has experienced social

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<sup>67</sup> In Tonga, the most effective information-collecting techniques are oral rather than written, especially at the village level. They include *talanoa* (conversation); *felāfoaki* (interactions) of men's informal discourse and humorous interactions at a *kava* party, where as *pōlave* (small talk) of women is a strong oral tradition as carried out in a *lālanga* (weaving) session or *koka'anga* (*tapa*-making) where women come together and work collaboratively as a group, share food, local news, and other information including gossip.

mobility through educational achievement, the researcher, in this instance, is able to identify with the aspirations the participants have for their own children.

Further, because ethnographers traverse both territorial and semantic boundaries, fashioning cultures and cultural understandings through an intertwining of voices, they appear heroic to some and ludicrous to others. They are cross-dressers, outsiders wearing insiders' clothes while gradually acquiring the language and behaviours that go with them (Tedlock, 2000). The role of perception, then, is of paramount importance. Participants, although anticipating an empathy because the researcher shared many of their characteristics and experiences – Tongan born and raised, fluent in the language, migrant to New Zealand, mother – were also somewhat wary because the educational achievements and current employment status of the researcher distanced interviewer and interviewee. Although welcomed as a fellow Tongan (insider), the researcher was also perceived as one who had adopted *pālangi* (outsider) ways. The degree to which this perception of the interviewer influenced responses is not measurable.

Ethnography has recently been extended to other areas of study, including sociology, particularly cross-cultural studies, and has proved useful in a number of applied areas (Ely et al., 1991; Davidson & Tolich, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Wherever ethnography has been adopted, a key assumption has been that by entering into close and relatively prolonged interaction with people... in their daily lives, ethnographers can better understand the beliefs, motivations, and behaviours of their subjects than they can by using any other approach (Hammersley, 1992 cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 456).

By immersing herself in the lives and realities of the mothers participating in the study, the researcher, as the ethnographer, as Fonua (2004) puts it, “was able to look at ‘a slice of life’ of the participants to come close to the realities of the participants as the participants themselves know them” (p. 39). The social and cultural contexts were of great importance for this study, because they made it a cross-cultural research of Tongan mothers in New Zealand contexts. For this reason, observation needed to be carried out in natural habitats, and both the details of discourses of each context and the ways in which the participants responded to the interactions, activities and events in these environments were considered very important. This was another reason why ethnography was considered the most appropriate approach for this study.

## **Ethnography and the identified contexts for the study in homes, ECE centres and schools, church and the community**

Because ethnography is both a process and a product, "... ethnographers' lives are embedded within their field experiences in such a way that all their interactions involve moral choices" (Tedlock, 2000, p. 455), and ethical considerations. The researcher, as the ethnographer, spent time in the homes of most of the participants, asking questions, having *talanoa* with and listening to the women's explanations of what they do and how they contribute to their children's learning and education at home, and observed some of the learning activities that happened there.<sup>68</sup> The mothers talked with confidence about their activities and the reasons for doing them. The interview/*talanoa* in their homes, in particular, took longer than in the other two contexts, and sometimes involved a meal, or light refreshment.

Conversations between researcher and interviewee in the home tended to be wide-ranging and on occasion resulted in further instances of mother/child educational interaction. For instance, when the watermelon beverage, '*otai*, was on the menu the researcher and the mother reminisced on the making of this traditional drink in their youth – specifically who did which task and how. This raised issues about Tongan values that are practised 'back home' but not in New Zealand. The children often asked their mother a lot of questions in Tongan and English about the practice and about related values, and what they mean today. The resulting explanations, in Tongan, though delivered informally, were a tangible element of the home learning paradigm.

The interview and *talanoa*, about their activities in primary school contexts did not take long for some mothers.<sup>69</sup> Women who worked at the Tongan childcare centres (regardless of whether their children still attended the centre or not) were willing to be interviewed and observed in those contexts (with the permission of the head teacher). But none of the mothers whose children were in the English kindergarten or at school,

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<sup>68</sup> During the month of the *Faka-Mē* (children's Sunday), all the early-childhood and primary-school-age children participated in drama rehearsals for their respective church's Sunday school. They had to learn Bible verses, hymns, or drama scripts. These were rehearsed in their homes and they were often asked by their mother to recite to the researcher while she was present.

<sup>69</sup> The brevity of these sessions was attributable to the fact that they themselves did not visit the schools frequently; two had only visited the primary school with their children once – when they had started school.

was willing to be observed or visited at school.<sup>70</sup> However, the researcher was invited to speak to a class at a private primary school about Tonga, and there she met and conversed with one participant, who frequented that school, and was able to see what she did when she went to help the teacher with some of the activities in her daughter's class on this particular day.

The interviews that took place in church and the observations carried out during church activities and functions went smoothly. One church did not allow audiotapes to be used for recording inside the church during the *Faka-Mē*, but the others had no objections. The researcher used the ethnographic approach, which according to Spindler and Hammond (2000, p. 19) had distinct methodological attributes, including participant observation as a major part of the fieldwork, a considerable length of time spent at the research site and the collection of volumes of material. No specific hypotheses or any form of pre-coding were developed before the research. The researcher sat in church, at community activities and functions for long periods listening to what went on while observing the mothers' performances, and wrote notes.<sup>71</sup> The speeches, singing, prayers, sermons, and dramas in church, which were in Tongan language, were audio taped (when permitted) while the researcher listened and observed. It appeared that during the sermons, a sense of meaning and purpose empowered the mothers in their attempts to help their children's education. These stemmed from the teachings of the Bible, and what the preacher encouraged the parents to do in terms of teaching their children ethical behaviour and helping them with their education.

While the researcher and the researched are Tongan, and speak the language fluently, and were assumed to hold similar cultural values at each phase of the research process, it proved necessary to negotiate and clarify the meaning and interpretation of what the participants said and did. There was also a need to ensure an accurate understanding as the participants explained their beliefs in a range of issues, including *ako* (education) and *lotu* (Christianity). Clarification of participant responses proved essential for a number of reasons:

- Occasionally participants were unfamiliar with the wording of the questions posed,

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<sup>70</sup> Since school visits were not included in the application for approval by Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC), the researcher did not approach any school for this purpose.

<sup>71</sup> Written observations focused on describing the setting, personnel, and gestures that assisted with subsequent transcription of events.

- Many Tongan terms have multiple shades of meaning, e.g., *lotu* can variously be interpreted as worship, prayer, pray, religions or Christianity, depending on the context,
- There was a constant use of humour and laughter by participants in their responses to the interview and *talanoa*.

These factors all required the researcher to ask a series of questions to clarify the true meaning of terms and concepts as the participants perceived them. The laughter and humour, and the need to negotiate meaning, occurred equally in all contexts, although not always with every participant. Clarifying the terms and concepts within context was important so that the researcher could represent the participants' views accurately.

Although anthropologists experienced and wrote about 'fieldwork' and life in Pacific societies in the early 1950s and 1960s (Cushing, 1979; Stocking, 1983), it was Malinowski who formulated fieldwork as a paradigm or theory (Firth, 1985, cited in Tedlock, 2000, p. 456). What he accomplished was the enshrinement of fieldwork as a central element of 'ethnography' as a new genre (Rabinow, 1985, p. 4, cited in Tedlock, 2000), and suggested that an ethnographer's goal should be to grasp the natives' point of view. There has subsequently been an expectation that "participation observation" would lead to a human understanding through a field-worker's learning to see, think, feel, and sometimes even behave as an insider or [a] 'native' (Tedlock, 2000, p. 457). This was an 'insider' to the social-cultural context of and within this group of Tongan mothers. She used Tongan and drew on her cultural knowledge to obtain information from participants, and sometimes used herself as a source of information and interpretation (Saville-Troike, 1989).

Given the inherently discursive nature of conversation, the researcher needed to be mindful of keeping the discussions within the scope of the study. Inevitably, at times, participants' *talanoa* veered to the activities of others (not the interviewee) and their personal issues within church or in the community. At such times, as often as was both practical and sensitive, the tape was turned off until the participant's had moved on to the next issue, or to a context where the researcher could observe the mother in her interactions or engaging in activities with her children. This ethical decision needed to be made. It is useful to point out that this kind of dilemma is particularly evident with

researchers who speak the same language and share the same culture as the participants they study – their own people.

In summary, the use of ethnography in the three contexts was comprehensive. But while the interviews and observations held in the homes were effective, productive, engaging, and wide-ranging, those taking place in church and during church activities were controlled both by the nature of the functions themselves and their accessibility to the researcher. A more controlled environment also operated in the Tongan-speaking early childhood centres.

### **The use of the Case Study method**

In the Case Study research method the researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon (the case) bounded by time and activity. It can be a programme, event, process, institution, or a social group. In the present study the focus is on a group of Tongan-born mothers, as a social group who migrated and now live in urban '*Uta-mama*'o. Their type of activity in which the researcher is interested is their contributions to their young children's education and the way they do this in specifically identified contexts. The researcher collected detailed information by using a variety of data collection methods and following procedures over a sustained period of time, viz 22 months (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1989, cited in Creswell, 1994).

The case study method should enable the researcher to find out 'what is going on', 'what is happening', 'the doing' in, among, and by this particular group of women in the particular situations of their contributions to their children's education. The aim is therefore a description of this group's 'actualities' in their real world, reflecting their own worldviews. The case study as an approach has been selected for investigation in this research for various reasons: 1) because of the nature of the group studied – they are mothers, all live in the same town, and practise similar activities focusing on their children's education; and 2) there is a need to devise an approach that is holistic in nature to allow for cultural context factors to be explored and for cross-cultural interpretations to be made.

Nunan (1992, p. 76) lists three key characteristics of a case study. First, it is *naturalistic*, involving the use of spontaneous speech; second, it is *process-oriented*, or

takes place over time; third, it is ungeneralisable in that it involves very few subjects. The present study links closely with Nunan's concept of a case study. It requires the conceptualization of these dimensions in relation to the Tongan mothers influencing their children's education in New Zealand contexts. Stake (1995) refers to case study as playing a role in research as a "bounded system". The bounded system in this case is the group of Tongan mothers with similar cultural values, and with similar cultural experiences before and after they migrated to New Zealand. According to Herber,

A case study involves a reconstruction and interpretation of a segment of an individual's life-story – based upon the most reliable evidence available ... the process is a quasi-judicial method; it embodies a theory about how and why a person behaved as he or she did in a particular situation. (1991, p. 37)

However, although case-study research may be used in its own right, it is more often recommended as part of a multi-method approach ("triangulation") in which the same dependent variable is investigated using multiple additional procedures, as with ethnography, participant-observation, or narrative analysis or others. Case study as a research method is used in two ways in this research: first, for Tongan mothers as a group in the town, and this cannot be generalizable for either the group members or other Tongan mothers; second, there may be individual women whose life-story will gather reliable evidence that will be used as a case study elsewhere but not within the present study itself.

In summary, elements of case study can be used to build in to the ethnographic strategy in this study. The convenience of the participants all being Tongan, women, born in the island kingdom, speaking Tongan, mothers of young children, involved in their young children's education, and living in the same town made this group desirable, suited and worthy of being 'chosen' to be studied within this research.

### **The use of a phenomenological approach**

According to Byrne (2001), phenomenology is one of many types of qualitative research strategies that examine the everyday experiences – the life world of humans – in an effort to understand 'what is going on', and give meaning to such experiences. The interviewing and observations are carried out by 'bracketing off' judgements about

the social structure and other influences,<sup>72</sup> while making no assumption about existing social power. Systematically collecting and analyzing narrative materials using methods that ensure the credibility of both the data and the results usually do this. As such, phenomenological researchers hope to gain understanding of the essential ‘truths’ (that is, the essences) of the lived experience of participants by taking a fresh look at the phenomena without the influence of other factors. The term is often used without a clear understanding of its meaning, and has been described as a philosophy, methodology, and method. Furthering confusion, the term has been used interchangeably with the term hermeneutics.

The father of phenomenology is frequently cited as Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher. His work, like those of Martin Heidegger, is cited as the framework for the research approach and methods. The term is related to methodology in ‘phenomenological methodology’. Here, the methodology links a particular philosophy to the appropriate research methods and bridges philosophical notions to practical and applicable research strategies. Husserl (n.d.) claimed that essences serve as the ultimate structure of consciousness, and contended that ‘bracketing off’ (that is, setting aside preconceived notions) enables one to describe the phenomena under study objectively. Consequently, he sought a logical method to gain understanding of the experience of human consciousness. According to Husserl, bracketing off his own experiences enabled him to identify the ‘essences of whatever he studies, free from his prior experiences which he may have gone through that may influence his study. Cohen and Manion (1994) state that according to Hycner’s work in 1985,

... the phenomenologist advocated the study of direct experience taken at face value and sees behaviour as determined by the phenomena of experience rather than by external, objective and physically described reality. Hycner points out that there is a reluctance on the part of phenomenologists to focus too much on specific steps in research methods for fear that they will become reified. These steps offer a possible way of analyzing data which allay such fears. (p. 293)

These steps highlight the repetitive nature of bracketing off the researcher’s previous experience, of listening to the tapes of the interview, and of condensing the meaning of the interview to relate directly to the research question, then identifying, modifying, and

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<sup>72</sup> ‘Bracketing off’, in this case, is in terms of the researcher being a Tongan herself and interviewing Tongans as participants.

contextualizing the themes before writing up the summary. That summary should describe the 'world' in general as experienced by the participants. Creswell (1994, p. 12) gives this as a definition of phenomenological study, saying that phenomenological studies, in which human experiences are examined, provide detailed descriptions of the people being studied. Understanding the lived experiences marks phenomenology as a philosophy as much as a method of research; the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning. Through this process, Creswell maintains, the researcher 'brackets' his or her own experiences in order to understand those of the informants. This is relevant for the present study given the researcher and participants are of the same ethnic and language background.

In working with Tongan mothers, this method was used because in a context where Tongan women gather together, whether in a home, in a learning centre, or in the church and in community-based activities, they repeatedly discuss certain issues among themselves. This researcher needed to 'bracket' off those factors about Tongan mothers that could affect her data collection from, and interpretation of, the group under study. This would enable her to identify the 'realities', and the essence of Tongan motherhood, and the perceptions and activities involved within as well as in opposition to the wider context of the Tongan community. While it is debateable whether any researcher is in fact able to divorce him or herself from his/her own background, experiences and perceptions, bracketing off does assume people can separate their personal knowledge from their life experiences. Theoretically, phenomenological research as a method is sound; however, when it is applied in the field it can become problematic. For one thing, the researchers, are encouraged in qualitative study to use first person pronoun, "I" and "We", when writing up the research (Creswell, 1994), to demonstrate the researcher's in-depth, personal involvement in/with participants' activities; they are also advised to form a bond with the participants on entering the field and sustain this partnership to the end. This requires sharing each other's backgrounds and subjective knowledge to establish a common understanding – the intersubjective elements. If these are not upheld then, according to the phenomenological approach, the research is less objective, and therefore less meaningful, and the validity of the data could be challenged.

However, for this researcher, this creates tensions between the need to bracket off previous experiences and the assumption that being Tongan, the researcher would know something of the focus of the study before beginning fieldwork, which is deemed advantageous. Further, the interview questions explored the mothers' experiences and probed their concerns, aspirations and perceptions. This was expected to provide the phenomenological data, which Byrne talks about. The women's narratives were expected to provide helpful perspectives related to this experience and rich details about their feelings and thoughts. This was one of the reasons why employing ethnography as a method, with its in-depth interviewing and detailed observation was considered useful for studying this Polynesian group of women in New Zealand contexts. Another useful aspect of ethnography is the use of authentic terms, concepts, and cultural values to reach the essence of the core values of the group studied.

### **The contexts**

Three main settings were selected to investigate these mothers' contributions to their young children's education: their family and their homes; their early childhood centres or schools; and their church and community. Within their homes, the mother's interactions and activities in the family and with the household members were examined, with the mother's role in each; her direct and indirect contributions to children's learning and education in general were explored through informal *talanoa*, structured interviews and researcher observations. Within the early childhood centre and the school settings, the mother's role and contributions in each was examined similarly, likewise within the church and communities.

### **Selection of participants**

At the initial stage, the mothers were identified from among those attending the Tongan language church services, the Tongan Language Early Childhood Centre, the Tongan language play group primary schools, and from Tongan women's groups outside the church. Mothers were approached in person, and were invited to participate if they were interested. The majority agreed to participate, but those who worked full-time claimed they did not have the time to spare. The purpose of the study and the process involved were explained to them in Tongan, although a written information sheet in both Tongan and English was at hand (see Appendices A & B). If, after the explanation, mothers agreed to participate, they were then asked for their consent (see

Appendices C & D). Mothers who agreed to participate also directed the researcher to others with young children, and these referrals were followed up. The mothers were given the choice of where they wanted to be interviewed, the date and time of day, and whether they preferred to be interviewed in English or Tongan. When dates, times and venues were confirmed, a *me 'a 'ofa*<sup>73</sup> was organised for each home visit.

Small quantities of corned beef, tea, milo or coffee, sugar, butter, and biscuits were shared with each family when visited. These items were symbols representing the *laumālie* (spirit) of sharing, appreciation, and *toka'i* (respect for, or consider others' feelings), and *'ofa* (love and compassion), and can be compared to the Maori cultural tradition of *koha*. Western academic circles may perceive this practice as a form of bribery – a trade-off of time for groceries. In fact it is a key element of the reality in working with Tongans and maintaining good relationships. To Tongans this is *fakahounga'i* (a gesture of appreciation) of the women's *toka'i* (showing consideration) for the researcher's request for their participation. To visit without such a small token of appreciation would be anathema to Tongan etiquette and denote a marked degree of disrespect by the interviewer towards those taking part in the study.

### **The interviews**

Research participants were each visited on three occasions. Each time the method of research enquiry combined a formal interview, casual discussion and the researcher's observations. The initial session focused on the mother's contributions at home to their children's learning. All the mothers were happy to be visited in their homes. A set of semi-structured interview questions was used to prompt the mothers' *talanoa* (see Appendices E & F). The second meeting centred on the mothers' contributions in institutional settings – the language nest and the primary school. These were carried out mainly in the Tongan Language centres, which the majority of their young children attended. However, a few preferred a home venue – their own or the researcher's. None of the mothers wished to be visited at any English speaking kindergarten or primary school, although two women said they were regular helpers in the schools their children attended.<sup>74</sup> The final series of discussions covered contributions to their children's education in the church and the wider community. All the mothers were

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<sup>73</sup> This is similar to the *koha* in Maori cultural practice.

<sup>74</sup> Possible reasons for this are discussed later in this chapter.

happy to be observed in church, during Sunday school, if they were teachers, and also during the social activities including the feasts after church. Some invited me to join the feasts when they themselves were the hosts in the function.

For ethical reasons, the town is not identified, and the women's identities are protected, so they were assigned pseudonyms (Tedlock, 2000, p. 460) that represent names of flowers in Tonga. Fragrant flowers are significant elements of a number of traditional activities undertaken by women in the Kingdom, hence the appropriateness of the choice of pseudonym.

### **Role of the researcher in the study**

*Insider*: Being Tongan by birth, a fluent speaker of the language, and having grown up and acquired Tongan culture within the extended family, like the majority of the participants, the researcher was, at most times, an 'insider' in the fieldwork context. Being an 'insider' has both advantages and disadvantages. The researcher was able to utilise her cultural knowledge to introspectively expedite the task of ethnographic description. Nevertheless, when, at times, participants expected an intuitive understanding from her of their responses, they were always asked to elaborate on what they had said to ensure the authenticity of the work. Saville-Troike stated that researchers who study their own cultures are able to use themselves as sources of information and interpretation (1989, pp.109-110).<sup>75</sup>

The ability to merge into the participants' realities is one of the major strengths of being an insider (Fonua, 2004. p. 43). This was possible because participant and researcher conversed in Tongan, understood common slang, jokes, and humorous allusions, and shared a common knowledge of idioms and social practices, prominent figures in Tonga, and of current news from the home country.

The researcher was sometimes both an observer and an informant, and this impacted on the problems of verification of issues in the study. Mothers realized that the researcher was fully aware of many of the situations they found themselves in and, not

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<sup>75</sup> For example, a mother might wonder if a wreath she recently took to a funeral was large enough to reflect her respect for the deceased and his/her family. The researcher was able to identify with her very real fear that she might not have met community expectations and social obligations in this area.

unexpectedly, anticipated empathy from the researcher. Consequently, there was often no need for the elaboration that would be necessary with an interviewer not of the same culture, who did not speak the same language, or who had not shared similar experiences. Perhaps knowing that the researcher also knew the background to the issues prevented any temptation to oversimplify or romanticize their responses.

However, even when the researcher was perceived as an insider, the social position which community members assigned to her was of significance – whether the researcher is “one of them, or the expert or the idiot” (Van Maanen, Dabbs, & Faulkner, 1982, cited in Fonua, 2004, p. 43). Certain pressures on the researcher resulted from her various roles as a university lecturer, a member of the Tongan fellowship congregation, and a volunteer in a number of groups for education, health, and immigration for local Pacific communities in the town. These roles and responsibilities earn respect among Tongans, particularly those who come from families that hold education in high regard. Consequently, to a certain extent these activities framed the Tongan community’s perception of both the researcher and the research project.

**Outsider:** Despite being an insider who shared the same language, cultural background and family experience as the interviewees, the researcher was also occasionally perceived as an ‘outsider’. Ingold (1994) suggests that it might be more realistic to say “that people *live culturally* rather than they *live in cultures*” (p. 330; emphases in original). According to this suggestion then, the Tongan community would have assigned roles to being a ‘researcher’ as well as an ‘educator’ and therefore, sometimes, boundaries or barriers still occurred within the researcher’s experience with the participants. Much of this would be due to social status based on education, professional position, and the role as a community adviser in a second language culture. Parity between interviewee and interviewer is thus lost and reasons exist for participants to view researchers with a great deal of suspicion, despite research (of Maori and other minority groups) claiming research should only be carried out by members of the ethnic community concerned (Spoonley, 1999, p. 53). Conversely, on other occasions, the researcher was afforded social privileges over the participants. At feasts held for Tongan community functions, perhaps because of a perceived superiority of education and university position, the researcher was almost always invited (with her American husband) and treated as a special guest. Obviously, the participants considered

education to be important even at church and community events when seating was assigned alongside the religious hierarchy.

*Insider and Outsider:* Clearly then the researcher's combined roles of parent, Tongan woman and mother and academic created something of a dichotomy - both an insider and an outsider depending on the specific situation. Further, Tongan women have a special social status within Tongan society, although Tonga is not a matriarchal society *per se*. Within those contexts men (in high positions within the church) and women (in socially responsible positions in the community) often need to negotiate their relative positions respectfully and tactfully, to reach a compromise. This socio-cultural technique of maintaining good relationships is known as *feveitokai'aki*, which means to respect and honour one another; to respect one another's feelings or scruples (Churchward, 1959, p. 183), and remains an essential aspect of *anga faka-Tonga* (Tongan ways) today.

Spoonley (1999), in writing about research among the Maori, points out that participants (may) want to control the research. The participants in this study evinced no desire to control the research. Rather, they frequently checked with the researcher that they were following the correct procedure, and queried whether what they were saying and doing was what was being sought. Participants wanted to *talanoa ako* (talk education) to demonstrate what it means to them to educate their children so that one day the child would become 'someone', who serves others, who *mo'ui 'aonga* (lives a useful life) for his/her family, church, and community; they wanted these social groups to acknowledge their efforts in this sphere.

As the researcher wanted to record the participants' own actions, beliefs, knowledge, and perspectives without her own input as to the appropriateness or otherwise of responses received, this occasionally created a mismatch in expectations of both parties. However, it was evident that both parties were "vulnerable experiencing subjects working to co-produce knowledge" (Abu-Lughod, 1993), so the researcher had to accept the participants' ways, based on their perceptions, as the truth. Tedlock (2000) advises that knowledge and experience from outside fieldwork should be brought into ethnographic narratives; asserting, "... ethnographers should demonstrate how ideas matter to them, bridging the gap between their narrow academic world and the wide

cultural experiences” (p. 467). However, this dilemma during the fieldwork does illustrate that emotional involvement in human relations is difficult to avoid. Complete objectivity in this type of ethnographic research is particularly difficult to achieve, especially at the end of the research partnership particularly when using qualitative research with an interpretative approach as a (design) method.

### **The use of *Kakala* metaphor**

Konai Helu Thaman (2003), a scholar, researcher and educator of Tongan descent, used this Tongan practice to create an investigative framework in 1988, as a contribution to the development of culturally inclusive teaching and learning notions of and for Pacific teachers and students. So the *Kakala* model represents her personal philosophy, developed in her ongoing search for more meaningful and culturally relevant approaches to her work at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. Originally for teaching and learning, the model can be adapted as an analogy in research design. Although the model appears simple, it can be further enhanced from initial Tongan perspective, to provide an in-depth understanding not only of how Tongan concepts can be built in and woven together with western notions in research methods, but also how research issues can be applied and interpreted according to a cultural framework.

### ***What is kakala?***

In Tonga *kakala* refers both to the range of different fragrant flowers, leaves, seeds or tree-bark, in general, and to a collection of fragrant flowers and leaves, woven together as a garland.<sup>76</sup> There are two types of *kakala* in Tonga, a threaded one called *kahoa kakala*, which is worn around the neck, and a woven/plaited type – *sisi kakala* – which is tied around the waist, although a small *sisi kakala* can also be worn around the neck, as a necklace. Made only by women, the different types of *kahoa* or *sisi kakala*, have traditional names that are hierarchical (see Table 1), depending on the flowers and leaves with which they are made/woven. There are three processes involved. The flowers are first *toli*<sup>77</sup> (picked), and then *tui* (threaded) for the person for whom the *kakala* is being prepared. After they are made they are *luva* (offered) to a particular person on special occasions such as in welcoming a guest, performing a dance, to a

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<sup>76</sup> The threaded garland, *kahoa*, is similar to a *lei* in Hawaii, and a *salusalu* in Fiji.

<sup>77</sup> *Toli* also connotes a sense of ‘choosing freely’ as one moves around picking flowers. The term connotes a sense of superiority, with freedom of choice.

wedding couple, celebrating an achievement, honouring a chief, or even presented when expressing condolences to a person who has lost a loved one.

**Table 4.1:** The hierarchial relationship between type of *kakala* and type of *kahoa*

<b>Name of kakala (flower)</b>	<b>Type of kahoa kakala</b>	<b>Significance continuum</b>
heilala	ve'eve'e heilala	most significance
heilala	nusi heilala	
heilala	nusi palataha	
heilala	pito'ingalau	
falahola / fā	kahoa papai fā	
pipi	kahoa lala	
maile	kahoa malie	least significance

There is a special etiquette and mythology associated with *kakala*, which, in Thaman's view, aptly reflect the integrated and holistic nature of the world views and epistemologies of many indigenous cultures, both within and outside (their own cultures) and the Pacific Island region (2003, p. 9).

The integrated and holistic nature of the process of *kakala* making by weaving together different flowers, has its own unique characteristics, and its place in the traditional myths and legends, of which Tongan women in general are very proud. This pride emanates not only from the women who have the expertise and traditional knowledge of *kakala* making but also from those who receive and wear the *kakala*, knowing where it came from, who made it, the source of the materials from which it was made, why it was offered to them, and, of course, the purpose of the occasion. In other words, the chain of personal meanings, and of meaningful relationships, which the *kakala* (fragrance) manifests is, in this case, among the person who makes it to the person who

presents it to the one who wears it,<sup>78</sup> and to the people in the community who witness it – each of these is a ‘strand in the mat’ that strengthens the *kakala*’s core values. The *kakala* is an example of the kind of activities that provide the sense of meaning and purpose that drive Tongan mothers to achieve their goals, with or without the help of others. This can be applied to their efforts on behalf of their young children’s education in New Zealand.

### ***Kakala* model process**

The important and relevant aspects of the *Kakala* model in research lie in the three stages of its making, namely, *tolu*, *tui*, and *luva*, as explained above, but it is useful to elaborate on each phase, and explain how it can be applied to the research process. *Tolu* refers to the selection and picking of the natural materials needed for making the *kakala*. Since *kakala* is hierarchical, the types of materials needed for each have to match the status of the person who wears it, as well as the occasion for which the *kakala* is to be worn. *Tolu kakala*, (picking flowers) connotes a sense of freedom and choice among women, yet it is a delicate task. It is useful to point out that the selection of places from where the flowers could be picked is important, as this is another hierarchical consideration. In fact, the person who picks flowers (best done early in the morning) from a particular locale has to be of some importance to the landowner. Delicate flowers and fragrant fruits must be hand-picked<sup>79</sup> and the branches must not be shaken. The flowers that cannot be reached must be left alone. Having handpicked them with great care, they are collected carefully, as some, such as the *heilala* (*garcinia sessilis*), are very small and fragile. The materials are collected into a piece of tapa or cloth and carefully carried home. To preserve them until needed (in an hour or two) some of the flowers, such as the *heilala*, are lightly sprinkled with a mixture of water, seawater, and a drop of coconut oil.

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<sup>78</sup> Etiquette requires that the person who makes the *kakala* does not necessarily present it. Instead, a person who ‘means something’ (*‘uhinga*) in the occasion makes the presentation. Also, the person who receives the *kakala*, does not put it on him/herself. Rather, the person who presents the garland, places the *kakala* on the recipient. The preferred practice is to be inclusive, and involve people who have links to the wide circle of the family, in order to identify the status relationships of the members of the *kāinga* (extended family).

<sup>79</sup> Delicate flowers such as *heilala*, and *mohokoi*, must be carefully handpicked, and in small quantities, put in a soft cloth or fresh *feta’aki* (tapa cloth) and loosely wrapped up.

*Tui* refers to the process of weaving together the elements to make a *kakala*. This involves using different types of folds, knots, plaits, threads, and weaving. The time taken to make one *kakala* depends on the complexity and the intricacies of the flower arrangements. Flowers are ranked according to their cultural significance, which is closely related to various mythologies. Some flowers and leaves, such as *hingano* and *lousi*, are suitable and proper to be used as *lalon*i (underlayers) of the garland, while others, such as *heilala* and *langakali* are ‘qualified’ to sit on top (equivalent of front row) and make up the *fungani* (top layer(s)). These are considered the best or ‘better than all the others’ of the traditional ornamental girdle. So, the colours and shapes of the elite flowers, which make up the *kakala* or garland, are carefully selected, matched, and arranged to be woven together to make a complete piece of *kakala*, to represent a concept, as its name dictates (see Table 4.1). The reality of a *kakala*, however, is not just its decorative and appeal, but also the sweet fragrance it exudes. There are cultural beliefs and practices that are related to the use of *kakala* that symbolize the cultural values of Tongan people, but these are outside the scope of this thesis.

The final process in *kakala* making is *luva*,<sup>80</sup> which is the offering of the final product to someone else, an act that could be referred to as ‘garlanding’ someone special. *Kakala* is meant to be given away as a sign of ‘*ofa* (love or compassion), *faka’apa’apa* (respect), and *toka’i* (consideration) – core values of traditional Tongan culture. The recipient of a *kakala* may be a dancer, or special guest, or a superior figure, a relative, or friend who is departing on or arriving from a journey. She or he may be a chief, a guest or keynote speaker at a conference, or a student graduating from high school or university who has achieved something special and is given a *kakala* in acknowledgement of that achievement. The act of *luva* or giving away brings pride and humility to both the giver and the recipient – pride in being acknowledged as part of, or belonging to, a group or family; and humility in knowing that members of the group acknowledge the achievement of the recipient. Both parties acknowledge the power and reality of relationships. A *kakala* is often passed on from the original recipient to another who, in turn, shares the original purpose for which the *kakala* was given. Both the celebration and the relationships of the people involved are *talanoa’i* (discussed, talk of the town) among members of the Tongan community, and it helps raise the

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<sup>80</sup> ‘Luva’ is translated by Churchward, (1959, p. 309) as, ‘to give or devote or sacrifice one’s all’; it connotes a sense of giving wholeheartedly, willingly and with pride in giving.

achiever's self-esteem, and acknowledge his family's social status. This consequent acknowledgement has been what has driven the achiever and his/her family to provide the support that led to the successful culmination of the effort.

For Thaman, *kakala* provides a philosophy of teaching and learning, as well as a methodology for research that can be adapted to other cultures in other contexts. Consistent with Vygotsky's notion that "... children learn to use the tools for thinking provided by culture through their interactions with more skilled partners in the zone of proximal development ...", (Rogoff, 2003, p. 50). "*Kakala*," as Thaman puts it, "... requires her to use knowledge that is sourced both locally and globally so that [she] may weave a garland that is both meaningful and appropriate and worthy of being passed on" (2003, p. 10).

#### **Application of the *Kakala* model in this study**

Thaman argues that *Kakala* is inclusive and holistic, and it values the relationships between teacher and learner. This researcher will attempt to analyze the three stages of making *kakala*, to see how the process and issues involved, and the implications that emerge, can be applied in research methodology and practice. The discussion of the findings and the conclusion will follow the process of weaving or plaiting the flowers together to produce the *kakala* (garland).

As with the *toli* (picking of flowers), the issue of collecting and selecting of the ingredients is significant. Where one goes to pick flowers is determined not only by the location, but also by the relationship between the landowner and the person doing the picking. The person who picks the flowers is expected to be superior to the landowner; the place could be a home, a cemetery or a beach, and so on. The owner of the locale could be a chief or a commoner. Applying these notions to a research context among Tongans, the person who collects the data, that is the researcher, should know the people she is going to work with, along with their 'cultural and social meaning', which identifies their social status (*'uhinga*). The researcher must also be aware of her own social standing among her would-be participants as well as how she fits in to the social structure of any group involved. She should know her own genealogy, as well as who is who in the group, to whom and how to ask initial questions, and what type of questions

to ask.<sup>81</sup> Second, the task of collecting data is just like the delicate task of picking the flowers – the researcher must obtain the information with a gentle approach<sup>82</sup> and in tactful manner. Confidentiality must be maintained, and, just as the *heilala* are wrapped carefully in a cloth, so should the information obtained be kept strictly confidential. Tongans in ‘*Uta-mama*’o live in a close-knit community, so the primacy of relationships is important.

With the *tui* (weaving) of the garland the time taken depends on the complexity of each particular *kakala* to be made. With a research process to follow,<sup>83</sup> the researcher must take time to explore the fieldwork using *talanoa*, conversations, interviews and observations; then reflect upon the data collected to encode, analyse, interpret and make meaning of it. This is comparable to the way in which the *kakala* are sorted for the *laloni* (lower layers) and the *fungani* (upper layers). The researcher must be able to use tools to analyse the information collected as they are the ‘ingredients’ of the research report. The researcher must decide which aspects will go in the background, underpinning the indirect information in the study, and which concepts will be highlighted in the final report. It is important also that the researcher carefully crafts the research to present a complete, coherent piece of work. All these ‘ingredients’ must be linked to ensure comprehension by the participants, and for both the researcher and her audience.

Finally, the *luva* (giving away) to others – at all stages of the social hierarchy – honours the recipients, possibly at a welcoming ceremony, an opening of a conference, a new building, or in the launching of a new project, in a celebration of an achievement, wedding, or birthday. The *luva* of the garland is performed with *laukau* (pride): pride in giving, giving something one has made with skill, and a willingness to maintain whatever relationship exists. Both the giver and the recipient acknowledge their mutual relationship, or one that is about to be established. That the *kakala* can also be passed on to another recipient or recipients further extends the relationship. What is important

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<sup>81</sup> The task of asking people outside the circle of participants must be done with confidence, yet must satisfy the requirements of MUHEC and Tongan cultural practice.

<sup>82</sup> There is a protocol for approaching would-be participants, and a way of maintaining with *faka’apa’apa*/respect the relationship with participants in a Tongan context.

<sup>83</sup> This includes the literature review, the design selected, and the method of weaving these strands together both in the field and in academia to reach valid conclusions.

about the *luva*, is the acknowledgement of the purpose of the occasion, the reinforcement of social relationships, and the strengthening of personal connections and social links within the group.

Like the *luva*, the fieldwork was planned and carried out with the participants' cooperation and goodwill and, when completed, it is worth giving away – giving away for the benefit of the participants who provided the materials, the information, and the important lived experiences that are meaningful in their social world. They have given the researcher something of their knowledge, beliefs, values, and examples of their own practices – their 'selves', the very core essence of their lived experiences. It is also important, the researcher felt, that the finished product is made accessible to teachers and educators so that they understand the situation of Tongan mothers in the contexts that have been studied, and in their efforts assist Pacific parents and their children. This will also help Tongan (and Pacific Island) mothers in their attempt to understand teachers' expectations of them at home,<sup>84</sup> their role in the learning centres and schools, and in their endeavour to engage in their children's learning in church and community contexts. The reciprocal actions of the researcher and participants demonstrate the social-cultural features in conducting research among Tongans, and the ethical considerations involved therein.

On a slightly different 'scent', Thaman's *kakala* model, with the collection of the fragrant flowers, and the process of making them into a garland, can be conceptualized as a metaphor and compared to the way in which these Tongan mothers gather learning strategies, skills, techniques, and educational materials in various New Zealand contexts and use to equip themselves. As the beautiful, scented *kakala* (garlands) represent a strong body of Tongan cultural knowledge that is later given away, so the Tongan mothers of '*Uta-mama*'<sup>o</sup> are endeavouring to weave those aspects of western intellectual scholarship that they understand to *luva* or make a key contribution to their children's education within New Zealand institutions.

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<sup>84</sup> A significant element in the matching or mismatching of teachers' expectations of Pacific parents, and mothers in particular, and parents' and mothers' understanding of *pālangi* teachers, their expectations, and the school culture is based to a large extent on language differences. This will be touched on later, but a thorough discussion of the topic is beyond the scope of this thesis.

### **Validity and reliability**

In qualitative research, studying one's own people and culture raises the issues of validity and reliability (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 44; Davidson & Tolich, 1999, pp. 31-34). Validity refers to the extent to which a question or variable accurately reflects the concept for which the researcher is actually looking. During the actions in the field, the researcher moves from an abstract theoretical concept to concrete and empirical measures of that concept (Davidson et al. 1999, p. 31). Unlike quantitative studies, in which validity of data can be measured statistically and can be generalisable to the population from which they were drawn, the issue of validity asks whether those empirical measures realistically assess the concept being studied. The question of validity can be external or internal. External validity refers to the generalisability of the findings obtained in the research, whereas internal validity refers to the design of the research project, that is ensuring there are no flaws in the research design. To ensure validity, it is advisable to pre-test the concepts and questions before data gathering stage.

Reliability, in contrast, refers to consistency. Davidson and Tolich (1999, p. 33) state that a measure is 'reliable' if it produces the same results when repeated at a different time, in a different place, even when used by someone other than the original researchers. There are three types of reliability: stability reliability, which refers to reliability across time; representative reliability, which refers to reliability across a group of subjects; and equivalence reliability, which deals with reliability across indicators. In other words, reliability is searching for an understanding of the complexities and idiosyncrasies of particular cases (Nunan, 1992, pp. 80-81, cited in Fonua, 2004, p. 42). There are methods of testing the reliability of research instrument, but this is outside the scope of this study. It is useful to note that achieving either reliability or validity does not automatically guarantee the other; measures can be reliable but not valid. To ensure validity, the present study measured the concept being studied, namely, the contributions of Tongan mothers to their young children's education, by interviewing the women, and observing their performances in three different contexts; to maximise the reliability of the research, the researcher used different methods of gathering data, namely through interviewing, observing, and *talanoa*, which were carried out in three different contexts, and different times, by the same researcher.

## Triangulation

Triangulation, an important aspect of qualitative research, is the use of multiple methods. This reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question, while trying to capture the objective reality through its representations. According to Flick, (1998, p. 230), triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation. The combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigour, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 5). Maxwell (2005, p. 93) agrees and states that triangulation reduces the risk that conclusions reflect biases and limitations of a specific source or method, while allowing the researcher to gain a broader and secure understanding of the issues investigated.

Denzin, in the 1970s, identified four types of triangulation. These include data triangulation, which refers to the use of a variety of data sources in a study; investigator triangulation, which is the use of several different researchers or evaluators; theory triangulation, which involves the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data; and the methodological triangulation, which is the use of multiple methods to study a single problem. Another aspect is the interdisciplinary nature of triangulation (Janesick, 1994a). However, Richardson, (1994) changes the use of triangulation and offers the notion of ‘crystallization’ as a better lens through which to view qualitative research designs and their components. He argues that crystallization recognizes the many facets of any given approach to the social world as a fact of life. The crystal, he says “combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionality, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and alter, but are not amorphous” (Richardson, 1994, p. 522, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 392).

The use of triangulation, in the present study, is in the data collection methods, the data analysis phase, and in the writing up of the interpretations of the findings. In the data collection phase, the researcher used a variety of methods including in-depth interviewing and *talanoa* (conversations), audiotaping, naturalistic observations (and note taking), and participant observations, in varying conditions and contexts, to ensure the credibility of the findings. In the data analysis, triangulation was used to reduce the

likelihood of misinterpretation. The researcher used procedural challenges to explanations,<sup>85</sup> (Densin, 1989; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 443). This was a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation. Triangulation also serves to clarify meaning by identifying different ways in which the phenomenon is being perceived.

Vaipuna-Frenley (2006), writing about gifted Tongan students in New Zealand secondary schools, asserts,

The advantage of (using) these methodologies ... are explained in terms of the role of Pasifika research (involving Pasifika participants and Pasifika researchers) primarily being to identify and promote a Pacific worldview, beginning with identifying Pasifika values, beliefs, and practices, and the ways in which Pasifika peoples interpret meaning, create structure, and construct reality of their own social world (p. 39).

In addition, Pasifika research should interrogate those assumptions that underpin western structures and institutions that may have been adopted unwittingly by Pasifika peoples. The ultimate goal of any Pasifika research is to make a meaningful contribution to Pasifika societies (and communities) through reclaiming their knowledge and values.

### **The Fieldwork**

Information on fieldwork as a qualitative research strategy is well documented (; May, 1997; Davidson & Tolich, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Fieldwork refers to the process in which the qualitative researcher prepares him/herself for the 'world they wish to explore'. Carrying out fieldwork among Pacific Islanders is a respectful role with a delicate involvement and a sense of sincerity; and the researchers must ensure they exit the field with the same sense of dignity, or more, than when they first entered it. This world is "... not awash with discrete, measurable variables, but is a whole that must be first experienced, by standing ... in the shoes of those being studied ... [and researchers] do their best to leave their preconceived notions at home: (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p. 97).

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<sup>85</sup> This is especially so from a cross-cultural perspective; and from a woman's viewpoint, which may be different from that of a man's.

It is important that the researcher enters the field with a clean slate, and open mind, and is ready to be receptive to the information he/she collects. It is equally important that he/she is impartial, non-judgemental, approachable, and without favour but with respect.

Fieldwork requires (data collectors) to spend a great deal of time in surroundings with which they may not be familiar; and to secure and maintain relationships with people with whom they may have little personal affinity; to take copious notes on what would normally appear to be everyday, mundane happenings, to possibly incur some personal risk in their fieldwork and then, to spend months of analysis after the fieldwork (May, 1997, p. 139).

Data collection and data analysis occur simultaneously, and the researcher needs to be flexible and reflexive, since she is the main tool in the research, with basic assumptions.

Theoretical literature on parental involvement in education and in their children's education (Bastiani, 1989; Chavkin, 1993; Barbour & Barbour, 1997), home and school relationship (Edwards, 2002); Education in Tonga and Tongan teachers (Kavaliku, 1967; Thaman, 1988); education and Tongans in Auckland (Furneaux, 1973; Mafi, 1997); Tongan culture (Latukefu, 1966, 1976; Kaeppler, 1971; Marcus, 1977, 1980; Morton, 1996, 2003), and Tongan women (Gailey, 1980; Kupu, 1990; Manu'atu, 2001) was reviewed and evaluated over the past 6 years within the context of the study as proposed. These readings also inform the assumptions held before entering the field.

### **Basic assumptions**

Before commencing fieldwork, the researcher acknowledged the following assumptions based on her reading and personal aspirations:

- that as a researcher, she speaks from a particular gender, educational class, social background or group, cultural and ethnic community perspective (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p. 18);
- that the researcher has her (own) beliefs, based on her cultural background and upbringing, which shapes the way she sees the world, and acts in it;
- that each social cultural group has its own unique system of organizing, then adapting and modifying, then reorganising the world around them;
- that the cultural knowledge, beliefs, and values of a group are reflected in its language, practices, symbols and meanings;

- that the behaviour of a social group is based on the established relationships (biological, physical and/or social) among the group's members;
- that it is important to see parts of a culture as they are conceptualized by members of that culture (Thaman, 1988, p. 12);
- that if the group is a minority in a dominant culture, the members tend, in their views and practices, to shuttle from within their own group to the outside bigger group, and back again, thus modifying and adapting their beliefs and practices to suit themselves and their minority while conveniently adjusting to gel in with the 'dominant' culture;
- that the groups' desires and future aspirations may not necessarily be easily and immediately identified, but it is the researcher's task to explore these aspects.

The researcher wonders what *kakala* these Tongan mothers are carefully selecting and weaving over time in New Zealand to *luva* to their children.

### **Ethical considerations**

This is a very important aspect of conducting research among any group of people, regardless of the location, ethnicity, age group or religious beliefs, because each group has its own sets of values to be respected. Hau'ofa (1999) explored the ways Pasifika peoples felt about being exploited by the western ideas to which they have been exposed, while at the same time trying to protect their space within that world. He writes:

Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still; Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean. We must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places and from which we have recently liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again and take away our freedom (Hau'ofa, 1999, p.37).

Once the Research Proposal for the study was approved (*Protocol 03/40*), consultation with potential participants was carried out in *anga faka-Tonga* (the Tongan way) by asking various social groups within the churches and Tongan community who would be eligible to participate, and therefore who could be approached. This was done directly

in face-to-face meetings with group members, and *talanoa* (conversation) in Tongan with questions and humour about the study and women who could be participants. Once a list of few names was drawn up, the culturally appropriate approach was a personal visit for *talanoa* in Tongan, in the evening when the women were free. Snowball sampling was used to identify and select other participants.

