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The Lived-In-Experience

Of Migration For Samoan Women

A Cross-Cultural Phenomenological Study

Bronwen Byers

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at Massey University, Albany, Auckland, New Zealand

January 2003



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Abstract

In New Zealand between 1950 and 1960 rapid industrial development brought about a corresponding demand for workers. Many Pacific Island male and female workers filled the available jobs. Considerable material has since emerged addressing issues relating to migrant workers, the focus however has primarily been on male workers whilst portraying women in supporting roles. The paucity of material acknowledging Samoan women's social and economic contributions within migration literature, acted as the catalyst for this study.

Qualitative research paradigms promote theoretical and methodological liberalism, therefore three paradigmatic constructs, social-constructivism, feminism and phenomenology informed this study's interpretive practice strategies in triangulation. Quantitative data added rigour within the analysis process. The cross-cultural nature of the research and my outsider researcher status also influenced a methodological emphasis for researcher transparency.

To ensure this occurred the piloting stages were undertaken with extensive collaboration with gatekeepers in order to achieve appropriate access to the respondents. From the piloting emerged major themes considered characteristic and integral to the migration process as defined by Samoan women. These themes provided the basis for the semi-structured questionnaire, used to elicit the articulated reflections of the individual and collective *lived-in-experiences* of Samoan women migrants. The extensive verbatim interview material was analysed using interpretive phenomenological data analysis procedures. What was revealed was the significance of the pivotal role and critical impact of the individual and collective social and economic contributions made by the Samoan women respondents.

This unique journey thematic focus, allowed for the revelation of the *lived-in-experience* of Samoan women, commencing from the germination of the idea to migrate whilst still at school, to their reflections on this earlier decision of the migration journey (in some cases) fifty years later. These revelations provide a greater understanding of their experiences in relation to: *Schooling* - the influencing factors; *Choice* - the positive and negative affects; *Expectations and Impressions* - the emotional and physical cost; *Language* - the linkage between self-esteem and identity; *Remittances* - women redefining the parameters of traditional obligation; *Church* - the role in the women's lives; *Employment* - the lived-in-situation work situations and the complexity of *Union* membership; *Dawn Raids* - the hidden affects, and finally *Remaining in New Zealand* - reflections and the question of belonging.

This study celebrates the lives of the first wave of Samoan women pioneer migrants to New Zealand by providing a unique, gendered, cross-cultural representation of their *lived-in-experiences* of the phenomenon/migration.

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The Samoan women who made this study possible by sharing their lived-in-experiences of the phenomenon/migration. By allowing their rich narratives to be gained throughout the interview process permitted us a brief glance into their world. I owe you each a deep debt of gratitude. Without your contribution this study would not have been possible.

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