Confidentiality was guaranteed with the use of pseudonyms for all participants involved and the town in which the study was carried out. The families, churches, social groups, and institutions involved were not identified in any way. Information sheets in both Tongan and in English were prepared and provided in advance for the women to read and consider before they gave their consent. All the women except one agreed orally to give their consent, after being given the written information and told clearly what was involved in the study, their right to refuse to answer any questions, or ask to have the audio tape turned off at any stage, and that they had the option of withdrawing at any point during the study without any further question being asked. After discussions with the first three women, their comments<sup>86</sup> made it clear that the women did not want to sign on paper (consent form), as this made them feel they were distrusted (by the researcher). Consequently, this practice was discontinued. The first three women also suggested that it would be better simply to arrive with the information sheet (in Tongan) and explain its contents, gain consent, and get on with the *talanoa*, and they would be willing to talk. An understanding of *anga faka-Tonga* (Tongan way) with practice of *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *toka'i* (being acknowledged), *fakatō-ki-lalo* (deference), *fetokoni'aki* (reciprocity) and *'ofa* (love) are important elements in the protocol of entering the Tongan social world.

Another phenomenon that is worth remembering when conducting research among Tongans is the relative status of members of one's extended family, that is, between *'eiki* (those of nobility or chiefly rank) and *tu'a* (commoners), *ako* (educated) and *ta'eako* (uneducated), *'uta* (bush people) and *kolo* (town people), *lotu* (religious) and *ta'elotu* (non-religious), *mo'umo'ua* (well off) and *masiva* (poor), and many other divisions that include the researcher and the researched. In all the sessions, the researcher took refreshments as part of the practice of *toka'i* (showing gratitude) and

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<sup>86</sup> Comments included, "*Oku 'ikai te ke falala mai kiate au? 'Oku ou loto lelei ke ta talanoa!*" (Don't you trust me? I am willing to talk with you!)

*fetokoni'aki* (reciprocity) as appreciation for their time, the information given, and their involvement in the study.

Because the study was focused on exploring learning and activities that the mothers planned and implemented to contribute to their children's education rather than identifying barriers to their education and achievements, the women felt *vēkeveke* (enthusiastic) and *pōlepole* (proud) to share their knowledge, and there was little chance of them feeling *fakamā* (embarrassed) about revealing details of their activities in this regard, as well as their dreams and aspirations for their children.

Despite its generic nature, the Pasifika Education Research Guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2001) document was consulted regularly from the design phase of the research to the selection of participants, data collection and analysis, and the writing up of the work. This was adapted to a Tongan focus, and to the designated contexts of the study. One example of this was to incorporate the hierarchical nature of Tongan society and the particular role of the husband's sister in any marital relationship. These aspects are not found in all other Pacific societies.

### **Data collecting tools**

A number of tools proved useful and effective in collecting data with and from the participants. These included the in-depth interviews and *talanoa*, the casual as well as systematic observations of formal and informal activities within the targeted contexts, and finally, participant observations in homes, centres, church, women's groups, and community functions. A journal was kept, along with written and audio records of most observations.

Other useful sources of data and 'tools' were the researcher's upbringing in Tonga, her knowledge and experiences overseas, and her teaching background. Her teaching career has spanned primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Tonga, New Zealand, and Fiji. Her community involvement has included liaison and language/interpretation for various organisations, and she is herself a Tongan woman now in her fifth decade. Inevitably, the researcher's 'Tongan-ness' has been influenced and 'modified' by her experiences in countries outside Tonga. Thaman (1988) warned of the need to be

mindful of the influence researchers as 'research tools' contribute to their findings; and Davidson and Tolich (1999) also point out that:

... qualitative researchers do not just enter a location with a blank mind, and collect whatever data falls into their lap. Rather, they take with them a whole raft of assumptions, their own personal agenda, and ideas they have read about in their literature review (p. 98).

### **Selection of the research site**

*City: 'Uta-mama'o*, which means 'far away village in the bush', is a fictitious name given to the city in which the study was carried out. This was to protect the identity of the small number of Tongans who live there. The name is based on the term Tongans in Auckland use to refer to places outside the Auckland region. This is similar to the way in which Tongans in Nuku'alofa refer to villages distant from the capital. Rubin and Rubin (2005) point out that these understandings might be expressed through symbols and metaphors that suggest how people interpret their experiences and how they deal among themselves, and with others. To understand what people say, interviewers need to pay attention to the symbols and metaphors with which people describe their worlds (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 8). '*Uta-mama'o* was chosen because it was central, has a population of Tongan families, and the range of Tongan mothers can be represented in the sample of participants.

'*Uta-mama'o* is situated in the southern part of the North Island of New Zealand, with a population of approximately 80,000. The largest ethnic group is European, followed by Maori, Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan, Niuean, Fijian and Indian, and Tokelauan, and other ethnic groups. An increasing number of Asian families have arrived within the last five years to take advantage of business and educational opportunities. The city has tertiary institutions; secondary schools, of which two are single sex schools; intermediate schools; primary schools; Tongan Language pre-schools; Samoan language nests, and a few other Pacific Island childcare and playgroup centres. There are many English language kindergartens and childcare centres.

Tongan families have moved in to the town for various reasons. A small number originally came from Tonga as students on Tongan Government scholarships in the 1970s and '80s to study at polytechnics and the university and have remained

permanently in *'Uta-mama'o*. Others came under the work scheme when there was a labour shortage in industries during the economic boom at the same period. After the economic boom, and their work permits had expired, they stayed on illegally, but eventually gained permanent residence status under the then Labour Government. Still others moved from Auckland, because of the expensive living conditions there, and the difficulty of managing the increasing number of relatives from the islands who came to live with them. Some are students who have moved into the area for tertiary education.

Since the late 1990s, a small number of families have migrated straight from Tonga under the Skilled Migrant Programme. This last group brought with them professional skills and experience in their respective fields. They now hold positions as teachers (in primary schools, and early childhood education), builders, fruit pickers, and factory workers. Some are researchers or lecturers at university; one is an accountant, and a few are farm workers. A few of the women work as night nurses in retirement villages while a small number are night cleaners in the city. The majority of women said that they have come to New Zealand for better education for their children and *'Uta-mama'o* has ideal conditions – it is peaceful, has fewer social pressures than Auckland, and is more conducive to children's learning than in Auckland.

Most of the Tongan families in *'Uta-mama'o*, prefer to live close together, mainly in rental accommodation, and within walking distance of each other (as they do in villages in Tonga). Only a few own their own homes. The nuclear and extended families occupy flats in big blocks in the neighbourhood where separate homes (*'api*) for each nuclear family are located. This is known as *nofo -'a- kāinga*, (living together as extended family). Family members within the kin group see and help each other almost every day, care giving and babysitting, sharing food, domestic services, vehicles, money and other resources, and they do many things together, especially on such occasions as church feasts, weddings, birthdays, celebrations, funerals and similar functions. The women and mothers talk and work together collaboratively and reciprocally.<sup>87</sup>

The men do the same in their respective roles, while the children who are related to each other, grow up together, play and learn from each other, know their kingroup and

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<sup>87</sup> Two of the participants clearly expressed their preference for raising their children in the home of their in-laws, rather than with their own biological families because they get a lot of support and their in-laws understand them better, and communicate with them well.

relationships, and learn to practise their roles and responsibilities within these contexts. They move from one household to the next to play, help, and share meals wherever they may be in the neighbourhood. It is similar to a communal lifestyle in Tonga where all the adults are responsible for the well-being and learning of all the children. This is where the children learn and the mothers reinforce those social and cultural features of growing up to be Tongan that are embedded in daily practices such as the importance of social ranking in status relationships, perception of childhood, direct and indirect teaching, silence and obedience, and questioning. The mothers thrive in these Tongan-style living conditions and environment, with supportive surroundings, while anticipating the successful acquisition of a western education for their children.

**Church:** Another factor that holds the extended families together is their membership of a church. This is a very important aspect of Tongan lives overseas, and especially for mothers whose task it is to teach the children moral and social values along with some academic skills, if possible. In *'Uta-mama'o* several large extended families form the basic membership of a church. Most of the churches that currently operate in Tonga are represented in *'Uta-mama'o*. These include the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, and the Methodist Church, where a group of Tongans have formed a Tongan Fellowship and attach themselves to the Methodist Church main congregation. They attend the main church service and worship in English with the *pālangi* congregation, but also have a separate service in Tongan. There is also a Free Church of Tonga congregation with services conducted exclusively in Tongan. The Mormon Church and the *Tokaikolo*<sup>88</sup> faith are also represented by a small group.

These Tongan congregations use some of the *pālangi* church<sup>89</sup> buildings for services and other social activities pertaining to church worship. The opportunity to use these buildings is extremely important for Tongan church members, not only because they cannot afford their own, but also because church practices are a fundamental traditional core essence of the Tongan way of life; it is a cultural system. A church (and church

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<sup>88</sup> The *Toka-i-kolo* church is a break-away group from the Free Wesleyan Church in Tonga. The original group left the main church because they felt the Wesleyans, to which the royal family belongs, were very hierarchical, too business-like, and very much dominated by overseas educated Tongans who were seen by some as becoming more materialistic rather than focusing on spiritual matters as priority.

<sup>89</sup> At the time of the study, the Methodist, Anglican, and Presbyterian Churches each had a Tongan fellowship attached to them, and they share the use of their facilities.

halls) provides a central place where they are drawn together by their inter-subjective meaningful faith and belief, to work together to support each other while cultivating and practising their traditional cultural values, which drive their daily practices. There, they have Sunday services, as well as weekday devotions, Sunday schools, where children also have drama rehearsals during the week, choir practices, Bible classes, different age group meetings, and feasts for special occasions. While these activities may appear physical, outward, and unspiritual, they nevertheless provide the contexts within which both the fundamental principles of Tongan cultural values and religious beliefs are delivered and put into practice. The mothers who participated in the study are constantly in the midst of all these. They help in the planning, preparations, and actual implementation more than most of the men do as the researcher observed.

**Other groups:** Other types of activities which hold the Tongan community together in '*Uta-mama*'o include those that are organized for Pacific Islanders in the city, for example, the Secondary School Pasifika Students cultural festival, the Pasifika Health Projects, the Pasifika Educators Group, and the Pacific Pride Advisory Group, which, through regional education coordinators, acts as go-between between the Ministry of Education in Wellington and the Pasifika communities in the city.

The Pasifika Health Projects are run by Pacific workers within the Health Board system, with the help of Pacific people in the community. Projects such as national vaccinations against epidemic diseases, and writing health policies for Pacific peoples draw Tongans and other ethnic groups to participate. Some of the participants involved in these projects contribute to them from a Tongan perspective, and at the same time distribute information in Tongan to other Tongan parents to be passed on to others in the area and to their children. Finally, Pasifika Pride is a community advisory group that advises the Ministry of Education on national policies for and activities in relation to Pacific people. At the time of the study, the membership in this group was dominated in '*Uta-mama*'o by Tongan educators. With education so important to Tongans, this has drawn parents to participate in the health and education activities of these community groups. When they come together they talk to each other in Tongan, share new ideas and news from Auckland and from the islands, while also sharing views on educational matters, joking with each other, and with other Pacific islanders. This helps Tongan parents

(who are mainly mothers) form a strong network, and support their children and their children's school activities.

**Participant selection:** After exploring the Tongan community groups, it was decided that mothers who identified themselves as Tongans<sup>90</sup> had early childhood, and/or primary school age children, and were living in 'Uta-mama'o were considered suitable to be approached to participate. The researcher ensured that the types of family construction from which the participants came were representative of the types of Tongan family structure present in 'Uta-mama'o. The researcher felt that 'the mothers who identified themselves as Tongans' were important because they were *palotoloto*<sup>91</sup> in their Tongan beliefs and values and were nurturing these in their children in New Zealand, and they would be living according to the Tongan way.<sup>92</sup> However, at the same time they wanted western education for them, and while the two are culturally contradictory, both can be acquired, often with great adjustments and sacrifices. Tongan-born mothers (and those who now live in New Zealand) were born into and ranked to a certain fixed social category as either 'eiki (chiefly) or *tu'a* (commoner). However they can improve their status and class mobility through success in education and/or business, and there is a great difference in the lives of people (in Tonga) according to how they are ranked in the hierarchical society.

In a single household, elders and the father hold the highest social status, then the mother, followed by the eldest child and so on to the youngest. But if it is an extended family household, the father's sister holds the highest rank. All learn function according to their social status, where each person has many 'selves' and behaviours in roles and responsibilities, according to status and context. A mother in an extended family will perform her roles according to her husband's rank in the order of the family. If her husband is the youngest in the family, she may have to look after children of her

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<sup>90</sup> It was difficult to ask the women directly to identify themselves (as Tongans) but after trial and error, the researcher discovered that it was easier and more humorous to ask, "In what way do you consider yourself a Tongan?" The researcher and the participant both laughed, and then the answer followed.

<sup>91</sup> The term *palotoloto*, is translated by Churchward (1959, p. 401) as 'to stick in one's mind in such a way as to be difficult or impossible to dislodge', that is, they are firm believer in a particular thing.

<sup>92</sup> The 'Tongan Way' is a term used by both Tongans and non-Tongans to describe a complex body of knowledge to do with traditions, values, beliefs, practices and interactions within Tongan social hierarchical contexts, and/or among Tongan peoples. It encompasses culturally specific ways of using the three-tier Tongan language, symbols, and of understanding and expressing *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *fatongia* (duties and obligations), *talangofua* (obedience), *'ofa* (love and generosity), *mateaki* (loyalty), and *mamahi'i me'a* (commitment).

brother's older siblings as well as her own little ones. She may also on occasion do washing, cooking, house cleaning, for the whole extended family.

Mothers with pre- and primary-school-age children were chosen because it was considered highly likely that these women would have had their aspirations for their young children's education set, and that their desires and ambitions as priorities for their children's learning of Tongan cultural beliefs, values and practices would already be established.<sup>93</sup> It was also considered likely that these mothers would spend more time at home with this age group and would be able to 'mould' them into the people they wanted them to become, and be able to 'teach' the young ones social etiquette and moral education as well as help the primary-school-age children with their school work, and Bible verses for Sunday school.

The children would still be greatly dependent on their mother at this stage, whereas intermediate- and secondary-school-age children would be likely to want more independence, despite the Tongan parents' expectation of their children to *talangofua* (be obedient) and *fakaongoongo* (show deference) to them. It was decided that fathers would not be included in the interview, except when mothers made reference to them. This is part of the Tongan cultural *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *toka'i* (to consider the feelings and judgement of others involved) that typify interactions with other Tongans about sensitive issues. However, Tongan practices do not always mesh with the *palangi* requirements in the classroom, so both mothers and children often find these expectations contradictory and a source of tension between the two cultures; there are many examples of this.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Most mothers/parents want their children to have extensive knowledge of *anga faka-Tonga*, more so when there are older relatives at home who speak only Tongan, and have ongoing involvement in a church-based Tongan community. Communication between the family and their Tongan visitors is restricted because they cannot speak each others' first language.

<sup>94</sup> The mothers' desire for their children to practise Tongan cultural values is very strong. They also want them to achieve better academically than they themselves; these are key factors that drive them to contribute to their children's education. By working in two or more jobs, purchasing expensive educational materials, often without guidance from educational experts, they think can do it.

### ***Talanoa* as interviewing method**

At this stage it is useful to discuss why and how *talanoa* came to be employed as an appropriate and practical tool for data gathering in this study. *Talanoa* means a talk, a conversation, a dialogue or verbal exchange of ideas, thoughts or opinions; but it also means a story. The face-to-face verbal exchange in *talanoa* between two or more people, in a group can be formal or informal, where all the parties involved can use verbal (speech, verbatim, idioms, slang, jokes) as well as non-verbal (facial expressions, gestures, actions, motions, signs)<sup>95</sup> means of communication to tell and illustrate their stories. These are some of the social and cultural features of communication that are salient from *palangi* observations of Tongans holding a *talanoa*. *Tala* means to tell, convey, inform, relate, announce, disclose, as well as to instruct, command or order. *Noa* means nothing, nonexistence, nothing in particular.

Vaioleti synthesizes these: “*Talanoa*, then, literally means talking about nothing in particular, and interacting without a rigid framework” (2001, p. 23).

*Talanoa* is spontaneous, flexible, impulsive and unrestrained; it provides opportunities to probe, challenge, clarify, and re-align among those who are engaged in it. It can be robust and gentle at the same time, providing valid and up-to-the-minute knowledge because it is contextual, on the spot, flowing and reciprocal. It employs questions, answers, comments, praise, criticism, idioms, jargon, and analysis in its discourse.

What is important about *talanoa* is that it allows those with a common interest to come together, to dialogue, and share ideas; it gives people a chance to engage in social conversation that, while it may lead to critical discussions or knowledge creation, provides rich contextual and inter-related information and issues to surface as a co-constructed body of knowledge in stories. Halapua (2005), in his discussion of the use of *talanoa* as a tool in the negotiation to solve the conflicts in the political reform in Tonga, argues that *talanoa* does not have a preconceived agenda; it is open and anyone can tell their story. He reminds us that:

... prior to the advent of the western civilization and the coming of the missionaries, the only thing that we [Tongans] had was *talanoa*, that was how history was created; that was how we knew we were Tongans, that was how we

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<sup>95</sup> Raising one’s eyebrows and laughter are a dominant non-verbal communication during *talanoa* among Tongan men and women.

knew we own [sic] the land that was how we knew our *kainga*, that was how we knew our *hou'eiki*, that was how we knew our *Tu'i*, because of the *talanoa* (Halapua, 2005, p. 4).

The trick about *talanoa*, Halapua says, is that it must be facilitated, in such a way that after the story is told, the facilitator then extracts what he/she sees as the main issues that emerge from the *talanoa* and takes them back to the people who participated in the *talanoa* to verify what they said and meant before he actually records it.

Within research,

...in a good *talanoa* encounter, *noa* creates the space and conditions. *Tala* holistically intermingles researchers' and participants' emotions, knowing and experiences. This synergy leads to an energizing and uplifting of the spirits, and to a positive state of connectedness and enlightenment (Vaiotei, 2006, p. 24).

This is when *talanoa* reaches the *mālie* and *māfana* (warmth)<sup>96</sup> state, the point of intersubjectivity for both the researcher and the researched, where both parties feel the *māfana* 'o e mo'oni (warmth of the truth), and see the meaning and agree, while establishing a point of common understanding of the subject they discussed in the *talanoa*.

All these characteristics make *talanoa* a suitable tool for data collection in this study. Because they were familiar with it, and know the process involved, the women were happy when the researcher changed the term from 'interview' to '*talanoa*' during the first round of discussions.<sup>97</sup> *Talanoa* is subjective, mostly oral and collaborative, and is resistant to rigid, institutional, hegemonic control (Vaiotei, 2006). Once the mothers had agreed to be visited during an evening to *talanoa* about the study and their potential role in it, arrangements were made by phone and personal visits. This proved difficult as most were heavily committed to church, part-time jobs, or family responsibilities. It

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<sup>96</sup> Manu'atu (2000) claims the state of *mālie*, when reached, is a psyche and spirit of both a performer and storyteller energised and uplifted to a positive, often sensual, state of connectedness and enlightenment. *Mālie* is translated by Churchward (1959) as 'good, pleasing, pleasant, such as one likes or enjoys. It also means pleasantly, very satisfactorily, special senses; exactly, evenly, gently, softly, gradually at a leisurely pace...' (p. 324).

<sup>97</sup> The term 'interview' when translated into Tongan, becomes *faka'eke'eke*, which means 'to investigate, probe, to make repeated enquiry'; and it implies a sense of suspicion, of wanting to know more than what is told or given. Some felt that a person from university investigating what they do became suspicious, although this was not explicitly pointed out to the researcher who had *talanoa* with others who were not participants and decided to add the term *talanoa* alongside interview (*faka'eke'eke* or *'initaviu*)

was important that the face-to-face meetings were adhered to. For the first round, the discussion was held in their homes in the evenings for all but two mothers.<sup>98</sup> However, most of the women had their children in bed, and each mother was ready for the *talanoa*. Most of the *talanoa* in the first round took from 3 to 3½ hours, and the richest data were collected after midnight when the mother just spoke freely and openly about what she did to contribute to her children's learning and education at home. The later it got, the softer their voice, and the more seriously they talked about their own upbringing in the islands, how they fitted in to the town, and so on. Some began to whisper when they talked, as if they were sharing their personal secrets for the first time.<sup>99</sup>

The second session was about their contributions to their children's education through early childhood centres and schools. These sessions had to be held at locations where their child attended, but this only happened at the Tongan language centres. Mothers who had children at school or at an English speaking kindergarten worked part-time during the day, so were not interviewed in these settings, nor was the mother who frequented the English-speaking kindergarten; but two teachers at the Tongan language centre had their interview there.

The last round, which focused on the mothers' contribution to children's learning through church and community activities, took place in both settings. However, as the mothers were very busy in some of the church and social functions, the researcher assumed the role of participant-observer. It would have been disruptive to stop the women from engaging in the activities in order to have a *talanoa*/interview, so observations and audio taping took the place of discussions.

### **Observations and participant-observation**

The mothers were requested at the very beginning before the interviews started if they would agree in general to be observed infrequently while they were participating in some of the activities in the contexts. The request was discussed with each participant

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<sup>98</sup> Two women preferred to come at daytime to the researcher's home for the first round of *talanoa*; one brought her three children with her, and the other came by herself.

<sup>99</sup> The researcher shared similar experiences with the older women in the outer islands in Tonga during the collection of data for her MA thesis (Kupu, 1990).

and was left to each person to make their own choice; although they did not mind, they were still offered a consent form if they wanted to make it formal (see Appendix I).

Naturalistic observations were carried out in the homes, in the first round. This was an advantage because the women were in their familiar environment; sometimes observations took place during the *talanoa* and interview, when the mothers were preparing for the *talanoa* and organizing the children if they were to be present, or to set them a task if mothers did not want them to be present during the *talanoa*.<sup>100</sup> At other times the observations took place while the mothers were working on something else, for example, in *lālānga* (weaving) or handcrafts during the discourse. The observations also occurred as some mothers were helping with children's homework, rehearsing Bible verses for Sunday school, helping with spelling and times tables, or just completing activities in colouring books. These were some of the most productive evenings observed because after the children went to bed, the women spoke freely and in a relaxed manner, without distractions. The tape was turned on, the woman talked, and the researcher was able to watch their reactions to certain issues, and how they used their body language to continue the flow of *talanoa*.

In the second series of discussions, observations took place in the Tongan Language centres, none took place at school or English speaking kindergarten contexts, for the reasons explained earlier. Observations were of mothers who helped in the centre preparing the children's snacks and lunch, and feeding and changing the babies. Other helpers worked with the older children in reading stories, supervising and interacting with them during lunchtime. The mothers who dropped off their children before they went off to work, were spoken to, but the communication was very limited due to pressures of time. Other mothers who helped with fundraising activities, such as cooking, packaging the food, selling raffle tickets, dancing with their children, or welcoming and farewelling parents at the end of activities were also observed. Women who kept the yard and the garden clean were also observed and spoken to, although briefly.

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<sup>100</sup> One mother insisted that the children must not be present in the "*talanoa faka-kakai lalahi*" (adult talk), so she sent the children to the dining room to do their work there, and when asked later for examples of adult talk, she said, "*talanoa ki he kakai kehe*" (talking about other people). It is assumed that she meant 'gossiping'.

Observations, during the final round mainly in church and community groups, included those of mothers contributing directly and indirectly to their children's learning at these functions. In church, the researcher participated in the Tongan language services, in singing and listening to the service, and later in Sunday school when mothers, teachers and children interacted. Only two of the participants who were teachers were observed in their performance with the whole Sunday school, and with their own children when they presented their items.

Activities were often followed by a feast in the church hall where mothers instructed the children about setting the tables, laying out the food and serving the guests.<sup>101</sup> Male elders, lay preachers, and a few women gave speeches after the grace, and shared jokes and humour about a range of topics while children listened as they ate.

Other community activities attended by the researcher, included weddings, birthdays, graduation celebrations and funerals. Some of the participants agreed to be observed, if they were a master of ceremony, in any of the events. The details of these observations form part of the 'Findings' chapter.

### **Preparation of the transcripts**

Since much of the data had been recorded on audiotape it was necessary, for ease of analysis, to prepare transcripts of what had been said, and was necessary to translate the material from Tongan to English while maintaining the authenticity of the speaker's comments. Consequently, the researcher had to insert some of the women's Tongan phrases, sentences or a short paragraph in the English version to remind her to check the meaning (see Appendices G & H). The process of shuttling from one language to another soon became the norm in this task.

The difficulty of finding a Tongan to do this time-consuming task was an issue that also related to confidentiality. As a consequence, it fell to the researcher to do it, which allowed her to become familiar with the data. Another benefit was that after the interview process, the researcher was able, during the preparation of the transcripts from

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<sup>101</sup> All the mothers insisted that their children must participate in these activities because this is how they learn to be *kau ki he lotu* (part of the church), *fua hono kavenga*, (meet their social obligations), and '*ilo 'a e fāmili*, (know their kingroup), and *poto he anga* (know what to do, and do it well) in order to behave in the proper Tongan way.

each round, to expand on some of the questions to encourage further explanations from the participants.

The translation process faced another difficulty. Not all Tongan cultural concepts and vocabulary have English equivalences. So during the translation phase, an issue arose, and it was to do with some Tongan mothers using Tongan terms which have more than one English meaning. Others used a mixture of Tongan and English sentences in their *talanoa* and were 'codeswitching' during the whole duration of the *talanoa*, as Baker (1996, p. 87) " ...to emphasize a particular point in conversation ... and substitute a word in another language". Still others used a mix of authentic Tongan and transliterate words in the interview. Consequently, the need to go through the English version to ensure the Tongan 'meaning' conveyed by the mothers was transferred to English transcript. However, the sequencing of the semi-structured questions for the *talanoa* helped the researcher focus from one round of *talanoa* to the next, while picking up on the women's talking habit and how they could be accommodated in the translation to English. A card system with the concepts, themes, and some events from the transcripts, enabled new material to be easily slotted into the classification.

### **Coding of the data**

The transcripts from the *talanoa* sessions in each of the three contexts were kept separate from each other. Each transcript was translated, checked, and read several times before the English version emerged from collective analysis. Observational details of setting, personnel and body language were recorded separately and in different coloured highlights on the transcript, and then collated in a card system in the file under the main concepts. Working in two languages, and in three phases of *Talanoa*/interview, with a number of observations in so many contexts, was found to be rather challenging than straight forward.

This system proved very helpful in the final analysis. Coding involves systematic labelling so that the researcher can later retrieve all the data units that refer to the same topic across all the interviews. Furthermore, the card system was organized into separate sections, namely, the home context, centre and school settings, and the community. The home context, for example, was further divided into family and households categories; and under each of these categories were clearly labelled sub-

sections, according to the different activities carried out in each. A similar process was followed with the educational- and community-related data. At the same time, the comments directly quoted from the data were clearly marked in the transcripts.

Where direct quotes from the participants are used in this and subsequent chapters, the participant's pseudonym is used, followed by the Round of interview code, 1, 2, or 3, and the page number of the interview record to which the quote belongs. For example (*Heilala, Rnd. 2, p. 2*) means *Heilala*, representing the participant's name, from her Round two interview, recorded on that page number, so this quote could be referred to in another context. This was meant to make the writing up of the thesis manageable and less problematic, but that the scripts were in Tongan and in English was found to be challenging, especially when it became necessary to check the interpretation of a word in English or Tongan as used by a participant in the way that was meaningful to them.

### **Data Analysis**

“Data analysis” according to Rubin and Rubin (2005), is

the process of moving from raw interviews to evidence-based interpretations that are the foundation for published reports. Analysis entails classifying, comparing, weighing, and combining material from the interviews to extract the meaning and implications, to reveal patterns, or to stitch together descriptions of events into a coherent narrative. (p. 201)

From this analysis, they go on to say, researchers can construct informed, vivid, and nuanced reports that reflect what the interviewees have said and that answer the research question. But while the analysis is based on the descriptions presented by the interviewees, the interpretations in the final reports are those of the researcher.

The purpose of data analysis, according Lincoln and Guba (1985), is to understand the phenomena represented in the raw data, and arrange them in a manageable style to convey that understanding to others. Data analysis involves an intensive engagement in examining the content to see what has been learnt and what still needs to be identified, then to modify or design new questions to pursue emerging ideas. In the final analysis, the researcher pulls out coherent and consistent themes that speak to the research question (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Analysis involves a careful examination of the actual transcribed words of the conversational partners, followed by systematic coding and

extraction of information from the transcripts. We are warned that memory can be flawed and selective, and what we think was said months or years before is no substitute for careful examination of the data (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

So these are the guiding principles, and the researcher organized the data from each phase, weaving together the record of the *talanoa* in the interviews and the observation notes into categories to bring out the distinctive features of the phenomenon studied, which would be illustrated later from the details in the data. As Rubin and Rubin (2005) put it:

... the objective is to discover variation, portray shades of meaning, and examine complexity. The goals of the analysis are to reflect the complexity of human interaction by portraying it in the words of the interviewees and through actual events and to make that complexity understandable to others. (p. 202)

The data for this study consist of transcripts of audiotapes from *talanoa* sessions in various settings, field and observation notes on participants in their homes, their church and related activities such as *Faka-Mē* (Children's Day in May). Christmas celebrations, Easter Camp, Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day services, and a number of special community functions were explained by the participants in the *Talanoa*. One Tongan wedding, a Tongan student's graduation celebration, and a twenty-first birthday celebration were attended by the researcher as a guest. The data collection attempted to capture the nature of engagements of the participants in various activities with their young children, and their reasons for doing so, plus the type of interactions with their children in these contexts, which they believe help them do well in their learning. The information collected attempted to determine the intentions and emotions of the mothers in their interactions with their children. A sense of obligation, a sense of belonging, and a sense of togetherness that these women learned (from Tongan social groups) influenced their actions.

### **Summary**

This chapter, covering the methodology and the methods involved in this research, has addressed the purpose of the study as well as the research question investigated.

Exploring the role of the researcher in this study raises issues about researching one's own people in a foreign context, the ethical considerations, and the justification of the

methods employed. The value of a qualitative approach in this research has been explained, and the research strategies, that is the need for a qualitative approach appears appropriate. Elements from such approaches as ethnography, case study, and phenomenological approach, normally employed in a qualitative study, have been outlined with regard to their relevance to the present study. Finally, the chapter discussed the dilemmas the researcher encountered in the fieldwork with a number of ethical considerations in the Tongan cultural context, the complexity of maintaining a card system and preparing the scripts in both Tongan and in English and the data analysis. The researcher's mind was constantly occupied with the 'stories' about these women. Sometimes she felt unconsciously obsessed about the data. Given that growing up in a society where most information is received, processed, and stored differently can also present problems. This has been a positive learning experience.

The next chapter profiles the participants in this study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Tongan Mothers in New Zealand – Participant Profiles

*Tama tu'u he fa'e*

(The child's standing in the community depends largely on the mother's social status)

The importance of the role construct of a Tongan mother, highlighted in the above proverb, as a determining factor in her child's life presupposes she will educate her children in order to give them the best possible future.

#### **The sample**

The 12 Tongan mothers who participated in the Talanoa/interviews for this study obviously represent only a very small proportion of Tongan migrant mothers currently in New Zealand and in 'Uta 'mama' o. The decision to limit the number of mothers in the sample was made to ensure an in-depth investigation rather than a broader, more superficial inquiry. While a total of 20 women were initially approached to participate, eight declined to do so citing pressures of work, study, family or community responsibilities. One woman was New Zealand-born, fluent in Tongan, brought up by Tongan parents, from a village at home, who migrated to New Zealand before the child was born. The family had lived in Auckland, and operated similarly to other Tongans. It was decided to include her in the sample to see if her ways and perceptive were any different from those of the rest of the participants. From her *Talanoa*/interview, she seemed not to have been much different from the others. Any differences that have arisen are pointed out in the discussion throughout this study. Research questions asked the women to recall their expectations of life in New Zealand and to focus on any unexpected challenges they had to confront. Specifically, the women were asked to indicate when they could call on what was already familiar to them, and when they had to adopt new strategies to cope with the demands of life in their new country.

The criteria for participation in the study were sharply defined to ensure cohesion within the group. The participants were to be mothers with children of preschool or junior primary school age who attended a recognised educational institution, and lived in the vicinity of the designated geographical area. With one exception, the women who

participated were considered representative of migrant Tongan mothers of their age group who now reside in 'Uta-mama'o. All but one were from a cohort that had enjoyed their formative years in Tonga but as adults and parents themselves found that in New Zealand they had to adapt to very different cultural norms and expectations as they made a life for themselves and their family.

The focus of this chapter is on key aspects of the women's background that influenced their adjustment in their new country. First, it examines those forces in Tongan society that impacted on the mothers' early experiences in their home country. This is followed by an analysis of their situation in New Zealand and of significant elements in their current experience, including how they came to live in 'Uta-mama'o, the nature of their current family structure, their church affiliation, and their social standing within the New Zealand Tongan community. Their educational background in both countries is discussed, along with their qualifications and their current employment status in this country. Finally, there is an analysis of the situations these women have faced in New Zealand, in particular the practical problems, challenges, and learning difficulties they met as immigrants. This could be well summed up by Alison Jones's (1997) editorial for a Special Issue of *Women's Studies Journal*. Referring to indigenous women in the Pacific, the focus of the special issue, she wrote, "All are connected by their sharp view of women's lives in this complex site of both belonging and struggle" (p. 6).

For ethical reasons, and in order to protect the women's identity, not only has the city in which the fieldwork was carried out been referred to as 'Uta-mama'o, all participants have been assigned pseudonyms. The pseudonyms are names of fragrant flowers used in Tonga in the making of a *kakala* (garland), a traditional activity that is the exclusive province of women and girls.

## **Social background – Tonga**

### **The role of hierarchy**

As discussed in chapter two, Tongan society up to the late 1960s largely followed a traditionally rigid social structure. An individual's social status was strictly determined by birth, and to a lesser extent, by marriage, although attaining a leadership position in the church raised an individual's social position – a reflection of the key influence Christian missionaries have had on Tongan society. The rigid social hierarchy is

reflected in the function and daily operation of Tongan society. For example, the structure of both the *fāmili* (nuclear family) and the *kāinga* (extended family) are hierarchical, as are the villages, the community groups, and the church. The importance of *koloa* (wealth), such as *tapa* cloth and mats, also has a hierarchy. Fragrant flowers, food-supplies such as root crops, meat and fish, and even animals and plants are classified according to their order of social importance. In other words, people, plants, animals, traditional wealth, and material goods are organized in their social hierarchical order. To many commoners, as reported by all the mothers who participated in the study, it was difficult if not impossible, to reach a higher social status in the hierarchy without a good education that would in turn lead to a well-paid job that would enjoy a high social position. Education, in fact a successful Western education, was perceived by the participants as providing a possible avenue<sup>102</sup> to a higher social position and the material benefits concomitant with such. This was a goal they perceived as available to their own children.

The twelve women considered themselves well versed in the hierarchical and traditional norms and practices of Tongan life. They were ‘village’ women who went to the cities<sup>103</sup> principally to attend secondary school. They grew up in very small communities (typically less than 500 inhabitants) surrounded by their extended family, and deeply involved in local community and church activities. They learned, practised, and internalized Tongan cultural values and beliefs through listening, observing, and participating in daily life. Key among these were knowing how to serve and *faka’apa’apa* (respect) the nobles, and practise *fakatō-ki-lalo* (humility), *mateaki* (loyalty), *tauhi vaha’a* (maintaining relationships), and ‘*ofa* (being generous and considerate), in their immediate environment.

### **The role of the church**

The 2006 population census reported that 90% of Tongans in New Zealand were affiliated to religion, and for 98% that religion was Christianity so the church is a focal point of community involvement for Tongans, even today. Three of the women were

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<sup>102</sup> Respondents were able to cite anecdotal evidence of individuals in families they knew well who had come from humble (usually village) backgrounds but who through academic success had subsequently gained respected (usually government) positions with the concomitant salary and social advantages.

<sup>103</sup> Even today (2006 census) the Tongan ‘urban’ areas of Nuku’alofa, Neiafu and Pangai, the three largest in the Kingdom, are estimated to have populations of 23,000, 4,000 and 2,500 respectively.

always very closely involved with the church, being the daughters of ministers. The rest of the women grew up in what they termed very religious families, all but one claiming to be staunch Methodists or Wesleyans.<sup>104</sup> In a Tongan minister's home the whole family constantly hosts church members who visit to offer the first fruits from their garden, or food from a feast, to seek pastoral care and moral support, or to discuss church matters. The minister's wife and her children are constantly making cups of tea, talking with visitors, cooking and providing meals, and sometimes sending church members home with food (Mone, 1992).

In Tongan society a minister's home was and is still considered an ideal and preferred learning environment for children (Kupu, 1989) who, with their parents, become directly involved in the church and related activities. The church was/is regarded as a safe and secure place for children 'to learn good and moral things' (MacIntyre, 1992). Within the church context, mothers taught and demonstrated to their children the need to serve others more than to be served; to give rather than to receive, regardless of the social status of individuals from the congregation.

### **Father's occupation**

Paternal occupation naturally has a key impact on upbringing in terms of locale (rural or urban, village or city), wealth, as well as a child's experience and expectations. Table 5.1 indicates the employment fields of the participants' fathers as they were growing up in Tonga.

**Table 5.1:** Father's Occupation

Minister of religion	3
Businessman	1
Civil Servant	1
Subsistence farmer	7

*Source:* Fieldwork 2004-2005

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104 The Wesleyan Church in Tonga was initially established in the 19th century by missionaries from England. From the 1840s, personnel from the Australian church took over the proselytizing roles. The terms Wesleyan and Methodist are used synonymously throughout this research, although minor doctrinal differences do exist within the faith.

Ministers, like chiefs and nobles, enjoyed special social privileges within their wide social network of relationships. Within Tongan society, ministers of religion have always been highly regarded by the community because they represented high moral standards and the dedicated life for which the early Christian missionaries were admired. Even today, to hold a position in the local church is to be respected by the congregation and the wider community. Active involvement in church activities earns respect and trust from the congregation, and those who hold *lakanga* (positions) within the church are treated as role models, held in high regard, and *talanoa*'i (talked about and praised) by the wider Tongan community.

White-collar civil servants, known as *ngāue faka-Pule 'anga* (Government workers<sup>105</sup>) were perceived as *poto* (knowledgeable, clever) because of their superior education. As a result, they were well known and respected, and deemed particularly trustworthy. Possessing leadership skills, they were considered to represent political authority given their special management abilities. They were often referred to as *ha'a poto* (a rank of intelligence).

Businessmen and women were held in the same high regard because of their material wealth. They were admired by the local community because they provided services, particularly those who ran the village *falekoloa* (small grocery). They were well known in their villages because they supported those farmers who would not have a regular income for daily grocery expenses by offering a credit facility until they could afford to pay it off. Not only was this appreciated by the villagers but it was seen by many as a potential enterprise for their children. The drive to educate their children to a level where they could one day run their own *falekoloa* as a means of livelihood while still serving the community, became increasingly attractive to parents.

Small farmers, although focused on their land and seasonal work, enjoyed wide social networks. They were respected as 'cornerstones' of the community, referred to as *tangata'i fonua* (men of the land), and admired because they possessed valuable traditional knowledge about astronomy, agricultural practices, weather patterns, and the

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<sup>105</sup> 'Government workers', perceived by society to have earned a certain prestige through their academic achievements, became an emerging social class. Many commoners found the pathway appealing, and believed it to be accessible to them through education hence the wide support Tongan parents' afforded higher education in the Kingdom.

like. By working through *toutu 'u* (cooperatives) to till the land, plant and harvest, communal work was the norm.<sup>106</sup> The farmers also shared their harvest with their extended family and friends, after the first fruits offering to the chiefs, ministers of religion, and their *fahu* (family superiors). Social links were further extended through kava parties,<sup>107</sup> church connections, and community involvement.

Key Tongan experiences of the 12 participants are summarised in Table 5.2. Each of these factors will have influenced how the mothers subsequently reacted to the situations they faced in New Zealand. The table below clearly indicates that the majority of the mothers were unused to urban life, were committed members of the Christian church, and that most were schooled predominantly in their home country.

### **Education – a pathway**

Through their father's occupation, the women surveyed grew up, saw, and learnt how social networks were formed and maintained in the Tongan community. Key aspects included the practice of *faka 'apa 'apa* (respect), *talangofua* (obedience), *mateaki* (loyalty), *fetokoni'aki* (reciprocal help), *mamahi 'i me 'a* (social obligation), *'ofa* (love and generosity), *fakamolemole* (forgiveness), and *feveitokai'aki* (respect for one another). Not surprisingly, these core Tongan values, beliefs and practices have influenced the women's own efforts with their own children (Fusitu'a, 1992).

Particularly for the purposes of this study, educational success was perceived as a realistic avenue to better jobs, with higher pay and authority, acknowledgement by family and church members, and the achievement of a higher social status for the family within the Tongan community.

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<sup>106</sup> To harvest his plantation, a small farmer provided a *faka 'oho* (provision of food) for his workmates, cooked and prepared by the womenfolk. A Tongan plantation traditionally covers only 4–6 acres.

<sup>107</sup> In this male ritual men gather together and drink kava roots mixed with water. In the kava circle the men discuss local issues, politics, and share jokes. Women, though they make and serve the beverage, are not expected to participate in the verbal exchanges.

**Table 5.2: Participant Profiles – Tonga**

Name	Childhood Home	Religious Upbringing	Father's Occupation	Primary Schooling	Secondary Schooling	Tertiary	Arrive in NZ
<i>Heilala</i>	Village main island	Tongan Methodist	Church minister	Tonga: 6 yrs	NZ: 7 yrs	University: 4 yrs	1975 8 yr old
<i>Langakali</i>	Village outer island	Wesleyan Church	Subsistent farmer	Tonga 6yr	Tonga 5 yrs	1 yr (English)	1998
<i>Hehea</i>	Village outer island	Wesleyan church	Subsistent farmer	Tonga 6yr	NZ 5 yr	1 yr	1986
<i>Sialetafa</i>	South Auckland	Wesleyan church	Subsistent farmer	NZ 6 yrs	NZ 6 yr	1 yr	NZ born
<i>Falahola</i>	Village outer island	Tongan Methodist	Subsistent farmer	Tonga 8 yrs	NZ 3 yr	nil	1984
<i>Kukuvalu</i>	Capital main island	Tongan Methodist	Small businessman	Tonga 6yrs	Tonga – 4yr NZ – 4 yr	NZ Polytech 4 yrs	1985
<i>Loumaile</i>	Village main island	Wesleyan Church	Subsistent farmer	NZ 8 yrs	NZ 4 yrs	NZ Polytechnic 3 yrs	1976 2 yrs old
<i>Pipitongi</i>	Village outer island	Wesleyan Church	Subsistent farmer	NZ 8 yr	NZ 5yr	nil	1985
<i>Hingano</i>	Village outer island	Tongan Methodist	Subsistent farmer	Tonga 6 yr	Tonga 6 yrs	Tonga.T/Coll 2 yrs.NZ.2yr	2003
<i>Puatonga</i>	Capital main island	Wesleyan Church	Govt. Civil servant	Tonga 6 yr	Tonga	Fiji-Univ 3 yrs	2004
<i>Mohokoi</i>	Village outer island	Wesleyan church	Church minister	Tonga 6 yrs	Tonga 7yr	Teachers College	1987
<i>Huni</i>	Village outer island	Church of Tonga	Church minister	Tonga	NZ	Polytech 2 yrs	1996

*Source:* Fieldwork, 2004–2005

In traditional terms, then, social status was based primarily on family birth, then later, on one's father's occupation and how well known or regarded one was in the community. In recent decades, however, success in western education, which resulted in obtaining a well-paid job in a recognized profession, especially in new fields,<sup>108</sup> was realized and became the main, if not the only, way, through social barriers for most ordinary Tongans. Having witnessed how returning scholars to Tonga, especially

<sup>108</sup> As a result of increasing exposure to western ideas, skills and technologies, Tongans gained positions within such previously unfamiliar areas as the tourist industry, aviation, international commerce, and health specialties as well as in the more traditional occupations.

women, walked into high positions in Government, church, or business, mothers in the study came to realize how economic resources, social status, and political power could be acquired through educational and professional achievements. For example, in the 1970s Tongan women doctors, lawyers, accountants, and teachers who were trained overseas returned to take up responsible positions. Participants, who had grown up in families that had enjoyed social respect as church ministers, lay preachers and community leaders, but were still commoners by Tongan social standards, began to see how their children could enjoy extra privileges if they could only access and succeed in western education. While social status within Tonga had changed only slowly, as more commoners became successful academically, economically and, in recent years, politically, the benefits of a good education became even more apparent to these mothers when New Zealand became their permanent home.

### **Social Experience – New Zealand**

#### **Migration: how they came to ‘*Uta-mama*’o away from Auckland**

The literature (de Bres, 1976; Didham & Bedford, 1996; Mafi, 1997; Coxon & Fusitu’a, 1998; MacPherson, 2000; Morton Lee, 2003) indicates clearly that Pacific migrants came to New Zealand for a number of reasons. Important among these were:

- A better education for their children
- Employment and provide financial help for folks back home
- A better social and economic lifestyle
- Joining family members already in New Zealand
- Escape demanding kavenga (social responsibilities and economic obligations) to family, church and similar community groups (Larner, 1990).

Typically, the Pacific migrant left home (Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Cook Islands, Tokelau) for New Zealand on a 3-month holiday visa. Arriving in Auckland the migrant generally moved in with relatives, found a job (often organized by a relative), and stayed for many years. Only a very small minority would leave Auckland to look for a job in other parts of the North Island and fewer still ventured to the South Island. Even in 2006 80% of Tongans living in New Zealand were in Auckland. Of the 12 Tongan women in this research seven came to ‘*Uta-mama*’o from Auckland after living with relatives, in the world’s largest Polynesian city, for periods ranging from 5 to 12 years.

Of the mothers interviewed, six came straight from the islands as pre-teens with their mother to join the father who, already here on a Tongan Government work scheme, had chosen to stay on after their permit had expired. Two women came as adults on a work scheme, one employed in a factory, the other on a farm in the North Island before moving to *'Uta-mama'o*. Another came as a student, stayed on after completing her study, started a family, and settled permanently in *'Uta-mama'o*. Two women arrived directly from Tonga to work as trained teachers at a Tongan language early childhood centre set up in *'Uta-mama'o*. One of the two brought her family with her; the other came as a single woman but later married, had a family and settled in NZ. One woman came with her family to join her husband who was here as a university student.

Two of the women had a first degree from university, and two had a Teaching Diploma, but the highest educational level of the rest of the mothers was secondary schooling.<sup>109</sup> Two women had secondary schooling only in Tonga, and the rest had attended high school in both Tonga and New Zealand for varying periods. All the women interviewed stated that they found difficulties with the English language in New Zealand both in and out of school, except in their homes, where speaking English was forbidden, and in the church where everything was conducted in Tongan.

With English being the sole medium of instruction in most New Zealand schools, participants who went to school here experienced linguistic barriers to their learning. Encountering difficulty with spoken English at the initial stage of their education in New Zealand, they either avoided being in situations where they had to speak, or, if present, chose not to speak. They also found reading and writing in English challenging so some of them did the minimum they could, especially if they had no one at hand to help. Their own parents were unable to help because their reading, written and spoken English were not good enough to offer help. As a result, the participants, with their parents, used the Tongan Bible and other church books for reading materials, attended the Tongan language church service and other similar Tongan language functions, and mixed with other Tongans with whom they conversed in Tongan. Their social circles

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<sup>109</sup> By June 2008, two women had completed their degree and two their diploma.

were restricted to those who spoke Tongan. Operating within such constraints, however, occasionally presented serious problems.<sup>110</sup>

All the participants admitted that their parents found communication in English with the teachers, their peers, and other parents very challenging. When it was time for parent-teacher interviews, to bridge the gap between their parents and the teachers, they relied either on the few Tongan friends and relatives around who could communicate in English or on their own children to be translators and interpreters at the interview. Neither the school nor the Ministry of Education, at the time, provided a language service to support Pacific Islands parents or those from other non-English speaking minority groups.

### **Religious affiliation**

Belonging to a church is an important aspect of Tongan culture,<sup>111</sup> and continues to play a vital part in the lives of most Tongan migrants in New Zealand. A number of researchers have endeavored to explain the importance of the church in Pacific Island migrant communities in Australasia. Lafitani (1992), writing on Tongans in Australia, asserts that this indicates a need for personal social harmony (while away from home) and the hope of keeping Tongan language, traditions, cultural values, beliefs, and practices alive in a foreign environment. Loudon (1977) believes that church activities became alive among Tongans overseas because of the limited participation opportunities available in the wider society. As a consequence of their limited ability in spoken English on arrival, the church became the major source of direction, social orientation, motivation, and purpose for the new Tongan migrants.

Church organizations were perceived as safety mechanisms (according to Legat (1988), writing of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand). Religious practice proved a cornerstone providing social security in time of difficulty and loneliness in New Zealand, and

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<sup>110</sup> Until 1986, there were not many Tongans (even in Auckland) who could provide certified translation or interpretation services. Consequently, parents relied on their own children, often secondary school students, to translate or interpret during interviews. Not surprisingly these ad hoc interpreters and translators, lacking professional skills, tended to filter information and only conveyed parts they either understood or wanted their parents to know.

<sup>111</sup> Christianity for over 100 years has been an integral part of Tongan culture. Early Christian missionaries started churches, founded schools, and established a new form of government, all of which developed alongside Tongan culture.

spiritual sanctuary, and hope for life thereafter. According to Mafi (1997), church and religion appeal to Tongan migrants because of the material and spiritual rewards they gain from them.

All twelve mothers who participated in the study claimed a strong religious background, and were active church members. The majority belonged to the Wesleyan/Methodist faith, with only one being an adherent of the Church of Tonga. The group then reflects traditional Tongan worship patterns – the dominance of the Wesleyan faith and the continued importance of religious affiliation in daily life.

Tongan Wesleyan congregations in New Zealand share a number of important characteristics:

- affiliation with a *Pālangi* (European) church congregation with whom they share a building,
- weekly Sunday services and related activities conducted in Tongan,
- an annual *kātoanga Misinale*<sup>112</sup> – a day of celebration and financial contribution to the work of the church,
- an annual Children’s Day, called *Faka-Mē*, in which the children perform to the congregation in biblically based dramas, by reciting from the scriptures and singing hymns – all in Tongan
- women as Sunday school teachers, choir members, youth leaders, and lay preachers,
- women involved in annual World Day of Prayer, Christian Youth education, Bible study groups.

Within the church context, it appears that the women are drawn together by a common interest, namely, nurturing their Christian faith as a group, operating their own programme in Tongan based on *mahu’inga’ia* and *anga faka-Tonga* (Tongan cultural values and practices), working collaboratively – often without male input.

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<sup>112</sup> In the annual *misinale*, the amount individual families have donated is recorded and announced publicly in church. This is followed by a feast, and speeches of thanks and encouragement for members to prepare for the next *misinale*, are given.

To a significantly lesser extent, the interviewees participate, at least occasionally, in the English-speaking services and activities. Although often critical of *pālangi* norms when they conflict with Tongan cultural values, by the same token, through interacting in English with the European congregation, the Tongan women experience cross-cultural communication and inter-cultural cooperation in unfamiliar contexts. Heilala (pers. comm., 2005) notes that their fellow Christians ‘are inclusive and accepting of our Tongan ways’ and are genuinely sincere in their explanations of unfamiliar language and church practices.

The Free Wesleyan<sup>113</sup> congregation follows the constitution of its church headquarters in Tonga, from where ministers are sent out to various cities in New Zealand and Australia to manage their branches there.<sup>114</sup> While they are able to manage local decisions, they still defer most of the business of the congregation to the main church in Tonga, and this is evidence of

- the strong link between the Tongans in New Zealand and their fellow church members and leaders in Tonga,
- the strength of Tongan cultural values, beliefs and practices in maintaining relationships and church doctrines between church in Tonga and those overseas, and
- how overseas members adhere to the instructions (which are mainly to do with administration and moral behaviour) to meet the demands of the church overseas.

It appears that their Christian faith and positive experience of learning to read, memorizing Bible verses, singing, and reciting and performing drama in front of the congregation, had driven these mothers to commit to church activities from which children acquire a concrete body of knowledge, and through which they can contribute to their children’s learning of these skills, and moral values, and education in general. Three of the six participants who belonged to the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> The Wesleyan Church in Tonga was established by early Methodist missionaries from England and later from Australia in 1840s–1850’s, followed by the first secondary school to train ministers in 1862.

<sup>114</sup> A reasonable proportion of annual collection of the church in ‘*Uta-mama*’o is sent back to the church headquarter in Tonga; a New Zealand representative and the minister attend the annual church conference where the major decisions about administration and members’ practices are made in Tonga.

<sup>115</sup> Members at ‘*Uta-mama*’o refer in conversations to the Wesleyan Church as S.U.T.T., short for *Siasi Uesiliana Tau’ataina* ‘o Tonga, a Tongan translation of ‘Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga’.

were Sunday School teachers, and one was a minister's wife, so all contributed to the above church activities within which their children learned.

The Church of Tonga has a different structure: they rent to use other *palangi* church properties, and conduct their activities without affiliating closely with that particular congregation, or negotiating with that church. However, some of the Church of Tonga's congregations in other places in New Zealand, own their own buildings, and continuously fundraise to meet the mortgage payments on time. To fundraise for this purpose, some of the members have been known to travel overseas as a group, especially to the United States. Table 5.3 shows the participants' religious affiliation.

**Table 5.3:** Religious Affiliation

Wesleyans	6
Methodist	5
Church of Tonga	1

Each of these churches has its own weekly Sunday service conducted in Tongan. All activities, such as choir practice, Bible studies, worship groups, and committee meetings in Tongan, are run during the week. Attended by both parents but mainly mothers, the children are brought as well, 'to get accustomed to going to church' and form a habit of 'learning the things of the church'. Most of the mothers attended church services twice on Sundays and again during the weekdays. They participated as Sunday School teachers, were involved in running *the Potungāue Talavou* (Christian Youth Department) and Christian education programmes, and organized camps for young people. From a young age, these women spent much of their time in various church activities in the weekend and weekdays. Nowadays, they continue with similar activities and take the children with them. Some are completely used to this kind of routine, and in fact, believe that following routines as a habit is a good practice, and a good way of making good use of their time.

However, while Tongan mothers believe it is important that children are made to sit still, listen, and memorize Bible verses and songs, this is not the view of some *pālangi* teachers, and the New Zealand education system.

Although listening to songs and services in Tongan, and the speeches that follow, where Tongan colloquialisms, proverbs, jokes, and pleasantries are exchanged among adults, is perceived as helpful for their Tongan language learning, personal discipline and learning of cultural humour, they are seen only as means of social entertainment, and passive learning.

### Age group

The age of the mothers in the sample ranged from 27 to 40 years. Table 5.4 depicts the age groups of the sample.

**Table 5.4:** Age group of mothers in the sample (2005)

25–29	1
30–34	4
35–39	4
40–45	2
46–49	1

The average age of the mothers who participated in the study was 36.9 years. These figures indicate that most mothers started to have children in their early to late 20s; and the majority will still have young preschoolers and primary school age children when they will be in their 40s. The figures also indicate that women who studied for a degree or diploma did not start having children until late after they completed their first tertiary qualification in their late 20s or early 30s although they had started tertiary education immediately after they had left secondary school in their early 20s. Typically, women with a tertiary qualification were employed full time, but after their first child arrived, they changed to part-time employment; consequently, they had not been promoted to a high position in their profession.

Eleven of the mothers participated actively in their children’s school activities, such as sports, fundraising projects, driving for field trips, class supervision, reading, and school camps. They also helped with the children’s homework at home, but one young mother devoted her time to reading the Bible, attending her scripture study group, prayer meetings and fasting sessions; she believes that by seeking the Kingdom of God first she will, as a mother, be given everything she wants including *poto faka’atamai*

(intelligence and academic achievements), and *poto fakapotopoto* (being wise, sensible, thrifty, tactful, and discreet) for her children.

### **Mothers' education**

All participants completed primary school, and at least up to Year 13 at secondary school, although only two went to preschool/kindergarten, and this was in Tonga. The Tongan Government primary schools, and most of the churches' primary and secondary school system are based on the New Zealand education system/model,<sup>116</sup> and very much similar to how they were when those participants who attended school in Tonga. There are kindergartens in operation now; primary school children start at age 6 in Class 1 (equivalent to Year 1) to Class 6 (or Year 6 in New Zealand). Secondary schools start at Form 1 (equivalent to Year 7) to Form 7 (Year 13). Mormon mission school system follows an American education model, and 'Atenisi Institute, which is secondary and tertiary level and follows an Australian (New South Wales) model. The Wesleyan and Catholic churches have female single-sex secondary schools but the rest of the church and government schools are co-educational high schools (Kupu, 1989). Seven women attended single-sex secondary schools, the rest went to co-educational schools either in Tonga or New Zealand; however, the majority (nine mothers) would prefer their children to attend a single-sex school at secondary school level in New Zealand.

### **Primary schooling**

Ten of the 12 mothers in the sample went to primary school in Tonga, and seven of them did their complete primary schooling there (and five of the seven did theirs in the outer islands where they were sometimes taught by untrained teachers and the school routines were not as formal as they were in the capital, Nuku'alofa). The rest did part of their primary schooling in Tongatapu and the rest later in New Zealand. There they found the transition from learning in Tongan to English, and from a simple to an advanced education system, difficult and demanding. To them the English language was complicated, and the experience of learning to speak in class discussion, at times, painful. The two youngest women in the sample did their kindergarten schooling in

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<sup>116</sup> Since 1989, the Tongan education system has changed from following the New Zealand education assessment model (School Certificate and University Entrance) to a Pacific Region external assessment, administered from University of South Pacific (U.S.P.) for its catchment area in the Pacific neighbours.

Tonga, and all their primary and secondary schooling in New Zealand<sup>117</sup>. Initially, they found the experience difficult, but later settled into their new environment more easily than the others did.

One woman was born, raised, and schooled in New Zealand; she has visited Tonga once; her parents are full Tongans who spoke mainly Tongan at home. They affiliated with many Tongans in South Auckland before moving to *'Utu-mama'o*. She could not remember much of her early days in primary school except the difficulty she had in trying to explain school requirements to her parents. All the women interviewed (except one who had to go away to university) stayed with their parents who spoke Tongan and were closely affiliated with a church and a Tongan community close by. During their primary and secondary school years, all learned their traditional roles by observing and participating in cultural activities at home, within their kin group and in church.

For those schooled in Tonga, subjects such as Tongan Language and Studies, Maths, Science, Domestic and Social Sciences, English, Art, Music, and Craft were taught in Tongan and reinforced in community activities. Domestic tasks such as cooking, sewing, weaving and tapa making were learned, while singing and dancing were practised at home and at school. Their childhood friends were from the school and the neighbourhood; they learned games such as skipping, knucklebones, threading garlands, hide-and-seek, and juggling, and sports such as netball (known as basketball) and handball were played at village level.

All the women found their grandparents, parents or relatives, with whom they lived in some parts of their childhood, key influences in their acquiring knowledge of Tongan culture, traditions, family genealogy, values, beliefs, and practices in the home, church and the community. Yet, their own parents and grandparents had frequently expressed the hope that the children would gain academic achievement. These women all admitted that their parents and grandparents had greatly influenced the way in which they themselves currently raise their own children in New Zealand.

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<sup>117</sup> All primary schools (except Tonga Side School, which is for expatriates and nobles' children) and all but one of the secondary schools, were taught in the Tongan language, and included English as a subject.

## Secondary schooling

Eight mothers completed their primary and 4 or more years of secondary schooling in Tonga, where one of them continued and gained a science degree from the University of the South Pacific (USP). Two women completed only three years of secondary schooling in outer islands of Vava'u and Ha'apai before they left school, and later left for New Zealand. All showed a strong preference for speaking Tongan and learning Tongan language and culture, which they clearly indicated they wanted their children to learn in New Zealand.

Women who went to the Methodist Wesleyan Girls' Colleges, for part or all of their secondary schooling in Tonga said that their learning focused on arts subjects, and great emphasis was placed on basic subjects plus domestic science, commercial practice, and typing – subjects that allowed women to work at home or in an office doing “women's work” (Kupu, 1989). They learned similar subjects to those taught at the primary level, but with more specialized subjects such as English and Literature, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics in Science, and Maths, History and Geography, Economics and Accounting, all at senior level. The subjects were taught with a strong sense of Christianity<sup>118</sup>, knowledge of genealogy and family relationships, practice of domestic and social skills, art and crafts, and sport. They also learned weaving, tapa making, music and dancing, and Tongan-style cooking and housekeeping, which they teach their own children at home here in New Zealand; they would like these skills to be taught or reinforced at school. Scripture was taught at all levels in the church secondary schools. Another significant part of this church Girls' school curriculum included the teaching of principal cultural values such as *faka'apa'apa*<sup>119</sup> (respect), *fakatō-ki-lalo* (being humble), *fatongia* (social obligations, responsibilities), *mateaki* (loyalty), and *tauhi vaha'a* (establishing and maintaining social relationships) in culturally appropriate ways. While they teach some of these values at home and in church, all the participants expressed a strong desire/preference to have these taught at school alongside Tongan language, singing and Tongan dancing.

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<sup>118</sup> Tongan Studies as a compulsory subject, is taught at all levels throughout secondary schools in Tonga to Form 5; it has different components on grammar, literature, research, and with practical components on music and dance, art and craft, and genealogy.

<sup>119</sup> *Faka'apa'apa* can be practised reciprocally between father and children; parents and children; father's sister (*mehekitanga*) and children; brother and sister; teacher and students; and between old and young generations.

### **Tertiary education**

Of the eight women who did some or completed their secondary schooling in Tonga, two continued to tertiary level and gained a Diploma in Teaching (Primary) from the local Teachers College; one left on a Tongan Government scholarship to study at university in Fiji, and later obtained a Bachelor of Science. Of the four women who continued at secondary schools in New Zealand, one completed a Bachelor of Business Studies, one gained a Trade Certificate in fabric and textile from a polytechnic, while the remaining two left school at the end of Form 5. All these women had something in common. Initially, they had difficulty with English language, which became a barrier to their learning. In particular, the thinking and conceptualizing of abstract concepts in Tongan and explaining them in English was problematic and consequently mentally strenuous; they also found shuttling from the 'Tongan world' in their relaxing, informal home environment, and adjusting to an 'English world' in the formal educational institution demanding and exhausting.

Of the twelve mothers who participated in the study, two women had obtained university degrees, one with a Bachelor of Science from USP, Fiji, and the other, a Bachelor of Business Studies. The latter is currently pursuing a postgraduate degree in Business. Another couple of women had a Teachers College Diploma in Teaching from Tonga, and both are currently studying further in New Zealand. One of these two women is studying for a Bachelor of Education, while the other is studying for a Diploma in Teaching Early Childhood Education; both are studying extramurally while teaching fulltime, a challenge for working mothers. The rest of the mothers, except two, are currently enrolled at the Polytechnic for further qualifications including nursing, early childhood education, catering, management, and administration. The two women who did not complete secondary school are not planning to return to study, saying they prefer to spend time with and helping at the centre and school, and their children's school work and extra curricula activities.

**Table 5.5: Participants' qualifications**

University degree	2
Teachers College Diploma (Primary)	2
Polytechnic Trade Certificate	1
Form Seven at Secondary School	1
Up to Form Five at Secondary School	4
Up to Form Three at Secondary School	1

**Mothers' Occupation**

When the participants were asked about their occupations, six mothers said they were primarily housewives, and other roles were secondary. These included the two women with degrees. Two said they were teachers full-time, and homemakers the rest of the time; two cited studying as their primary occupation; one said she was a supervisor, and one described herself as a part-time administrator and a part-time mother.

**Employment Experience**

Most of the mothers who participated in the study wish to be employed full- or part-time. But their maternal responsibilities, plus a lack of specific training, apart from domestic skills, which they had learned in Tonga or at home here in New Zealand, restricted their employment opportunities. However, three women who worked full time but irregularly in blocks of 4–6 weeks, found the experience socially pleasant, repetitive and very focused and needing high concentration; four others worked part time and enjoyed their free time with their children. Another four only worked when they were contacted (catering/food preparation, confectionary, or cleaning companies) to be relievers on a single-day basis; and one stayed home as a full-time mother.

Those who worked did so to support their husband, pay the children's school fees, and purchase educational materials for them,<sup>120</sup> and still wanted to be able to 'send money and a few things' to their relatives in Tonga. Heilala enjoyed her two part-time jobs

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<sup>120</sup> The parents' notion of *ngāue ke tokoni ki he ako* 'a e *fānau* (working to 'help the children's education') in Tonga meant paying school fees, buying uniforms and school materials, and meeting all the *kavenga* (financial demands and responsibilities) which parents have for their children's schooling. In other words, this clause connotes and emphasises the need to meet the physical and material needs of the students rather than their intellectual and academic demands, which are perceived to be the responsibilities of the teacher.

because it allowed her to get out of the house, use the skills she learned at university, and still have time to do the early childhood Center's financial records and work with her women's group. Pipitongi wanted to work because to her, staying at home while her children attended Early Childhood Education was a 'waste of time', and she could be 'earning some money'. Like the rest of the women, she wanted to be financially independent, and able to spend money on her extended family, and the church; this reason was given by the majority of the women as the motive for choosing to work in a paid employment. They implied that staying at home and doing domestic chores are neither worthwhile nor regarded as 'real work'. Kukuvalu said her desire to get paid employment was due to her having the skills for this job, and her ability to organize her family routine so she could go to work, to support her family financially here and help her relatives in Tonga.

It appears that most, if not all the mothers in the study, were torn between working to support their children and family, plus donating to church here, and sharing their material and financial resources with relatives in Tonga, a practice that challenges the notion of individualism in New Zealand society. Yet, they did not 'feel' or indicate that this was a burden, although their primary-school-age children are beginning to question why they have to send money to Tonga. Perhaps it would have been different had the church leaders (who are predominantly men) become aware of the responsibilities involved in nurturing a young family, holding a paid employment, fulfilling school obligations, and the pressure church-related activities put on these women and families. There is no wonder that most of them do not have energy left at the end of the day to engage directly with their children's learning by helping with their homework.

However, most of the women who cited housewife as their occupation spent a lot of time helping at the Tongan Language Centre. Of the two women with university degrees, one explained how she daily dropped off her son at a *pālangi* kindergarten, because she wanted him to learn to speak good English from European children and teachers there before entering primary school. However, she did not always go in because she did not know many parents, and she 'did not always feel comfortable

there'.<sup>121</sup> She then went off to the Tongan Language centre (4 days a week) and helped prepare the children's morning tea and lunch, as well as helping with feeding the babies and changing the toddlers. In the afternoon, she read stories to the older children, and participated while supervising the children's play. She liked helping at the Tongan Language centre because she said, "... there, I have chances to see my daughter learning with other children, in that context especially with girls. But I also like talking freely with other mothers, and learning with them how to help children at home." The other university-educated mother went to the Centre two to three times a week to keep their financial records, and also worked part time as an administrator in another place. She too, liked the comprehensive communication in Tongan with other parents and teachers, because she spoke mainly English in other places.

The two mothers who were also qualified teachers, both worked fulltime at the Tongan Language centre and enjoyed it. Having both taught primary school in Tonga, they commented on the difference between teaching in Tonga in a relaxed environment and in a *tō'onga faka-Tonga* (Tongan way) with few resources, "... which was sometimes frustrating" (laughs), and the well-disciplined, clearly regulated and positive approaches used in New Zealand early childhood centres. They both admitted they have learnt a lot here, are enjoying their jobs, and are continuing to do more for Tongan children. They liked the clear communication with parents and working with children in Tongan, and both believed that Tongan language is essential in learning Tongan culture in New Zealand. It appeared that while they enjoyed communicating in Tongan with parents and children, they also wanted a chance to practice and improve their English.

All the mothers believed that their paid employment definitely contributed to the success of their children's education now and in the future. All but four wanted to work and earn money to buy the *naunau ako* (school materials), and pay for extra curricula activities for their children, such as swimming or dancing. Some women, perhaps considering my position in education, asked me what I thought of their aspirations for their children. It appears that they wanted to be reassured they were making the right decision and helping their children the right way, but also wanted to be approved by

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<sup>121</sup> Puatonga said she felt the big difference in the way she was welcomed at the Tongan Language Early childhood centre compared with the rare and superficial greetings she received from teachers and some parents at the *pālangi* kindergarten, although she speaks good English and always smiled at them.

family and other Tongans, especially their in-laws, friends in church and the community. To them, to be seen to be ‘pushing their children’ through education, to be perceived as a strong supporter doing a great deal to help the children at school was and still is a preferred notion and/or a preferred/expected way of conceptualizing education for their children. After all, they came to New Zealand to get a better education for their off-spring.

Because the women came from small villages where each individual was well known to others, being seen as an active church member or a strong supporter of children’s work at school was very much the preferred image of the good parent. While it was a social and cultural pressure on parents and on mothers in particular, this is a desirable attitude among Tongans, especially when it is the centre of the *Talanoa* (talk, conversations) among those who know them, their families, church and the Tongan communities, and even among relatives throughout New Zealand. It is the power of *Talanoa* and *ongoongo lelei* (good reputation/news) about them that drives these mothers to push their children to do well at school.

Furthermore, to the women, it is their Christian faith/belief that drives them to contribute to and participate in church activities more than they do in anything else, even in some of their family activities. When discussing the time they spent in church and related activities, the women sometimes quoted from the Gospel, “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*” (Matthew 6: 33). They believed that in making commitments to the church activities, God would give them what they prayed for, which includes enabling their children to do well in education. It was central to their Christian faith and their belief in themselves that because they had witnessed other Tongans who had succeeded in education, the same would work for them.

Two mothers who received their education only in Tonga referred to the good example of parents who had worked hard serving the church and community in Tonga, and as a result their children became educationally successful, got well-paid jobs, and are now helping their parents educate their siblings and other relatives. They regarded this family as a good role model in church and the community. Other community members also praised this family, as they appeared to have raised their social status because of

their children's educational achievement, their career provided a dependable income, their position in the church and community was admirable, and they financially support their extended family. Such parents are very proud of their children.

### **Summary**

The elements that form those general characteristics that make up the general profile of the participants in the study have been discussed. The description of their social background and the contexts in which these women grew up in social groups in Tonga, where they learned the core values through observation, participation and practice reflected their parents' *mahu'inga'ia* (social values). These values formed, reinforced, and consolidated their own. Based on their father's occupation, and the family's social standing in the church and the community, these women, like most ambitious Tongans, thrived on, and were motivated and driven by what was achieved by family members, or prominent Tongans, in education, business, and similar professions, and was acknowledged by others in their social circle, and the society at large. These were *talanoa'i* (talked about and praised) within the extended family, church or the village community, and they raised the social status of the family; they were most valued. These achievements defined the mothers' role construct, justified by their religious background and current church affiliations, and were admired among others of their own age group.

The mothers' education in both primary and secondary levels taught them about the meaningful and practical ways of the Tongan core values, but at the same time exposed them to the newly introduced western ideas and a different notion of education. This 'new' education, while it appeared to conflict with some of the aspects of Tongan cultural values, enabled the women to reconsider the importance of their time, the opportunity of taking up further studies towards higher qualifications, and getting a better paid job. Such improvements would allow them to trade in their factory job for one that would bring in better financial resources, with power and higher social status within the Tongan community in New Zealand. Parents, and mothers in particular, began to see higher education as the avenue to better living standards, better jobs and financial position, and a higher social status. They began to dream about what New Zealand education could bring to their children and their families, and so that their achievements would be *talanoa'i* (talked about and praised) within their extended

family, church and community. They started to look at migrating overseas in order to give their children a better education. How the mothers actually performed in their *direct and indirect* contribution to their young children's learning, *ako*, and general education in New Zealand is the focus of the following three chapters.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The Home Context

*Ko e fānau ko e me'a mahu'inga taha pē ia 'i māmani*  
“Children are treasures and the most important thing(s) in the world”  
(Morton, 1996, p. 44)

#### Introduction

Tongan women see children as intrinsic treasures, valuable social beings who give meaning to life and to social institutions such as marriage. Mothers, (and fathers too) would therefore do anything to give them *ako*, in the Tongan sense, as well as western education in the *palangi* sense, to prepare them for the future.<sup>122</sup> This chapter describes the results of the first phase of the study – the interviews in the participants’ homes – and outlines the key avenues of inquiry for this research, the *what*, *how* and *why* Tongan mothers contribute to their young children’s *ako*<sup>123</sup> (learning and education) in New Zealand in their homes.

Discussion of the findings in the home context will consider the mothers’ contribution in two ways – direct and indirect. Using Coleman’s (1988) social theory of family capital these will be subdivided into physical/financial capital, human capital, and social capital. The investigation will show how these forms of family capital are ‘used’ as lenses to explain and analyse the mothers’ contributions to their children’s *ako*. Direct quotes from the data will amplify the voices of the women as they talk about their tasks.

**Indirect contributions** here refer to those physical and material provisions present in the homes of Tongan mothers’ families that can be used by the mothers themselves to assist the children’s *ako*. Such provisions of physical capital cannot, by themselves, be regarded as direct contributions unless they are utilized directly by the mother for the child’s learning. **Direct contributions**, on the other hand, refer to those activities implemented directly by the mothers through ‘storying’ and storytelling, interactions,

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<sup>122</sup> This refers to livelihood, being independent yet within the nuclear and extended families, and playing a social and economic role reciprocally with others.

<sup>123</sup> In this and following chapters the term ‘*ako*’ will be used to represent the Tongan perspective of ‘learning’ and ‘education’ in general’ as well as its meaning, from a western perspective.

demonstrations, instructions, questioning, answering, negotiations, scaffolding, co-constructions or role modelling, and similar strategies used to assist their children's education. It is interesting to note that Radin (1982) gives the parents' direct and indirect contributions a definition with a different slant.<sup>124</sup> Coleman's social theory of family capital (Coleman, 1988, 1990, 1991) can be used as a tool to explain the key contributions to their children's learning in general.

### **Coleman's theory of family capital**

Coleman, a Canadian social theorist, maintains that the family as a dynamic entity actively transforms various forms of capital from the parents' generation into the educational attainment in the children's generation. According to his theory, family environment includes three distinct forms of capital, namely physical or financial capital,<sup>125</sup> human capital, and social capital – 'which are interrelated and should be dealt with interdependently' (Li, 2007, p. 28) and, as the research findings will demonstrate, these three forms of family capital are intricately linked and overlapping, and at times difficult to disentangle. A summary of Coleman's three forms of capital follows.

#### Physical or financial capital

- refers to the material resources and is measured by the family's wealth and income,
- provides the physical resources that can aid achievements such as a fixed place in the home for studying and materials to aid learning,
- smoothes family problems (Coleman, 1988),
- is embodied in tangible assets, in tools, machines, and other productive equipment, and can be extended to include human capital as well (Shultz, 1961, cited in Coleman, 1990).

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<sup>124</sup> "In direct influence, the parent does or says something and the effect is felt by the child; in the indirect influence the parent does or says something to someone other than the child, and, in turn, that individual exerts influence on the child" (p. 61).

<sup>125</sup> Tongans, and particularly Christians, perceive physical capital and 'things' as *ngaahi me'a fakamatelie* (materialistic, perishable, earthly or 'rubbish-like things of life') based on the teaching of the Bible, and are discouraged from being too focussed on them.

Human capital in the family, Coleman continues,

- is the individual's level of educational attainment embedded in a person's intellectual capabilities to act in certain situations,
- provides the child with a potential cognitive environment that aids learning,
- refers to the ability to utilize, manipulate, and facilitate knowledge and skills to meet needs, solve any problems, and enhance performance.

Social capital within the family

- refers to "the relations between children and parents (and, when families include other members, relationships with them as well)" and the social relations and networks available in the community (Coleman, 1988, p. 110).

To Tongan families (and mothers in particular), their Christian faith, cultural knowledge, values, beliefs, and practices are all essential parts of their form of human and social capital on which their child-rearing practices are based. Coleman argues, "... if the human capital possessed by parents is not complemented by social capital embodied in family relations, it is irrelevant to the child's educational growth that the parent has a great deal or a small amount of human capital" (1988, p. S111).

These three forms of family capital reflect the quality of both the mothers' competence and the children's home environment, which are vitally important to their educational outcomes. The discussion of the findings in the home context will focus on the mothers and children's interactions and performances within their surroundings, centred on the family as a unit.

### **Indirect Contributions**

The initial contribution is to the children's *ako* and learning at home, is examined in the sections that follow.

### **Desire for stable home and accommodation**

All the mothers interviewed, even the three who already owned their homes, emphasised the importance of, and expressed a genuine desire to establish stable accommodation, in a peaceful area, in which their children could grow up and feel at

home.<sup>126</sup> Kukuvalu said she persuaded her husband to move the family from Auckland to 'Uta-mama'o where there were much better conditions for raising young children than existed in the biggest Polynesian city in the world. After visiting 'Uta-mama'o and 'observing the people, places, events and things' she explained what she liked about the place:

- A much more peaceful city than Auckland,
- Tongan people she knew from her home village already lived there,
- No weekly fundraising activities among the Tongan people,
- Most Tongan parents tended to go home after work, and talk, play, and feohi (be with and learn from each other) with their children,
- Although involved in the Tongan church and fellowship activities, most Tongan people did not spend a large proportion of their weekend time in church,
- Most young children were formally taught to speak Tongan properly at the Tongan Language Centre,
- Fewer distracting activities for families with young children than in Auckland,
- Tongan families who had settled in 'Uta-mama'o for the education of their children were already showing signs of success.

However, while other families used their physical capital and moved to 'Uta-mama'o because, among other reasons, they had relatives there, availability of job offers, or the opportunity for university study, most of the mothers and their families focused on the opportunities for their children to get a good New Zealand education in this town.<sup>127</sup>

Other mothers who had already settled in the town had in the previous nine months moved to a better house, in a higher income-level neighbourhood: Heilala<sup>128</sup> had moved her family to a bigger four-bedroom house in a Decile 10<sup>129</sup> school area; Sialetafa had moved from a low decile school area to a two-storey house in a high socio-economic

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<sup>126</sup> Possibly this is related to the sense of security the mothers experienced while growing up in their own home in Tonga. Since land in the kingdom cannot be bought or sold their 'roots' are more geographically stable than in most Pacific societies.

<sup>127</sup> Initially most mothers were not aware of the potential clash between living with Tongan cultural values while learning those western concepts involved in the New Zealand curriculum in the classroom. This awareness began to emerge only after they had settled in their homes and tried to mesh the two lifestyles.

<sup>128</sup> All names are pseudonyms to protect the women's identities.

<sup>129</sup> A system used in New Zealand to measure a school's socio-economic level, based on the income of parents whose children attend a particular school.

area; and Puatonga had moved her family to rental accommodation with a lawn where her children could play, and attend a kindergarten in a good neighbourhood.

### **Other domestic essentials**

Using their physical capital, all the participants had a car (with two women being from a two-car family). All except two mothers drive, which they saw as essential when children needed to be ferried to family, church, and extra-curricula activities. All had a television, with two women having two televisions in their homes; these mothers had intermediate- and secondary school-age children. All had a landline telephone, and four of them had mobile phones. Six mothers had a computer at home, but only five used them; the mother who could not use the computer said it had been bought for the children. Five of the mothers had access to the internet. One of those indicated that she normally sends her children upstairs to do their homework, often using the internet, but she herself did not know how to use the machine. In contrast, another mother used the internet frequently to communicate with her relatives overseas – her principal means of keeping in touch with them. Within their house, each mother had most basic appliances, such as a fridge, stove, washing machine, lawn mower, and most had a microwave, a clothes dryer, and a DVD; different from an average house in Tonga, even today.

### **Provision of resources and learning materials**

To ensure their children could learn well at home and at school, they had to be provided with the basic needs – those aspects of physical capital that are important for learning. All the mothers said they had a Tongan Bible and a hymn book in their possession; a few who could read English had an English Bible in their resource collection. About half the mothers had an English dictionary and an atlas in their house for the family use. The mothers who themselves studied at the time, (Kukuvalu, Heilala, & Hingano), or had a member of their families working or studying in a tertiary institution (Puatonga, Langakali, & Mohokoi), had English educational textbooks and novels on their bookshelves. All but three of the mothers had children's books in English and Tongan, visible in their sitting rooms during the time of the interview.

Most of the books Heilala had were borrowed from the public library; while Mohokoi bought most of hers from second-hand bookshops, garage sales, some were birthday

gifts to the children from friends and relatives. Still others borrowed their Tongan language books from the Tongan Language Centre. Five mothers said they visited the public library weekly with their children and borrowed books, cassette tapes, toys, videos, and games for the children's reading, school projects, and for entertainment. The mothers who did not frequent the library were either employed part- or full-time or were just not familiar with the public library culture, and/or they themselves did not like reading and had not done well in secondary school. One mother told me she did not know how to read to young children. The evidence suggests that while the mothers may not have been able to afford new resources, they would not have had to employ physical/financial capital, as most of the resources are available at the public library.

Some of the women, like Kukuvalu and Heilala, who worked part-time, had a good supply of drawing paper, pens and crayons, magazines and newspapers with which,

... the children can develop basic skills such as identifying ... letters and numbers, drawing,... cutting and pasting, copying, and ... other things (Heilala, Rnd. 1. p. 8).

Such materials were visible in Puatonga's house, and in Falahola's house pictures on the wall had been cut out from magazines and pasted on charts. Some had captions in Tongan and in English, some in single words, others in full sentences. Falahola pointed to a crayon sketch of a clock, "... that's how I tried to teach him ... how to tell the time." Obviously, most of the mothers attempted to provide resource materials to support their children in their learning.

Further, the physical capital (which, in regard to the present study, includes the family's income, including the children's, along with donations and remittances from relatives, local and overseas) allows the family, and children in particular, to participate in cultural activities, including school camps, cultural festivals, national sports events, and to enjoy library membership and attend concerts to develop an interest in literature,<sup>130</sup> music and art (Bourdieu, 1977). Through these cultural activities, parents cultivate the (western) intellectual climate for their children's educational aspirations, motivations to achieve, and hence performance in schools and therefore assist their academic progress

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<sup>130</sup> These cultural activities are western, but they are helpful and are often required for a successful academic career in art and languages in New Zealand schools. Some Tongan students enjoy them as much as they do the Tongan cultural activities.

in school. Coleman (1990), however, cautions that differences in physical capital are not determinants of the quality of children's family environment.<sup>131</sup> Further, even families of low socioeconomic status can provide a quality learning environment by taking advantage of their local school or centre, church, and local organizations and charities for their children. For example, in Falahola's family, some of the voluntary health organizations contribute services, resources and materials for the family that are much valued.

However, some of the women admitted they do not always have time to use these resources with their children. When asked about the amount of time she spent reading to the children, Heilala replied,

... not as often as I would like to ... I would spend some time with them reading, but also actually telling them stories about my upbringing, and my childhood days, something that I would like to spend more time telling them. I see that they enjoy my husband telling them about his upbringing childhood and they love hearing (about) them (Heilala, Rnd, 1)

### **Additional resources for learning**

Heilala, however, believes that the beginning of learning and acquisition of knowledge is in the *lotofale* (centre of the family home). What happens there is the use of *afo* as "social strands" such as beliefs, values, and faith, and material possessions to weave the foundations of the life of the family on which the lives of the children (successful or otherwise) are based. The actual practice of their cultural beliefs, values and Christian faith by most Tongan families in 'Uta-mama'o, is the real means of teaching, from which the children learn, consciously or unconsciously. Everything else, for example, material possessions, comes after this.

As a family here, we always have a special time, we always have a devotion ... before bedtime, and that's a wonderful time together ... everyone together, and the children get to recite a Bible verse, and we sing some children's hymns, and ... yeah, and there are times when we get together ... just bring up family issues we would like to know to resolve ... looking forward to the new day, new week, ... new year ... so you know, the children are there also listening to what is going on (Heilala, Sn.1, p. 3).

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<sup>131</sup> Some of the participants who stay at home or work part time concur. They note that in families where both parents work full time and earn a lot of money there is no one at home to look after the children when they return from school. There may be no help with their homework, the children may roam unsupervised in town and sometimes end up joining a gang, and regard that gang as their 'family'.

While these comments cover the usage of both human and social capital, they also indicate Heilala's priority for her children's development in terms of what forms the foundation of her family. Similar to other mothers, the interpersonal interactions within the family about their cultural beliefs, values and Christian faith are very important to this mother as she attempts to scaffold the foundation of the children's moral education.

Parental human capital, especially that of mothers, is an important factor that affects the children's cognitive development, language at home, the creation and use of resources, and the planning and implementation of their learning activities in their cultural environment (like New Zealand). Mothers with a limited/different educational background may have the same high aspirations for their children's learning and educational achievements as do mothers/parents from higher education levels. However, their own educational level may restrict their involvement in learning activities with their children at home. The mothers with New Zealand secondary education (up to Year 11) are examples.

Pipitongi placed great emphasis on teaching her daughter *faka'apa'apa* and *anga faka-Tonga* (respect and Tongan ways) but knew very little about *ako-'i-lokiako* (learning in the classroom), or about academic subjects. Loumaile talked about her Bible reading, and daily prayers but very little about teaching her children a daily routine and set of habits or helping them with preparations for school or with their academic work. Yet she felt that she 'must improve on that side of my mothering role and should actually do it' but had not taken any specific steps in that direction. Sialetafa had bought a computer and other electronic equipment for her children to use in their study, and even promised a car for whoever got to university first. But she could not teach them how to use the computer; instead, she trusted that when they were sent upstairs to do their homework or use the internet, they would use it productively for schoolwork.

### **Contribution to children's learning through daily routines**

All but two of the mothers had a daily routine, similar in nature and sequence, although three work full-time, some part-time, others study, and the rest stayed home for the children and only worked when needed to relieve a family member or friend.

The routine of the mothers with a degree was the most structured, especially the one who worked in two part-time jobs. To allow for travelling to and from work, and for transporting children to and from extra-curricular activities she planned her trips carefully. Sports practices, such as swimming, touch rugby, and soccer; and hobbies such as music, singing lessons, must be attended, and the children learned to be ready on time. However, for the mother who stayed home for the children, and who lived close to school, the routine was not as tight and hectic. This was how Heilala who has three school children engaged in after school activities, described her daily routine:

Daily set routine – waking up early in the morning, making their breakfast, ... making their lunch (and fill) lunchboxes, including my husband's lunch, and three days a week, I have to make 5 lunches which include one for mum, and ... So after making lunch and breakfast, I organize their ... brushing teeth, getting dressed, and then ... we are out the door, ... to take them to school, and ... I come back here, and ... I go to work ... I pick them up (after school at three o'clock, except the 4-year-old child, ... I pick her up once a week after school ... to take her to swimming lesson, yea. So I bring them home at three o'clock, organize afternoon tea. And then ... some days they've got afternoon activities. They've got music lessons ... there's a sport practice, rugby practice, once a week, yea ... So there .... Really... (Heilala, Sn. 1, p. 2).

While this working mother had structured routines, and kept to them, some of the other women's routines were more flexible. Mohokoi's was an example. As a full-time teacher at kindergarten in the weekdays, and at Sunday school in the weekend, as well as being a composer of Tongan dance in her free time, she needed to find time to relax. According to Mohokoi, although these are all parts of her life, her Christian faith and her dance composition activities are more important to her, and they are linked to each other. Therefore she needed to find time to relax and think creatively, especially when she needed to choreograph hands and feet movements to suit the lyrics of a Tongan song. In this regard, she said she used meditation to relax while dreaming up images of hands, feet and body movements, to suit the lyrics as she was humming the tune. This was her way of integrating her Christian faith and her composition. She described part of her daily routine,

Part of my daily routine begins when I wake up in the morning and read the scripture, I must always do that and say my prayer, before I do anything else. I then get up and prepare my husband's lunch, and my son's... Normally, we all get up at the same time, and each does his or her way of talking to and seeking strength from God for that day. My son gets up and does the same, wakes up and says his memory

verses from the kindy, then says his prayer, then we go wash his face, clean his teeth, then to the kitchen... (Mohokoi, Rnd, 1, p. 2).

Mohokoi believed that the only way to teach young children about Christian faith is to show them by practising it, and they can have joint participation. She often invited her children to join when she tried out new hand movements, and these could be at home or at any other place, even in lieu of extra-curricular activities; after all, it is always free and it is always a 'happy' activity, although it was not part of her daily routine.

Some of the participants chose to describe their routine by focussing on activities that reflected their interests. Langakali described her reading routine with her children, which was carried out usually every evening after dinner, followed by a family devotion;

(To read) the English books are their big sister's task, she goes regularly to the library and borrows..., because they all have a library card, and they can borrow. But the Tongan books can be obtained from their Tongan preschool... And every evening, they are asked if they want to read, and they are very happy about this reading session.

The reading of Tongan books is my job. And their big sister's ... job is to teach them to read (in) English. The 4-year-old ... I don't see ... that he pays attention to the reading or shows any interest (in it). But the eldest boy and the second one are very keen, both of them. The reading of eldest boy is very good, but the second one is not very comprehensive. His reading in Tongan, ... he can understand, and sometimes we read the (verses) from the Hymn, but he cannot understand much ... very well, ... he still 'reads' by spelling it. But the eldest boy can now read the Hymn and sing the words (from the Hymn), and reads the books (borrowed) from the Centre (Langakali, Rnd. 1).

Langakali said that she tried to have a basic daily routine where she prepared the children for school, and then tried to set a regular habit of doing the things that were important for the family (in and out of the home) and for the children's well-being.

Loumaile spoke of a different routine, centred on her interests and her personal spiritual growth, and daily meditation.

This is one of the aspects of my *feohi*<sup>132</sup> with my children, which I want to improve. I want to be consistent in *tauhi* (looking after, caring for) my children, because their future life will depend on whatever consistent care we give them now, and not to move around too many times.

In the morning, I cannot always get up. But now I realize they are growing up, I just make sure there are enough cereals in the kitchen and they get up and get ready for school. We have our morning devotion first before we do other things.... But there are days when I sleep in (and forget to get up) early enough (to) prepare their breakfast. But after that I tell them to brush their teeth, and make sure that their school bags are in order, and give them their lunch and they go to school. So there are lots of things to be improved in that side... My work at home is that I read my Bible. And then I pray, and tidy up our house and ... (Loumaile, Rnd.1, p. 2).

This lack of a set routine that contributes to the children's daily preparation for school reflects the presence of low human capital in this family, which could also mean that even indirect contributions to children's *ako* and its degree of effectiveness are questionable. In fact, the mothers in this group were found to be lacking in physical and financial capital, human capital, and even, in some cases, social capital. This was in part due to the fact that they were either working full-time, during the time of the research, or were studying part-time, and that other members of their extended families were staying with them, supposedly to help raise the children.

Falahola, who was educated in Tonga, described her daily routine, which reflects how she uses her time to teach her children to do things by and for themselves, and to become independent. She described what she did every morning;

This little one wakes up first at 6 o'clock. I feed her and put her to sleep. I then get up. My husband prepares their breakfast. The children wake up and watch a cartoon for one hour in their room. After that, I take them to the bathroom and teach them how to wash up, then oil them with Tongan oil, and dress them, then take them to the kitchen to their father, who has prepared their breakfast and they have breakfast, and make their lunch, and their father takes them to school. ... I tidy up, but I don't wash the dishes, I leave them for the boys. That is part of their training, and learning domestic skills at home, and when they come from school in the afternoon, they'll have afternoon tea, and then wash the dishes...

I taught him (eldest son, 7 yr old) and he can now wash the dishes (and) plates, sweep the floor, and vacuum the house. Sometimes after our dinner, if there are

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<sup>132</sup> At a simple level it means 'to mingle with' as in 'warm companionship', but it also has a deeper meaning, which connotes a sense of being together, to share and learn from each other, (morality and comradeship, fellowship with others).

crumbs or food (smeared) on the table, he would get up, fetch the sponge cloth and wipe the table, and then vacuum or sweep the floor (Falahola, Rnd.1).

It appears that the two mothers who received their education only in Tonga, used every opportunity to teach their children both the Tongan way of learning and *ako*, based on Tongan beliefs, values, and cultural practices, as well as trying to reinforce the western notion of classroom learning and education in general,<sup>133</sup> at home. Falahola had a regular routine that included taking her children to the Centre, staying there and playing with them, while observing the teacher's teaching strategies, and making a point of discussing with the teacher, her son's social development, his behaviour, and general performance. She also taught her children to know their cousins in '*Uta-mama*'o:

I talked about their cousins, and other families outside the home, for example, (husband's) *kui* (grandparent), and my grandparent<sup>134</sup> were brothers and sisters. And M, well, her grandparent and my father's parent were cousins. So I explain to my children like this, "Do you know, M's children, are your family in the Tongan way". So my children are very close to her children. When I give birth, she comes and helps look after my children, and when V gives birth to hers, it's M and I who go there to help out. And when I am busy, or have major things to do, it is she who comes to help me at home (Falahola, Rnd.1, p. 2).

Langakali has her own way of teaching her children reading for understanding from Tongan reading materials. Both the mothers have made attempts to improve their forms of human capital and social capital in order to improve the quality of their direct and indirect contributions to their young children's education. For example when reading, Langakali said she uses Bible stories:

For me, I think it is better that I read the story and then tell him; it is more meaningful to him then. Like I '*talanoa*' the story and I try to do it in a humorous way to make the story meaningful to him and for him to understand... I would read the story in the Bible, and then I tell the story, by trying to bring out and draw their attention, and their minds to understand the story. But as far as his ability to read phonetically, he can do it, but to my way of thinking, whether he understands what he reads or not, I don't think so. But he would understand more of the meaning of the story, if I demonstrate and explain the story. Do it in a story form (Langakali, Rnd.1, p.2).

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<sup>133</sup> Both these mothers frequented the respective centre and school their children attended; they often participated in class trips, and were regularly involved in the centre or school fundraising activities. They both admitted that while their spoken English was not very good, they kept going to school because the teachers helped them.

<sup>134</sup> Tongans use '*kui*' (grandparent) in conversation, unidentified as male or female, but the listener would either work it out or ask questions to clarify it.

Similarly, and using her personal human capital, Falahola uses the stories in the Bible to teach her children to read in Tongan, and she does this routinely every night.

Sometimes, Falahola would get her husband to read stories in English to the children who would correct his pronunciation, and from that, the parents would learn the correct pronunciation of certain English words. Here, she describes how she helps the children with their reading and thus contributes directly to their learning:

My main task is trying to get my '*uhiki*'<sup>135</sup> to learn to read Tongan. I teach them Bible verses and hymn verses to memorise one or two verses. But they cannot read the Bible. So that is my job to read to them the Bible every evening, and get them to learn to remember a memory verse. And sometimes I read them a verse from a hymn or a song, and they sing that song before they go to sleep. Sometimes I tell my husband to read them a library book, for them to listen to. And those (English) words, which my husband cannot pronounce clearly, my eldest son would correct him (Falahola, Rnd. 1).

As previously mentioned, this is how a couple, who have contributed indirectly to their children's education by using their physical and financial capital, now makes the effort to contribute directly to their children's learning by improving and using their human capital. The next section will discuss another form of indirect contribution to children's learning, in their homes.

### **Fundraising Activities**

*Kumi pa'anga* (fundraising) is a type of project, an assignment proposed and discussed, in this case, by the members of the Parents and Teachers' Association (PTA) of the Tongan Language Centre (TLC); if the proposal is agreed, the members organize how the fundraising is to be carried out, and the women themselves organize the groups or individuals, what to prepare, and set a date for the event. The purpose is to raise money, to enable the PTA to subsidize school or early childhood education fees, which some families cannot afford, and to fund various financial needs of the Centre. These needs include purchasing materials such as toys, games, books, and hiring casual relieving teachers when needed, or providing professional development for the staff. During the duration of the fieldwork for this research, three types of fundraising activities were held at the TLC, including a *koniseti* (concert), several *fafanga* days (providing Tongan dishes for lunch), and the selling of raffle tickets. These events were organised and run

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<sup>135</sup> '*Uhiki*' means offspring (sometimes used for off-spring of animals). This is part of practising 'respect' among villagers, according to their different social status relationship.

in similar ways to a School Gala Day. Other fundraising activities such as hosting a Pasifika Day for staff of the Educational Development Centre at the University, and providing entertainment for the opening of an Art Conference involved activities similar to those performed in the *koniseti*, and the food preparations to those on *fafanga* days. Discussion here focuses on the activities carried out in the homes, collaboratively by the mothers and their children in preparation for the fundraising days in a *koniseti* and a *fafanga* day.

### **The *Koniseti* (Concert)**

This type of activity is a performance on stage by the children who dress up in different Tongan traditional costumes. They present items to the audience who show their appreciation by putting money or *fakapale* on the thoroughly oiled-body of each performer, and the money collected goes to the PTA as the fundraiser. The preparations for the *koniseti* involve teaching the children different Tongan dances, songs, poems, Bible verses or lines from a hymn, or rhymes to recite. These are rehearsed for several weeks before to the event. On one occasion the children had a ‘floor show’, and a ‘parade in traditional costumes’. Grandparents, friends and relatives of the children, were invited to attend the entertainment and put a *fakapale* (reward) of money<sup>136</sup> on the performers to show their appreciation. The money that is collected from each item is announced, and sometimes it can become a competition among groups of families.

The role of the mother in these types of activities is carried out in part in their homes and requires a direct contribution. Included in such activities are the making of the costumes, the supervision of the children’s rehearsals of dance, recital of verses, and practising of songs, as well as explaining to them what it all means so that the children perform with a feeling of *māfana* and *mālie* (inside warmth, excitement and elation). These are part of feeling the spirit of performing, of getting a good grasp of this cultural value. Mohokoi explains how her 3-year-old son enjoys performing a Tongan dance after observing and imitating what he saw:

Recently, we have been practising ... various Tongan dances, and (her son) has picked up a lot of the actions from it. He wanted me to sing with him the song, ‘Toli lou siale...’ so he can imitate the dance... I gave him a stick ... he stood up

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<sup>136</sup> Notes are preferred to coins because they stand out. ATM machines readily supply twenty dollar notes. Mothers dance to the stage and put the note on the child as her contribution.

and told me to watch. I started to provide the beats for the rhythm. Man! As soon as I started the beating, my! He jumped here and there, and twisted the stick around ... then tilted his head *fakateki*<sup>137</sup>, and smiled ... then he quickly twisted his head around, and turned his face like this (demonstrated the movement). He can dance to it (song) and performs the actions he knows. Now he knows most of the song... it was just the two of us, and he would bend his knees, and called out. .. 'Teuteu, talua!'<sup>138</sup> I said 'Mālie'.<sup>139</sup> We then laughed and laughed, just the two of us! (Mohokoi, Rnd. 1, p. 19).

This occasion shows how Mohokoi used the human capital available in her family to provide a direct contribution to her son's learning of Tongan dance; Mohokoi did this by reinforcing what her son had learned through observing and imitating what he saw at the performance during the group's rehearsal. Further, the social capital of the family is the relations between, in this study, this child and his mother, which is embodied in their particular *feohi*<sup>140</sup> manifested in their interpersonal interaction. This reflects the human capital possessed by the mother that is complemented by the social capital embodied in the family relations. According to Coleman (1988), it is relevant to the child's educational growth that the parent has a great deal of human capital. Furthermore, this practical and emotionally positive interaction also cements the social bond between the mother and her son in a positive way – a very important link and aspect in the growth of the child at this early stage.

Another aspect of the mother's role in the fundraising performed in their homes for the *koniseti*, is the making of the costumes. This includes collecting the materials, processing them, and making the costume, and requires the use of physical capital in the family and the human capital possessed by the mother. While the collective task is an indirect contribution to the *ako* of the children, the interactions between the mother and children in each stage, and the direct explaining of the meaning of both the materials used and the finished product for the children, result in the children learning directly from the mother; she conveys this information while demonstrating the technique of

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<sup>137</sup> This means to move the head suddenly and intentionally in action songs, as part of acting out the lyrics in the song. A good dancer can do this in a fraction of a second.

<sup>138</sup> *Talua* means to canter, a piece of instruction for the performers in the war dance. They do this on the spot, and the *mālie* is in the control of the legs for a long time as they have learned and practiced.

<sup>139</sup> This means 'Well done!' a comment of appreciation always called out by the audience when the performers are elated and *mafana* with the hand movements to the lyrics, and body movements to the rhythm.

<sup>140</sup> Churchward (1959, p. 171) translates this term as 'fellowship or communion or moral and spiritual comradeship with one another'. In a Tongan sense, it means fellowship with one another, learning from each other, and trusting one other with an in-depth knowledge and understanding of one another's wisdom and idiosyncrasies.

how it is made to the children. Hingano explained later at the *koniseti* what she did and how:

I showed her (primary-school-age daughter) how to make the costume from the fresh si leaves, and then got her to fold the pieces I cut, in small triangles, which must all be in the same size. I then sewed the triangles in straight rows onto the piece of ngatu (tapa cloth), while she watched ... and when I had made enough to fit her height, I got her to try it on. She was so thrilled ... she immediately asked what else she could do ... Later I showed her how to lightly oil the leaves by brushing over the rows, using a piece of feta'aki<sup>141</sup> dipped in fragrant coconut oil. I told her how my mother used to make mine (when I was young) and (how) I waited around ... to try it on, (just like she did) (Hingano; Diary, June, 2005).

It is evident from this excerpt that Hingano used the knowledge and skills learnt in previous years as human capital together with her physical capital, which is embodied in observable material form to benefit her daughter's learning of Tongan dance; as Coleman (1990, p. 304) puts it, "Physical capital and human capital facilitate productive activity...". Hingano made use of hers. Pipitongi, on the other hand, made her daughter's dance costume from painted tapa cloth, cut to pattern, and explained to her daughter about the importance of her part as a 'little' contributor to the *koniseti*, and the purpose of the fundraising activity:

In the last kindy's *koniseti*, my daughter had a dance, and I made her a little costume, so that she knows that she will go and perform in front of the crowd. I told her the reason – that she will dance, and the people will come and put money on her, a *fakapale*. That money will be taken to her school, or the church ... for a treatment of a little boy who was ill and brought from Tonga to be treated here, or whatever the fundraising is for. And she knows and understands that. When the music started, she was not shy; she stood up and started dancing. When the people (friends and relatives) put *fakapale* on her, she brought them to me. I told her to take it to the table where they collected the funds. She (does) not sit down (after her turn), but continued dancing around, Tongan dance, disco, or just imitated the others' dancing. ... So, I (did) make her costume. I want her to learn those Tongan values: compassionate, foaki, (giving), participating and supporting, dancing and feeling the mafana, and malie (manifesting in joy)<sup>142</sup> and so on. I cried. That was the right place for her to learn it (Tongan value) (Pipitongi, Rnd. 1, p. 5).

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<sup>141</sup> *Feta'aki* is the soft white tapa, after it is pounded, ready to be joined together, pasted and printed to make tapa cloth.

<sup>142</sup> Sometimes the friends and relatives put on the *fakapale* and then join in the dance, and this is seen as supporting the child and his or her family in the fundraising activity. What is important is the demonstration or public declaration of the relationships and social links between individuals in a group.

This excerpt shows how Pipitongi, whose physical capital and human capital, at least as measured traditionally by academic attainment, may not be high, combines it with the social capital embodied within her family, its networks, and social relations with other extended family members, to assist the child's educational growth. That Pipitongi made her daughter's costume and also invited friends and relatives to put fakapale on the little dancer, must have given both the mother and daughter a boost in self-esteem. The in-depth meaning of cultural values that the parent has, in this case, is a great deal of human capital,<sup>143</sup> (in particular, Tongan cultural capital) available also to the child (Coleman, 1988). To the end, this is undoubtedly a direct contribution made by Pipitongi as the mother, to her daughter's learning of Tongan cultural core values. This is the type of learning of values, as Tongan elders would say, *tongi'i 'i he loto 'o e fānau ke nau ongo'i 'a e mālie mo e loto māfana*, (crafted in the hearts of the children to feel heartfelt joy, elation, and warmth) of performing, contributing and participating, that no one can take away from them. Within most Tongan social contexts, when this type of meaningful experience and understanding of the depth and essence of cultural values<sup>144</sup> are shared by family members of different generations (in occasions like this, very often), 'tears of joy' or *tangi māfana* are shed as indicators of the obvious, but unsaid, unmentioned socio-psychological positive feelings and connections between family members – this is part of what being a member of a family group is about.

Langakali contributed to the fundraising *koniseti* in a different way. To ensure her children knew their memory verses, songs, or hand movements for the *mā'ulu'ulu* (sitting dance), she sat down with the boys and explained to them what the Tongan words in the song meant, how to pronounce them, and then to say the whole piece correctly:

I read the short story as a background to the (understanding of the) verse, then I tell the story, ask them questions about it, and they answer. I say the memory verse, in (small) parts, then I get them to ... say it, and I give them the correct punctuations (by saying it) for them to imitate... When they say it, and sometimes they make mistakes, I try to laugh with them and make it fun, otherwise they'd lose interest (Langakali, Rnd.1, p. 5).

<sup>143</sup> In this case, human capital does not have to be measured by academic or western educational attainment, instead, the in-depth knowledge of the meaning and practice of Tongan cultural values is what counts.

<sup>144</sup> The meaningful experience and understanding of the depth and essence of Tongan cultural values can be positive, as in this case, or in a wedding ceremony, a celebration of a birthday or other achievements, or it can be negative, as in a funeral, a loss of opportunity, or similar misfortunes.

Langakali continued to drill this exercise daily. The ‘participation structure’ (a term coined by Tharp and Gallimore, 1988) that she and the children employed, was characterized by repetition, fun, and continuous checking for understanding. She also helped them remember the memory verses, by making references to their daily experiences, and realized that she must understand the story first in order to be able to teach the memory verse effectively to the children. However, Langakali also admitted that she and the children were facing a challenge as the children, she noticed, were moving from understanding words and concepts in Tongan to comprehending them in English. She was determined to teach them to continue with their Tongan heritage; this dialogue shows how she tried to maintain her eldest son’s understanding of/in Tongan language:

Langakali: I always use Tongan and try to get him to understand the meaning in Tongan language first (because) that is how I understand it, and I explain it to him from my understanding in Tongan (language). I understand that when he is at school though, he (learns and) understands concepts in English, and this is from English language (instruction). But when we interact here in Tongan language, I guess he is unable to understand it easily. He is more able to catch and understand the English meaning (in English).

Interviewer: So, do you think he is beginning to slowly moving away from (thinking in) Tongan language to thinking in English?

Langakali: Yes, he has begun to do that.

Interviewer: But does he understand (a lot) in Tongan?

Langakali: I know that he understands, sometimes ... the way we try to understand each other about the story, he is more able to understand (it in) English easily... and I don’t.

So it means that if I am ... giving in now and not use Tongan language, he will lose Tongan. But I don’t wish to be like that... However, I think he will eventually lose it because he is mixing more and more with palangi (Langakali, Rnd.1, p. 4).

In a situation like this, the mother struggled, because not only did she have to deal with the issue of making sure she and her son have a common and shared understanding (intersubjectivity) of the concept they are talking about, but she also needed to share the clarity of meaning that is involved in translation from Tongan into English. This provides a challenge for most mothers (and other Tongans as well) who are bilingual learners in New Zealand. For example, it is possible for a question such as, ‘*Oku mahino ki ai?* (Is it clear to him?) to mean one or some of the following:

- is it understood by him?

- is it meaningful to him?
- does he understand the meaning?
- does he know what it means?

The challenges faced by Tongan mothers when helping their children in their learning in English at school, while trying to maintain their Tongan language in order to preserve their Tongan cultural values in their homes, can create dilemmas. On the one hand, the mothers try to help their children understand the English task sent home from school, on the other, the mothers' own limited knowledge and use of the language, and their desire to preserve and reinforce the children's knowledge of Tongan language and culture, gets in the way. However, also evident is the mothers' determination to do what they can to contribute to their children's *ako*; in some ways, it is similar to barriers involved in reaching an educational goal. This calls for an understanding of the situation by educators, classroom teachers, and policy makers.

The acquisition of cultural values was manifested in this *koniseti* through the children's singing, dancing, reciting poems, hymns or Bible verses. One of the key factors is the ability of the mothers, based on their determined *loto 'i Tonga*,<sup>145</sup> to utilize the available different forms of family capital – physical, human, and social – in making their direct and indirect contributions to their children's education. The web of complexities involved in the long processes they go through, physically, intellectually, and emotionally/spiritually, perhaps explains in part the current nature of the 'conflicting' outcomes of Tongan children's educational achievements at secondary level in the current New Zealand Education Statistics (Ministry of Education, 2002) – but this is another issue.

### ***Fafanga* (Preparing lunch for sale)**

Another fundraising activity in which the participants were involved and for which they did most of the preparations in their homes was the *Fafanga*. The *Fafanga Day* was proposed and discussed in the PTA meeting as a suitable fundraising activity to include non-Tongan parents and their children. These parents could not participate with their

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<sup>145</sup> The motto of the Wesleyan schools in Tonga where most of the mothers participants received their education before migrating to New Zealand, is "*Ko Tonga Mo'unga ki he Loto*" (The mountain of Tonga is in their hearts). Tonga does not have physical mountains. So, this motto was set and interpreted by early missionaries to mean, whatever Tongans put their heart to, they achieve.

children in the *koniseti*, either because they could not make the costumes or their children could not participate in the dance and singing rehearsals, or the learning of Tongan memory verses, but they could participate in the preparation and selling of lunch on the day. This involved purchasing the ingredients, preparing and cooking the food, and packaging it to be sold for lunch at School, or at the Child Care Centre. The mothers worked in groups, but each woman could make her contribution in whatever area she has skills or expertise. For example, Heilala organised the groups, and promoted and advertised the event. She was also responsible for collecting, recording, and banking the income, and giving a financial report in the Parents' meeting, as well as purchasing some food on the day of the *fafanga*. Langakali admitted, that by using the family physical capital, she had to budget before purchasing the ingredients:

I have to be careful that after buying the Tongan food, I still have some (money) left to buy some lunch on the day to share with the children at the Centre. I buy the ingredients first and prepare the Tongan dish, making sure it's not expensive, but tasty, so that they get sold quickly. The children help me, and the money goes to the Centre.... While we are doing these ...we sing, joke, tell stories and have fun (Langakali Rnd.1, p. 17).

Langakali and Falahola, who received education only in Tonga, were not restricted by their educational attainment; they made a direct contribution. According to Vygotsky, "... the efforts of individuals are not separate from the kinds of activities in which they engage and the kinds of institutions of which they are a part' (Rogoff, 2003, p. 50). Further, from the above excerpt, it is obvious that Langakali used the human capital in the family to plan and organize her part in the preparations of the *fafanga* at home. She gave the children the onions and garlic to peel and instructed them clearly on how to do these, while watching them closely. But she diced the onions and crushed the garlic herself. When it came to mixing the ingredients for the chop-suey, Langakali, gave her eldest son the sequence to follow in mixing them, which the boy followed. These were direct contributions to the child's learning to identify ingredients, follow instructions, and think and work in sequence.

Both Heilala and Langakali felt the importance of talking about their role in this task, the *fafanga*, with the children. For example, Langakali not only explained what she did, but also answered questions from the children about the reasons why certain ingredients were included and/or mixed in certain ways. She also discussed how she budgeted with

their limited financial capital and other resources, to make sure they can cater for the fundraising *fafanga* as well as being able to cover their weekly groceries. Langakali admitted this created a dilemma for her – to spend more on the food for the *fafanga* and do it particularly well, or just to ensure enough for both the family’s home supply and the *fafanga*. She wanted to achieve both, but she had to make a choice. According to her, it was important that the children were exposed to what was going on and that they know and remember what is involved in fundraising in a group with a purpose:

We must *talanoa* 'i (talk about) these things (fundraising) in front of the kids so they listen to it, to learn and remember the things that are involved when fundraising like this happened. I want my children to learn about by participating in *fuakavenga*<sup>146</sup> (Langakali, Rnd.1, p. 4)

Heilala made a list and called out the names of friends and relatives to be invited to buy Tongan food for lunch on the *fafanga* day; the children listened and added some names. Heilala acknowledged the importance of talking with the children about the extended family, the connections, and their aspirations for the young children, and they listen to these, which reflected their part when family and relatives were invited to come and buy lunch from the Centre’s fundraising activity:

And of course, these are discussed in front of the children so they know who is asked to come and help and what connections they have with us, and the status relationships involved. The children were very proud of their links to different families (Heilala, Rnd.1).

While these may appear to involve physical capital and financial decisions to be made, the fact that both mothers in this case had to plan, implement the plan, and then communicated parts of it to other family members, required the use of the human and social capital they have access to; and given that the children are directly involved in participating, and remembering what to do, these tasks become a part of the direct contributions which these mothers make to their children’s *ako*. Referring to *fuakavenga*, (carrying out responsibilities), Langakali says:

The best way for them to learn is when they see us doing it. They learn from us parents doing it, and how we do it, the details involved, sequence, and who does what and over time, as they grow up. They see and observe these, and that’s

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<sup>146</sup> This translates as ‘accepting responsibilities’ and ‘fulfilling social obligations’ and as part of ‘being obedient’ with a sense of ‘voluntary participation and cooperation’, which all Tongan mothers who participated in the present study said they wanted their children to learn and maintain.

when they learn. But if the parents don't do any or avoid doing fuakavenga, the children will do the same, and I think we parents know that when the children grow up they will not do any. They must sio tonu (see directly) with their own eyes, to what is being done (Langakali, Rnd.1, p. 10).

One of the highlights of *fafanga* days for some of the participants was the fact that they as mothers could take time off work, come to the Centre, buy Tongan food for lunch, and sit down and talk with their children without the usual rush in and out. The children were also looking forward to their mother or parents to join them on this day. Those who did not work full time could also bring the rest of their children to the Centre, buy lunch and sit down as a little group or with another family and share the food, while they chatted, and listened to what happens at the Centre. This was a good use of the mothers' physical capital, human capital, and their social capital.

While the discussion of the *fafanga* has centered on Langakali, Heilala, and Falahola, their direct and indirect contributions, and their use of different forms of family capital, it must be pointed out that other participants did roughly similar things. As Rogoff (2003) puts it, "The cultural historical approach assumes that individual development must be understood in, and cannot be separated from, its social and cultural-historical contexts" (p. 50). Furthermore, the present study acknowledges the women's responses, which identify their holistic method of giving instruction, working collaboratively with others, communication, and learning processes, which may be missing from or just not yet known about in the New Zealand classroom, or otherwise; Phillips labelled it as being 'violated'<sup>147</sup> in the school setting (Phillips, 1982).

## **Direct Contributions**

### **Learning and teaching**

This section will discuss how Tongan mothers contribute, in their homes, to their children's *ako*, learning, and education in various identified areas, using physical capital, human capital or social capital, as Coleman (1991) defines them. This will provide conceptual tools through which to look at the data set and examine the emerging themes. While the participants in the study demonstrated their consciousness about their role as mothers by teaching social and moral values and advising (*akonaki*)

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<sup>147</sup> This is how Phillips (1982) refers to the treatment of those core values, which determine the behaviour of a particular social group, being disallowed in some classrooms.

their young children, they also tried to help them with their homework, Bible verses, Tongan language learning, and discipline. Not surprisingly, numerous methods and strategies of teaching and learning were utilised in their homes, and the type of teaching in a mixture of English and Tongan may be unique to the women who participated in the study. These will be discussed.

### **School work**

Schoolwork here refers to all types of formal and informal 'homework', and short- and long-term 'projects' sent home from school to be completed, in which parents may or may not be expected to have joint participation with the children. These include tasks in storytelling, reading and learning of Bible verses (from the early childhood Centre), reading, spelling, maths and times tables, English language, and small research projects from school. Most of the mothers did not see themselves as their children's teachers of academic subjects. However, they continued to assist the children in their schoolwork, and whenever they did not feel able to help they sought assistance from others outside their home.

### **Reading**

In writing about bilingual literacy of ESL students, Ovando and Collier (1997) state that the overall "... goal in teaching reading and writing is to enable students to use and enjoy reading and writing ...", and, according to Hudelson, (1994, p. 130), they continue "to learn about and interpret the world and reflect upon themselves in relation to people and events around them" (p. 129). Au (1993) emphasizes the importance of constructing meaning through written language by making students' background experiences central to the literacy process, using culturally responsive instruction (cited in Ovando & Collier, 1998, p. 129). Recent research has shown Pacific Island children develop expertise in reading and writing through the patterns of written language use, which also occur in their family environment. Wolfgramme et al. (1997, pp. 2-4) conducted an educational training programme on story reading for a small group of Tongan mothers in Auckland. First, they identified the mothers' existing style of reading to and with their children; they found that the adults (mainly mothers) used particular styles (as discussed in the Literature Review chapter).

In the present study reading is referred to as an interactive activity between a mother and her child: they can read from a children's book, a picture book, a Bible or a hymnal; the reading may be in Tongan or English, depending on the reading materials available in their home; and they also use a range of reading styles and reading materials, in different contexts and for different purposes.

### **Reading in Tongan**

This activity was directly related to children's learning of their memory verses for Sunday school, as preparation for the annual *Faka-Mē*. The Tongan Bible and hymnbook were mainly used, as well as the drama scripts from Sunday school teachers. Mother and child also read children's storybooks in Tongan produced by Learning Media Ltd, and borrowed from the Tongan Language Centre, and other materials such as the monthly church bulletin, the weekly *Tongan Chronicle*, and local Tongan newspapers and magazines<sup>148</sup> from home. The shortage of Tongan language reading materials was evident, and some mothers admitted to having none. Most of the mothers used the family evening devotion time first to read a story from the Tongan Bible, then tell it in a storytelling form, elaborating important parts, applying them to everyday experiences, and highlighting the moral 'lesson' for the children. Most of the mothers helped the children internalize the meaning of the story by asking questions and discussing the answers with the children in Tongan, so that they could apply it to their behaviour in their daily performance, and use it as an *akonaki* for the family. This was then reinforced in the prayers that followed.

During the Tongan reading time, most mothers focused on accurate recitation of text segments by the children, as well as the phonetic pronunciation, and discussion of the meaning of individual words and phrases. These, the mothers believed, help the children remember the Bible or hymn verses or the text for a drama they need to memorize. It was clear that most mothers, when reading with their child, asked questions and discussed the title, pausing and/or pointing to the word. The child would pronounce the word and then they both discussed the meaning, although more often

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<sup>148</sup> *Taimi 'o Tonga*, is a newspaper with a strong political viewpoint, published in New Zealand and distributed in Tonga; *Matangi Tonga* magazine is published in Tongan and distributed both to local and international readers.

than not, the discussion occurred at the beginning of the reading session.<sup>149</sup> Wolfgramm et al. (1998) tagged these styles as narrative exchanges (focus on the story meanings, and discussed by the reader and the child), display exchanges (based on an initiation-response-evaluation sequence in which the child labels parts of an illustration, letters, or words in the text), and performance exchanges (based on the reader's pause and the child pronouncing the word).

Falahola explained how she taught her 7-year-old son to read Tongan, and memorize his verses for the Children's *Faka-Mē*,<sup>150</sup> focusing on pronouncing the words correctly, and emphasizing the importance of looking at the spelling of the words:

What I do, is that I read to him what it says on the piece of paper... and he repeats after me ... many times ... (until) he knows it off by heart. I taught him (to listen) ...and (say the word), when to break and breathe after a dot, a comma.

With the Bible and hymn, I get him to lie down on the floor and ... read to me, and he does. But when he gets to those words that he does not know (how to pronounce); he would ask me and I tell him to spell it, he ... spell them (each one) ... and I pronounce those words ... and get him to repeat after me. He then knows, that is how that word is spelt and how it is pronounced... Sometimes, I ask him if he knows what it means, and if he doesn't ... I use it in a sentence, after explaining. I know that if I pronounce the word/s and he does not look at how it is spelt ... he would still not know how it is pronounced properly... I teach what I think will develop as a habit ... trusting that they will pick it up. They can read in Tongan (and) may not know how to do it in ... correct grammar ... I try to ... teach ...there are places for commas, full stops, and glottal stops, ... that will be the places he will breathe too (Falahola, Rnd.1. p. 2).

Falahola wanted her children to be confident in Tongan to be able to communicate with other Tongans. "That's what makes them Tongan", she said, and recounted how she took her primary-school-age children to Tonga, and was sad to watch her parents really wanting to interact with them but could not because the children's Tongan was very limited, and they were there only for a short time – but it was a good learning situation. Since then, she has tried to teach and maintain their level of Tongan as it is important to her that they can speak good Tongan and learn a lot about their Tongan heritage, given that they can speak English anywhere in New Zealand at any time. The desire to create

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<sup>149</sup> The mother who discussed the story at the beginning learned the technique from her daughter's school when she was a volunteer participant in the school's reading programme.

<sup>150</sup> The first Sunday of May every year is a special day "*Faka-Mē*" (children's day); the Sunday School children perform in front of the congregation by reciting their Bible verses, singing their songs, presenting a drama, all in Tongan.

a human capital in her children by using the social capital through learning the language in a Tongan context and communicating with others is very important to this mother.

All the mothers except one read stories (parables) from the Bible's New Testament then retold these in Tongan and asked questions to test the comprehension of the story by the children who sit and listen, and sometimes they asked them to retell the story. Each mother used her own way to help her child understand the meaning of the story. A range of methods was used to help the children memorize the parts they needed to memorize – a reading style practiced mainly in Tongan language Sunday schools. Langakali explained how she taught reading in Tongan to her sons, but in particular to her 7-year-old.

The way we read, Lesieli, is that I read the story first, and then tell them the story in story form because he will not understand ... he may understand some, for example, the sentence. But I know he is not in a position yet to read for himself and understand it, just from reading. For me, I think it is better that I read the story and then tell him; it is more meaningful ... to him then. Like I *talanoa 'i* (conversationally tell) the story to him, and I try to do it in a humorous way to make the story meaningful to him ... for him to understand it. But as far as his ability to read (phonetically) *laukonga*,<sup>151</sup> he can do it, but ... whether he understands what he reads or not, I don't think so. But he would understand more of the meaning of the story, if I demonstrate (*fakatātā 'i*) and explain (*talanoa 'i*) the story (Langakali, Rnd.1, part 2, p. 2).

Bourke (2000), in her study of intermediate-school-age students' concepts of learning and self assessment in context, found that 50% of her samples had a conception of learning as "...memorizing and reproducing" in a school context (p. 167). The mothers in the present study used different methods to help their children memorize their Bible verses. This was done mainly after the family evening devotion.<sup>152</sup> For example, Falahola read parts of a verse, and got her child to repeat after her, many times until he got it right; Sialetafa dictated one verse (from the Bible or hymnbook) at a time, and got her son to write it down as he said it, many times until he got it right. Mohokoi just read a small segment of the verse first and then repeated it in unison with her 3-year-old

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<sup>151</sup> *Laukonga* means to read by quietly spelling the word. The reader inwardly and silently sounds the letters out and then pronounces the word. This is done slowly, moving from one word to the next, and when he comes to a long word, he/she normally stops and works out the sound first in segments and then pronounces it.

<sup>152</sup> In most families, a devotion is held in the evening where verses of a hymn are read out, and the family sing; this is followed by a reading from the Bible, and then a prayer by one of the parents, followed by the Lord's Prayer which may be sung, chanted or read together.

son, and sometimes alternatively as a game, although she did not insist that he must get it right. Kukuvalu got her three children to help each other, by reciting together the memory verses of each child, so at the end each child was able to help the others with their verses because they knew them all. All the mothers believe that children's knowledge of 'something' off by heart, whether it was a Bible verse, a hymn, song or a chant, is very important for their intellectual development; and their ability to instantly demonstrate their skill in producing this body of knowledge to others around them, and that this achievement strengthens their self confidence. As Langakali put it, "...it's something that we, the parents and the children, are very proud of". The mothers' use of human capital to develop and improve their children's reading ability (to read in Tongan), while expanding their knowledge and self-confidence, is clearly a direct contribution to their children's education in general.

### **Reading in English**

While most of the mothers did not talk explicitly about reading in English, because they wanted their children to read and learn Tongan, the ones who had children of primary school age mentioned the compulsory reading from school that they needed to do with each child. Reading sessions at home were conducted routinely in most of these families. Having brought the books from school, the children were expected to read to the mother, another adult or an older sibling, who would help with the pronunciation, explain the meaning, and make sure the child understood the story. One of the parents was to sign off the notebook and return it to school with the child. Two of the mothers left the English reading task to their respective husbands, because "they themselves just did not know how to" (Puatonga, pers. comm, Dec. 2006; Falahola, pers. comm, 2006). It appeared that mothers who were teachers in Sunday school, the early childhood Centre, youth group, or in a church group were able to conduct the reading sessions successfully. These were done constructively, collaboratively, and with interesting activities, which, they said, the primary-school-age children enjoyed.

Those who had received education only in New Zealand, and one of the university graduate women, tended to leave the reading task to other adults and older siblings in their family. But one of the two mothers who were educated only in Tonga was the most active participant in English reading exercise with her child, when she had a chance to do it. Although the others contributed to the English reading of their children

by doing what they had seen in the Centre, this mother's effort stood out. She used her human capital and her social capital to make direct contribution to her son's reading in English, despite her limited education and knowledge of the language. She read the story in English and explained its meaning to the child in Tongan:

That room (pointed to it) is set aside for him to study in. He brings home a notebook with the tasks in it. [He is required to read and know the story and be able to tell it in class]. He gets help from school with his pronunciation. But I go to school and pay attention to how he is taught, and ... look closely (at the teacher) to make sure I know how it is done. (Here, at home...) if he cannot pronounce a word, and I cannot pronounce it either ... I try to get help. I then phone (my sister-in-law) and ask ... I spell the word ... she then pronounces the word ... on the phone. When she pronounces it to me, I say it to him. ... I get him to repeat after me three times ... until he gets it right<sup>153</sup> (before I hang up). He... always finds it amusing when I reach for the phone and call around for help. Sometimes I need to find out the meaning (as well), and I seek help. I always use Tongan and try to get him to understand the meaning in Tongan first, because that is how I understand it, and I explain it to him from my understanding in Tongan. I understand that when he is at school he learns and understands concepts in English (Langakali, Rnd.1, p. 3).

While this is just one mother's example, the above excerpt illustrates the strong desire and determination of these mothers who want to help their children learn to become high achievers in New Zealand education while maintaining their skills in Tongan language, their knowledge of Tongan culture, and a personal sensitivity for Tongan values. The mother's perseverance in establishing a shared understanding, the intersubjectivity,<sup>154</sup> of the content of the reading was obvious. By using the human and social capital they had, these mothers went to school or to the Centre and observed the teachers' performance (in reading, storying, playing, general teaching) took the skills home, imitated by practising and used them with their children – a learning strategy that is known and practised among Pacific peoples (Thaman, 2003). Further, in this case, they used their Tongan social networks to enhance their performance in contributing to their children's learning. They also seemed to be working towards the *kaha'u* (future) of their children, their livelihood and educational achievement. For these women it was also very helpful that the teachers sent home the tasks clearly written out on a notebook,

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<sup>153</sup> A few of the Tongans, both mothers and students use the telephone a great deal to call and get help from others, for/with their studies. This includes explaining a concept, translating a word, phrases, or sentences, or just clarifying ideas, or interpreting an assignment question. It saves them time.

<sup>154</sup> Wertsch (1984) defines this term as 'the extent to which the student and the teacher (in this case, the child and mother) agree on the meaning (involved the task)'.

identifying the parts for the parents to follow. Sometimes teachers explained this verbally to the child to convey to his/her mother, which was greatly appreciated by the mothers in the study.

### **Helping with mathematics**

In the present study, maths activities at home refer to all the number tasks from school as part of the children's homework, including activities that involved mathematical concepts for preschoolers; counters to teach and learn numbers, identifying colours, sizes, and other similar mathematical concepts. For primary-age children, numeric values, games that involved identifying patterns, times tables, the use of money, units of measurements, and the use of the computer for maths at home, are included. Most of these required the use of the mothers' form of human capital. Again, mothers who frequented the Centre or a classroom learned by listening to and observing how teachers taught and carried out maths activities, then took and used these teaching strategies at home with their children. They tended to interact with their children about maths, and participated in their children's informal learning but in meaningful ways at school, and in the Centre "because they too wanted to learn maths" (Langakali, Rnd.11, p. 8). Mothers who were in a teaching capacity tended to do the same, as they explained clearly and comprehensively during the interview. More than half of the mothers in the study left the maths activities with the children to their husbands, even if it was just the drilling of times tables. Heilala and Puatonga left their children's maths activities to their respective husbands who were both university graduates. While not all the mothers helped their children with maths, those who did gave a clear picture of what and how they did it:

I just helped them like the way I was taught arithmetic in Tonga, especially with problem solving tasks.... But now I get a person who is an accountant to tutor him in maths and I am very pleased about that (Langakali, pers. comm. 18/6/2005).

Langakali also allowed her boys to ask questions about maths, and she tried to answer them, thereby helping them with their problems, although, "in a Tongan way", she said.

The strategies mothers used varied according to the age level of the children, and how much the mothers knew. However, except for mothers who were teachers, because the

majority of the children were preschoolers, mothers thought that what they learned at the Centre was adequate.

### **Maths activities with young children**

With the preschoolers, the mothers who “talk and play maths with their children were mainly teachers at early childhood or Sunday school” (Mohokoi, Rnd.1, p. 10); they focused on numbers, colours, shapes, sizes, and sequencing. She explained how she interacted with her 2½-year-old son (and her niece when she comes to visit) about these mathematical concepts:

After he watches *The Simpsons* on TV, I would spell his name (and he listens...) then I count from 1 to 5 (then repeat with him), then (I) point to the colours for him to identify, which are pasted all around the room. ... Then I give him a pen to write his name (pretending).

The way I teach him the numbers 1 to 5 ... he can now recognize the numbers 1 to 5. I am trying now to get him to know the sequence... be able to rearrange (in sequence), the numbers 1 to 5, I mean, I mix them up. He can now point to and identify 1 and 2. But when it comes to putting them in sequence, he cannot do that (yet). As for the colours, he is beginning to master the identifying of colours. ... I have cut different colours in different shapes – (for example, a) circle, triangle, square ... and I also cut out house (shapes), but they are all in the same colour. We talk about these.

[Later, I watched Tim<sup>155</sup> answer his mother’s questions about numbers. He used his fingers to show the numbers, which represented the answers].

Being a teacher, Mohokoi used her knowledge and skills to design suitable learning activities of this type, and interacting with the child about these concepts in an informal way enabled her to enter his world at his level and scaffold his learning of mathematical concepts. In other words, she assisted her child’s construction of his understanding of these concepts, a strategy that Rogoff (2001) by building on Vygotsky’s notion of learning in zone of proximal development, strongly advocated. By using her human capital through collaboration with her child’s learning, and using her social capital by giving him feedback and expanding what he said, she thereby contributed directly to Tim’s cognitive and intellectual development and learning of these important mathematical concepts, which will form the foundation on which the next level of mathematical concepts he needs to learn, will be based.

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<sup>155</sup> a pseudonym.

Hēhea employed a different method. She used clear instructions in *pu'i*<sup>156</sup> and asked questions about the sequence of events. She reinforced and repeated the instruction she gave or the questions she asked to allow her 3-year-old daughter, San<sup>157</sup> to think and follow the instructions to construct the image and size (big, smaller, inside, outside) of the object or concepts she was instructed to get:

Mother:        Could you please go upstairs to my room and get me a piece of paper with some writing on it. It is in a small purse inside my big bag.  
[Daughter went up the stairs].  
Daughter:     Mum, where is it?  
Mother:        It is inside my big bag. Just look for it; it is there.  
[Daughter took some time, and finally came down with the small purse].  
Daughter:     Mum, you said it is in your big bag, but it was not, it was on the ...  
Mother:        Clever! I knew you'd find it.

The mother continued that although she gave her clear instructions, she always encouraged her to look for the object she was sent to get. As for getting her child to think in sequence, Hehea always started the conversation with a question, and her daughter would reply explaining ... the sequence of events:

I demonstrate to her first, like I would say ... 'Do you remember when we went to ...' And as soon as I say that, she would say, 'Oh, yes, we went there and such-and-such happened ...' She would then tell me the whole story (in sequence) and we then continue to talk. Yes, it's me who start the talk with a question (Hehea, Rnd.1, p. 2).

When this mother allowed San to help her bake some scones, she got her to measure the flour by cupfuls and pour it into the mixture as she counted them, and she did the same with spoonfuls of the rest of the ingredients.

To be able to count, not by rote, but one-to-one at this age is very important for understanding the numeric values ... (Rnd.1, p. 4).

Sialetafa taught her primary-school-age sons how to memorize their times tables in a different way. When asked how her children learned these, she explained:

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<sup>156</sup> To give orders, to do errands for another person. Tongan adults use young children to do their *pu'i* as a way of teaching them to do things in order to learn by doing, to learn to follow instructions, and to learn to be obedient.

<sup>157</sup> A pseudonym.

They started in Tongan but as they grow older, they work more in English than in Tongan. What we did was ... write them (times-tables) down, (and) told them to sit at the table, and I bring out the chart of the tables, and they copy these. After that, we started from the times tables one to four, (presumably they learn these overnight) and the next day, if they don't get them all right, I get them to repeat the ones they got wrong. And we continue in that ... (pattern) to 12-times tables. We (then) begin with one person, and test them one by one, but we don't test them in order, but (we) mix up the tables. When they pass, we give them a treat, for example, (a trip to) McDonalds, or give them \$5 (to buy) whatever they want. That works, and they try hard for that (Sialetafa, Rnd.1, p. 3).

The rest of the homework to do with maths Sialetafa found difficult so she left it until her husband came home from work. He helped the children before their talk and sharing of the day's news. While both parents demonstrated their ability to contribute directly to the children's learning by using the human and social capital they possessed, it was not clear how productive or effective their contributions were. However, what is important is that the human capital possessed by the parents is complemented by the social capital embodied in the family relationships. Both parents could help with some aspects of the children's homework, and both can talk with them about schoolwork.

Falahola taught her 7-year-old to add and subtract, and identify colours by using different denominations of dollar notes:

I told my husband to go to the bank and change a \$100 bill, to have a 50, 20, 10, and 5 dollar notes, and that's how I taught my eldest son. I asked him, 'What colour is this note, and what is the number on it?' I would tell him, 'Tell me, what note is this and what colour?' He would tell me, and we practised this many times. Now he knows, and can identify the notes, their colours and values of each. He knows how to identify \$1 to \$100. When we go to the bank to deposit money, I would say to him, 'Have a look at that, what colour, and how much is it'. He would tell me, 'Green', and I'd say, 'What number?', and he'd say, '20'. Then we add all of them together, and he'd copy the amount to the deposit slip, and we make the deposit. So that's how we do our bank deposit, (weekly) (Falahola, Rnd.1, p. 3).

Although Falahola struggled with her limited English, her physical disability and her son's limited Tongan, her strong drive to teach her son to use money, by identifying numbers, colours, and values, and to manage addition, to fill out the deposit slip, and to be confident in doing these in the bank was obviously a 'teaching session'. That they learned from each other demonstrated the usefulness of reciprocal teaching for both mother and child and enabled them to achieve the task they set out to do, while

strengthening the bond between the two. This was a way of using the forms of human and social capital Falahola seemed to have been blessed with or have acquired.

### **Learning to memorise Bible verses at home**

It came across clearly that it is important for these women to know that their, “sons and daughters must ‘have knowledge of what they are expected to know ... they must know it and be able to produce that body of knowledge when they are asked” (Langakali, pers. comm., 2006).

The mothers were conscious of the need for their children to know what they were supposed to know and behave in the way they were expected to, because as mothers they were responsible for both the children’s good behaviour and wrongdoings. When the children made mistakes, behaved badly or simply did not know what to do, the mother, rather than the father, was immediately blamed. The blame did not come just from the extended family, but from the church, social groups, and the community, even friends would criticize. All the mothers admitted the power of these social control mechanisms for Tongan families, even when they are out of the village life. Nevertheless, all the mothers claimed an advantage in teaching their children moral values through memorizing Bible verses, drama scripts, or hymns and songs for the yearly *Faka-Mē*.<sup>158</sup>

### **Teaching Tongan culture and values**

Mothers in the study took pride in the teaching of Tongan cultural values to their children. The *ako* ‘i or ‘teaching’ was done collaboratively by physically and verbally interacting with the children, giving them *akonaki* (advice), by providing contexts and setting up activities in which these concepts were practised, and by encouraging and participating with the children within and out of the family activities where the drill and reinforcement of these values were actively exercised, existing naturally and as a habit. Included in these values are concepts such as *feohi*, (to be with, togetherness); *māfana* (warmth, being emotionally moved), *mālie* (excitement, elation) and *ongo* ‘i (being considerate, thoughtful and sensitive, feel for). These concepts are to do with the well-being of the ‘self’ as well as in relation to others, consequently, the importance of working collaboratively with others remains paramount. To sustain a degree of

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<sup>158</sup> Other Pacific Island churches take part in similar occasions but under different names, and in different months of the year.

correctness and authenticity in teaching these values, all the mothers emphasized the importance of “correcting the children’s mistakes right there and then” in order to establish a habit of “behaving in the right way” in any context.

To ensure her children experience *feohi* regularly, Heilala organized a yearly reunion family camp where her extended family, including her parents and her siblings, went away for a weekend. While away, she explained to the children their relationships with their relatives, and encouraged them to share and interact with one another and get to know them better. She recalled some of the incidents in the camp, and compared the *feohi* they normally had at home:

... we had a structured timetable where the children performed ... they exchanged gifts, sang and danced, recited verses and so on. ... a prime example of the importance of bringing the whole family together. I really see the benefit of that ... it makes my children closer to my parents, their aunties, uncles, and cousins... My sister video taped the activities, and I can see ... my children play the tape over and over again (raised her voice with excitement) and it is still their favourite.

Here at home, we always have a special time, we have a devotion before bedtime and that’s always a wonderful time together. At the end of the year my family came together ... that’s an opportunity for us, my sister and my brother to offer a word of thanks to mum and dad ... (and) just bring up family issues to resolve (Heilala, Rnd.1, p. 3).

Heilala wanted her children to experience the feeling of warmth in being together with other members of the extended family, and learning to know who was who in different valued contexts (Thaman, 1988). Langakali and Fahina taught their children *feohi* by taking them to church to *mix and mingle* with other members, and by occasionally going back to Tonga for a holiday to spend time with their relatives; to learn while in Tonga to do without much of what they take for granted in New Zealand; to share and play with fewer toys; to get on with and know others better; and learn to speak more Tongan. Again, when they behaved inappropriately, the children were *akonaki’i* (corrected, counselled) right there and then by their mother, using their human capital to advise them and social capital to consult others for help, and positively reinforce the children’s behaviour. Any bad influence on their behaviour from other children is always possible, but these are given counselling immediately, and monitored closely.

Mohokoi observed that when *feohi* or being together with others occurred regularly, and in harmonious ways, and was enjoyable, the children began to feel *māfana* (warmed to it) and enthusiastic about getting together and learning from each other. Consequently, they began to feel *ongo'i* (obliged to, and considerate toward each other). She encouraged it:

I notice that when they are together (her son and his cousin), one would call the other to come and play, and it shows that they missed each other. ... when I see that, it really moves me ... if it is like that now (that they *feohi*), and it brings their blood connection closer ... for my son ... treating his cousin as his best friend ... I like that (tears in her eyes). It is like two people lying in one womb<sup>159</sup> (Mohokoi, Sn. 1, 5).

Mohokoi taught her son dancing because she believed it would help form his Tongan identity. She encouraged him to play collaboratively with his cousins; consequently, she modelled the appropriate behaviour and explained how and why these actions are done. Within the practice of *feohi* is the learning and teaching of *faka'apa'apa* (respect according to different status relationships and in different valued contexts). In other words, she helped the children and co-constructed with them ideas and etiquette, how they should behave when they are together, from an interpersonal perspective, thereby contributing directly to the children's learning. By using their human and social capital, mother and child enhanced each other's *ako*, and their learning in general. She also monitored how they played together and reinforced good behaviour.

All the mothers in the study wanted their children to learn Tongan dance, through which they could experience the *māfana* (inward excitement) and *mālie* (personal elation) in performance (Manu'atu, 2000). Two women taught their children to sing and dance, and the rest participated with theirs in the cultural programme run by Tongan artists, at the Tongan Language Centre. The exercise involved:

- learning a *hiva kakala* (Tongan song for dancing) which requires knowledge of the words, and understanding of the meaning,
- learning the actions or hand movements, which express the meaning of the words in the song and acknowledges persons, places, and relationships of greatest importance,

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<sup>159</sup> This is equivalent of a Tongan saying, *Tākoto he kete taha*, which symbolizes the close blood connection and therefore the collaboration and partnership or teamwork among close relatives.

- practicing the body and the feet movements in unison, which explains the metaphors from the song,
- learning the *fakateki* (sudden and intentional movement of the head), which indicates the achievement of *mālie* during the performance,
- experiencing the success of a *faiva faka-Tonga* (Tongan dance), called *mālie*, which indicates a notion of ‘achievement’ in dancing performance,
- achieving the success of a *faiva*, which is indicated by its production of *mālie*.

So, from a cultural-institutional perspective, the notion of *mālie*, which mothers and children experience when they come to the practice, according to Manu’atu (2000, p. 60), provides insights into the kind of world-view Tongan people might have of themselves and their world when they perform. It helps to explain how Tongan people’s ways of thinking and acting would move/drive them to do other things, bigger or better or both. The concept of *mālie* provides insights into the ways Tongan parents can be encouraged to participate in the education, and engage in the learning of their children. All the mothers in the study had experienced the *mālie* in the Tongan dance, which they had often performed before.

### **Teaching domestic skills**

All but one participant believed that teaching children domestic skills was not only part of their role construct as a mother, but good preparation for children when they grow up and move out of the family to live with others or on their own. One view that came across clearly from the women was that children must have domestic skills to be able to fend for themselves, especially if they (parents) die unexpectedly; a fear of being *paea* (an orphan) was clearly conveyed. All the women set specific tasks for their children, but they were present to help or correct them immediately if it was necessary. These included dish washing, tidying up in and outside the house, hanging up and folding the washing when dry, or even mowing the lawn. One mother, as normal practice, left her kindergarten and primary-school children to prepare their own breakfast and afternoon tea and then clean up afterwards. The degree of difficulty ranged from one family to another. Heilala’s 8-year-old son was expected to water the garden in summer and was responsible for turning off the electricity and appliances then locking the house everyday before they left for school. Her daughters’ daily chores included tidying their

own bedrooms and the whole house in the weekend; and they all do the dishes in the evening.

Langakali washed the dishes but insisted that the children dried them so that they would be together in the kitchen sharing the day's school activities; preparing the vegetables for meals was a collaborative family task while catching up on extended family, church and community news. She also taught her older children how to bake a roast and to prepare a whole meal. Falahola left the dishes to be done, and kitchen to be cleaned by her sons after school, and her 8-year-old son cut the grass and helped out with gardening in the weekend. Kukuvalu, on the other hand, did not make her children do a lot of housework, although she expected them to help out occasionally, but when they wanted money she made them earn it by doing the housework.

All the mothers wanted their children to develop the habit of keeping clean and tidy, helping out when needed, and responding immediately and *talangofua* (obediently) when asked to help. It appears that the mothers, while working collaboratively and learning from each other, contributed directly to the children learning domestic skills, by using their human skills and knowledge to demonstrate to the children what needed to be done, and by using their social skills when encouraging them to learn from each other and from relatives close by.

### **Disciplining the children:**

Disciplining the children was done:

- during morning and evening devotions,
- by reprimanding the child immediately after misbehaving,<sup>160</sup>
- when misbehaviour was reported by school or the Early Childhood Centre,
- when misbehaviour occurred where smacking was most inappropriate.

All the mothers admitted they used smacking to discipline their children, but the degree of seriousness varied from one family to another. One woman used to leave her husband to hit the child while she herself left the house because she could not bear watching the child being hit. Eight of the mothers said they had decreased the amount

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<sup>160</sup> This ranged from a reprimand, time out, a simple smack, a pinch, a slap with palm of the hand, or a big slap on the shoulder, or a threat to wait for father to give out the discipline.

of smacking given to their children largely because they have become aware of the anti-smacking law recently passed. One mother said she used to smack her children in Tonga, but here she just talked to them, and sometimes she threatened them but does not touch them. However, so far she is happy with their behaviour, but also worried what will happen when her youngest son reaches secondary school age.

### **Conclusion and Chapter summary**

This chapter has discussed how Tongan mothers contribute directly and indirectly to their children's learning in the home context. Using physical/financial capital to provide stable accommodation, home provisions, resource materials, and to pay for extra curricula activities, support centres and school fundraising activities, the mothers, as seen through a personal lens, pride themselves and enhance their identities by their abilities in these areas. By using their human capital, social capital and social networks, the mothers assisted the children's *ako* at home by helping their reading, maths, and other subjects for school, and by memorising Bible verses, for Sunday school. The mothers interacted with their children while setting domestic tasks for them to practise these skills. According to Rogoff's (1995) three planes, the mothers continued to develop, expand, and enhance reciprocal relationships with the children in the home context. The mothers' participation in their contribution to the children's *ako* in the early childhood centres and primary school settings is perhaps less intensive, and the findings from those contexts will be the focus of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Contributions in centres and primary school settings

*Potopoto- 'a-niumui*

(The cleverness of a novice)

#### **Introduction**

The Tongan proverb quoted at the start of this chapter suggests that while a person appears to be clever at doing something, if they lack maturity and experience this will naturally show up sooner or later. While initially expected to make mistakes, through experience, practice, and learning they will make progress and one day prove to be an expert at what they are doing.

Strong parental involvement in a child's education and school environment is widely believed to be a key element in the success of the child. Such parental involvement is an ongoing, comprehensive, purposeful, and relentless process to ensure the parents and family's connection and contribution to the learning institution. While they may initially be new to the 'game', through experience, the parent's involvement becomes gradually progressive, enthusiastic and enterprising.

The presentation of data in this chapter is a response to the research questions about what and how the mothers contribute to their children's *ako* in the early childhood and primary school settings. The educational institutions through which the mothers in the study make their contributions include a Tongan Language Childcare Centre (10 mothers had children there), a Tongan language playgroup (one mother had a child there), two English speaking mainstream kindergartens (two mothers had children there), and six mainstream primary schools (seven mothers had children there). The average mother in the study therefore shuttles from one institution to the next thus showing her commitment to her children's learning. While they enjoy the collaborative nature of working with Tongan teachers, children, and other parents in the Tongan Language Centre most of the mothers face difficulties when participating in [particularly] the mainstream centres and primary school settings, where services are provided mainly by *Pālangi* (Europeans) and in which English is the only medium of

communication. The majority of the mothers, however, are keen to contribute directly and indirectly in these settings, although more so for some than others. They use various forms of family capital, namely physical and financial capital, human capital, and social capital, to which the family has access to fulfil their obligations to their children's education.

### **Impact of the belief system**

Not surprisingly, the research data revealed that their belief system influences what these women do to contribute to their children's *ako*, and also how they do what they do. Apart from their religious belief that children are gifts from God who must be nurtured, giving them a good education/ *ako*<sup>161</sup> is considered a key element of parental responsibility. Their beliefs<sup>162</sup> about their role and their children's learning have much to do with Tongan cultural concepts. Some of the more mature mothers discussed the general belief among Tongan men and women that children's success in any field depends to a large extent on *fa'ē mo 'api* (mothers and the home) – how the mothers raise, teach and nurture their offspring from a young age in the *anga faka-Tonga* (Tongan way). In practice, when the children don't behave well, display good manners, show respect for others, use appropriate respectful language, follow the proper dress code, and even in some cases do not do well in their school work, the mother is always 'blamed' and questioned 'oku 'i fē koa□ e fa'ē mo 'api,? (where is the mother and the home?), as the saying goes. The women in the study also believe it is important to protect their image as 'a good mother'<sup>163</sup> by being good role models to their children, especially to their daughters who need to learn the mother's role from them while they are young, hence the Tongan proverb, *Tama tu'u he fa'ē*<sup>164</sup> (the child's status and privileges depend on the mother's).

Four elements in the women's *Talanoa* about their beliefs stand out as being the most important concepts in their contribution to their children's *ako*. These are held to be the

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<sup>161</sup> This refers either to informal education at home in the extended family, and other valued contexts (Thaman, 1988) or to the formal education available in an institution outside the home, or both. From now on only the term '*ako*' will be used to mean or represent learning, schooling and education.

<sup>162</sup> Belief is defined as 'knowledge in the sense that the individual knows that what he (or she) espouses is true or probably true, and evidence may or may not be deemed necessary; or if evidence is used, it forms a basis for the belief but not the belief itself' (Sigel, 1985, p. 384, cited in Harkness et al., 1996, p. 85).

<sup>163</sup> Phrase taken from the research data.

<sup>164</sup> This proverb means that the status and privileged relationships to which a child is entitled and which he/she enjoys, depend to a large extent on his or her mother's social status and relationships.

cornerstones, which would support the contribution of Pacific mothers in general to their children's education in New Zealand: the importance of early childhood centres; the quality of teachers; the mothers' participation with their children; and the mothers' communication and relationships with others. There appears to be a strong link between these cultural beliefs and behaviour, and ultimately their beliefs exert a powerful influence on the development of their children, and are key components in the actions of the mothers themselves. These concepts are explained below.

### **Importance of early childhood centres**

All but one participant believe that the early childhood centres are an important asset to any local community who want to raise their children in a cooperative and collaborative manner<sup>165</sup>. To the women with children at the Tongan Language Centre, the centre is a place where they can come together and support each other<sup>166</sup> and the teachers. As they all speak Tongan and understand each other,<sup>167</sup> in meetings, the discussion and decision making in relation to raising children are clear to all. The centre also provides the parents with the assistance and leadership of well-trained and *poto*<sup>168</sup> teachers who have moral standing, respect, and classroom experience. Pipitongi feels that at this stage, her

...young daughter's life is beginning to be woven, but unlike Tonga ... where preschool is (not taken seriously)<sup>169</sup> so by sending her to the centre (to learn) it would encourage her to develop an interest in learning and to enjoy schooling at a young age (Pipitongi, Rnd.2. p. 2).

It is at the centre that young children learn their mother tongue and the cultural values, beliefs, and practices of appropriate Tongan behaviour and customs in social relationships, and *fetokoni'aki* (reciprocal help) with others. Langakali feels relaxed at

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<sup>165</sup> Childrearing in Tonga is a whole village responsibility, where everyone knows everyone else so they all teach each other's children and learn from their own and the children of others and they reward and discipline them just as they would their own.

<sup>166</sup> To these parents the Tongan language centre is likened to a community centre where anything to do with supporting the children's education or the Ministry's initiatives is discussed.

<sup>167</sup> Those married to non-Tongans, i.e. *Pālangis*, have their Tongan spouse to translate for them; because both parents almost always attend and participate when there are few problems, and the teachers can clarify any misunderstanding.

<sup>168</sup> *Poto* means to be clever, smart, intelligent, and skilful; to understand what to do and to do it well. When the term is extended to *poto fakapotopoto*, it means clever and intelligent, with wisdom along with great thrift and caution.

<sup>169</sup> Most mothers made similar comments about Tonga and its preschools; perhaps they themselves did not attend a preschool as it was not encouraged and was not important to some parents, or perhaps they could not afford the fees at the time. But today preschool education is increasingly important in the Kingdom.

the Tongan Language Centre because she can learn from the teachers by listening, observing, imitating, and asking questions (in Tongan) when she needs to without feeling that she may appear to be challenging them.<sup>170</sup>

Mohokoi prefers to send her 2-year old son to the centre everyday to learn in an environment rich in resources. With its qualified teachers, other mothers and older children, professional experts who visit, the centre can answer her son's many questions and provides a range of books, toys, and games to satisfy her son's curiosity. Hehea and Huni like being present at the centre during school days when they can observe the teachers and interact with other mothers while learning what and how to reinforce what has been taught in the centre, at home.

However, those who have children in other centres or mainstream kindergartens have a different view of those institutions. Falahola, who has a child at the Tongan language playgroup said she takes her son to the group daily and stays there to talk and play with him to improve his speech (Tongan and English) because the group itself is not always well supervised. Sialetafa feels it is important to monitor her children's progress so she drops off her daughter at a mainstream English speaking kindergarten and asks the *pālangi* staff questions about the child's performance and progress. However, her full-time employment does not allow her to stay and participate in the child's learning. Puatonga takes her son to another mainstream kindergarten so he can learn to speak good English, having mastered Tongan. However, she herself rarely goes inside because no one greets her so she feels uncomfortable and unwelcome at the kindergarten although the *pālangi* teachers know she speaks good English.

So while the majority of mothers feel at ease and comfortable about the function of the pre-school centres in enhancing their own learning and that of their children, there were references to the tensions about the reception some receive in some kindergartens and playgroups. That these were not highlighted by the research participants is a by-product of respecting authority in Tongan culture.

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<sup>170</sup> Traditionally, teachers stand for authority, and therefore deserve to be respected. Tongan-raised parents in particular obey and do not question them in case they are seen as *fiē-poto* (pretending to be smart or intelligent; smart Alec); and anything to do with education in a school context is the territory of teachers.

### **Teacher quality**

All the participants feel that the quality of pre-school teachers is an important factor in young children's learning and the mothers' support for their children. Those who have children at the Tongan Language Centre feel comfortable that the teachers there are qualified, having trained in recognized institutions. With experience behind them, they have good standing in the community and are generally considered dependable and trustworthy. Even the young women staff who are not mothers themselves advise parents and interact with children in parent-like roles. The teachers are admired for being churchgoers, with strong Christian beliefs. Some hold positions in the church's Christian education and youth programmes, meaning they can teach more than just the early childhood curriculum. Most of the teachers are themselves mothers and are from families respected in the communities. Being versatile, they not only teach children Tongan language and cultural values, but also morals and spiritual values, and more importantly, Biblical knowledge. For example, they help teach the children their Bible memory verses, songs, and their drama for Sunday school *Faka-Mē* (Sunday School anniversary day in May). Langakali feels that it is important that the teachers are fluent in Tongan and have an in-depth knowledge of the Tongan culture so they can teach the children *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *fua kavenga* (taking responsibilities), *tauhi vaha'a* (maintaining relationships) and *'ofa* (love and compassion).

Langakali's sentiments were reiterated by other mothers who participated in the study and had children at the Tongan Language Centre. Also, mothers who had children at a private primary school were particularly happy with the treatment they and their children received from teachers and the Principal of that church school. In contrast, Tongan mothers are aware that teachers in the mainstream state kindergartens and primary schools are well qualified, very good at their jobs, and able to cater for all children's needs. However, what is worrisome to the Tongan mothers is the fact that they do not seem to have a shared understanding of what is considered important to these Pacific women who are not quite familiar with the expected social nuances, learning culture, and education system in this country. Consequently, some of the mothers feel unwelcome and uncomfortable, and sometimes experience a sense of powerlessness. Although they feel unacknowledged they keep such thoughts to themselves. Puatonga expressed how she feels when she drops off her son at the mainstream English-speaking kindergarten:

When I drop off my son, I go in and get him settled, put his bag up, and ... look around and say goodbye (to him), then (I) leave ... when others are there ... just talking ... nobody says 'hello' ... although they know I can speak English. I feel a bit ... unwelcomed ... you know? (Puatonga, Rnd.2, p. 5).

### **Mothers' involvement with their children**

When most of these women grew up in Tonga, going with one's children to school, and *feohi* or participating with them in school activities and/or even staying there in the classroom and observing them, was not a common experience. The general expectation was for mothers to send their children to school with other children in the neighbourhood, and the youngsters would return together after school. Taking the children daily, mixing with them while working with the teacher, and interacting with other children and parents is a novelty for some mothers; it is a *ako* for them, an appealing exercise, a sign of *tokanga*<sup>171</sup> *ki he ako* (paying attention to children's *ako*) which is perceived by most Tongans *ngali poto* – a sound educational practice. Now these Tongan mothers in New Zealand see this exercise as worthwhile.

All but one of the interviewees feel that mothers' participation with their children in activities in the centre and school or in the church and the community is important not only for 'mother-child bonding' and shared the experience, but also for a common knowledge of the activities on which they can reflect later, and discuss and learn from, although they also agree that this is not always possible.

The mothers enjoyed other activities with their children. For example, Hehea feels that 'joining the circle for morning show-and-tell session at the centre' gives her and Sane (daughter) a lot to reflect on and talk about when Sane returns home and asks questions about it. Kukuvalu shares the fun she experienced with her children at school when she joined with other parents in drama, sport, and singing, even competing in a team with other mothers against their own children on the school's sports day. She says that the preparations leading up to the sports day generated much discussion, practice, rehearsal, and even debate in her family, but proved a good learning experience for all. The two

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<sup>171</sup> "*Tokanga*" is a very important term/concept in Tongans' notion of *ako*; it means to pay attention to; look after; to be careful about; treat with care, be vigilant. When used in reference to general education, it involves managing one's time, resources, and engaging in studying. When used in reference to learning, it involves listening, thinking, processing information, responding, questioning and answering, synthesizing ideas, and engaging in similar activities.

mothers who are also teachers encouraged other mothers to participate with their children in school activities, and then at home, reflect on what happened and help them evaluate their performance and assess how much learning had taken place.

Mohokoi tells of her son's reflection on the Tongan dance lesson at the centre, and how he asked her to show him again the hand and body movements they saw earlier to help him practise the dance at home. Langakali tells of how *feohi* (mixing) with her children at the centre and at school helped her understand what happens in class, how they learn, behave, and make progress with their teacher. This, she says, helps her understand more about the teacher-student interaction in New Zealand classrooms and how it works – at least from her children's point of view. It is through *feohi*, Langakali says, that Tongans youths learn about others – their manners, idiosyncrasies, status, attitudes, beliefs, principles and way of thinking,<sup>172</sup> This is consistent with Kukuvalu's comment that when she goes to kindy she studies her child's behaviour in order to understand her reactions when she is with other children.

### **Mothers' communication and relationships with others**

Eight of the 11 participants agree that the mother's method of communication with the centre or school and their relationships with others are important factors in their contribution to their children's education. Clear communication is important to the mothers in the study because:

- it gives them up-to-date knowledge of what is happening at the learning centre and what is expected of them,
- it maintains a close relationship between the learning centre and the parents,<sup>173</sup>
- it maintains/protects the trust established between the teachers and parents,
- strongly established communication channels and networks between parents and teachers will be shared by the children and they will not play one party against the other,
- the good relationships define their reciprocal responsibilities to each other,

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<sup>172</sup> For the same reason, several Tongan churches encourage their youth groups to attend camps at Easter or after New Year, to *feohi* with other Tongan youth, and leaders, *Palangi*, and those from other cultures, to learn from each other, understand how to work together, and share their knowledge and faith. On returning home they share their experience with parents – this is a joy to mothers, such as Langakali and Kukuvalu.

<sup>173</sup> Good relationships and reciprocal trust between a teacher and a mother allow the latter to approach the former and ask for assistance so she can help her children with homework.

- it helps both parties monitor the children's learning and homework tasks,
- they need to respond to the learning centres' message as soon as possible especially to do with the children's health.

The most common communication between the mothers and the primary schools is the regular notices which the child takes home. Telephone contact is made when urgency dictates. Some mothers complain about the written communication being only in English. At the Tongan Language Centre, a mother-tongue newsletter is sent home once a month in which,

they tell us what they want, the news about families, donations and support from different people, and from outside the centre and the PTA, to us parents to know what is happening inside the centre (Pipitongi, Rnd.2, p. 2).

The same notices are written in Tongan on a notice board in the corridor, which is accessible to all parents when they collect their children after school. The mothers prefer this method. All the mothers point out that they also have good relationships with the staff and parents in the centre because they understand what is going on because the language medium is Tongan. Heilala, for example, was treasurer at the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) for a few years and received good support from the members. Later she performed the same function at the local school; staff there are aware of what she and her husband can do with the Pacific Island community. Langakali was at the time chairperson of the PTA at the Tongan Language Centre. Most, if not all the mothers are loyal members of the PTA who fundraise regularly to meet the financial needs of the centre and the teachers. The principal of the centre appreciates the constant help mothers provide the centre throughout the year but wishes that once they have had experience of helping at the centre they would come in and see what needs to be done and do it without waiting to be asked. However, she also understands that the mothers do this out of *faka'apa'apa* and *talangofua* (obedience) to the principal and staff, who, out of respect, could not be too direct about this.

Falahola describes the clear communication between her and her son's Samoan teacher, which was established at the very beginning of the year. She emphasizes the importance of directness and being truthful with the teachers and the school:

I told them before, (that) I don't want my son to bring home messages verbally, I would like them to write me a note for him to bring home. If not, they should contact me on the phone. I don't want him to come and lie to me. Even if they want money for school or fundraising activities, I still want a note from his teacher, and I don't want it in any other way. And they are doing that all the time (Falahola, Rnd.2, p. 2).

Falahola was direct in her demands but it may be difficult for many Tongan mothers to be as assertive, especially when they fear being misunderstood by the school and especially, by their child's teachers.

### **The mothers' beliefs about their role**

All the mothers in the study believe their role in contributing to their children's *ako* through the centres and schools is primarily as a teacher-support service. It is perceived as peripheral and indirect in the sense that they do not teach their offspring directly, but instead participate in a range of activities in the centres and/or schools, in both formal and informal ways. They believe their support would enable the teachers, by freeing them up, to have more time, energy and resources to teach their children effectively.

#### ***A teacher-support service***

Heilala believes that her *fatongia* (duties and obligations) as a mother in supporting her children's formal early learning is to be primarily a supporter of the teachers and the institution. The university graduate in business studies has two part-time jobs but says that she wants to be,

... a strong supporter of whatever it is that requires parents to help (with) ... and ... I believe in just making it known to the teachers (at the Tongan language centre) and school that I am available to help in any way I can (Heilala, Rnd.2, p. 1).

A daughter of a church minister, this mother has had professional experience in accounting in a previous job, and book-keeping work in various church and community groups. She believes that it is important to keep clear, accurate and comprehensive financial records when working with Pacific communities in New Zealand where accountability is very important. Heilala believes that her skills can be used at the centre and at school, and passed on for the benefit of others.

Another way of helping the teachers at the centre or school, Hingano believes, is to respond quickly when the children bring home messages or requests from their teacher. She reads the notices as soon as they come:

So ... for example, if it's something to do with homework, fees, school camp or trip, sports or even out-of-school activities such as making costumes for their concert, or preparing special lunch for a school picnic, I ... do it (immediately). ...I stayed up late one night to make the costume for the concert (on the following day), I was talking about ... [shaking her head] (Hingano, Rnd.2, p. 2).

By responding immediately to teachers' requests, she believes she can help reduce the teacher's worry about these less important tasks, and they can focus solely on their teaching.

Mohokoi feels a useful contribution would be to meet all the centre's requirements that her son brings enough food and a change of clothes daily. This ensures the teachers do not have to hunt for items in other children's bags if they run out. She believes it is practising fairness, equality and justice, when each child's provisions must be used for that child only. However, she realizes this conflicts with the Tongan way of *fe'inasi'aki* (sharing)<sup>174</sup> with others less well off.

Langakali believes that (one of) her duties to the centre includes

... going there freely to ... help, as this is vital for my children's education. Not only that, but I go there because I want to, to help in tidying up their toys, (sometimes) cleaning them, and that's what the centre always invites us to visit them and do, and be with the children, talk to them, tell them stories, or show them how to use the toys, whenever we can (Langakali, Rnd.2, p. 2).

This mature mother, who received all her formal education in Tonga, believes that the more often she goes to the Tongan language centre to help and observe the teachers, the better able she is to learn more skills and strategies either to help the teachers at the centre or to teach her children at home. It is interesting to note that this Tongan-educated mother believes that, in order to make her contribution to her children's

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<sup>174</sup> It was explained to me that when a child does not bring enough food, drinks, or change of clothing for the day, the teachers sometimes look at other children's (preferably a relative's) provisions in their bags and take some to use for the child.

learning worthwhile, she needs to know what the teacher is doing in the classroom; she needs to know how her children understand and perform in the classroom, then she can help them at home. She teaches her children, tells stories, or explains concepts, or asks questions of her children in Tongan, and they reply in English. After repeating the dialogues a few times, they come to understand each other. This is her way, she says, of easing the task of teaching for the teacher.

She also believes there is a link between her going to primary school and observing the children, and her attempt to learn about the *pālangi* ways. This enables her to understand the *pālangi* worldview in their environment, and to see how her children perform in it. She is hoping that, as a consequence, they will be successful in the New Zealand western-style classroom. She explains her belief about helping at the centre and learning herself at the same time about food and nutrition:

I also believe that when ... I help in preparing their meals ... and I see and learn the right food which the teachers (prefer) the children to bring ... then I come home and do that ... with their lunch and snacks to take to school. They want the children to bring sandwiches and just water, but I send them with pies and sweet drinks (Langakali, Rnd.2, p. 1).

Langakali also believes that by helping the teachers and the children while *feohi* (having fellowship)<sup>175</sup> with other mothers through interaction, inspires them all to develop an interest in learning and teaching by observing the teachers' performances, and an opportunity to discuss and put into practise their Christian faith while at the centre:

... this encourages and reinforces the (mothers') interest in learning and teaching, and that of their children's as well. And we also discuss what we have heard ... and learned in church (Langakalli, Rnd.2, p. 2).

Pipitongi believes that as part of the parents' *fatongia* (duties and obligations) to support the teachers, they must obey the experts, listen to the instructions, and do as they are told:

I am happy with the centre, and whatever *kavenga* (responsibilities) they want us parents to do ... I'd do it ... (and) whatever the teachers want ... we believe that we (should) support the teachers and ... centre because it is a good thing for our

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<sup>175</sup> This term has a deeper meaning, which connotes a sense of having fellowship or communion or moral and spiritual comradeship with one another. In a Tongan sense and context, to have a *feohi* means to be together, learning from each other, and to possibly adopt each other's ways.

daughter. I want my child to see and know that I do whatever the teachers at the centre want because of her ... (Pipitongi, Rnd.2, p. 1).

In the Tongan sense, to do whatever the teachers want them to do, is part of the cultural *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *lototō* (loyalty), and *mamahi'i me'a* (commitment). This New Zealand-educated mother believes that she must help, and feels obliged to obey, and she trusts the teachers at the Tongan Language Centre because they are qualified, have Christian faith, and teach and care for her child:

I (should) help as much as I can and go there as often as I can. So I trust what they do to my daughter, not only when they teach her academically, but they also do a good job spiritually, as these children are still growing ... and developing (Pipitongi, Rnd.2, p. 1).

Huni, a young mother who studies at tertiary level and works part-time, appreciates what the teachers do for her daughter while she sometimes works full-time. She trusts them wholeheartedly. Being influenced by her mother and grandmother who always help in community activities, she believes her role in the centre and the school is vital:

...to support the decisions made by the teachers, and put them into practice because they know more about the educational side of my children than I do. I should support and cooperate ... *fetokoni'aki*<sup>176</sup> (helping reciprocally) with them when they want anything done. I also believe that I must teach my child to obey and respect the teachers, (to make the teacher's job easy). I want to go there and tell the 3–4 year olds stories about my daughter's genealogies, and her Tongan relatives and Niuean relatives in Auckland. This will help the teacher (Huni, Rnd.2, p. 1).

Nine of the 10 mothers who had children at the Tongan Language Centre therefore believe they should visit the centre daily and help with such tasks as preparing the children's lunch, cleaning up after meals, tidying up toys after learning activities, changing the toddlers and rocking them to sleep, and supervising the children so the teachers can have a break at tea and lunch, and "... if the teachers wanted us in the classroom, we can help there too".

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<sup>176</sup> *Fetokoni'aki*, the quintessential form of generalized reciprocity, is often singled out by Tongans as the defining characteristic of *'ulungaanga faka-Tonga* with any and all social ties being best expressed through *fetokoni'aki*. To practise *fetokoni'aki* is to show mutual *'ofa* (love) sometimes referred to as *'ofa faka-Tonga* (Frenley-Vaipuna, 2007).

In other words, doing as much as they can to help the teachers, they believe, will free up and enable the teachers to focus on teaching.

Mothers who have children at the mainstream kindergartens and primary schools assist the teachers but in different ways. Falahola goes to school to supervise the Year 3 and 4 children on cultural days; Hingano sends a packed lunch for her children's teachers when she cannot attend the school picnic day; Kukuvalu helps by joining other mothers who help with the reading programme at school; she also helps her daughter's teacher with the social studies unit on Tonga by teaching the children weaving with *pandanus*, and by dressing up her daughter to perform a Tongan dance to the class. When Huni's children have birthdays, she prepares food and sends teachers and children a special lunch:

At one time we provide pies, and another time we got McDonalds food for all the children and KFC for the teachers, ... sometimes we have a BBQ or just cook and prepare some food and send them – just small amount and light types ... for the children and the teachers. My husband reminds me to get Christmas presents for the teachers ... It is important to him, because he does not stay with the kids, he works, and ... sees that that is possible because the children can go to the centre so we can go to work... he appreciates the role of teacher in this respect, that they look after the children during working hours ... which is his responsibility (Huni, Rnd.2, p. 4).

Huni feels that those who help are the ones who grew up in a family that believed in working and seeing results; as the centre grows, they themselves would be willing to work to make sure that that thing grows; she wants other families to do the same. Some mothers, however, argue that teachers are paid, therefore what they do is their job and they do not need help:

...other mothers help because they want to, or they can afford it, but sometimes they want to help but have nothing to contribute – could be money, or other material things, and still do it...(however) this way of life ... does not fit in well in New Zealand,... here, we have to pay rent, buy food, and things for the house, and nothing left to be given away, but there is still the desire in us to give and it still stays strong (Huni, Rnd.2, p. 5).

It is interesting to note that while mothers desire to *foaki* (give) generously and be obedient to the teachers, and help them simply because they are formally trained, have strong values, and are Christians, not much is said about their academic ability, or their

competence in teaching the curriculum – the human capital. Whether this is due to the mothers' unfamiliarity with the importance of teacher's knowledge of the content learning, or because they did not want to appear *fiepoto* (wanting to be smart), is not known. That all the teachers grew up and have had primary classroom experience in Tonga is very important to these mothers because it guarantees a knowledge and practice of Tongan cultural values, Christian beliefs, and practice in the learning institution.<sup>177</sup> It appears that a concrete knowledge of the substance of learning and of the curriculum is invisible, but this did not matter to them. They believe that this is the influence of their upbringing,<sup>178</sup> and has to do with *faka'apa'apa* (respecting each other) and *feveitokai'aki* (reciprocal considerations or respect and honour one another), which are beliefs and values that determine the type and nature of contributions mothers can and want to make to their children's *ako*. It is therefore difficult to see how some mothers expect to make academic contributions so that their children will improve their academic performance, when they themselves are not sure what they mean by it, even if they are capable of contributing at this lower level. One wonders if perhaps the Tongan cultural belief system overpowers their aspirations for their children's academic achievement in New Zealand, the very reason why they migrated here in the first place.

### **What and how do the mothers contribute to their children's *ako*?**

This section discusses the mothers' contributions, both indirectly and directly, to their children's *ako* in the preschool and primary school contexts. Indirect contributions include those that are made, using their financial/physical, human capital, and social capital, to the PTA, teachers, the centres and schools, and may be in the form of services, materials, skills, or financial donations to enable the teachers to teach and the children to learn. Direct contributions, on the other hand, include using different forms of family capital, those services and activities in which the mothers are directly involved and/or engaged with the children in their learning. All the fundraising activities are conducted under the PTA as the umbrella organization of the Tongan Language Centre (TLC) and the mothers are proud of their membership and the role of this group in both the Tongan community and the early childhood centre. The assistant chairperson describes her role, and a proposal she put forward, as follows:

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<sup>177</sup> The same reason why an increasing number of Tongans send their children to Church secondary schools, for example, Wesley College in Pukekohe.

<sup>178</sup> Huni is an example of those who grew up in families where 'everything, big or small was donated to the work of the church and education', and finds it very hard to shun this habit.

Last year was ... good, we raised good money in the second half of the year. I suggested to the committee to stop the centre from paying for the children's lunch, and invest that money and get the mothers to contribute cooked food, a couple each Friday, and parents to buy. We raised good money indeed.<sup>179</sup> This year we have to revisit it ... if it ... (disrupts) the children's learning. If it does, then it's better to discontinue it. (We) can express our opinions, and that's why it is good ... that we *feohi* ... and we each constructively contribute ideas, ... discuss and hold a ballot to vote, and whoever's idea is approved, we go with it (Langakali, Rnd.2, p. 2).

It is apparent from the meeting described that the women have equal rights in the discussion and decision-making, and that they are free to express their opinion without the influence of a hierarchical structure to inhibit their expression of ideas:

The idea of getting mothers to pair up and prepare lunch for sale is an excellent one; it pulls in the parents, to come and feel at home ... and comfortable to be at the centre. '*Oku fakalata!* (causing one to feel at home, to be happy and contented; pleasant). The way is through food, (and) when they come to pick the children up, they often stay ... and eat with their children, and they talk!!! [with an emphasis!] *talanoa* (converse) with the teachers ... with their children, and sometimes with other parents. This is important ... for parents who just drop off their children and ... go off to work (Puatonga, Rnd.2, p. 3).

It is important that the mothers *feohi* or mix with others, so that they come to trust and understand each other, and are frank about their decisions and beliefs – a practice that is perhaps difficult to exercise among conservative women in a Tongan community context, even in New Zealand. One mother describes the advantages of *feohi* among women, and although she enjoys the *feohi* and can justify it, the time she spends on attending meetings, and organizing what to do, leaves her feeling guilty that she should be spending it helping directly with her children's homework:

- it is a social gathering and, like a bridge, connects the individuals to each other and leads to understanding, accepting, and feeling free to express one's opinion;
- by trusting each other as a product of *feohi*, the individual is not afraid to change, modify their opinion, or even defer it to those of higher status or in authority;

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<sup>179</sup> \$10,000 was raised in a few months. Some pairs raised \$500 per week.

- *feohi* allows *māfana fakafefine* (womanly warmth)<sup>180</sup> and *mālie* (excitement) to emerge and the discussion of personal questions and issues to occur, which in turn leads to one speaking from the heart;
- *feohi* takes place during celebration of children's birthdays at the centre, farewell feasts when a child leaves the centre to enter school;
- it entails interactions among those who *feohi*, and it promotes an understanding of their hierarchical roles; it involves knowledge of language which leads to an understanding of manners, values, preferences and other aspects of *anga faka-Tonga*;
- it defines an understanding of roles and obligations based on *fetokoni 'aki* (help one another) and *feveitokai 'aki* – considering and respecting each other.

Pipitongi adds that

another advantage of *feohi* among women is that it reinforces this 'womanly warmth' and *mālie*, which connects them to each other, and when they come together for PTA fundraising activities it is very hard to untangle the bind of that sense of belonging together which was created and maintained throughout the duration of the fundraising activity (Pipitongi, Rnd. 2, p. 4).

### **Indirect contributions through fundraising activities**

When the mothers talked about the types of contributions which the centres and schools want them to make, they all mentioned fundraising.<sup>181</sup> Fundraising in these institutions are a necessity; for preschools, it helps the centres purchase basics such as books, toys, games, and other materials such as stationery and computers for the daily use of the children. Funds are also required to maintain the buildings or extend them when the enrolment increases. Extra funds are needed to hire day-relievers to take over the children for a day or two so the staff can attend professional development in or outside the centre. For schools, fundraising activities are held to help subsidize school camps, field trips, day excursions and similar outdoor learning activities, as well as purchasing

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<sup>180</sup> *Māfana fakafefine* (womanly warmth) occasionally discussed among Tongan women is perceived to be unique to females because of the nature of their physical and psychological make up. Evidence or examples often quoted include females easily shedding tears when they are sad and when they are happy; tears of joy are shed more by women than by men in any context; women moan, wail, and grieve the dead more readily and openly than men do; and they tend to react more promptly to the emotional needs of others than men do.

<sup>181</sup> Other things asked of parents include dropping off and picking up children punctually; notifying the centre when the child is away, and in writing immediately if there is problem with the child's disobedience or swearing; and to talk to the teacher concerned about it when collecting the child.

books, computers, for the school library. Parents, and particularly mothers, are the main players<sup>182</sup> in fundraising activities, which range from selling raffle tickets to preparing Tongan dishes for sale at lunch time, to concerts, dances and fashion parades, and so on.

### ***Fafanga* (providing lunch for sale)**

Mothers with children at the Tongan Language Centre belong to the Parents and Teachers Association, which responds to the TLC's requests for financial assistance. The members meet monthly and discuss the issues that arise, so when a proposal for a *fafanga* as a fundraising project is passed, the women organize themselves into groups and decide what and how to do it. At the time of the Talanoa, eight of the participants were involved in the *fafanga*; one was the chairperson of PTA, another was the treasurer, two were teachers, and the rest were regular or occasional helpers at the centre. The women decided to work in pairs and, using their own physical capital, each pair was to purchase their root crops, meat and other vegetables, and prepare and cook Tongan dishes using their human capital. The *fafanga* was held once a week on Fridays. Sometimes the cooking was done in their homes and other times at the centre on a barbecue outside then carried to the kitchen inside. The pair then serves the food on paper plates in two sizes, one small enough for a child's single meal for \$2.50, and another for an adult's helping at \$5 to \$10, depending on the amount and varieties of meat and crops included.

Langakali explains how she, with the help of her children, prepares the food for the *fafanga*:

First, we decide what Tongan dishes to make; they may include chop-suey, curried chicken, *lū-pulu* or *lū-sipi*<sup>183</sup> and pieces of meat or fish, and root crops such as potato, kumara, pumpkin, taro and yams. When we go shopping for these, I am very economical and I look for the cheap products. One child will hold the calculator and work out the price for me, and another will add up what we put in the trolley. Sometimes they want other things but I ... stick to the ... list as we budget ... (and) this causes disagreements (in front of the cashier!)... but I always sort it out ... when we get home. I explain why we cannot afford other things.<sup>184</sup> When we do the cooking, which is mainly at home, but sometimes at the centre

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<sup>182</sup> Although the mothers do it, there was a query, "What happens to our free education?"

<sup>183</sup> *Lū-pulu* or *lū-sipi* – a dish of corned beef or lamb squares, mixed with coconut cream, and onions, wrapped in taro top leaves and bake. In New Zealand, spinach leaves, or silverbeet are used as substitutes.

<sup>184</sup> Sometimes this mother feels guilty that she is giving priority to the centre or the school fundraising over what her children need or want, and she feels bad that she can't justify it, so she feels under pressure both from her obligations to the centre and school and from her children.

also, I show them how to peel the garlic, onions, and carrots, and top-tail the beans, and they help me. I explain to them why it is important that they help because it is for their ‘school’<sup>185</sup> fundraising ... (so that) they can tell the buyers ... that they help prepare the food (Langakali, Rnd.2. p. 2).

Using her network and social capital, this mother also gets the children to phone their friends and relatives, inviting them to come to the centre on the day and buy their lunch to help the fundraising. She gives the children the proper Tongan wording of the invitation, and the children use them on the phone, and repeat them in church and in other places when they see friends or people they know. While fundraising is an indirect way of contributing to the children’s *ako*, the fact that they are all involved in working out the prices at the supermarket, learning how to prepare the vegetables for cooking, and inviting potential customers to buy lunches on the day from the *fafanga*, are all aspects of the mother’s involvement in teaching their children.

The pair themselves then advertise, using their social capital and network connections to invite their own friends, relatives, acquaintances, neighbours, and colleagues to come and buy. Both the parents and their children learn a marketing skill, and they work together as a group. Kukuvalu says,

It is important for the child to see his parents at the centre, and to do things together, even if it is just eating and talking! (Kukuvalu, Rnd.2, p. 2).

This sense of togetherness is so strong that when some children are ready to transfer to school, their parents prepare a *kai fakamāvae* (farewell feast) with special food, and sometimes presents, for children, teachers, and parents because “the child will not come through this stage again,” and the mother will not share in the *feohi* again (unless they have another child at preschool). The mothers gain from the experience, and they do not see it as a financial burden or loss, but neither do they realize its lack of direct contribution to their children’s academic learning. It is a Tongan way of showing their appreciation of the *ako* their children have so far received and are moving on to the next phase of learning, although they may retain the connection through such activities as fundraising.

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<sup>185</sup> The word ‘*ako*’ is used interchangeably here to mean early childhood centre or school. The formal Tongan term for early childhood education is ‘*Akoteu*’ which literally means ‘preparation school or prep school’.

Falahola, whose son goes to a primary school that fundraises by selling sweets, does not go out to sell but “she sends money to school to buy if it is sweets, a *hangi* (Maori earth oven roast), or a calendar” to make sure they support their son and his school.

### ***Koniseti* (Concert)**

On average, the TLC can raise up to \$1,000 on a single day, through a *koniseti*.

Mothers play an important role in helping with the rehearsals, making the costumes, inviting friends and relatives to come and put *fakapale* on their children, and making sure they have enough money for *fakapale* themselves. It is possible that some parents become over-enthusiastic on occasion, and the *koniseti* can become a competition of who will donate the most, and at the end, while the TLC acquires a good amount of money, some families return home empty handed and struggle financially until the next payday. Although one could question just how much academic learning comes from a concert, there is no doubt that all those involved enjoy it.

One school has incorporated Pacific Island dances into their curriculum, and Falahola explains how she perceives the school’s *koniseti*:

What I really like about this school, is that they bring Pacific practices and incorporate them into the school programme ... During the year, they have a function and they include a Tongan *mā’ulu’ulu* (sitting dance) and the Samoans (have) their own dance. In particular, they had recently held a concert, and they combine all the islanders, who learn a song and they sang together. They performed the Samoan *mā’ulu’ulu*<sup>186</sup> together, and they all sang a Tongan song together ... performed the Samoan *mā’ulu’ulu* together.

I watched the children’s performance, and wow! ... the beauty of it for me, is how all the children, regardless of race, participate and perform together, especially the half-caste *Pālangi*. They sang in Tongan with all the others ... when it was time for Samoan sitting dance, they joined in together with others. Then it was the Cook Islands item, they joined in...and almost all their songs were started by my son. ... I hope he will continue to be able to do both – the Tongan things as well as the other cultures’ things. I really like it when the school teaches other Pacific cultures to my children, and how they teach these through the school programme, and activities from other cultures’ performing arts (Falahola, Rnd. 2, p. 4).

This mother feels the school should have more of these activities incorporated into the programme; however, little is said about the academic aspects of other cultures in the

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<sup>186</sup> The Samoan sitting dance is called Samoan *sa-sa*.

curriculum, or the aspects of these cultural performing activities built into the classroom learning activities or integrated into the teaching of other learning areas.

Other fundraising activities carried out in the centres and schools in which the mothers in the study participate include the sale of raffle tickets and sausage sizzles. The mothers who are responsible use their financial capital to purchase the ingredients, provide the prizes for the raffle, and the barbecue and food for the sausage sizzle, and their human capital to provide the labour needed. Then they use their social skills to sell the raffle tickets or invite parents, friends and relatives<sup>187</sup> to join in the fundraising activity at the centre. Ironically, one mother said that sometimes the expenses and energy involved in the preparation for the fundraising outweighs the benefit gained from it because of the pressure and sense of responsibility that comes with it, especially when only a couple of people are responsible for the organisation each time, although others always lend a hand. Again, the value of activities like these in children's learning is hard to identify – perhaps they can only be seen in the mothers' direct contributions to children's learning for that purpose.

### **Mothers' direct contributions to children's *ako*/learning**

When asked in Tongan about how they contribute directly to their children's *ako*,<sup>188</sup> most of the mothers were silent and had to think of which meaning of *ako* the question referred. But once a brief explanation was given including the use of the word 'learning' in English as an example, they were more forthcoming. Table 7.1 highlights how some of the women explain what they mean by the term, *ako* or learning.

From these varied explanations of *ako* it is apparent the women reflect on their past experience, and from these work out how they themselves learn. The accounts ranged from the simple, straightforward, and somewhat superficial to more indepth and complex accounts that challenged widely held views. Kukuvalu, who goes to school to help with the reading in her daughter's class, explains her involvement in the learning to read activity:

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<sup>187</sup> I have observed when visiting the TLC, that when visitors arrive, teachers sometimes stop teaching to sell raffle tickets or give out an invitation to the visitors, for the sausage sizzle.

<sup>188</sup> In Tongan contexts, the speaker's use of the term *ako* is generic, and it is up to the listener to work out which of the meanings applies in that particular conversation.

there are a lot of things they want us to help with, for example, they ask us to come ... and help the teachers. We are rostered ..., and help with other things. Each parent helps once a week on a set day.... Each parent has a small group and the teacher also has a group. .. What we do is that we read to the children and... they read back to us; we rotate the groups. Each parent helps other children and not just our own. The teacher demonstrates to us how it is done. For instance, how words are pronounced; and I really like such details. She explained ... how each group level works, and how the girls work and get promoted from one group to the next. The girls seem to compete in this. They also have spellings; we are shown how to work with different levels, from simple words to more hard ones. We lead the children in identifying the words, and they follow us. They then take (the words) home to learn, and they are tested at the end of the week. When I look at my daughter's, I was really surprised because she is at Year 1, but has to learn 10 new words a week. That is a big improvement.

When we go in on Friday, they have had their test, and all sit up with each girl has a badge for 'Achievement of the Week', that means they have passed. I was pleased with my daughter who was promoted to the next level to learn 15 words per week. The words on each level are selected and are progressive ...they start with simple ones to the hard types (Kukuvalu, Rnd.2, p. 3).

It is obvious that Kukuvalu knows what is involved and engages in learning to teach reading and spelling with her daughter and other children. She then uses the same strategies to help her other children at home. For her, the advanced and progressive nature of her daughter's reading and spelling in this classroom represents a novel learning relationship with her daughter and with the teacher. The longer she attends school, the more fully is she socialized into this 'new' pedagogical model and the more likely she is to think appropriately in the situation of reading and learning spelling at junior primary. This observation can be applied to all the participants, especially those who left school early or who had a largely negative experience at school. Kukuvalu feels this is a worthwhile task and ensures she attends the training and tutoring sessions in this private school every week.

Whether this has created or will create an interest in this mother to train to become a primary school teacher remains to be seen, but her experience has been very positive and worth sharing with other Tongan mothers.

**Table 7.1:** Definitions of *ako* by some women in the research group

Mother	Definition of <i>Ako</i>	Example:	What it involves:
Hingano	<i>Ako</i> is to do with learning something or anything new so one could be able to be <i>poto</i> (clever, and be able) and to do it.	make a pineapple pie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•motivating the learner, explanation, sequence, demonstration, physical constant presence of the teacher / instructor,</li> <li>•collaborative work of the learner with the teacher, repetition, trial and practice, scaffolding of contents to be learned, good rapport between the learner and teacher, •reinforcement of what is learned, and summarizing of what has been learned. It is a body of new knowledge, which the learner acquires.</li> </ul>
Fahina	As a young child, <i>ako</i> meant to me just going to school, but when I reached secondary school and then university, I reflected on the past and realized that I learned from observation, demonstration and explanation, and work collaboratively with an adult while being coached.	crochet or knit a <i>ta'ovala</i> <sup>189</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Learning has to do with thinking and engaging in something new until one knows it, demonstration and explanation by the teacher, observation and imitation or practice by the learner; they need to coincide or occur at the same time.</li> <li>• when I teach my young child, I coach him, demonstrate and explain.</li> <li>•with my teenage children, I start from what they already know from observation, then I just give them instructions to follow and they use their prior knowledge. I use this technique when I tell them to cook a meal.</li> </ul>
Fakula	<i>Ako</i> , to me is something good and useful - that I can see, and listen to, and follow and do it (imitating) and I know is good. So <i>ako</i> has to do with acquiring new concepts or improvements to add on to one's prior or existing knowledge. <i>Ako</i> has a goal and sometimes we copy, but by copying someone else's example, we learn the new ideas or approach or we improve our existing knowledge.	how to bathe her newborn son	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•explanation and demonstration, reasons why certain part of the body was washed first before others, and how to hold the baby's head,</li> <li>•demonstration 3 or 4 times and explained while the learner listened and observed before she tried.</li> <li>•after she felt confident she was willing to begin to try and bathe her son. She had to observe her sister a few times, she had to be given reasons for doing what she needed to do, before she herself tried.</li> <li>•she had to practise many times before she masters the skill.</li> <li>• a strong urge in this mother to do this properly because it is her son.</li> </ul>

<sup>189</sup> *Ta'ovala* is a piece of fine woven mat, worn around the waist by men and women as part of the formal Tongan code of dress. Today, strings of different colours have been introduced as alternative materials to pandanus.

Langakali, a Tongan-educated mother speaks only Tongan to her three boys who are beginning to answer her only or mainly in English. She reads them stories in Tongan, but her methods include reading the story to herself then telling it to the children in Tongan. When they discuss the story she gives her input in Tongan and the boys give theirs in English. She spends time *feohi* with them so that they understand her and she them:

To my eldest son, asking questions is natural to him, if he asks me questions and I answer them correctly, he will ask me more questions. If I don't answer him correctly, he often corrects me, but the interesting thing is that our dialogue is in Tongan from me and English from them. Our (interactions) can be long ... because ... he means one thing, and I interpret it to mean another thing. (But) ... when I know that he understands and knows ... what I mean ... and what I want him to know, it is *fakalata!* (pleasing, and satisfying; comforting) (Langakali, Rnd.2. p. 4).

While this mother acknowledges that their *cross-cultural* or *cross-lingual* interactions can be lengthy, repetitive, and involve much explanation, other learning characteristics, including motivation, reinforcements, good rapport between the learner and teacher, scaffolding, working collaboratively, and self-confidence for both parties, seem to be embedded in this mother's learning discourse with her son. The son is keen on asking questions, the mother tries to answer them, and accepts his corrections as a sign of reciprocal trust between the two. One wonders whether this is a positive effect of *feohi* where the duo have come to know and trust each other well and have established a shared understanding of a range of phenomena, in different contexts – this is learning.

Falahola is another who goes straight to school and seeks help for her son who had difficulty with writing some letters and numbers correctly. She finds it easy to seek help from the teacher with whom she communicates clearly:

I went and asked them (teachers at school) to help me how to help my son with his letters and numbers. When he writes 6, or P, or t, they face the wrong way ... so I went to see this teacher for help.

What encouraged me to go and talk directly to the teacher is the fact that I know how difficult it is to keep repeating teaching the child the same thing ... but he does not understand it. I do try to help him at home with his letters, by copying A B C on a chart, and ... on the wall, and I recite it to him in Tongan, A E F H, (and so on) because some of the *pālangi* alphabets are not in the Tongan alphabets, and I explain it to the teacher. ... I believe that if the teacher was

*Pālangi*, I'd find it difficult, but he is an Islander, a Samoan. He knows and understands the ways of Pacific Islanders (Falahola, Rnd.2, p. 3).

While it may appear that this mother needs basic help, the fact that she knows specifically what her son's needs are, that she can communicate these needs clearly to the teacher, that she can explain how she tries a cross-cultural method to overcome her son's problem, and that she demonstrates to the teacher what she has done, shows that she possesses some of the characteristics of *ako* other mothers have identified. She has trust in the teacher, she can explain and communicate her thoughts, and feels sufficiently confident to go to school to seek help. To this mother, there are ways to seek help directly from the teachers about her son's learning problem, despite her limited English, lack of familiarity with the system, and so on.

Again it appears that while mothers like Langakali and Falahola, who speak Tongan to their children who reply in English, may find the dialogues fascinating yet frustrating, but satisfying when they reach a level of shared understanding – of *intersubjectivity*, the essence of what is learned and what process to follow so that a positive outcome is achieved, needs to be clear in the minds of these women. That the mothers are enthusiastic about contributing to their children's *ako* and keen to use various forms of family capital they can access for these purposes, should be a good foundation on which to build their knowledge of what to contribute to their children's *ako*, how to make these contributions, and what outcomes to expect. This can perhaps be achieved through parents' education, in early childhood centres, kindergartens and primary school level where mothers (and fathers) can be attracted to learn.

Huni recounts how she sometimes goes to the centre with photos and tells children stories about her upbringing in Tonga, the stories she tells the old people in the hospital when she works:

When I go to the centre to give a session, I take photos with me and show them my family, some of the games we played when I was young in the islands. I explain to them in detail my children's relatives, their grandmother, and those who are in Auckland. The children are interested in relationships but I am not sure if they know what the terms mean apart from *fa'ē* (mother), *tamai* (father) *kui* (grandparent). They ask some questions, but they were more interested in the pictures, which I think are useful (resources) for (effective) teaching (Huni, pers. comm. July, 2007).

That this mother explains, using details, and presumably in sequence, are worthwhile ways of teaching and for children's learning according to how a few Tongan mothers defined what *ako* means to them earlier. This mother therefore contributes so that the children learn.

However, when asked to *talanoa* about the activities they were involved at the centre or school at the time, more than half the women talked about the domestic tasks in which they were involved, even the ones who helped daily at the centre. These ranged from fundraising activities and children's toilet training to talking with other mothers and the topics they talk about and so on. Presumably, these are the things they identify with when they help daily at the centres, or this is simply how they perceive their role? As some of them have commented, they see their roles as merely supporting the teachers.<sup>190</sup> Much of the data seems counterintuitive to expected outcomes of parents' (and mothers' in particular) involvement in their children's education at pre-school level in early childhood contexts.

Sialetafa relates how she and her husband help their children learn their times tables. This is an influence of her husband's education in Tonga where it is compulsory for primary children to know their tables off by heart. Relying on the children's prior knowledge, they tell them which times-tables to learn,<sup>191</sup> give the boys time to learn to memorize them, and then supervise them. The boys are tested on their tables on Saturday evenings and if they do well, they get rewarded for their efforts. Sialetafa says she enjoys getting feedback from the teachers about their work but she provided no specifics in her explanations of what she does with her children, other than that they are left "to do their homework upstairs on the computer". It would appear she is well versed in what is involved in helping the children's learning of numeracy, reading and spelling, and even how to test them.

These mothers are very enthusiastic about contributing to their children's *ako*, and supporting the teachers and the centres so that the children are better nurtured

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<sup>190</sup> However, the researcher observed some of them reading stories to children, discussing a game they play, or working with pictures and interacting in a very engaging manner. They were seen singing together, reciting poems, saying prayers, or memory verses, and even dancing!

<sup>191</sup> This is a similar technique to one of the women who uses it when teaching her teenage children how to cook a meal – by just telling them what to do, and the teenagers use their prior knowledge.

intellectually. But perhaps the great enthusiasm is driven more by their *to'onga faka-Tonga* (Tongan ways), and cultural beliefs and practices, and less by the expected outcomes of parental involvements in their children's education as perceived by educators, the Ministry of Education, the media, and even other Tongans in this western style education system. If this is so, some kind of shared understanding must be established for the parties involved.

### **Conclusion and Chapter summary**

Having discussed the contributions these Tongan mothers make to their children's *ako* in these educational institutions, it appears, as the data unfolds, that most of them are novices in New Zealand education context. Being women and mothers, and doing things with 'womanly warmth' is appealing and is acknowledged. However, their great enthusiasm to get involved in the early years of their children's *ako* together with their empowerment through both the Tongan cultural belief system and their newly acquired knowledge of education in New Zealand society, are concrete evidence of their self-confidence and positive attitudes and aspirations for their children's future education. Although the references to tensions and dilemmas faced by a small number are not highlighted, it is important to acknowledge that others who could have faced the same problems, did not speak out about them. They could have been overcome by their respect for the authority of the school and centre, and that may have been why they are attracted to TLC, to church, to private schools, and to places where they receive good treatment and understanding. After all, why should they if they are not made welcome?

The dominant use of Tongan language, Tongan cultural values, beliefs and practices, combined with their Christian faith in their increasing commitment to education, determine the nature of their contribution to children's *ako*. This creates a mismatch between their beliefs and the expectations of New Zealand education for young children. The mothers' beliefs about their role in making these contributions, that is, the importance of the centres, the value of quality teachers, the significance of their participation with the children in social and learning activities, and the essential nature of communication and relationships appear to place too much on the peripheral or sideline needs of the contribution and too little on the essence of contribution for *ako*. The mothers' admiration of the teachers, especially those at TLC, paints a picture of obligations, obedience, and following instructions, which, while highlighting a sense of

respect and other similar qualities that are unique in a Tongan sense, do not match the educational expectations of authorities in New Zealand.

Finally, when it comes to the question of the mothers' direct contribution to their children's education, these women need to be informed of what is important and directly relevant to their children's learning – the essence of learning in New Zealand education system. What the mothers gain from the process, such as *feohi*, *ako*, *māfana*, and *mālie* among others, is only part of whatever sense of satisfaction they would get from the outcomes of their contributions to their children's *ako*. Perhaps this is a disadvantage of doing research by interviewing without 'consistent' direct observation, without witnessing what they actually do.<sup>192</sup> However, from what the mothers have said, they deserve to be saluted given the struggle and tensions some of them are assumed to go through. Nevertheless, they need to be brought back to the expected goals and outcomes of parental involvement in children's education in order to succeed, as perceived by the education system in which they are operating.

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<sup>192</sup> After a brief discussion with participants at the initial stage of data collection it was decided that observation would only take place in the homes and church activities.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### **Mothers' contribution to their children's *ako* in church and the community**

*Alaisia-ala-i-kolonga*

(A person of many talents)

#### **Introduction**

Tongan mothers make both direct and indirect contributions to their children's learning through their involvement in community-based activities. The versatility the women display, and their ability to turn their hand to a wide variety of tasks in these spheres, indicates how apposite is the phrase quoted above. The data in this chapter is a response to the research questions *what, how and why* Tongan mothers contribute to their children's general education, first through church activities and then in community settings.

#### **Church Involvement**

Although the mothers' practice of aspects of their religious beliefs has been touched on previously,<sup>193</sup> this chapter reveals their extensive dedication and commitment to the church, thereby reflecting their Christian faith. While the sample size of this study is small, the depth and richness of the data collected provide significant insights into the personal feelings of these mothers about their own spiritual growth and journey, as well as their aspirations for their children's education and future livelihood, and the maintenance of Tongan cultural and spiritual values and language for future generations in New Zealand. Consequently, the task of representing these Tongan mothers' feelings toward and experiences of their spiritual world from a cross cultural perspective is a challenge.

#### ***Belonging to a church***

All the mothers who participated in the study belong to a church of one kind or another within the Protestant camp, where they use one or more forms of family capital – physical and financial, human and social – they can access and various networks to

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<sup>193</sup> See chapters two, six and seven.

meet their needs and those of church and community requirements. Membership starts with the christening of a baby and is maintained by attending church and later by confirmation as a young adult. As they get older and become more involved in the church, members want to hold a position in the church or lead a group in the wide range of activities available. Although no direct question raised in the *Talanoa* has asked why the women belong to a church, the following came across as reasons for their membership:

- their children will grow up in a Christian community and *feohi* or mingle with such people and learn from them
- by seeking God and His Kingdom everything will fall into place
- by going to church they demonstrate a belief in God and enjoy a fellowship with other believers especially from their own culture
- the children will realise the importance of God in their lives
- they want to model to their children the importance of belonging to the *lotu*<sup>194</sup> and the *feohi* (fellowship) with members of same faith<sup>195</sup>
- they demonstrate to their children how to fulfill obligations and responsibilities in church, to hold a position in the church community, and help develop their spiritual life
- their children will stay comfortable within the church community and not get into trouble.

It appears that the mothers belong to a church for a variety of reasons,<sup>196</sup> not only for their own spiritual growth and development, but also for their children's future *ako*/learning, moral education and development. They regard their role in the church as part of their responsibility in child rearing through which they can make a direct contribution to their children's social, physical, and spiritual development in a safe environment, as expected by their fellow Tongans in '*Uta-mama*'o. Influenced by their sociocultural backgrounds, the participants grew up in families with various degree of attachment to a village church. All, except two, regularly (at least once weekly) attend

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<sup>194</sup> This term represents a range of meanings, including (as a noun) religion, Christianity, church, worship, religious beliefs, prayer, devotion; and (as a verb) to pray, to worship.

<sup>195</sup> Sometimes a very strong 'sense of belonging' among members of particular churches often excludes them as a group from the rest of the Tongan community.

<sup>196</sup> That the mothers made links between their reasons for belonging to a church and the benefit for their children could be a result of their knowing the focus of the present study; these reasons may not have been their original motivation for belonging to a church.

church with their children, and all those regular attendants hold a position of responsibility of one type or another in their respective church. These include being a lay preacher, a member of the women's *Akonaki*<sup>197</sup> or *Lotufehu 'i*<sup>198</sup> prayer groups, a Sunday school teacher, a Bible Study group leader or member, a youth group leader or supporter, a choir member, or simply a dependable church member – as such they use their human capital to play these roles effectively. Although the mothers' involvement in these church group activities is time consuming<sup>199</sup> and demanding, evidence shows a strongly held belief that *lotu* is an important part of their lives, and that it is important to bring up the children to know God, to belong to a church, to work collaboratively with other members, to meet the church obligations, and to acquire a position in the church and hold on to it, for that is what belonging to the *lotu* (church) means.

### ***Factors behind church involvement***

The mothers are driven by beliefs formed at an early age, framed and shaped by their family backgrounds, and preserved by their practices in their church. Most of the women grew up in a local church-community (two are ministers' daughters, five are daughters of lay preachers, the rest did not identify their parents' involvement in church). About half the participants who spent some of their school years in Tonga before coming to New Zealand, took part in church activities, and learned a range of social skills from church people. Some attended church primary and/or secondary schools, where formal and informal learning and extra curricula activities were based on the church doctrine, its principles and practices. Scripture study as a subject was therefore part of their formal education, in addition to the Government prescribed curriculum. Thus church doctrine became embedded in the lives of these women. One wonders if perhaps what they learned then in Tonga is what they are trying now to get their children to learn here in New Zealand.

### ***Participation in church festivities***

Another practice that reaffirms the women's roots in the life of the church and congregational network is the annual festivities in which they are involved. These

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<sup>197</sup> A woman officially recognized as a leader in the Methodist church.

<sup>198</sup> A term used for members of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, who are under instruction in church doctrine and principles and training to be lay preachers. They can provide pastoral care for newly recruited members.

<sup>199</sup> One mother reported that she spends an average of six hours a week on church activities; longer if she has to host a feast.

festivities help preserve and retain church involvement within the family participation. The mothers are very familiar with the necessary preparations for such events as *uikelotu* (holy week) in the first week of the year, where families attend early morning and evening devotions.<sup>200</sup> This is followed by the ‘*Aho Lotu ‘o e Kakai-fefine* (World Day of Prayer for women) in March, when services are led by women lay preachers. *Uike-fāmili* (family week) and related activities with family devotions at a set time<sup>201</sup> are held as part of the preparation for Easter.<sup>202</sup> The *Faka-Mē* (children’s anniversary) on the first Sunday in May is a special day for children, when they dress in new clothes, participate in leading the service, perform their drama, and present their memorized Bible verses to the congregation in church. Later, they are served first in a feast with the best Tongan and European foods purchased and prepared by parents, for this special day. This is followed in the same month by the *Sāpate-Fa’ē* (Mothers’ Day), when the role of mothers is highlighted and celebrated by families in church, followed by that of the fathers in the *Sāpate-Tamai* (Fathers’ Day) celebration in the same month. The *fakataha-Sepitema* (Women’s September Meeting) is a special time for women.<sup>203</sup> The annual *misinale* (church donation) occurs in November,<sup>204</sup> and the religious year closes with the Christmas celebration, followed by the *Faka’osi Ta’u* and *Malanga Pō Le’o* (end of the year, with a midnight service).<sup>205</sup>

These ceremonial occasions demand the active participation of the women and their families, nuclear and extended. By using their physical/financial capital to make donations and provide food for the feasts, their human capital to organize and make arrangements to host the guests, as well as their social capital and network connections, the mothers willingly contribute money, food, time, skill and energy to these activities. At the same time their children learn social and cultural skills while developing their spiritual growth through practice in these contexts. However, such participation does

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<sup>200</sup> Each devotion session is followed by a shared meal hosted by one of the church members.

<sup>201</sup> A schedule of set Bible readings is prepared, printed, and distributed to families to guide the focus of each devotional session.

<sup>202</sup> This includes Easter camp, fasting days, prayer meetings, and Bible study group discussions.

<sup>203</sup> This is the annual women members’ roll call where each woman is called, and she (and her family if they wish) can respond with a Bible verse or hymn.

<sup>204</sup> During the *misinale* the traditional practice is to announce how much each family has contributed; although everyone responds by saying “Malo” (thank you), this is often a difficult situation, especially for those families who do not have much to donate. The ceremony is often followed by a shared feast, to which each family contributes. And, as always, it is the women who prepare and set out the food, and then serve the church members and the guests.

<sup>205</sup> The end of the year is celebrated with feasts and an exchange of foods during the day, before preparations for the midnight services in which some of the women lay preachers participate.

not come without cost for these mothers and their families, as indicated below.

In the normal weekly routine, Sunday is dedicated mainly to church activities, which include chanting, praying, singing, and sometimes feasting, and speech making. Here the children learn by listening and imitating the adults both at the service in church and in their own learning activities during Sunday school. Often both mothers and children take part with the teachers in these activities. Langakali describes how she spends almost all-day Sunday with her children in church:

...we go in the morning to decorate the church, then we come home and get ready for the main service, ... this is followed by the Sunday school, which runs for one hour before we take a break for lunch; then the women's group meeting starts (after that), ... then the choir practice follows,<sup>206</sup> then it's time to come home. By that time, the kids and I are just... so tired" (Langakali Rnd.3, p. 2).

While the issue here is the amount of time spent in church activities on Sunday by each family, this is when the mothers do in fact participate and thereby contribute to the children's learning. It is through this kind of practice that mothers model their role and the children are reminded of their responsibilities and obligations to the church. Huni recalled how she learned as a young girl, from her mother and grandmother, that in everything they do, the church comes first, and her family still follow this practice here in New Zealand. For example, when the *misinale*<sup>207</sup> is held, they use their family physical/financial capital by giving most of what they have saved to the church. They also host one feast a year to which all the church members are invited<sup>208</sup> to mark the children's combined birthdays. Every quarter they pay for 'tickets', which go toward the cost of publishing the church notices and bulletin.<sup>209</sup> And, when there is a need, they fundraise to help the church.<sup>210</sup> For this family, now permanently domiciled in New Zealand, their first responsibility is to the church.

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<sup>206</sup> While these activities are going on, some children are allowed to run around and play with their friends outside church (often very noisily), while other children are made to sit beside their mother and often fall asleep. Some mothers do not like the lengthy activities as their children find sitting inside boring and come to dislike going to Sunday church.

<sup>207</sup> The term literally means 'missionary'. It originated when the first Tongans went as missionaries to the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, and Tonga's Wesleyan congregation held an annual *misinale* (donation) and sent them money to help their work.

<sup>208</sup> In the Tongan sense, an invitation to a church feast is open; a general announcement is made a week earlier; the whole congregation is expected to attend, and after the feast, they are encouraged to take home the leftovers. It is the hosts' pride to prepare enough food for both the feast and 'doggy bags'.

<sup>209</sup> New Zealand church members unquestioningly pay this fee, although the publications are only available in Tonga.

<sup>210</sup> In Tonga, Huni's family used to receive second-hand clothes from New Zealand, they gave some to the church annual bazaar; but here they donate food as a church fund raising activity.

### ***Perception of church membership***

The participants perceive belonging to a church as being important, as the right thing to do, and as advantageous for themselves, their children, and their children's future.<sup>211</sup>

They believe that in church the children learn worthwhile skills, knowledge, attitudes, morals, and Bible teachings, as Heilala explains:

... by going to church ... it demonstrates to the children the importance of God in their lives. I believe that is important, and what we are hoping for is that God will become central in their lives too (Heilala, Rnd.3, p.1).

Heilala believes that her children are indirectly benefiting from this practice, because by attending church and participating in the spiritual activities herself, she feels she is growing in spiritual health, and as a person, this helps strengthen her to fulfil her role as a mother.

Mohokoi, with all the church activities she is involved in, hopes that one day her children will follow in her footsteps:

I model in church what I want of children... my children see what I do and how I do them ... my involvement in (different aspects of)... the church. I hope they'll learn just by watching me, and that one day, they'll grow up (and) ... take up those responsibilities themselves (Mohokoi, Rnd.3, p. 3).

Langakali believes that by being exposed to Tongan language every time they are in church, her children learn to speak Tongan fluently – “the correct and good Tongan language” that enables them to have comprehensive, interactive conversations with others in Tongan, while *feohi* (fellowship) with adults in these church contexts.<sup>212</sup> This interaction happens on Sundays when they spend most of the day in church participating in activities ranging from a formal service, to Sunday School, combined family prayer group meetings, and a final devotion before they return home.<sup>213</sup> Langakali is also happy about the opportunity for her children to *feohi* with other parents and children:

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<sup>211</sup> Hau'ofa interprets this commitment to the *lotu* by most Tongans as caused by their “fear of damnation” as preached to them by the church.

<sup>212</sup> In this context, the notion of *feohi* means more than just being together physically; it connotes a sense of trusting while observing each other, interacting, sharing ideas, learning from each other and behaving sincerely.

<sup>213</sup> The level of language required in these meetings varies, depends on the social status of the speaker and that of the individuals present in the audience.

I want the children to have fellowship with other adults and to experience *ongo'i māfana* (feeling the spiritual warmth) and the warmth of learning from each other, sharing *fe'ofa'ofani* (reciprocal love and compassion, affection and consideration for one another) among the congregation in church (Langakali, Rnd.3, p. 3).

Langakali believes that her children learn about proper Tongan etiquette from the adults, both male and female, with whom they work in church. They are exposed to respectful language and see how it is used in speech making in different situations.<sup>214</sup> Equally, a facility with Tongan humour is an important skill for children to have, and this can be achieved through the use of Tongan language. She would like her sons to be able to join a *kava*<sup>215</sup> party, in one of the church activities and listen to the old men telling jokes, discussing issues, or using authentic Tongan names and places in the islands, which would allow them to make links to her own island. However, she is also concerned about the children not being able to speak Tongan fluently<sup>216</sup> during their proposed trip to visit her parents in Tonga at Christmas, so she is currently making a concerted effort at home as well:

I like it that Tongan (language) is being forced upon them here at home to learn ... and then they will learn more in Tonga, a chance to polish up. Although they try to speak Tongan ... as they grow older they speak more English ... my eldest daughter speaks English to them and they can communicate to each other. I am the only one here who speaks Tongan to them and they think I cannot speak English (Langakali, Rnd.3, p. 3).

However, although the mothers value the time spent in church speaking Tongan, and enjoying fellowship with others, some expressed a dislike of aspects of church participation. Heilala expresses her doubt about the usefulness of long meetings carried on late into the evening when the families and children are present:

I am not sure if that is beneficial for the children's education. The nature of church meetings is that sometimes it goes on too long, so I don't see that as benefiting the children. If there's anything it keeps them ... up late to bed (Heilala, Rnd.3, p. 2).

Mohokoi feels attending the Sunday church service, followed by meetings and then the

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<sup>214</sup> She believes that children learn decent Tongan language, polite manners, and christian, moral values from adults in church.

<sup>215</sup> *Kava* (*piper methysticum*) is a traditional ceremonial Tongan beverage made from crushed root and it can have an alcoholic effect if taken in large quantity.

<sup>216</sup> It is an embarrassment to parents when New Zealand-born children visiting relatives in Tonga find they cannot communicate with each other in Tongan.

choir practice, which makes it a long day for her and the children, creates a dilemma for her. She often asks herself if she should stay home and miss out on something she enjoys, or come to church and bring the children with her, then later face the consequences when they are tired. She laments the situation in which she finds herself:

By the time we have the choir practice, the children are tired... they are not allowed to run around and play with their friends (they are too noisy) ... so they sit beside me and often fall asleep, as the practice goes on too long, ... but the noise (from singing) upsets them and they wake up and cry. They don't like it (Mohokoi, Rnd.3, p. 3).

Kukuvalu feels the same, and refuses to take her children to church to attend or participate in any late-night activities. She would rather miss out on the fellowship of being with others to ensure her children have enough rest before school the next day. Similar sentiments about late-night activities were voiced by Puatonga and Heilala. As a consequence, mothers may simply absent themselves from activities or leave before the children's bedtime. Sialetafa said she had been with her children to a late-night concert in the church hall only once. It was a group of ex-students from her husband's old school in Tonga who had come to fundraise for a school building. She and the children had, however, enjoyed listening to the band playing, and the boys' singing, and the women in church dancing, showing their *mafana* and contributing lots of money to the project.<sup>217</sup>

While the mothers have good reasons for belonging to a church and do enjoy being a part of one, when it comes to weighing up their church commitments against their consideration for their children's health and well-being, a number of them make the children's well-being their priority, believing that, in the long run, it will have a positive effect on their learning, rather than having them tired and irritable. But these women must tolerate possible censure from others when they are not present in church.<sup>218</sup>

Further, although they enjoy taking the children and participating in church activities,

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<sup>217</sup> The women's link with relatives in Tonga is very strong; so much so, that although they do not have a lot of financial capital to spare, they are always willing to contribute when groups from churches, schools, clubs, or even families come here to fundraise. These groups find church communities in New Zealand, Australia, or the US give them better returns than other organizations.

<sup>218</sup> Two mothers commented that imagining what others might think or say about them and their behaviour can be a strong social control, a pressure that makes them conform unless they are strong enough to make their own decisions and stick by them.

some decisions made by church leaders and approved by the majority of the congregation, have caused some mothers to question their involvement. Falahola clarified her disapproval of the leaders' decision to allow the church youth group to fundraise to be able to purchase musical instruments and some electronic equipment to organize and run their own disco nights:

I stood up and spoke against it. ... (I said) it's good if it is to do with Christian drama ... and songs ... But if it is for disco – that really is in conflict with my idea of Christian youth activities. That will make it easy for them ... to go astray to the disco places. There are Christian songs, which they can learn from (how) to feel inside what it's like to experience (the warmth of the spirit) when they are in church... But if they are pop songs ... and they expect our children to join in and take part, I definitely do not support that. I very much object to that... (Falahola, Rnd.3, p. 3).

She believes that such actions may encourage the church youth to frequent the disco dances in town and may eventually cause them to leave the church youth group. However, despite her disapproval, she feels obliged to “take her children to God”, and so faces a dilemma”

There are times when (I am) dissatisfied with the things (worldly) that are suggested in church ... I would have pulled out a long time ago, ... but it's always in my heart ... if I do ... the children won't know which ... way they will follow. When I am not satisfied ... I say to them ... “You can go to church, I'll just stay home”. My son said to me, “Mum, are you staying at home, but what about the Sunday school, which starts at 12 noon? Does that mean that we are staying away from (it) too?” So ... I get up ... get ready and go. But when I do, it's like, to me, going for a visit (but I do not feel I belong to it). I just go to take the children to the Sunday school. It is difficult for me ... because I can't do my own will. But it (is) the will of the family (that I must follow)... (Falahola, Rnd.3, p. 3).

### ***Participation in Sunday school***

Every Sunday the women dress their children in their best and take them to church then to Sunday school, trying to make this practice a regular habit for the family.<sup>219</sup> Five of the mothers are directly involved in teaching Sunday school. All the Sunday school classes are taught in Tongan, a practice preferred by parents, church elders, and church officials.

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<sup>219</sup> Often quoted advice from grandparents in Tonga is to “make the children know the way to church and Sunday school on Sunday when they are young, so that when they grow up they know the way to church already”.

Using their human capital, the participants who are teachers carry out the following tasks:

- Plan and prepare the lesson, and teach their classes, which range from four to twelve pupils;
- Arrange the weekly rehearsal of drama for the *Faka-Mē* performance in front of the entire church congregation;
- Organize the annual scripture test held at mid-year;
- Teach reading from the Tongan Bible, and, with the assistance of some of the mothers, demonstrate to the children the proper use of punctuation, pronunciation, and intonation in reciting their memorised verses for the same scripture test.

The five mothers who help at Sunday school in their respective churches attend almost all the Sunday school sessions, participate in the learning activities, arrange the drama rehearsals, support the teachers, and help the children prepare for the yearly scripture examination. They believe that their presence is important for their children's learning, helpful for the teacher's teaching, and useful for their own spiritual growth. Heilala explains:

...attending Sunday school, and preparing the children for the *Faka-Me* helps me grow as a mother. So I feel I am more effective, as a mother ... I become calmer, more tolerant, and ... able to cope in my parenting role at home (Heilala, Rnd.1, p. 3).

Langakali admits that because the teaching, reading and interacting in Sunday school are all in Tongan, she experiences a feeling of *māfana fakalaumālie* (spiritual warmth) when she sees her children rehearsing their part in drama, showing that the play is meaningful to them; she believes that the children experience the *māfana* of the spirit. Heilala observed how children (5 and 6 years old) from her class are moved and inspired to perform in front of the congregation when reciting their memory verses followed by a song. She feels her children obviously benefit spiritually from learning in Sunday school. As they practised their Biblical verses at home she observed that her young children:

- use songs and dance effectively to learn the Tongan words, and their meaning, and to remember the verses;
- naturally respond to singing, humming the tune and trying to work out the words;

- try to remember the words as they try to memorise and match them to the tune;
- are keen to recite their memory verses by doing it in a song.

As a Sunday school teacher, Heilala finds that it is “quicker for the kids to pick up words from songs rather than actually saying it”. What is also important is that the children are thinking in Tongan, speaking in Tongan, and, according to Hingano, “it helps them remember the Tongan cultural values such as respect, sharing, and working collaboratively with others” (Hingano, Rnd.3, p. 5). Hingano also believes that not only will her children benefit from this but she will also be rewarded for her efforts when she sees her children succeed in their endeavours.

Another practice that allows mothers to make a contribution to their children’s *ako* is their home preparation for Sunday school. The watching children will ask lots of questions about the lesson, varying from the content of the stories to the method of delivery to the mother’s reasons for doing these. In answering the children’s questions, the mothers use different strategies to explain. Langakali’s children ask questions in English, and she provides the answers in Tongan, so the interaction and dialogue between mother and children are always carried out in both English and in Tongan, a practice she finds fascinating and satisfying when they reach a point of shared understanding. Langakali also finds that one of her sons often asks high-order thinking questions.<sup>220</sup> For example, when she explained the story of Samuel, her 8-year-old son asked,

- Son: How do you know that it was God who called Samuel when you yourself did not see God?  
 Mum: (Silence)  
 Son: Mum, did you see God?  
 Mum: Well... (the call was to Samuel)  
 Son: Did Samuel see God?  
 Mum: We don’t have time to talk about it now, but we will do so ... another time. (Langakali, Rnd.3, p. 5)

Langakali said they did follow it up at a later stage, and the discussion was interesting. Her answers included, “You don’t need to know it now”; and “One day, you will come to know why”. She believes that her children learn and accept some of her answers but

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<sup>220</sup> Langakali uses the term, ‘*atamai māasila ‘ene fehu’i*’- ‘questioning of a sharp mind’.

ignore others. What she finds interesting is that they interact in two languages, but at the end they reach some kind of shared understanding – at least this is what she believes happens.

However when Heilala's children ask questions, she explains the answer in English because that is the language she and the children have in common and it saves them and her time. Hingano gives her answers to her children's questions in Tongan because she believes the cultural and moral values embedded in the stories can only be meaningful to her children if they are conveyed in Tongan, and she wants them to remember (and practise) Tongan values. Puatonga, on the other hand, sometimes had difficulty answering her children's questions in simple terms, in Tongan or English,<sup>221</sup> so she often leaves it to her husband to explain the answer in detail to suit the children's age level.<sup>222</sup>

Langakali teaches her class in Tongan, explaining how she teaches her junior-primary-school-age children:

...by first reading the Bible story in Tongan, then I tell it in a story form in Tongan. The children listen and then ask me questions in English. I try to clarify those parts of the question that I don't understand by asking them further questions in Tongan. Someone then asks the same question again, but this time he rephrases it, using more Tongan words in it, so I can understand. Then the discussion would continue – they contribute in English and I respond in Tongan... in the end we understand each other (Langakali, Rnd.3, p. 2).

The interaction continued, and in the end, the mother said she was happy with the answer and has a shared understanding of the contents discussed, although the child's opinion of the matter was not expressed or sought. Langakali, however, pointed out the difficulty involved in trying to use Tongan words simple enough to be understood by the children, and the time-consuming nature of trying to communicate an abstract concept such as 'spiritual things' and 'heartfelt experience' in two different languages. Nevertheless, mother and child tolerate each other's sometimes mismatched communication because both parties know that Sunday school must be taught in Tongan.

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<sup>221</sup> Her two preschool age children are beginning to learn to speak bilingually but at the time of the interviews could speak neither basic Tongan nor basic English accurately, and Puatonga does not want to confuse them.

<sup>222</sup> Puatonga is a trained secondary school teacher; she sometimes finds it hard to handle preschoolers.

From these examples, although some of their questions remain unanswered, it appears the children benefit from their mother's use of human capital to explain as much as she can the concepts to the children (despite their level of difficulty) in their involvement and social capital

Clearly then, the mothers are prepared to expend both human and social capital to encourage and provide support for the children's learning. Different teaching strategies are employed, including singing, chanting, memorising, dramatising, questions and answers, and discussion. By engaging in Sunday school activities, including the rehearsals for the *Fakame* and the drilling of memorised verses, and learning/practising reading in Tongan for the annual scripture examinations, mothers make an effort to ensure their children learn to speak Tongan. It is interesting to note that little mention of cognitive thinking or reasoning occurred in the mothers' Talanoa/interview.<sup>223</sup>

Memorising their Bible verses by singing or chanting them in Tongan helps the children remember the words, and sometimes the meaning as well. However, while memorizing as a learning/teaching strategy is frowned on by some western educators, Puatonga believes that this different learning practice must be understood and not judged, for it may be cultural, and unique to Tongan or just to this generation growing up in New Zealand. The children also learn to question their mother and their teachers about Bible stories,<sup>224</sup> a practice that is welcomed by western educators, nevertheless, the mothers are able to answer the questions (in their own way) and explain them in Tongan, even when it takes time, thereby contributing to their children's learning. Sometimes they defer the answer, or get the father to respond, or tell them that time will tell. Lastly, the children learn the value of good memories, are exposed to Tongan cultural values, and most of the mothers in the study hope their offspring will be able to live by them.<sup>225</sup> These are products of mothers using their human capital, social capital, and social

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<sup>223</sup> This could be due to a lack of Tongan equivalents for these specialised terms.

<sup>224</sup> This kind of social transformation (children questioning their parents and other adults) is beginning to occur among young Tongan families here with New Zealand-born children. Although believing that this is an influence of western education, Tongan parents in general have not raised this as an issue or debated it. But they push for Tongan language to be taught and spoken. Possibly it is a dilemma for them, but at this stage, they just want their children to be successful within the New Zealand education system, which may be why they have kept quiet about it.

<sup>225</sup> Even those mothers who are not teachers will later drill or reinforce what has been taught, at home, sometimes assisted by siblings and extended family members.

networks to benefit their children's learning, be they in church, at home, or in other social contexts.

It is interesting to note, however, that one Tongan-educated mother is critical of the curriculum content and the sequence of concepts taught to young children in Sunday school.<sup>226</sup> Falahola feels that,

...we are caught up with hard and abstract stuff about the Bible ... The questions are too much in-depth,<sup>227</sup> e.g., who is that king, and who is this king, and so on. But it (would be) better to start with the basics, e.g., *Ko hai na'a ne ngaohi koe?* (Who created you?), then develop gradually from there. ... But when they asked my ... son (aged 7), "Who created you?", he told them, "V. (father) and Mum" (they both laughed) (Falahola, Rnd.3, p. 3).

Another issue raised by Falahola was to do with the degree of difficulty of some of the concepts taught to young children:

...they are teaching difficult concepts to the children (but) ... there are no basics on which to build them. For example, once I heard the (children) being asked, "The Bible is divided into two parts, put your hand up if you know what they are called?" Gee! No one can answer that!! ... and how can we reach out to abstract things ... (without the basics) but if we start from the basics, and progress gradually ... whatever ... (Falahola, Rnd.3, p. 3).

While it is clear from these examples that this Tongan-educated mother has gone through transformations, it is unclear if her knowledge of the process of learning is based on what she experienced in Sunday school in Tonga or on new learning she has acquired in New Zealand. Secondly, that she has the self-confidence to critique and express her opinion about the teaching content (of the Bible) in Sunday school shows great courage, given that that is not normal practice from a Tongan-raised woman who has migrated to New Zealand.

### ***Involvement and participation as a lay preacher***

Although not all of them are practising lay preachers, the women feel the role is important. Preparing for a sermon is a task that is taken seriously, and the process involved is very similar to that of a teacher planning a lesson. Evidence from the *Talanoa* interview revealed that children who hear the sermon do learn a great deal

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<sup>226</sup> She purposely tried to avoid putting any blame on the teachers who are all women.

<sup>227</sup> The children's age level ranged from 5 to 7.

from it, as much as the lay preachers' children, who observe and ask questions as their mother does her preparation for a sermon or Sunday school class at home. There, the children learn directly from the mother who uses her skills (human capital) to answer their questions, and if necessary, explain the concepts. One teacher at the Tongan Language Centre (TLC) observed how a mother explained to her daughter what is involved in preparing a sermon:

...starting from Bible reading and choosing the hymns to use, to planning, delivering and rehearsing her sermon. As a result the children comprehend what is involved – the process, what the sermon is about, and they often pay attention to it in church, because they know a little bit about it. They even tell their friends what to expect (pers. comm., A.M.T., 1.10.08).

Being aware of what is involved in preparing a sermon ensures that when their mother asks to be left alone for this purpose, her children will respect that. Most of the children perceive the task as a serious matter, which involves 'learning' what to say, practising how to say it, and delivering it. One child likened it to "... sitting an exam". "It is really hard, man!" Puatonga's son said. Puatonga commented that the child has learned that preparing a sermon involves *ako ma 'uloto* (learning to memorise) some phrases, then saying them, and then explaining the meaning<sup>228</sup> to the congregation.

### ***Choir Participation***

Another practice that enables the mothers to contribute to their children's *ako* is their involvement in the choir. Nine of the participant mothers regularly attend and enjoy singing in the Saturday choir practice and the formal performance during church on some Sundays. They sing hymns, anthems, and other 'Christian songs' in Tongan, using Tongan notation<sup>229</sup> when they first learn the melody. Heilala explains:

I am part of the choir, and I regularly go to the ... practice, ... it helps me as a person and I think indirectly, it helps the children ... it gives me strength ... I think of that as my time out, sort of recuperating and sort of gaining strength to continue my role as a mother... It can also be ... spiritual ... in terms of my own

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<sup>228</sup> Puatonga suspects that her son can relate to this because he finds learning his own verses a difficult task; he dislikes doing it and it has become an ordeal for both of them.

<sup>229</sup> This is based on numbers, and is equivalent to doh, re, me, fa, sol, lah, ti, doh. The Tongan numbers in music are, tolu, fa, nima, ono, fitu, valu, hiva; the notes, using the *first syllable of the number*, starts from tolu, so, 3, (to), 4 (fa), 5 (ni), 6 (o), 7 (tu), 8 (va), hi (9), 3 (to); and the pitch can start on any key; a stroke on the number will raise or reduce a note by a semitone, e.g., 3, (lu) 4 (a) 5 (ma). Using the *second syllable of each number*, these become lu, a, ma. Interesting, but is this relevant to the children's learning?

personal development ... it is important and once again, the children (are) indirectly benefiting from it ... (Heilala, Rnd.3, p. 1).

Langakali not only enjoys singing but she also likes the *feohi* with other members of the church during choir practice. She does not always take her children with her but she assumes that one day they will grow up to like singing, “after all they hear it all the time”. Mohokoi attends the choir practice and enjoys singing; however, because the choir practice is long the children get tired and irritated but there is no one at home to leave them with, so she faces the dilemma of whether to stay home with them and miss out on something she enjoys or take them to the practice and face the consequences. She takes the children with her and often does not enjoy the practice. However, there is evidence that

children who go with their mothers (or parents) to the choir practice, know the songs, even the anthems, and sing them repeatedly with other children who go too. They remember the words, and some remember and imitate how the conductor conducts the choir, they imitate ... (Mohokoi, Rnd.3, p. 4).

Hingano attends the weekly choir practice because she enjoys singing in Tongan using Tongan notation (Appendix J) and also believes that the lyrics convey a lot of Tongan values. Consequently, she wants her children to learn to sing, and be able to remember these cultural values, which may help them use these in their daily lives.

From these examples, it is clear that these mothers contribute to their children’s *ako*/learning indirectly in these informal situations by role modelling their interest, and assuming that one day their children will demonstrate a desire to sing and experience the joy of sharing in fellowship with choir members.

### ***Involvement in church women’s’ groups***

The church groups in which the women are involved include *Kalasi ‘Aho*, *Kalasi Lotufehu’i*, and *Kaluseti*. Each group represents a level, standard, or position in the church where they hold Bible studies, learn about the church doctrine and principles, and provide pastoral care for other novices. But while there are no direct or equivalent English translation for each of the groups’ names, the women know what each means and what activities they perform in it.

These church groups are hierarchical in nature and operate as reciprocal support groups to scaffold their spiritual development. Topics discussed are based on the Bible using written guidelines specifically prepared. While these women's groups hold regular meetings that focus on Bible study and prayer, few of the mothers mentioned how these would benefit their children, except to espouse the hope that their daughters in particular would eventually join such a group and "hold on to it" to help develop their personal faith. Puatonga, however, believes that because her children watch and observe her preparing by reading the scripture, and praying, they will one day come to understand and experience the *māfana fakalaumālie* (spiritual warmth) gained from it.

### ***Misinale Participation***

The *misinale* activity is one of the festivities to which most families look forward, and the mothers have great responsibility for preparing it. In the participants' churches families are grouped into small clusters where members decide how they will work collaboratively to raise funds to meet the nominated amount *faka'amu 'a e siasi* (wishes of the church) set for each group.<sup>230</sup> Having saved all year for the *misinale*, each family tries hard to meet the amount set, and some try to exceed it. Langakali said, "But we all do it willingly because it is a responsibility in the church." (Rnd.3, p. 2). The amount donated by a family is perceived to be an indication of the degree of their commitment to the church, and therefore of their faith.<sup>231</sup>

However, Sialetafa does not believe in giving to the *misinale* if they do not have enough. When asked if she sets a balance between her commitment to the church and her children, she said:

To be honest with you, the church comes first ... but my children come first, in a different way.... You can still do both ... there are ... ways you can deal with it, like the Misinale, eh? ... first you fill up your fridge, and your cupboards, and whatever is spare, you can give to the church. ... I'm sure God doesn't want the kids to starve! (Sialetafa, Rnd.3, p. 4).

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<sup>230</sup> The wording of this term for the amount set for each group to donate is to show that it is a voluntary sum so that families do not feel obliged to give more than they can afford.

<sup>231</sup> It is a normal practice among Tongans here to send a request to relatives in the US asking for a *tokoni* (contribution) to their *misinale*, and the people in Tonga send similar requests to their relatives here for their *misinale* in Tonga. This is an important aspect of reciprocity as a cultural concept among Pacific Island peoples.

Sialetafa notes that while her children question why they have to give money to the church, she also believes that they do learn cultural values from what their parents do for the church, like the *fakaafe* (feasts) and the *misinale*, so she explains to them:

It's like a fundraising ... thing, when we come to the *lotu Pālangi* (Europeans' service, we (Tongans) have a share to pay or contribute for our use of the building. I tell them, 'It's only once a year' (Rnd.3, p. 2).

She also explains to her children the importance of sharing what they have with the church, which in turn uses it to help others overseas, for example, the Solomon Islands hospital project; Food Aid for people in Africa; or the local foodbank, which provides parcels for families who do not have enough food. She believes in teaching children about cultural values and sharing, which is what belonging to church means – a point that Langakali emphasizes to her children.

It is evident that these mothers enjoy serving their church, using their physical/financial capital in activities such as *fakaafe*, (feasts), *misinale* (church donation), and contributions to outside fundraisers, their human capital in teaching Sunday school, preaching sermons or leading devotions, and planning and organizing feasts, and their social capital and social networks in recruiting new members for the church, and appealing for contributions to their *misinale* groups. While they firmly believe their children are benefiting from them, they still face difficulties. In some cases, when they are unsure whether what they do actually contributes to their children's *ako*, they try to maintain the conviction that their children will benefit from what they model for them. The next section reveals what and how these mothers contribute to their children's education through their involvement in the wider community.

### **Involvement in the community**

Because 'Uta-mama'o is a small city compared with the big cities of Auckland and Wellington, there are a limited number of groups that these migrant women who speak English as a second language are able to join. The mothers belong to or work with a group in the community primarily because they are interested in it or have been invited to join by a friend and gradually they begin to see the advantages in doing so and consider its usefulness for their children. When asked to identify the community activities in which they are involved that they think contribute to their children's

education, they identified the following groups and activities that are discussed below: their extended family; shopping; their jobs; entertainment and recreation; and women's community groups.

### *Involvement in extended family activities*

The mothers' involvement in extended family activities is always an enjoyable occasion, at least for them. It is a special time when they get together and catch up on all sorts of issues from domestic to professional and from local to overseas. The mothers prepare special dishes – main course, dessert, and snacks – enough for their family and extra for others, plus more with leftovers to be given away. Such family reunions may take place once a month, a term, six-monthly or even yearly, if family members are scattered. They take their children and often their children's friends as well. The occasion will normally start with a *lotu* (family devotion) led by the elder who often selects a member of the young generation to represent their family and take part in leading the devotion. This may include reading verses from the Bible, or elaborating on them, reading a few verses from a hymn or starting the hymn, saying a prayer, and so forth. During the devotion, everyone listens quietly 'assessing' the quality of the spoken Tongan, which reflects the effort of the mothers in teaching the children the language.

Hingano describes the advantages of getting together as an extended family, for the school children and young adults; she looks forward to these gathering because sometimes her in-laws fill in the gaps that she herself has missed teaching the children:

Although the gathering and related activities are 'said' to be carried out informally, (the) practice of respect according to the status relationships between individuals is strictly observed, almost in a rigid manner in some cases – between father and children; parents and off-spring; *mehekitanga* and the rest of the children; grandparents and grandchildren; brothers and sisters; and between cousins of the opposite sex. One of the reasons for holding a family get-together to is get the young generation members to know each other and to understand the relationships, the connections between the families and their positioning within them (Hingano, Rnd.3, p. 4).

Heilala explains that extended family get-togethers

are always good times in terms of developing the children's ... knowing who they are and their cultural values, ... the importance of building up their closeness to

each other, ... bond between them and the whole extended family. ... It is very important because I don't want them to grow up thinking that there's nobody else but them. We want to foster ... that they belong to an extended family. ... at Christmas time, getting together,... that is a wonderful time and that's valuable for them and their education as well (Heilala, Rnd. 3, pp. 1–2).

Langakali, whose extended family lives in Tonga and who have hosted her and her children when they visit, wants her children to experience a deep feeling for and comprehensive understanding of the life situation of her family in Tonga; so that they come to appreciate what they have here:

I want them to go to Tonga and see ... 'things Tongan', and learn together with the young children... learn from them (their relations). ...to observe and understand the living conditions and the accommodation they are going to experience there. I want them to know they are Tongans and have *ongo'i faka-Tonga* (Tongan feelings). ... (and) to be able to adjust to the conditions, situations and people , ... (their) relatives in Tonga. I want them to learn how Tongan birthdays are celebrated and the preparations involved in it. Here in NZ they don't have the chance to see how these are done in the traditional Tongan way. The main thing is that I really want them to *feohi* (have fellowship) with my family, to see the reality there so that they understand (and appreciate)... what they have here ... their own room, the food they eat ... and so on (Langakali, Rnd.3, pp. 2-3).

Falahola takes the opportunity when her relatives from the United States and from Tonga come to New Zealand for family occasion such as a wedding or birthday celebration, she draws together the family:

... especially when we are in a foreign country. I want to take her (holding up her daughter) ... and my children, to take part in and learn. I think it is good because it is part of the education for children ... they should know ... there will come a time when I go, that they should still know ... the family and how to look after each other (Falahola, Rnd.3, p. 4).

So for these mothers extended family activities are important means of getting their children to know their status relationships with others in the family, to respect individuals according to their social positioning in the family, and to maintain these relationships, the cultural values they want to preserve, and the connections/links they need to pass on to future generations. Using their financial capital to provide the food, transport, and accommodation, and gifts for a few; their human capital to plan these gatherings, and to explain the extended families to the children; and their social capital

to support the head of families in bringing the members together, can provide social and cultural benefits for their children.

***Shopping: a learning and teaching activity***

All the mothers in the study see the importance of taking the children shopping at the supermarket, a different learning environment where the children can help while learning numeracy skills. They also learn spelling, to identify certain brands and packaging, and to compare prices and decide which is most economical. Other skills, including knowing the value of money and keeping to the budget, are reasons why these mothers enjoy taking the children to the supermarket.

Heilala takes the children to help her with the shopping:

I take them with me and I get them to help ..., ... to go and get something for me...I use shopping as a time where they learn ... maths, (and) language. That's always a great time (Heilala, Rnd.3, p. 2).

Before they leave the house, Falahola gives out clear instructions about who will carry the calculator, who will be in charge of reading out the shopping list, and who will go and get the items from the shelves. She takes the children to the supermarket to help her but also to teach them to be restrained and buy only what they can afford – to know the value of money and, more important, to demonstrate the need to work hard at school/learning in order to get good qualifications so they can get a job which pays enough to buy what they want. When her son asked for what he wanted she said,

No. The *seniti* (cents) we have is just enough for the shopping to fill up our vehicle with petrol, and for buying lunch for school next week. The son accepted it (Falahola, Rnd.3, p. 5).

Then she gave him a lecture:

If you don't pay attention ... and work hard at school, you will be *faka'ofa* (sorry) because I am getting old. If you want those things ... now, you won't learn ... you will leave school and there will be no money to buy the things you want, like books (Falahola, Rnd.3, p. 5).

This mother believes that going to the shop is a suitable environment to teach the children that there are lots of things they want in life, but unless they work hard to do

well in class, they will never be able to afford them. Kukuvalu has done the same when she took her children to the supermarket to buy the groceries. When they asked for things she negotiated with them that if they did odd jobs at home, she would buy the product for them but they would be able to pay for it with their own money that they had earned. But, she said, this did not last long at all!

Hingano does her shopping on Sundays after church, a practice that used to be unacceptable among those Tongans who are church-goers. She takes her eldest daughter with the toddler, and the other three children stay in the car with their father. She has explained to all that they do not have enough money, so they accept that their mother only buys the basics in large quantities to feed the whole family. She believes her children benefit from this by working things out among themselves. They are disciplined – they do not ask for what they know they cannot afford.

For some mothers, then, shopping is an enjoyable activity; for others it is an ordeal. Mothers from both camps also regard it as a valuable learning experience in a suitable environment.

### ***Employment and learning***

At the time of the third round *Talanoa*/interview, the three mothers who worked full-time and the five part-timers all agreed that their employment contributed much both directly and indirectly to their children's *ako* in one way or another. Their earnings improve the family's financial capital, and the experience and knowledge they gain from employment contribute indirectly to their children's learning. For example, as part of her after-school job, Mohokoi provides training (in parenting) for Pasifika parents, women's groups, and young mothers. So by using her human capital she contributes to the knowledge of other parents and their children, including her own who also attend.

Mohokoi also helps her husband to create and run activities to occupy the youth group on Friday nights to keep them away from alcohol and the pub. Their programme often includes a *kava* party for young males, a discussion group, impromptu speech competitions, or performing Tongan songs and dances. They always take their own children, who join in and learn Tongan language, singing and dancing while enjoying these activities. When she takes other parents and their children to show them the

cultural activities where they taste food, and watch cultural dances from other ethnic communities, her children join in and enjoy that learning experience too. Mohokoi and her children also participate in bush walks, visiting a bookshop, a video shop, and the library, where they spend time reading and playing on the computer. Mohokoi's children enjoy the company of other children and adults, and learn a great deal from them.

Kukuvalu believe that her job has a good impact on her children's *ako* and provides her with the financial capital to make donations:

I donate to different charities; at work we have a 'cure-kids club' and I donate to 'Cancer Children' in my children's names. Every now and then, the organization writes to each donor and thanks him or her for the contributions. So when they (children) receive their personal letters they read them ... they think, talk about it, and ask me questions; so we discuss the issues involved in those charities. ... We also get discounts at work on products that are suitable for children ... so, my work benefits my children and their general *ako* and education... (Kukuvalu, Rnd.3, p. 8).

Heilala, at the time of the interview, had two part-time jobs, and used the income from them to pay for after-school extra-curricular activities for her children:

...that's very important in terms of ... not only to support (my) family, so (we) can put them through education, but also in the extra-curricular classes like they do go to singing, ... music, ... swimming. So all those things ... are useful. If we weren't working I don't think we would be able to achieve that, and make ... contributions towards the children's development in these activities (Heilala, Rnd.3, p. 1).

Hingano is involved in the after-school programme as part of her job, so she is able to work as well as have her daughter with her to help; at the same time her daughter learns with older children. She enjoys having her daughter with her:

We go together in the morning, and I do my job while T. goes to her class, and at the end of the day, she comes to my room where she does her work. So we're together the whole day, and it pleases me to do my mother's role. ...

... my work has led me to be aware of the many things school children (in New Zealand) and parents ought to be aware of. Also, my supervisor ... takes me to community meetings ...and I understand what good (advantage) one can get from activities like these ... (we) take our children to be vaccinated ... (Hingano, Rnd.3, pp. 2-3).

Puatonga is also involved in the after-school homework programme. There she helps supervise children who learn Tongan from native speakers who were schooled in Tonga. This includes learning new vocabulary, pronunciation of Tongan and English words, and using them in sentences. She explains how her children benefit from her job:

I watch and observe how these mothers,<sup>232</sup> who were taught in Tongan in a church school back home, teach Tongan in this programme, then I go home and use these strategies to help my children learn to improve their Tongan language (Puatonga, Rnd.3, p. 3).

Similarly, Heilala uses the skills she picks up from tutoring students on a one-to-one basis, for her children. From her tutoring job, she finds that:

- tutoring is most effective when it is carried out on one-to-one basis
- after a sense of trust is established between her and the learner
  - the learner opens up and talks and discuss issues freely
  - it then becomes easy for her to help them to learn
  - once they learn, it becomes satisfying to her as the tutor
  - the learner is likely to return for help when she/he needs to.

Heilala admits that it takes time and patience both on her part and that of the learners to achieve what they decided to complete in each session.

### ***Recreation and entertainment: contributions to children's education***

Ten of the mothers enjoy and make a point of taking their children out for recreation and entertainment mainly during the school holidays. Some allow their children to go with other friends and relatives on their own (without a parent); others send off the younger ones with their older siblings, and the rest take the children themselves.

***Movies:*** Heilala takes the children to the movies only during the school holidays:

This is a real treat for them in the school holidays because they know they don't go during the school term. I know they enjoy it because when we come out they talk about it, and they know what it is all about. When we go home, they still talk about it and I know when the school starts, the kids all talk about the movies they watch. No doubt they will share with their friends when they return to school (Heilala Rnd.3, p. 5).

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<sup>232</sup> These mothers attended church schools in Tonga where every subject of the curriculum, including English, was taught in Tongan, so they are well versed in Tongan language both written and speaking; and practice of cultural values.

Falahola, in contrast, takes her two boys and her baby daughter to town during the school holidays. She buys the tickets for the two boys, and goes inside to find seats for them, then she and the baby wait outside until the end of the movie. Usually it is a cartoon because that is what they enjoy most on television. She always makes sure that what the boys see is suitable for children:

When they come out they talk about the cartoon they watched. Even when we are at home they continue to discuss and ask questions about it. There is a lot of interaction going on after the movie, and ... the following days. That's what pleases me when they go. They know what it is about. This is evidence that they learn something from the movie because they talk about it, and I don't take them anywhere else, except to church activities. Another reason why I take them to the movies, is that they go to school, come home ... do their homework, help out in the kitchen, or domestic chores outside (Falahola, Rnd.3, p. 4).

This mother takes her children to watch a movie in the school holiday, for entertainment, to learn from another media outside the home, and as a reward for what they have done to help at home.

**Other activities:** The mothers who can afford other activities and/or if they are required by the school their children attend, then they take them to watch.

**Live show:** Hingano took her primary school age children to a live show, a fundraising night run by the school:

It was the first time for them to see anything like that. They watched it carefully, and observed how other children put on their costumes. They really enjoyed the night, but I know they enjoyed the rehearsals leading up to the night of the performance (Hingano, Rnd.3, p. 4).

While the event was for the children, the mother enjoyed it too:

I really enjoyed it myself, and for me it was a moving experience because they spoke, sang, and acted and they had costumes on the right ones and very suitable for their performance and the theme of their drama (Hingano, Rnd.3, p. 5).

Hingano explained that when her children go to the movies or to a live show, she allows them to go with their cousins, without parental supervision:

I like it and I let them go. Their aunt and uncle often give them spending money,<sup>233</sup> take them and drop them off outside the movie theatre and pick them up after. I like that (Hingano, Rnd.3, p. 5).

### *A Women's community group – Kautaha*

Six women who participated in the study are members of *Kautaha 'a fafine 'o Falehanga*.<sup>234</sup> Their objectives include making Tongan handicrafts, home handicrafts, including bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen items for display at the end of the year. The group has acquired a fund to hire trainers to run workshops on skills such as tapa-making, weaving, quilt-making, cooking, and sewing, throughout the year. They also host visitors from other regions or from the Ministry of Education and New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) when they visit '*Uta-mama*'o for a community meeting. At the time of the Talanoa/interview, the women made a *ngatu* (tapa) using New Zealand materials to substitute for those used in Tonga, which that cannot be obtained here. They all believe that the knowledge and skills they acquire from these activities are worth explaining to their young children, both males and females.

Although these are skills used by women, Mohokoi wants to explain to her son how these items are made, the materials used, the processes involved, and what they are used for, as she believes in the importance of passing on the knowledge to the children. She also wants to explain to him how Tongan dance is taught and learned, and she is prepared to lead a small group of children to teach these skills to.

Langakali does her basket weaving and sewing of *feta'u*<sup>235</sup> in front of her children while explaining and demonstrating to them what she is doing and why. She has told them they will be invited to the display of these handicrafts at the end of the year and to the feast that follows. It is obvious that these mothers value these traditional Tongan skills and knowledge and are keen for their young ones to learn them.

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<sup>233</sup> This is part of the '*ofa faka-Tonga*, for example, giving gifts spontaneously; it is part of *tauhi vaha 'a* (maintaining relationships); This is an example of the behaviour to which most mothers who participated in the study referred and want their children to adopt. They believe their children will learn and practise them if they are surrounded by other Tongans, who have similar social values.

<sup>234</sup> This fictitious name, translating as 'Cooperative group of Women', is used to protect the identity of the group.

<sup>235</sup> A decorated lace cloth used to cover a coffin in a funeral.

Other activities including swimming, keeping fit, sports, and parenting discussion group were mentioned by the women but there was no concrete evidence of them being practised.

### **Conclusion and Chapter summary**

It appears that in the church and community settings the mothers seem confident, independent, knowledgeable, and display strong leadership qualities; they are leaders in what they do, and they teach their children directly, and model what they want them to learn indirectly through practice and activities within the church. Through teaching Sunday school, preaching sermons, leading devotions, and singing in the choir, these versatile mothers play multiple roles and fulfil their obligations to the church, their children and families, and their community. Unlike their involvement in their homes where they are subordinate to their husbands, the *mehakitanga* or *fahu* in the family, or in their roles in the early childhood centres and schools, where they feel inferior to the trained teachers and the official administrators, their participation in church appears different. They shine in these roles because they are confident, they work as a group of women, they make their own decision on what to do and how to do it. They are knowledgeable in what they do and they find enjoyment in doing it; they are leaders, working collaboratively with other women, but independent in the activities they engage in. This could be because they can use the various forms of family capital, financial, human and social, to fulfil the needs of the church while contributing to the *ako* of their children in these contexts.

Within the community at large, the women practically shuttle from playing one role in one group to another in a different group, then from one responsibility in one context to a different responsibility in another, working sometimes with different sets of people, and using a range of skills and knowledge, but each mother is taking the same cluster of children – her own offspring – to different locations and situations where the activities take place, and in all of them she contributes to their learning.

In the next chapter the thesis is drawn to its conclusion. This involves further discussion, statement of conclusion, limitations and implications.

## CHAPTER NINE

### Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

*Kuo tā hono uho he ako*

(Her umbilical cord was cut on *ako*/education)

#### INTRODUCTION

This thesis was initiated by my personal desire to explore the role of Tongan mothers in their children's education after they had enrolled some of their children in centres and schools in New Zealand for some years. The research question I set out to explore was: What, how, and why do Tongan mothers contribute to their children's *ako* in their homes, school and centre settings, and the community?

I examined the relevant international and New Zealand literature; defined the research focus, prepared a research proposal, and applied for approval from Massey University Human Ethics Committee (Protocol 03/40). I then decided on the methodology and methods used (as stated in the design), organized the procedure to follow in approaching the women and their communities in '*Uta-mama*'o, designed the data collection procedure, engaged in the data collection –*Talanoa*/interviews and some observations, transcribed and translated the interviews, analysed the data, wrote it up, and completed the thesis.

This chapter draws together the major themes that have emerged from the thesis/data and discusses these in relation to contemporary literature in the area and the Tongan conceptual framework of mothers' position/stance in their contribution to their children's *ako*/education in New Zealand. Using Konai Helu Thaman's *Kakala* metaphor (1999) (as described in chapter four), this Tongan framework is employed to explicate the Tongan mothers' steadfast contribution in different contexts – a very important input to their children's education now and the future. First, the discussion will reveal the findings from the research, and identify the major themes that emerged from the study. This is followed by a brief elaboration of the themes to clarify what issues are encapsulated in them.

Then, using the *kakala* metaphorical framework, the weaving of the issues and the themes, the contemporary literature, and the Tongan conceptual framework I will illustrate, first, what and how the major themes visible in the mothers' contribution lead to the future of their children's education, and second, how education is operated by, and is operating, among these women. These dimensions are then woven into the *kakala* of Tongan mothers' contribution to their children's *ako*. The implications for different parties will be outlined, and the limitations of the study as well as its contribution to future research direction will be addressed. A conclusion will be drawn.

### **People in social contexts**

Consistent with Vygotsky's claim that it is people, especially adults in the child's world, that influence the child's cognitive development, and with the argument that "thinking develops in a social context and that there is a unique form of co-operation between the child and the adult that is the central element of the educational process" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 27), the findings from this research showed that the Tongan mothers who participated in the study, contributed in different ways to their children's *ako*, in their homes, in the early childhood centres and primary school settings, and in church and the community. Socially, physically and spiritually they positioned themselves constantly in the children's real and inner worlds to support their learning, and they directly and actively taught them cultural beliefs, values, practices, and Christian faith, based on their own social/personal constructs – these were to 'make them Tongan'. By assisting them with the academic knowing/knowledge and skills (Moles, 1993) acquired to a large degree from their own educational experiences in Tonga, and enhanced, to a lesser degree, by their new learning in New Zealand, they believed will make them *poto* (socially competent, wise, intelligent) (Morton, 1996).

It was found that with their accumulation of *'ilo* (knowing/knowledge) over time, and with practice in various social contexts, these women established and increased relationships with significant others, thus empowering themselves and transforming their own learning behaviour (Utumapu-McBride, 2004). From being initially hesitant to go to the Language Centre they began to frequent it daily to offer legitimate peripheral participation. They have gone from having limited knowledge about what and how to contribute to their children's *ako* (Moles, 1993) to increasingly developing and understanding (Coxon et al., 1998; Manu'atu, 2000) the practice in a social learning

context; and from insisting that children speak only in Tongan at home, to gradually interacting with them in English and in Tongan, including scaffolding new learning (Greenfield, 1984,1994) and co-constructing with them their learning experiences (Jordan, 2004).

However, although most became confident, self-assured and, to some extent, satisfied with their social, cultural and spiritual contribution to their children's learning in their homes and in church, some were not completely satisfied with their academic contribution or in early childhood centre and primary school settings, despite their new learning and increasing involvement in the centres and some primary schools. As the data revealed, the mother's Christian faith, their 'absorption' in Tongan culture, the centrality of their women's and motherly roles, and their unreserved commitment to involvement in their children's lives all contributed to their operation in and of education as the key to their children's future success. The deep embeddedness of these values, and the mothers' own personal aspiration for their children's *ako*/education became obvious in the women's daily operation in '*Uta-mama*'o.

### **A context for discussion**

I have discussed in Chapter Two, using the *lālānga fala* metaphor as a model to illustrate the complex, multi-faceted nature of the role of Tongan mothers in Tongan society. At the same time, however, it portrayed the equally complicated nature of the Tongan mothers' commitment and participation in their children's education in New Zealand. The model exemplified how these mothers constructed and generated knowledge while creating meaning in their social world, rather than merely discovering it. Through Tongan language and culture in each context they integrated the use of cultural tools, artifacts, knowing, and other representations such as language, signs, and symbols in their roles and responsibilities while establishing and maintaining social relationships.

The interplay of these elements in the women's cultural activities<sup>236</sup> creates a social world that is meaningful to them, that is embedded in their lives, and that provides goals and purposes for them. These activities illustrated how, according to Merttens and

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<sup>236</sup> Activities such as fundraising, *koniseti*, and *fafanga*, in centres and school settings, *misinale*, or *Faka-Mē* in church, or weddings or celebrations in extended family contexts, are examples.

others (1996), when parents are involved, they demonstrate a range of teaching skills.<sup>237</sup> In this regard, through a complex cultural activity, the mothers as experts help children to learn<sup>238</sup> and can achieve a high level of social and cognitive functioning. For Vygotsky, "...the formation of such functioning takes place on two levels; first on the social plane by virtue of social interaction and activity; and second, on the individual plane as internalised cognition" (Merttens et al., 1996, p. 175). This shows what learning is about, and how these Tongan mothers seemed unconsciously to have followed a process of a western model of learning.

### **Contribution in social contexts**

This thesis has been an exploration of Tongan mothers' contribution to their children's *ako* in the three selected contexts, namely, their homes, the centre and primary school settings, and the community. In Chapter Six I explained with details how the mothers contributed directly and indirectly to their children's *ako*, using the three forms of Coleman's family capital theory, namely, physical/financial capital, human capital, and social capital. I found that in the mothers' indirect contribution they ended up interacting directly with the children, explaining processes of domestic tasks, or answering children's questions about events, items at home or demonstrating stories in the Bible, thus contributing directly to their learning. Various examples of Tongan cultural activities where mother and children work together<sup>239</sup> were discussed. The examples of Tongan cultural situations, where the contexts, agents, and pedagogies of learning, in a dynamic and dialectical relationship with each other (Merttens et al., 1996; Rogoff, 1990, 1994, 1995), were also discussed. A reflection of Rogoff's views on embedding of learning within cultural/institutional beliefs and practices comes across very clearly through these examples from the data. This approach is also confirmed by Cullen and Haworth, (in press)<sup>240</sup> in their study of Samoan, Maori, and European children at Wycliffe Nga Tamariki Kindergarten, in Napier. They showed how sociocultural philosophy underpins the curriculum and how this was reflected on the teachers' helping the children to revisit their learning. Within the Tongan mothers' activities the social and status relationships where mothers as experts and children as learners were illustrated in operation (Hatano, 1993; Bodrova & Leong, 1996) the

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<sup>237</sup> E.g., instructing, modelling, demonstrating, narrating, trialling, and even correcting (see Hatano, 1993).

<sup>238</sup> E.g., learning to read, cook, count, act, sing, and so on.

<sup>239</sup> E.g., cooking food for *fafanga*, a get-together of the extended family, or a rehearsal for the *Faka-Me*.

<sup>240</sup> See Language, Culture and Curriculum, 2009, 22(1), pp. 42-55.

Christian faith was employed, and children's active learning took place – all these fit into Vygotsky's model of teaching and learning, and his theory of concept development. It is interesting to witness how a western learning theory can help explain the learning process and engagement of Pacific peoples in cognitive development but in their own native language, and cultural contexts. This is a worthwhile 'multicultural *kakala*' which can be woven by us in education to be worn in modern New Zealand.

I described in Chapter Seven, women's belief about *ako*, and how they approached the centres and primary schools, learned and became familiar with the tasks, then frequented these educational institutions and contributed. The use of Tongan language and culture in the Tongan Language Centre, which attracted the mothers to become involved in daily learning and cultural activities is illustrated (Utumapu-McBride, 2004); some mothers even recruited other mothers to join them, an approach advocated by Scott-Jones (1993) in his proposed bridging school-parents relationship programme in his study of *Families as Educators* in the United States. The thriving involvement of mothers in learning activities, and the engagement of participants in new curriculum learning and in the school culture were positive and developing. This could be seen as a reflection of the Ministry's current attempt to develop learning materials in different Pasifika's languages to enable Pasifika's learners to participate and engage in learning from their own perspectives but share the same '*ilo* (knowledge) with the rest of learners in same levels in this country.

In Chapter Eight, I outlined the enthusiastic involvement of the women in church, and their participation in physical activities, as well as their engagement in inner spiritual experience of their faith. Highlighted in the women's involvement in their children's *ako* in this regard were their empowerment, leadership quality, energized enthusiasm, personal confidence, and the steadfast nature of their involvement in their children's learning, a finding that is well supported by contemporary research in relation to Pacific parents (Coxon & Fusitu'a, 1998; Manu'atu, 2000; Morton-Lee, 2003; Utumapu-McBride, 2004). In this regard, the Tongan mothers appeared to shine – in their faith, in their culture, in their role as family educators and church preachers, and consequently in the manifestation of their dreams for their children's *ako* and success in future – they are aspirations which can be achieved.

The ideas discussed in these chapters can be brought together into five major themes that explain the nature of these mothers' contribution (successful in their eyes) to their children's *ako*. The women's Christian faith; their 'saturated' absorption in and with Tongan culture; the centrality of their role as women and mothers, their total commitment to involvement in their children's lives; which together lead to their long-held belief that education is the key to successful future of their children's *ako*. These themes are discussed in relation to contemporary literature, the Tongan conceptual framework, and the findings – "all are connected by their sharp view of women's lives in this complex site of both belonging and struggle" (Jones, 1997, p. 6). A brief elaboration on the themes will help us understand what each means and what encapsulates in them.

### **Themes that energise the mothers' contribution**

#### *Mothers' strong Christian faith*

It was revealed in the study that all the women had strong Christian faith, which was manifested in a number of ways; their constant desire to include a *lotu* (devotion) component in the centre's daily programme; the integration of Sunday school lessons and learning in the Tongan Early Childhood Centre's daily programme; the decision to appoint practicing Christians as teachers to the staff. The mothers' daily volunteering to help teachers, parents and children (Coxon et al., 1998; Manu'atu, 2000), to establish warm relationships from *feohi*, and to share and learn from one another as a group was also a major factor. It was also evident in the majority's choice of Christian values that 'God is to be the central figure of their family lives' (Morton-Lee, 2003), which included daily family devotion, reading and memorising Bible verses, and participating in spiritual activities in church. That their Christian faith was present with them in each context was in part due to their personal conviction to live it, and to the fact that each of the institutions had a spiritual component to its daily function. So the daily lived experiences of these women were centred on their values and practice of Tongan culture, which shaped and was shaped by them, hence their attraction to the Tongan Language Centre, the church and other social contexts where Tongan cultural influence was apparent. This point is consistent with sociocultural theory's focus on embeddedness of learning in social/cultural practices and institutions (Rogoff, 1991).

### *Absorption and immersion in Tongan culture*

The mothers' 'saturated' absorption/immersion in and with Tongan culture was the result of their social background and upbringing where their respective families planted the seeds of Tongan cultural values and beliefs, and nurtured them through practice in their daily lives (Halapua, 1997), and in special social functions in valued contexts (Thaman, 1988). This issue is well documented in literature (Rogers, 1975; Marcus, 1980; Bott, 1982; Thaman, 1988; Kaeppler, 1990; Helu, 1999). The data revealed that through daily routines mothers taught their children Tongan language and values so they were lived<sup>241</sup> accordingly in the family (Marcus, 1980; Kaeppler, 1990). In social functions<sup>242</sup> the extended family or *ha'a*<sup>243</sup> perform their responsibilities and fulfill their obligations according to the status relationship both of the individual and the collective. They bring *koloa* to contribute, which are later distributed to the community by a superior figure. The children are involved,<sup>244</sup> obligation is explained by adults, and on other occasions they participate and learn from adults' modeling.

What is important is that the contexts, agents, and pedagogies of learning are present in a dynamic relationship with each other. This is what Vygotsky (1986) referred to as the 'scientific' concept/knowledge, which comes down from adults and the 'spontaneous' concept, which emerges from the child's ideas or 'inner-self'.<sup>245</sup> This is what Vygotsky focused on in developing his teaching and learning theory (Merttens et al., 1996). What I am arguing here is that if the mothers' knowledge, experience, and practice of Tongan culture<sup>246</sup> can be transferred to their contribution to their children's education, the positive effects of these on the children's educational achievement would be immense. The social networks between the parties<sup>247</sup> would be strong, the reciprocity of relationships between mothers and teachers strengthened, and the interconnectedness based on acceptance and understanding between home and school would be comprehensively healthy. This approach is advocated by Seeley (1993) in his proposed

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<sup>241</sup> E.g., *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *talangofua* (obedience), *tauhi vaha'a* (status relationships), and *fatongia* (obligation), and *'ofa* (love, compassion), *mateaki* (loyalty), *fakatō-ki-lalo* (humility) among others.

<sup>242</sup> E.g., weddings, birthdays, celebrations or funerals have the individuals involve in their role.

<sup>243</sup><sup>243</sup> *ha'a* means people, race, tribe or clan

<sup>244</sup> They watch, listen, participate, and internalise the process, contents, dialogue in the activities.

<sup>245</sup> I insert this term because this is what it means to me.

<sup>246</sup> This includes their cultural role and responsibilities, their *mafana* (warm feeling) and *malie* (excitement), and their enthusiasm about and commitment to their social obligations.

<sup>247</sup> The parties involved include parents, teachers/educators, church and community leaders, home and school.

paradigm for parental involvement in children's education in England, and by Dorothy Rich (1993) in her proposed building bridges to reach out to minority parents in the United States.

### *Contribution through mothers' role*

It was also revealed that the centrality of the women's role was an important dimension in their contribution to children's *ako*. Believing that 'children are the most important things in the world' (Morton, 1996), all the mothers nurtured their children's social, physical, psychological, and intellectual needs as part of their basic responsibilities (Morton 1996; Finau, 1997), a point that challenges the western notion of equality and division of labour, but reinforces a basic belief in Polynesia and world wide. The mothers' provisions to meet the daily physical, social and emotional needs of the children strengthened the mother-child bond,<sup>248</sup> and also preserved the family unit. As soon as mothers were able to they worked in paid employment to support the family, pay for school activities, and sent money to help relatives in Tonga (James, 1991; Vete, 1995; Brown, 1994), a practice that challenges the western notion of individualism and financial independence, but preserves the mother-child bond that was taught to these women by their own mothers. Again, this same teaching caused these mothers to herd their offspring to church on Sundays to learn about spiritual matters and moral education in ways similar to those taught to them by their mothers.

Being responsible to their husbands and *affines*, the mothers performed in their status relationships within their nuclear and extended family. Embedded in their lives, the women practised these values, and participated in social functions in valued contexts to model to their children, especially daughters, what a good mother in the Tongan sense, ought to be. While this is an ideal model in traditional Tongan (Kupu, 1989), it challenges the modern role of women (or role of modern women), and mothers as perceived in New Zealand.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> The children were reminded by members of the nuclear and extended families to take note of the '*ofa faka-fa'e*' (unconditional love of a mother). This occurred during family devotion time and when the mother felt tired and needed moral support from the family.

<sup>249</sup> Let alone that of feminists', single professional women's, and the like.

### *Commitment to involvement in children's lives*

The data generated in the three contexts of home, school and the community, revealed that the mothers, through their daily lived experiences, were committed to involvement in their children's lives,<sup>250</sup> as a powerful influence of their cultural background (Bott,1982; Helu, 1999a; Latukefu,1980), their past educational experience (Thaman, 1988), and their Christian faith (Mafi, 1997; Kupu, 1989). Having witnessed how their own parents had nurtured the physical, social and spiritual being of their offspring, the participants reproduced these actions – only better than their parents had. They migrated to New Zealand (Legat, 1988; Halapua, 1997; Lafitani, 1998) to give their children a better lifestyle and the overseas education that promoted Tongan commoners to chiefly positions with social status as lived in Tonga. Once in Aotearoa, the mothers (and fathers) worked in two or more jobs to earn enough for the families here and in Tonga; they taught Tongan language and culture and worthwhile knowledge and values associated with the culture; in recent years mothers have enrolled their children in Christian schools with religious dimensions that reinforced Tongan values, a practice that Frengley-Vaipuna (2007) found in her study of Tongan gifted students in New Zealand, although this is in contrast to Morton-Lee's (2003) findings with Tongan students in Melbourne, Australia. The need to be proud of their children's achievement and to praise the family's contribution to the children's education is incomplete without belonging and participating in church activities. Here the mothers take their children to church each Sunday for moral education and spiritual experiences, because it is there that opportunities for development of talents such as reading, reciting, public speaking, and leadership training, are available. These are the things that constitute a good mother, and to which they wanted to commit themselves.<sup>251</sup>

### *Ako/education is key to children's future success*

It was obvious from the data generated in the three contexts that the women had 'natural' instinct to contribute to their children's education. Their strong and firm Christian faith, their absorption and enmeshing in Tongan culture with a firm stronghold in their women's/ mother's role, and their unreserved commitment to involvement in their children's lives underlined their belief that *ako*/learning/education

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<sup>250</sup> Even before they were born, as described in Chapter Two.

<sup>251</sup> It is often remarked among families, *ko e ako mo e lotu kae mālohi ha fonua* (it is education and Christianity that strengthen a nation).

is the key to the future success of their children in New Zealand. They practised different kinds of input into their children's learning to make that learning successful. They told stories and read to the children at home,<sup>252</sup> a practice that is well documented in the literature (Epstein, 1983; Chavkin, 1993; Burgess, 2006; McNaughton et al., 1996; Garcia. (n.d.)) both English and Tongan; and they helped with their homework<sup>253</sup> and their lessons from Sunday school. It was also revealed that they contributed indirectly to their children's *ako* by participating in their educational institutions' fundraising<sup>254</sup> in the community functions.

Consequently, they make a commitment to involvement in the children's general education in and out of home and school, and directly engaged in the actual learning process of the children. This is the ultimate contribution they can directly make to their children's *ako* in New Zealand. It makes sense that these themes, when in operation, clearly indicate that for these mothers education is the key to future success for their children in New Zealand.

### **Themes in action**

These themes consistently made their presence felt in the mothers' contribution to children's *ako* within the three selected contexts. In order to understand how this works, it would be useful to consider the interconnected nature of these themes. First, the women's Christian faith is embedded in their selves; it was planted in them from a young age, and over time, has been nurtured by replenishing some aspects of it and by reinforcing others through social changes that challenge or strength their faith. As a result the women have steadfast Christian faith; they know that it is their faith, what it means, and what and how it is to be lived.

Second, they know their women's role within the nuclear and the extended family, in the early childhood centre and school settings, in church and the community. They know what to do, how, with whom, the social and status relationships they must establish and maintain, and the social obligations they must fulfill according to the

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<sup>252</sup> This also includes storytelling, chanting, asking questions, and some written work based on these stories.

<sup>253</sup> These include language, spelling, mathematics, times tables, and even their Sunday school lessons and rehearsals.

<sup>254</sup> These include PTA meetings, fundraising, and other activities in the community.

needs and demands of each context. Third, their 'saturated' absorption in Tongan culture and language is solid, concrete and strong; they know the Tongan cultural values, beliefs and practices, and what to do in each valued context (Thaman, 1988). Fourth, the children to whose *ako*/education they are contributing are their very own flesh and blood, they have a natural instinct to help and support them, the best they can (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Loner & Malpass, 1994; Rennie, 1996; Pugh, 1996). It is assumed that the children's education will receive motherly warmth, parental support and understanding, with moral values that underpin teaching given by parents.

So the interplay of the elements within each of these themes in the women's contribution to their children's *ako* can be explained. As with a *kakala* making exercise, the flowers are sorted out as 'strands' and added on in small mixtures as they are woven together. By illustrating how they interact and work collaboratively with the children, the mothers use cultural tools in social contexts; interacting reciprocally with others in social and status relationships they create for learning, an approach that is emphasized by Vygotsky, (1978) and advocated by Rogoff, (Vygotsky, 1978; Chavkin, 1993; Rennie, 1996; Rogoff, 2003).

It was revealed in the study, that for the children's school work, the mothers help with reading, discuss the stories, look at words, phrases, and sentences, and clarify them, an approach within which Wolfgramm (1998) advocated specific reading techniques with steps to take and resources to use that are suitable for Tongan mothers using Tongan language and Tongan reading materials in family and church contexts (McNaughton, 1995; Wolfgramm, 1998). In addition to other materials the Tongan mothers used the Tongan Bible for reading, either choosing stories for child to read or reading them to the child. The mother and child then discussed the story (Heath et al., 1986; McNaughton, 1995; Ministry of Education, 1996), highlighting the moral teachings in it, as the mother felt it was her role as a mother to *akonaki* (advice, counsel) the child about good behaviour, a deed advocated by Kessler (2000) in working with children in classroom. This was done with the child sitting respectfully in the Tongan way according to gender; a practice Morton (1996) found was exercised almost religiously in some families in Tonga. The examples the mothers and children used to clarify the meaning or to apply to relevant situations for the learner were Tongan examples. Examples such as the Sermon on the Mount were used and included the Tongan values, *faka'apa'apa*

(respect), *ofa* (love), *talangofua*, (obedience), *fatongia* (obligation, responsibility), a list of important Tongan cultural values that Frengley-Vaipuna (2007) found was very much a part of what Tongan gifted students in New Zealand had to learn to nurture their Tongan identity.

By the end of a single session the mother had indicated and explained all the themes mentioned, and when she moved from home to the early childhood centre and the school settings, or to Sunday school in church and repeated this in a similar task, the same holistic approach was achieved. As the child learnt, the mother implemented the qualities she possessed, the knowledge of her role and the Tongan culture and language, and her commitment to be involved in her child's learning. This one example, although simplistic, shows how education is operated by and is operating among these Tongan mothers. It amounts to their belief that education is the key to her child's future success in *ako*.

These examples of the contribution of Tongan mothers are related to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in two ways. One is illustrated by this quote from Vygotsky (1978, p. 128, cited in Merttens et al. 1996, p. 173): "Every function in the cultural development of the child appears on the stage twice, on two planes. First, on the social plane, and then on the psychological; first, between people, and then, inside the child."

Vygotsky's emphasis on the part of 'adults' as experts, 'caregivers', and more knowledgeable than children gives way to a mother's role in collaborative learning seems to fit in with Tongan practice in this study. Rogoff (1994) picked up this notion and developed it. This topic is also closely related to Kessler's (2000) seven gateways to spirituality in education, an approach that is very likely to be accepted and adopted by both Tongan parents and teachers of Tongan children in New Zealand.

### **Limitations to the study**

The limitations of the present study can be defined as follows:

- The study was concentrated in one specific geographical area and therefore cannot be generalisable; however, as it is an in-depth study, findings and insights can be applied to other areas or groups.
- The social status of the researcher among the Tongan community in *'Uta-mama'* o

could have influenced the participants' responses in the interview and Talanoa.

- While Tongan society is hierarchical and has been acknowledged as such throughout the thesis, it is nevertheless hard to ensure this has been given due recognition.
- This study could be seen as a 'snapshot' in time as the fieldwork was carried out in 2004–2005, but because so little research has been undertaken with this group, such a picture could be viewed as a strength. for future research in this area. The data collected from this study could be revisited to see whether this snapshot could be reinterpreted 1) according to the developmental changes that will have occurred; and 2) according to a different generational perspective of the same topic with similar issues.

### **Contribution to future research**

- As no literature exists specifically concerning Tongan mothers and their involvement in their children's *ako*, it would be worthwhile building on this research to examine how children learn and develop when teachers acquire knowledge and understanding of mothers' *anga faka-Tonga* (Tongan culture and practice) and how they help young children learn in these contexts.
- The data collected from this study could be revisited to explore whether this snapshot could be reinterpreted 1) according to the developmental changes that will have occurred; and 2) according to a different generation perspective of the same topic with similar issues.
- A similar type of research could be carried out in any town or urban area in New Zealand to investigate similarities and differences between:
  - mothers from different Pasifika ethnic groups and how they make contributions to their children's education.
  - the contributions of urban and rural mothers to their children's education.
  - Pasifika "religious" mothers and non-religious mothers and how they contribute to their children's education.
  - Pasifika working-class and middle-class mothers and their contributions to children's education.
  - working mothers and unemployed mothers and their types of contribution.

- children of different age groups, different genders, or different socio-economic status.
- research and literature on all aspects of Pasifika life needs to be expanded.
- Similarly, research is possible on how Pasifika mothers or caregivers interact with their children bilingually, and how they interact with each other, when learning is based on a particular curriculum area. Such directions of research will provide teachers, educators, mothers (and parents) and children, an insight into the complex nature of various dimensions of learning in different languages, cultures, values and understandings in a range of contexts that may be unfamiliar to most New Zealanders.

### **Implications for the parties involved**

Implications for women in the present study and their contribution to their children's education in New Zealand are derived from the process of the research as well as the findings that have been identified. This includes the Tongan mothers themselves, as well as teachers and educators, and policymakers.

### ***Implications for Tongan mothers***

For Tongan mothers it is important that they reconsider their position and their ability to be involved as tutors in the centres and primary schools. Their rights and responsibilities will involve understanding the tasks from school/centre, the techniques to use, and the willingness to commit to such involvement. Given that most of the mothers are now familiar with the learning and teaching contexts, the centre or school culture, the role of the teacher, and the resources available, and given that they have demonstrated an ability to assist their children in reading, spelling, mathematics, and memory verses, and other similar tasks, it is vital that they consider receiving proper training in tutoring. This needs to be made available. Such training will enable them to work in a team, collaboratively or co-learners with children or other parents as support mechanisms to help their own and other children, both at school and at home (Gorinski, 2005).

That some mothers have unconsciously followed sociocultural theory, have worked in shared activities, and have had valuable experience in helping with reading, social studies and sports at school, and that others have observed teachers' teaching in early

childhood centres, and that both have taken these strategies and used them at home to gain positive results with their children, is testimony to their positive experiences in classroom. It is also important for these mothers to consider training in bilingual learning and teaching as they will continue to work with their children in bilingual situations.

### ***Implications for teachers and educators***

It is vitally important for teachers and educators to be aware of the cultural background of children and their mothers, to accommodate their needs, to build good relationships, and to recruit them to be involved in school activities where they can support their children's learning. If they teach Tongan children, it is also essential that they understand *anga faka-Tonga* or some aspects of it so that the families with whom they come in contact feel accepted and understood and want to attend and contribute to their children's education in different ways at school or centre.

It would also be useful if the teachers and educators used effective means of cultural communication to make contact with Tongan mothers, especially those mothers with limited knowledge of English, to make them feel comfortable about being included in school activities. Most Tongan mothers have skills ranging from helping with manual tasks outside, to supervising children and helping with learning tasks in the classroom, and this is an asset of which teachers and educators could make use. When mothers and parents from other cultures contribute to classroom learning, the wealth of knowledge they bring with them can only be an advantage to the resources for learning. Because Tongan mothers have multi-roles in the homes, church and community they can bridge the gap between home and school in relation to their children's learning.

### **Implications for policymakers**

Policymakers at the local and national levels of the New Zealand education system have a significant role to play in designing policies for schools and centres with regards to Pacific education. The Ministry of Education has a Pacific Education Division and it is vital that they are aware of the challenges faced by all Pacific peoples in education in New Zealand. With regards to Tongan mothers and their contribution to their children's education, this thesis has identified the following implications for the Ministry's policymakers.

- A major problem in dealing with the term ‘Pacific’ in this area is that it includes all the Pacific nations, so all the groups, including the Tongans, are homogenized.
- There is an urgent need for qualified Tongan educators and teachers to be recruited to work in schools and centres with Pacific students. They need to be able to speak Tongan so that they teach Tongan children/students in a range of subjects, to cater for diversity in New Zealand.
- There is a need for in-service workshops and pre-service training to provide opportunities for mainstream educators and non-Pacific teachers to learn specific skills and techniques on how to teach children/students and involve parents of Pacific origin at school.
- There is a need for administrators and coordinators who could work in schools and centres along with community and church leaders to integrate the activities in school, church and community, and to use these for children’s learning of the curriculum both in and out of the classroom.
- There is a compelling need for appropriate resources to be used for the teaching of these students across all levels and across all curriculum areas.

## **Conclusion**

In answering the question, what, how, and why Tongan mothers contribute to their children’s ako/learning and education in New Zealand, this thesis has answered and argued that Tongan mothers **do** contribute to their children’s education in New Zealand, that their contributions **are based mainly on their cultural knowledge and educational experiences gained in Tonga, and their ongoing Christian faith, and added to these are their new learning in New Zealand.** I have illustrated these with reference to the relevant literature reviewed; a comprehensive and culturally appropriate empirical study with an appropriate methodological approach, detailed methods and well designed instruments to answer the research questions. I have shown clearly how the procedure involved in data collection, preparation and the analysis; and the discussion of the findings and what their limitations and implications are. So there are well-researched answers to the research question.

Now that I have reached this point, I sit back and reflect on my journey – what I thought I set out to look for and what I think I have found. I was led by my personal desire and

curiosity to find out what, how and why Tongan mothers contribute or assist their children in their learning in New Zealand. After all, some of them left behind the families they love, a well secured job they enjoyed, a comfortable home on land they own, and responsibilities to the church and community to which they belonged. When I witnessed some of them struggling through pain in trying to give the best they could to their children but not always able to do, I was energized and my interest in the subject increased to find out what, how and they contribute to their children's *ako*.

I was looking for some explanations and perhaps solutions; I searched nationally and internationally and eventually landed amongst this group of women in 'Uta-mama'o. We began my *tolu kakala* (picking flowers) for their contribution to their children's *ako*/learning and education with them from 2004 to 2005. Since then we have been threading and weaving garlands with while sharing ideas, skills and knowing/knowledge about western ways and *to'onga faka-Tonga* in the process. I found they picked both the *kakala* with which they are familiar and some of the *kakala* they know were from their own cultural background in Tonga, their educational experience that they had brought with them and added to others they had picked up in New Zealand. The techniques they used in weaving them, I observed, were a mixture of what they brought from Tonga and what they have since learned here.

I shared with them some of the knowing I gained from reading about approaches to *ako* as practised in the western world, and I introduced to them some ideas from Vygotsky, Rogoff, Cummins, and even some specifically New Zealand ones, for example by Jordan on scaffolding and co-constructing in children's learning, and by Bevan-Brown on Maori children's learning and a few others.

What I found is that these women weave their garlands mainly with what they were given and brought with them from Tonga, but they also seem to replenish their materials for weaving garlands with their Christian faith, their immersion in their culture and their commitment to their children's *ako* and their own desire to learn by following their children to the learning institutions in this area. Given that they live in New Zealand contexts and possess the intellectual capabilities they have, I believe their strong faith in that what/who they are and what they do will make up the required combination to help their children's learning.

## Epilogue

This group have taught me so much. It has been an incredibly rich journey. Having seen what I found in the journey, I now believe there is a promising future for them and their children. My small contribution of *kakala* is dedicated to them.

The *kakala* making for/of Tongan mothers' contribution to their children's education in New Zealand concludes with Thaman's poem:

Come  
take this *kakala*  
sacred symbol of our oneness  
tie it tightly around you  
where it will remain fresh  
in the nourishing flow  
only the sky knows

From: '*Kakala folau*' (Thaman, 1999)

Tu'a 'Ofa atu.

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## KO E LUKULUKU 'A E KAU FA'Ē TONGA' KI HE AKO 'ENAU FĀNAU' 'I NU'U SILA

### Tohi Fakamatala

Mālō e lelei!

Fakatulou atu, pea tapu mo hou'eiki, mo kimoutolu kātoa, kae fai atu e ki'i fakahoha'a ni. Talangata 'iate au 'o fai ki tu'a mama'o, kae 'atā ke 'oatu 'a e fakamatala ni.

Ko hoku hingoa' ko **Lesieli Kupu MacIntyre**, mei Kolomotu'a, 'i Tonga. Oku ou ngāue 'i he Univesiti ko Massey, Palmerston North. Pea ko 'eku kole ke ke kau mai mu'a ki he fekumi 'o kau ki he "Lukuluku 'a e Kau Fa'ē Tonga' ki he Ako 'enau Fānau 'i Nu'u Sila'". Ko 'eku telefoni: 'Univesiti Massey: 3569099 (Ext 8735)

Ko 'eku ongo Supavaisa' ko:

Dr Judith Loveridge, Learning & Teaching Department, Ph 3569099 (Extn 8957)

Dr Marg Gilling, Social & Policy Studies in Education. Ph 3569099 (Extn 6662).

Te ke lava 'o fetu'u taki ki ongo faiako ni, lolotonga 'a e taimi ngāue.

Ko e 'uhinga 'o e fakatotolo ni ke ma'u ha fakamatala pau ki he anga 'o e tokoni 'a e fa'ē ki he 'enau fānau iiki 'i Nu'u Sila ni; mo 'enau fengāu'aki, fetu'utaki, feako'aki mo fepōtalanoa'aki 'oku tokoni ki he ako 'a e longa'i fānau 'api, mo e e ngaahi feitu'u kehe'.

Ko e fekumi ni, 'e kau ai 'a e faka'eke'eke 'i he lea faka-Tonga', pe faka-Pālangi', fakatefito he founga te ke fili ki ai'. Ko e faka'eke'eke' 'e houa 'e taha, mo ha ngaahi houa talanoa 'a mui ange, 'o ka fiema'u ke fakama'ala'ala ha ngaahi me'a 'e ta'emahino. 'Oku faka'amu ke fai eni 'i ha taimi mo e feitu'u te ke loto ki ai'. 'Oku faka'amu foki ke ke loto ke observe (mamata'i) koe 'i ha feitu'u pē 'oku ke loto ke oberve ai koe 'e he taha fakatotolo', hangē ko e sipoti', kulupu va'inga, senitā, pē 'i lokiako. Lolotonga 'a e faka'eke'eke', 'oku 'i ai ho'o totonu ke:

- fakafisi ke 'oua 'e kau ki he fakatotolo ni
- ke nofo mei ke kau ki he faka'eke'eke'
- fakafisi ke ke tali ha fehu'i
- 'eke ha fa'ahinga fehu'i pē 'o kau ki he fakatotolo ni

- 'omi ha ngaahi fakamatala, 'i he 'ilo pau 'e tauhi 'a e fakapulipuli 'o e fakamatala ko ia
- 'oatu kia koe 'a e fakamatala fakalukufua 'o e fakatotolo ni.

Kapau te ke loto ke ke kau mai ki he fakatotolo ni, 'e fai leva ha fokotu'utu'u 'o kau ki he faka'eke'eke', pea hoko atu ki mamata'i koe mo ho'o tamasi'i mo e feitu'u 'oku ke loto ki ai'.

'Oku 'i ai e faka'amu ke kau 'a e hiki tepi' 'o ho'o fakamatala'. 'I he lototonga 'o e faka'eke'eke, 'oku 'i ai ho'o totonu ke ke fakafisi ke tali ha ngaahi fehu'i pe nofo mei he faka'eke'eke 'i ha fa'ahinga taimi pē.

'Oku 'i ai ho'o totonu ke ke sio ki he ngaahi fakamatala kuo ke fai, 'o liliu, pe t'ānaki atu ki ai.

'Oku faka'amu foki ke ke loto ke faka'ata 'a e tokotaha fakatotolo, ki hono mamata'I koe mo ho'o fetu'uaki mo ho'o tamasi'i pe ta'ahine 'i ha ngaahi feitu'u te ke loto ki ai. 'E hoko eni 'i ha houa 'e taha, tu'o tolu 'i he lototonga 'o e taimi fakatotolo 'o e Fekumi ni.

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Faka'apa'apa atu

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## APPENDIX B



# Massey University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Te Kupenga o Te Mātauranga

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND  
POLICY STUDIES IN EDUCATION  
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## Tongan Mothers' Contribution to their Children's Education in New Zealand

### INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Lesieli Kupu MacIntyre from Kolomotu'a, Tonga. Currently, I am a lecturer at Massey University College of Education, Palmerston North. I am doing this research for a Ph. D. degree. This study will look at the contributions Tongan mothers make towards the education of their children in New Zealand. The study will explore how Tongan mothers do this at home as well as out of home, and the family.

My supervisors are Dr Judith Loveridge, Hokowhitu Campus, Palmerston North, and Dr Marg Gilling, Wellington Campus. If you have queries, we can be contacted at the University in the following numbers:

Lesieli MacIntyre	Ph.(06) 3569099	Ext 8735
Dr Judith Loveridge	Ph (06) 3569099	Ext 8957
Dr Marg Gilling	Ph (06) 3569099	Ext 6662

You are invited to participate in the study by taking part in a semi-structured interview of up to two hours, at three different times during the course of the research.

This will take place when and where as you choose. The interviews and your answers could be in either Tongan or English, depending on your choice. The interviews will be tape recorded after receiving your permission, and the tapes will be transcribed, put on disk, and printed, and analysed for the purpose of the study. During the research period, you have the right to:

- decline to participate;
- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any stage;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

If you agree to participate, we will make arrangements to collect personal information which will be used to construct a group profile of the participants. You will not be able to be identified. The interviews at a time and place of your choice will also be arranged.

You will also be invited to agree to be observed with your child / children in a range of contexts of your choice while contributing to your child/children's education. These contexts may include watching with your sports in which your child/children play, or in their Sunday School sessions, their play group, Tongan community functions, an/or

other activities of your choice. You will only be observed in those contexts that you suggest or agree to, and again, you and your child/children will not be able to be identified.

During the interview you may also ask for the tape to be turned off at any time during the interview, or refuse to answer any particular question. All tapes, transcripts and field notes will be locked away securely and separately, in my office and can only be accessed by myself, and the supervisors if need be. In these information your identity will not be able to be identified as they will be coded (with numbers and no names attached), unless your permission is received that you can be identified.

At the conclusion of the study the tapes will be returned to you, otherwise your permission will be sought for them to be stored in the Social Science Archives of the University.

The study will be written up as part of a thesis, and of articles in educational journals and as such will be publicly available. The general findings of the research will be shared in small groups, and some churches in Palmerston. If you like I will send you a summary of the findings, and you may also read the full report in the university library.

A small contribution will be made towards your transport cost if you need to travel to the interview place or to the contexts of the observations, and towards morning and afternoon tea and meals we share together during the interviews and observation times.

I am available by phone and would be happy to talk with you about this study, and answer any questions you may have.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Protocol 03/40. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee, Palmerston North, telephone 06 3505249, email [S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz](mailto:S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz).

Lesieli Kupu MacIntyre  
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Lesieli.

## APPENDIX C

### KOE LUKULUKU 'A E KAU FA'E TONGA KI HE AKO 'EMAU FANAU 'I NU'U SILA

#### LOTO KE KAU FAKA'EKE'EKE

Kuo u lau 'a e Tohi Fakamatala ki he fakatotolo ni, pea kuo fakamatala'i mai 'a e fakaikiiki 'o e ngaue ni, pea 'osi tali fakafiemalie foci mo 'eku ngaahi fehu'i 'o kau ki ai. 'Oku mahino kiate au te u lava 'o 'eke ha fa'ahinga fehu'i kehekehe pe 'i ha taimi pe 'i he kaha'u.

'Oku mahino kiate au 'e lave pe ke u nofo mei he faka'eke'eke nip e te u fakafisi ke tali he fehu'i pe kongha ha fehu'i 'i he fakatotolo ni. 'Oku ou loto ke 'oatue e ngaahi fakamatala ni ki he tokotaha fakatotolo, 'i he femahino'aki mo e falala ten e tauhi mo faka'apa'apa'i 'a e mahu'inga mo e malu'i ke 'oua 'e fakaha noa'ia au, mo e ngaahi fakamatala ni ki ha kakai kehe ta'e tomu'a te u loto ki ai.

'Oku ou loto ke ngaue'aki 'a e fakamatala ki he fakatotolo ni, ngaahi semina, fakamatala fakapolofesinale 'i ha tohi pe pelusi mo paaki'i ha ngaahi makasini 'i he kaha'u, kaikehe pe 'oku 'ikai lava 'o tala ko hai au.

'Oku ou loto/ ta'e loto ke hiki tepi 'a e faka'eke'eke ni.

'Oku mahino foci kiate au te u lave 'o kole ke tamate'i 'a e tepi 'i ha kongha pe ngaahi kongha lolotonga 'o e faka'eke'eke. Pea teu lave 'o kole ke fakafoki mai e tepi ke u tauhi, pe ko 'eku loto ke faka'auha, pe tauhi he Archive 'a e Univesiti Massey.

'Oku ou loto ke u kau ki he faka'eke'eke o faitefito 'i he Tohi Fakamatala.

Kuo 'osi vakai'I mo faka'ata 'e he Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Protocol 03/40 'a e fakatotolo ko eni. Kapau 'oku 'I ai ha'o ngaahi fehu'I kau ki he fakatotolo ni. Pea ke fetu'uaki kia Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair Massey University Campur Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North, telephone 06 3505249, email: [S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz](mailto:S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz).

Fakamo'oni hingoa: .....

Hingoa: .....

'Aho: .....

**APPENDIX D**

**TONGAN MOTHERS' CONTRIBUTION TO THEIR  
CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND**

**CONSENT FORM**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researchers on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission. The information will be used only for this research, seminars and publications arising from this research project.

I agree/ do not agree to the interview being audio / video taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio / video tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I understand that: (please tick the *appropriate box*)

I can ask for the tapes to be returned to me

With my permission the tapes will be destroyed

The tapes will be archives at the University Archive

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Protocol 03/40. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee, Palmerston North, telephone 06 3505249, email [S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz](mailto:S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz).

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: .....

Name: .....

Date: .....

## APPENDIX E

### Ko e ngaahi fehu'i ki he Faka'eke'eke/ interview

1. Fakamatala mai 'o kau ki ho'o fuofua ha'u ki Nu'u Sila ni, pe ko ho'o tupu hake 'i Nu'u Sila ni?
2. Talanoa mai ange ki ho'o tupu hake, ho'o ako, mo ho'o 'ilo ki he ngaahi founa tokoni ki he ako 'a e ngaahi famili Tonga 'i Nu'u Sila ni?
3. Talanoa mai ange ki ho'o ngaahi tui mo e fakakaukau kau ki he tokoni'i 'o e ako 'o ho'o fanau 'i he 'enau 'i he ta'u iiki ko eni.
4. Fakamatala mai ange ko e ha e ngaahi me'a 'oku hoko faka'aho he pongipongi 'i ho famili, 'i ho'o ako'i e tamasi'i pe ta'ahine ke fai e ngaahi me'a pau 'o e mo'ui faka'aho.
5. Fakamatala mai ange ko e ha e ngaahi me'a 'oku hoko he lolotonga 'o e 'aho taki taha 'i ho'o feohi mo ho'o tamasi'i pe ta'ahine.
6. Fakamatala mai ange ko e ha e ngaahi me'a pau 'oku hoko he efiefi 'i ho'o fengae'aki, fetu'utaki, mo feako'aki mo ho'o tamasi'i pe ta'ahine,
7. Fakamatala mai ange ki he ngaahi me'a 'oku hoko pe 'oku mou kau ki ai 'i he weekend 'i 'api.
8. Talanoa mai ange ki he anga ho'o fakakaukau mo ho'o palani ke fengae'aki mo ho'o tamasi'i pe ta'ahine 'i 'api. Ko e ha e ngaahi me'a 'oku ke faka'amu ke hoko?
9. Talanoa mai ange ki he anga ho'o fepotalanoa mo ho'o tama 'i he taimi kai, taimi 'oku 'i ai ai 'a e kau memipa kehe 'o e famili, taimi 'oku mo toko ua ai? 'Oku fefe ho'o mo talanoa?.
10. Talanoa mai ange ki he anga 'o ho'o mo fetu'utaki mo ho'o tama, 'i he ngaahi feitu'u kehe mei 'api, hange ko e taimi lotu, Lautohi faka-Sapate,
  - taimi fai fakatau,
  - taimi 'oku ke 'ave ai ki ha sipoti pe leseni kehe
  - taimi 'oku ke 'a'ahi ai ki hono ngaahi kaume'a, pe 'oku nau omi ki ho fale.
11. Talanoa mai ange ki he tu'olahi mo e anga ho'o 'a'ahi ki he senita mo e anga ho'o mo fetu'utaki mo ia 'i he lokiako, pe senita, he taimi 'oku ke 'alu ai ki ai.
12. Fakamatala mai ange ki he ngaahi me'a pe fokotu'utu'u kai ki he tamasi'i he taimi 'oku ke mama'o pe mo'ua ai, Ko hai 'oku ne fai e ngaahi tokoni ma'ana, pea 'oku hoko fefe 'a e ngaahi me'a ko ia.

Fakamalo atu 'aupito ki ho taimi kuo ke tuku mai ki he faka'eke'eke.

## APPENDIX F

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(The Tonga version will be rephrased for the participants to comprehend it well)

- a brief explanation of the study, and established where in Tonga each of us came from, the family, village, church and school. This is to establish our link before we start.

#### **A. Life History and Own Educational experiences:**

1. Would you like to share with me how you first came to New Zealand, or how you grew up in your Tongan family here in New Zealand? Tell me, if you like, about your early experiences, with family, friends and relatives.
2. Could you please tell me about your 'learning experiences' as a child here or in Tonga, in different contexts that you remember. Reflecting on these, how did you go about 'learning' what you learned?
3. Could you tell me about your beliefs about your contributions to your children's learning in general, at this young age they are in.

#### **B. Contributions to Children's Education:**

- 4-6. Tell me about daily routines of the things you do with and the child does at home, and how you contribute to these, in the morning, during the day, and afternoon, and evening and night?
7. Would you like to share with me what happens in the weekend and how you and your child and the family occupy yourselves?
8. Could you like to share with me how you plan activities for the children, and what you wish for them to achieve (social etiquettes, values, principles and beliefs) with the family and / or with others at home?
9. How do you communicate and interact with your child, children, family, during meal times, with other members of the family, with visitors or when you two are alone together. Tell me what happens when you are with them , away from home.
10. Tell me how you interact with your children and what normally happens when you go shopping, attend sports or other activities, to take him/her to friends (of yours or theirs) and when friends come to you.
11. Tell me what happens when you visit the centre or classroom. How do you communicate with teachers and with the child in these contexts?
12. If you go to church, tell me what happens there with you and the child in that context. When you don't go, what happens at home, who does what?

I thank you for your time.

APPENDIX G



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**KOE LUKULUKU 'A E KAU FA'E TONGA  
KI HE AKO 'EMAU FANAU 'I NU'U SILA**

**LOTO KE MAMATA'I 'E HE TAHA FAKATOTOLO**

'Oku ou loto ke faka'ataa 'a e tokotaha fakatotoLO ke mamata kiate au mo 'eku lukuluku 'i he'eku fetu'uaki, fenāgue'aki, feako'aki mo 'eku tamasi'i pe ta'ahine 'i he ngaahi feitu'u kuo ma felotoi ki ai. Ko e mamata'i ko eni ki he'eku fengāue'aki mo 'eku tamasi'i pe ta'ahine ke 'oua 'e to e laka hake 'i he houa 'e taha, pea ke hoko eni tu'o tolu 'i he lolotonga 'o e taimi fakatotoLO.

'Oku ou loto foki ke hiki ha fakamatala kau ki ai, pea ke lava ke u lau mo fepōtalanoa'aki mo e tokotaha fakatotoLO kau ki he lekooti 'e ma'u mei ai.

'Oku mahino 'oku 'i ai 'eku totonu ke u kole ke ta'ofi 'a e mamata'i ko eni 'i ha taimi pē lolotonga 'a e taimi mamata.

Fakamo'oni hingoa: .....

Hingoa: .....

'Aho: .....

**APPENDIX H**



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**TONGAN MOTHERS' CONTRIBUTION TO THEIR  
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**CONSENT TO BE OBSERVED**

'I have been explained the purpose of the observation in the research, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to be observed by the researcher while I contribute to my child/children's education in a range of contexts of my choice. I understand that each observation would not be for a period longer than one hour.

The researcher can take notes, and I understand I have a right to look at the record of the observation, and we can discuss this after, if there is a need. Changes or additions to can be made.

I understand that I have the right to ask the researcher to discontinue the observation at any time during the observation session.

Signed: .....

Name: .....

Date: .....

## APPENDIX I

### A sample of a participant's translation maintaining Tongan words / phrases

L. Talanoa mai – What is your belief about your duties/*fatongia* to school/Centre (where your children go,) for your children's education:

N. I will start with the kindy in which one of my sons are in. My belief is that my duties to the Centre,(I go there freely to help voluntarily) is very vital for my children's education. Not only that, but I go there, I want to, to help in tidying up their toys, and that's what the Centre always invite us to visit them and be with the children when we can. Another thing is that it is useful for me to go and see the progress my children make there. I have always been going with the older ones (who are not at primary).

That makes me happy, and I know the more I go there and feohi (mix) with the children, and see the improvement my youngest son makes, see how the teachers work with them, the better it is for me. I observe what they do at the centre (teaching), and I bring those 'ilo (knowledge) and use them to help him here at home, in my teaching the children at home. So it is useful, because I bring those techniques I see/ observe there and use them here to continue to teach (and reinforce them). [*'Oku 'aonga lahi, he 'oku ou ha'u mo e ngaahi me'a ko ia ke hoko atu 'aki 'eku ako'i nautolu heni*].

Most times I go and help in preparing their meals at the centre, and I see and learn the right food, which the teachers wished that the children bring to the centre. [*'enua taunga mo e me'a pehe*], and then I come and try to do likewise at home with the food/ lunch (taunga) that they take to the centre. Sometimes, I concentrate with pies and sweet drinks, (thinking that's the best), after all the teachers want them to bring just water.

#### Tape - 020:

I learn what to send with them to school. Sometimes I just give them pies and sweet drinks, and such things, where as what the teachers want them to bring is just water. That's why I think it is useful and benefiting for me to go there and feohi (mix) with them, and I learn. And I strongly believe, that the more I feohi with my children while they are at the centre, the more I learn new ideas, new strategies, *sipinga* (examples) from the teachers. I bring these (ideas) home and try desperately to help them. It is not unknown (well known) that (my) education was not good.

So when I go and mix with them, I see and observe the teachers' ways (performances) and I can make a "claim" when I see something that I am not happy with. Or help if it is something I should help them with, because they allow us to. And I am very happy to do that. Have I answered your question? [*Taimi lahi 'oku ou fa'a fetakai atu pe au he pai mo e inu melie, kae 'osi ko ia, 'oku fiema'u mai ko e vai. Ko e me'a ia 'oku sai ai 'eku 'alu 'o feohi mo ia. Ko hono 'aonga 'eku 'alu 'o feohi mo nautolu. Pea 'oku ou tui lahi, pea ma'u ai 'eku 'ilo. Ko lahi ange ko ee 'eku feohi mo 'eku fanga ki'I tamaiki, 'oku lava ai ke u ma'u ai e ngaahi sipinga mei he kau faiako ke fa'iaki hono... ha'u ko ee si'I fai'aki hono vovoke hono feinga'I kinautolu 'I 'api ni, taha nai 'oku puli, ko e ako na'e 'ikai loto sai. Pea ko 'eku 'alu ko ee 'o feohi, pea u sio ki he to'onga ko ee 'a e kau faiako, pea taimi lahi kou lava sio ai ki he anga e to'onga 'a e kau faiako ke u fai ai ha claim kia nautolu ha me'a 'oku 'ikai ke u loto fiemalie ki ai. Pea 'oku totonu ke u tokoni atu at he oku faka'ata mai. Pea kou tui lahi ko*

*e lava pe ia ke u tali atu ho'o fehu'i]*

**Tape count: 026**

L. What about the school where your two older ones go?

N. In the school where my two older ones go, I go a lot at the beginning of the year, and although the teacher told me I have come there enough times, I still insist on going. We are given one week to come there, but they also still allow us after that, to come if we so wish. When they tell me not to come anymore, then that's when I will stop going. But because of the type of heart, curiosity, and enquiring mind I have in me, I still want to go and feohi, to see the way in which they make progress at school/ in the classroom. (*Ka koe 'uhi ko e fa'ahinga loto ko ia 'oku 'iate au, 'oku ou loto pe ke u 'alu pe 'o feohi, keu sio ki he anga e fakalakalaka 'I he taimi ako*) Or to see how progress is made in the classroom. [this is an example of vagueness when translation is made from Tongan to English. This part can be translated in various ways].

e.g. I see this as an opportunity to go there and learn and see how they look after/ and teach young children.

e.g. I am happy to go there, and see them making progress.

Sometimes I go there at lunch and see how they eat lunch and how they are managed as a group of children by the teacher or as a class, - that sort of things.

*Palangi* environment:

I believe that my going there to see is useful (for me) because that is a *palangi* environment. I want and need to see how they are kept and managed (*tauhi kinautolu*) at school; and to learn more at school to bring and use them here at home for them, because this is not Tonga (of which I know the practice in that environment!). They will no doubt one day will go to the environment of *palangi*, and their life style will be veering towards that lifestyle and ways, although they are only little and still young now.

Clash because of my Tongan ways and Traditional belief.

Sometimes my desperation in Tongan ways (*vovoke fakaTonga*) clashes with them (their *palangi* expectation). But when I go to school and watch, observe and learn, that will enable me to understand. They will no doubt be in an environment of speaking English, and sometimes it clashes with my belief, (*tui faka-Tonga*) my Tongan belief (*fa'ahinga fakamoli-Tonga*) traditional Tongan way and belief.

That's why I am happy to go to school repeatedly. For example, when it was close to the holiday in December, they had few farewell programme by the children, for the children and I went there. I was so pleased (*fakalata 'ia*) when I saw my children *feohi* with children from other *matakali*. There are Tongans there but they don't *feohi* with them. Instead they *feohi* with *palangi*, Chinese, and others. I watched their programme, they had songs, skits, educational, and I am very pleased to go and watch such activities. I see they are able to step forward to another environment, and mix with children from other races. They are happy with this, and I am happy that they are happy, and they are happy that I come to school, they are happy that I am there and I go.

APPENDIX J

A sample of Tongan Notation : of the Lord's Prayer in Tongan words

**LORDS PRAYER.** by H.M. King Tafua'ahau Tupou IV

Key F. 4/4  
♩ = 72 Approx

1 KO ENU 1 5 : 5 5 1 3 : 3 3 1 7 : 7 7 1 3 : 3 3		2 DANA 5 5 : - 5 5 : 5 3 3 : - 3 3 : 3 7 7 : - 7 7 : 3 3 3 : - 3 3 : 3		3 HE 7 : - 1 6 : - 3 : - 1 3 : - 8 : - 1 8 : - 3 : - 1 3 : -		4 VA 5 : - 1 : - 5 3 : - 1 : - 3 7 : - 1 : - 7 3 : - 1 : - 3		5 NI 4 : 4 4 : 3 : - 2 : 2 2 : 3 : - 7 : 7 7 : 7 : - 7 : 6 6 : 5 : -		6 TAPO HA 6 : - 1 5 : - 2 : - 1 3 : - 7 : - 1 7 : - 4 : - 1 3 : -		7 HO HU 4 : - 1 : - 4 2 : - 1 : - 2 7 : - 1 : - 7 7 : - 1 : - 7		8 A 4 : - 1 : - 4 2 : - 1 : - 2 7 : - 1 : - 7 7 : - 1 : - 7		9 FA 4 : - 1 7 7 : 6 - 6 2 : - 1 4 4 : 4 - 4 7 : - 1 7 7 : 7 - 7 7 : - 1 9 9 : 2 - 2		10 KE KU MA 4 : - 1 7 7 : 6 - 6 2 : - 1 4 4 : 4 - 4 7 : - 1 7 7 : 7 - 7 7 : - 1 9 9 : 2 - 2	
11 HO PU LE 5 5 : - 1 4 : - 4 3 3 : - 1 4 : - 4 7 7 : - 1 7 : - 7 3 3 : - 1 2 : - 2		12 FA HO FINA 5 : - 5 8 : 7 7 3 : - 3 1 6 : 5 5 8 : - 8 1 8 : 8 8 8 : - 8 1 3 : 3 3		13 NEA LO MA 6 : - 6 1 9 : 9 4 : - 4 1 4 : 4 8 : - 8 1 9 : 9 4 : - 4 1 9 : 9		14 MA NI HA NEE 7 : - 7 1 8 : 7 5 : - 5 1 5 : 4 9 : - 9 1 2 : 9 5 : - 5 1 3 : 3		15 KO IA NI HE 7 : 7 1 6 : 6 4 : 4 1 4 : 4 8 : 8 1 3 : 3 4 : 4 1 4 : 4		16 MO NI 7 : - 1 : - 7 4 : - 1 : - 4 9 : - 1 : - 9 7 : - 1 : - 7		17 DANA HA MA 4 4 : - 4 1 4 4 : 4 4 4 4 : - 1 4 4 4 : 4 4 9 9 : - 1 9 9 : 9 9 7 7 : - 1 7 7 : 7 7		18 KA NI KIHE 4 : - 1 - 4 : 4 4 4 : - 1 - 4 : 4 4 8 : - 1 - 8 : 8 8 7 : - 1 - 7 : 7 7		19 -Cres- 7 7 : - 1 7 7 : 7 7 7 : - 1 7 : 7 7 7 7 : - 1 7 : 7 7 7 : - 1 7 : 7 7			
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29 ANEA HA 3 3 : - 1 9 9 : - 3 3 : - 1 4 4 : - 6 5 : 6 1 7 7 : - 8 8 : - 1 5 5 : -		30 MA KI A 8 : - 8 1 7 : 7 3 : - 3 1 5 : 5 8 : - 8 1 8 : 8 6 : - 6 1 3 : 3		31 TE KI MA U 7 : - 1 6 1 4 4 : - 1 3 1 3 8 : - 1 8 1 8 4 : - 1 6 1 6		32 U TO 5 : - 1 4 1 : - 3 : - 1 1 9 1 0 : TO 7 : - 1 6 1 6 : TO 7 : - 1 7 1 : -		33 LU DEB 3 : - 1 : - 3 3 : - 1 : - 3 5 : - 1 : - 5 3 : - 1 : - 3		34 ONA NAA 3 3 : - 1 3 3 : - 3 3 : - 1 8 8 : - 5 5 : - 1 5 5 : - 3 3 : - 1 3 3 : -		35 TAKI KI HE AHA 3 3 : 3 1 4 : 4 4 8 8 : 8 1 7 : 7 7 6 6 : 6 1 6 : 6 6 3 3 : 3 1 3 : 3 3		36 A H 5 : - 1 5 : - 7 : - 1 7 : - 7 : - 1 7 : - 3 : - 1 3 : -					
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PP (Roll)

## GLOSSARY OF TONGAN WORDS

<i>afo</i>	strand, fishing line, or chord (in music)
<i>'Aho Lotu 'o e Kakai-fefine</i>	Women's World Day of Prayer
<i>ako</i>	(as a verb) to learn, to study, practise, to educate; (as a noun) education, school, learning,
<i>ako 'i 'api</i>	to learn or study at home; home-school
<i>ako ma'uloto</i>	to memorise, to know off by heart, to recite from memory
<i>ako-'i-lokiako</i>	to learn or study in the classroom, classroom learning
<i>ako 'i</i>	to teach, instruct, to advice
<i>akonaki</i>	to teach, to give instruction or counsel (of moral, and religious teaching or values).
<i>Akoteu'</i>	school preparation, Early Childhood Education
<i>alaisia-alaikolonga</i>	being versatile, a person of many talents
<i>“'Alu 'o tokanga ki he ako”</i>	“Go and pay attention at school”
<i>ako ke poto</i>	learn to be clever, learn to be able to do, being intelligent
<i>amohi</i>	to stoke with the palm of the hand
<i>anga faka-Tonga</i>	Tongan behaviour, Tongan custom, Tongan manners
<i>angi</i>	to instruct, to command, to order, a advisor
<i>'api mo e fānili</i>	home/family who are responsible for children's values
<i>'Apitanga Pekia</i>	Easter camp,
<i>'atamai mānisi</i>	sharp mind, quick thinking, smart, intelligent
<i>'Eiki</i>	Lord, chief, chiefly
<i>fa'ē</i>	mother, maternal aunt,
<i>fa'ē-'eve'eva</i>	female relative who accompanies the bride or groom at a royal or chiefly wedding
<i>fa'ē-huki</i>	maternal aunt or uncle who acts as a chair for the bride or groom at the wedding ceremony

<i>fa'ē-tangata</i>	a person's (male or female) maternal uncle
<i>fafanga</i>	to feed, to provide food for individual or a group
<i>fahu</i>	father's sister, a superior figure
<i>fāite</i>	polite sitting position for females; both legs folded to one side under the thighs
<i>faiva faka-Tonga</i>	Tongan dance, including all types
<i>faka'apa'apa</i>	to respect the parents, elders, superiors, brother/sister
<i>faka'eke'eke</i> <i>faka'ofa</i>	to investigate, inquire, interview to sympathise, to feel sorry
<i>Faka'osi Ta'u</i>	End of the year service and/or celebration
<i>fakaafe</i>	invitation; a feast
<i>fakahingoa</i>	to name (a child, place or event)
<i>fakahounga'i</i>	to appreciate, to be considerate
<i>fakalata</i>	to feel at home, or be happy and contented
<i>fakamā</i>	to feel ashamed, shame
<i>fakama'uma'u</i>	to restrain, repress, keep in one's feelings, practice
<i>Faka-Mē</i>	Children's Sunday school anniversary in May
<i>fakamolemole</i>	please, to forgive, to ask for forgiveness
<i>fakamuna</i>	make-believe play, imagining,
<i>fakaongoongo</i>	to listen, to obey, wait for instruction
<i>fakapale</i>	to reward, to reward a dancer by putting money on them
<i>Faka-Sepitema</i>	Women's annual roll call held in September
<i>fakata'ane</i>	sitting position for males, to sit with legs crossed
<i>fakatātā'i</i>	to demonstrate, explain, describe, illustrate
<i>fakatō-ki-lalo</i>	to be humble, to lower oneself, self-abasing
<i>faka-Tonga</i>	Tongan ways, ways of doing things by Tongans

<i>fakavalevale</i>	babyish, childish, foolish-ways
<i>Fale 'o Ha'a Moheofo</i>	the Royal House of Ha'a Moheofo
<i>falehanga</i>	women's role, working shed/house for women's group
<i>fale-kautaha</i>	co-operative women's working house
<i>falekoloa</i>	local store, shop
<i>fāmili</i>	family, including extended family, relationship
<i>fatongia</i>	obligation; responsibility
<i>fatu</i>	to start (a mat); to compose a song, a chant; to be pregnant (chiefly women)
<i>fe'inasi'aki</i>	to share (ideas, thoughts) reciprocally with others
<i>fe'ofa'ofani</i>	reciprocal love, concern, to love another
<i>fehua'aki</i>	to tease each other, to joke with each other
<i>feitu'ui</i>	food that is offered to relatives of a deceased straight after the funeral
<i>felāfoaki</i>	to exchange talk, to dialogue in a causal conversation
<i>feohi</i>	to mix and mingle, be together, learn from one another
<i>fetokoni'aki</i>	to help one another reciprocally
<i>feveitokai'aki</i>	to consider one another, to cooperate, help reciprocally
<i>fiepoto</i>	wanting to be smart, a smart alec, think one is clever
<i>foaki</i>	to give, to be generous, willing to offer
<i>fua kavenga</i>	to fulfill one's or family's responsibilities to others
<i>fungani</i>	top layer (of a garland, or mats or tapa), final touch
<i>ha'a</i>	people, clan, tribe
<i>ha'a poto</i>	clever type, smart clan, educated type
<i>ha'alo</i>	to make clean and smooth by scraping
<i>heilala</i>	a type of very small fragrant flower
<i>hingano</i>	pandanus or its white fragrant flowers

<i>hiva kakala</i>	Tongan love song
<i>hou'eiki nōpele</i>	chiefs, nobles, or chiefly nobles
<i>'ilo'i e fāmili</i>	knowledge of family genealogy
<i>kafa</i>	rope made of coconut fibre, used in building
<i>kahoa kakala</i>	a necklace of garland (with flowers, leaves, fruits, seeds)
<i>kāinga</i>	extended family, relatives, clan or tribe
<i>kakala</i>	fragrant flowers (and leaves, fruits and seeds), a garland, necklace of flowers
<i>Kalasi 'Aho/ Kalasi Lotufehu'i/ Kaluseti</i>	Women's church groups who study the church doctrine Women's Bible Study group in church
<i>Kātoanga Faiva</i>	the name given to the annual ASB Auckland Maori and Pacific Cultural Festival held in Auckland since 1976
<i>kātoanga Misinale</i>	celebration of church annual donation of funds
<i>kau toulālanga</i>	women's co-operative mat-weaving group
<i>kautaha</i>	co-operative group
<i>kautaha koka'anga</i>	co-operative tapa making group (women's)
<i>kautaha tuitui</i>	co-operative sewing group (women's)
<i>kava</i>	beverage made from piper methyaticum
<i>kie</i>	kind of pandanus; finemat, worn on special occasion
<i>Ko e Ako 'a e Kakai Pasifika</i>	Plan for Education of Pasifika people
<i>'ko 'api,</i>	'it is home', 'root of life and values'
<i>'Ko e fānau ko e } me'a mahu'inga } taha pē ia 'i māmāni)</i>	'children are the most important things in the world'
<i>"Ko Tonga Mo 'unga } ki he Loto" }</i>	"The heart is the Mountain of Tonga";
<i>koka'anga</i>	tapa-making done mainly by women

<i>koloa</i>	wealth, a collection of mats and tapa, treasures
<i>koloa hapo tama</i>	mats and tapa cloth that is offered in childbirth
<i>koloa mei he 'Otua</i>	gifts from God, treasures offered by God
<i>kōmiti mo 'ui</i>	health committee
<i>koniseti</i>	concert, entertaining including clowning and dance
<i>kui</i>	grandmother, grandfather, grandparent/s
<i>kulupu fakalalakalaka 'a fafine</i>	women's development group
<i>kumi pa'anga</i>	fundraising
<i>lālanga fala</i>	mat weaving which done mainly by women
<i>lalanga mo 'ui</i>	weaving of a human life, raising a child with values
<i>lau</i>	to read, to count, to speak, to gossip
<i>laukau</i>	to feel honoured, to be proud of, be pleased by
<i>laukonga</i>	to read, to learn to read word-for-word, reading
<i>laumālie</i>	spirit, soul, mood, essence of, well being (chiefs)
<i>lea faka-Tonga</i>	Tongan language
<i>liongi</i>	to go into mourning; being an inferior maternal aunt
<i>loto 'i-Tonga</i>	'the heart of a Tongan', brave-hearted, courageous, resilient and determined like a Tongan.
<i>lotofale</i>	in-house, confined to family members
<i>lotu</i>	to pray, to worship, religion, church, devotion, service
<i>lou'akau</i>	leaves, pandanus leaves (used for weaving)
<i>Lukuluku-fakaono 'aho</i>	traditional contributions usually done on a village level
<i>luva</i>	to gift, to give away proudly, to garland someone else
<i>mā'ulu'ulu</i>	sitting dance accompanied by singers
<i>māfana</i>	warm, warmth, being moved, spiritually moved

<i>māfana fakafefine</i>	womanly warmth, feminine inward feeling of love
<i>māfana fakalaumalie</i>	spiritual warmth
<i>mahino</i>	to understand, to comprehend, clear in one's mind
<i>mahu'inga'ia</i>	to value, cultural values
<i>mālie</i>	a movement of warm current that energise the process of malie. A process mafana can enable Tongans to transform their psyche (subconscious, and inner self) and thinking.
<i>mamahi'i me'a</i>	commitment, devotion, deep sense of loyalty
<i>Matangi Tonga</i>	Southerly wind; it is also a name of a Journal in Tonga which focuses on current political situation in the kingdom.
<i>mateaki</i>	to be actively loyal to, dedicated, committed to
<i>me'a'ofa</i>	present, gift, reward
<i>mehekitanga</i>	father's sister, a superior figure in the family
<i>mo'ui 'aonga</i>	to live a useful life (in different contexts)
<i>namoa</i>	a soft pliable piece of tapa-cloth rolled into a stick-like shape, dipped in baked coconut milk, and given to the new-born baby to suck while waiting for mother to produce milk
<i>ngali poto</i>	to appear clever, wise and educated, to appear dignified
<i>ngatu</i>	tapa cloth
<i>ngāue faka-Pule'anga</i>	government civil servant
<i>nofo -'a- kainga</i>	extended families living together in one block of land; closeness and mutual helpfulness of members of kindred in their daily living
<i>'ofa</i>	love, kind, fond of, compassion, generosity
<i>'ofa faka-Tonga</i>	love in the Tongan way, being generous, sharing willingly
<i>ongo'i</i>	to feel for, have considerations for another person, to hear
<i>ongo'i faka-Tonga</i>	Tongan warm feelings, generosity to others, love

<i>pae</i>	mats and tapa cloth offered to the newborn baby
<i>pālangi</i>	European
<i>pō ako</i>	night school, lesson preparation at night
<i>pō-lave</i>	small casual talk where both parties are humorous about the subject.
<i>pō-talanoa</i>	prolonging conversation between two or more people, usually at night
<i>poto</i>	clever, intelligent, skilful, bright, wise To understand what to do and be able to do it
<i>poto faka'atamai</i>	intelligent, brainy, clever intellectually,
<i>poto fakapotopoto</i>	wise, thoughtful, thrifty, intelligent but wise, matured
<i>poto he angā</i>	good conduct, good manners, good natured
<i>Potopoto- 'a – niuumui</i>	(proverb) cleverness of a young novice, intelligent but immature
<i>Potungāue Talavou</i>	Christian Youth Department
<i>pu'i</i>	to give orders, to command, to ask someone to do something
<i>salusalu</i>	a garland (also used as a Fijian term)
<i>Sāpate Fa'e</i>	Mothers Day
<i>Sāpate-Tamai</i>	Fathers Day
<i>Siasi Uesiliana</i> <i>Tau'atina 'o Tonga</i>	Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga
<i>sisi kakala</i>	garland of fragrant flowers
<i>ta'eako</i>	uneducated, unschooled, lack of knowledge
<i>ta'elotu</i>	unreligious, un-Christian, non-church goer
<i>ta'ovala</i>	a piece of mat worn around the waist as part of Tongan formal costume
<i>takai fakatakainga</i>	wrapped in a bundle, roll into bundle (pandanus leaves)
<i>tākoto he kete taha</i>	lying in the same womb; warm feelings among siblings

<i>tala</i>	to tell, to relate, to state, to assert, to command, to announce, to inform people, to give information about traditions, to ask or apply, a thorn, a pickle, a spike, a bird
<i>talangofua</i>	to obey, be obedient
<i>talanoa</i>	to talk, to converse, to speak, to tell a story
<i>talanoa faka-kakai lalahi</i>	adult-like talk, to talk about adults issues
<i>talanoa'i</i>	to talk about, to spread the news, 'talk of the town'
<i>talatala-i-fale</i>	in-house talk or advice or conference within the family
<i>tamai</i>	father, paternal uncle
<i>tamaiki kolo</i>	town children, town boys, town girls, 'town people'
<i>tangi māfana</i>	cry of joy, tears shed when one is moved by warmth
<i>tanumaki</i>	to scaffold, to bury bulbs with more soil, to contribute to
<i>tapu</i>	forbidden, disallowed, sacred, taboo
<i>tauhi vaha'a</i>	to maintain relationships, to preserve duties reciprocally
<i>tauhi'eiki</i>	to serve the chiefly, nobles and royal family
<i>tauhi-fānau</i>	child-rearing, to care for children, to bring up children
<i>'teuteu, talua!</i>	'Ready, canter!', a command in the war dance
<i>to'onga ngāue</i>	method of work, strategies, techniques, work culture
<i>tohi fe'unu</i>	splitting pandanus leaves into strips for weaving
<i>toli</i>	to pick flowers, to pick fruits, to harvest
<i>'Toli lou siale'</i>	to pick gardenia flowers, an action song
<i>toka'i</i>	to show respect for, to consider other's feelings
<i>tokanga</i>	to pay attention to, to take care of, to care for
<i>tōkanga</i>	men's work in the bush allotment, men's gardening or plantation
<i>tu'a</i>	back, outside, commoner, inferior to chiefs

<i>Tu'i</i>	King, Monarchy
<i>ue'i</i>	to cause to move, to stimulate, to energise
<i>'uhiki</i>	offsprings of animals, (derog.) offsprings of commoners
<i>'uhinga</i>	reason, meaning, object or purpose, genealogy, descent
<i>Uike Fāmili</i>	Family Week (before Easter)
<i>Uike Lotu</i>	Holy week (a week of prayer at first week of the Year)
<i>'ulungaanga faka-Tonga</i>	Tongan cultural behaviour, Tongan customs
<i>'umu</i>	earth oven, food cooked in 'umu served/offered to others
<i>'uta</i>	bush allotment,
<i>'uta-mama'o</i>	far away village in the bush,
<i>Veifua</i>	first cooked meal presented to a woman after marriage, or giving birth and usually by her maternal uncle or brother

#### **Other Pacific Terms:**

<i>sa-sa</i>	<b>Samoan dance</b>
<i>pakeha</i>	<b>European (a Maori term)</b>
<i>hangi</i>	<b>a maori underground oven, a meal</b>
<i>koha</i>	<b>a maori word for gift</b>



*An artificial Sisi Kakala made of fibre, sequins and beads*