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**Sense of Identity among Samoan Migrant Women  
at Work and Living in Auckland, Aotearoa/New  
Zealand**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology  
at Massey University**

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## Abstract

This study, leaning on existential phenomenology, explores how the experiences of 'being working women' have helped to shape the identities of Samoan women in Auckland. It explores how these women, who grew up within a strong cultural framework and who migrated to New Zealand to engage in work, perceived their transitional processes and how these processes shaped their sense of identity. The focus of the research lies on positive aspects that constitute opportunities for personal development. The objective is to make understood the relationship between being a migrant, being a woman and being at work with regard to identity formation processes.

In semi-structured in-depth interviews, twenty Samoan migrant women shared their experiences about coming to Auckland and taking up work. Their accounts were audio-taped, transcribed and analyzed by using a hermeneutic interpretation approach drawing on Heideggerian concepts. In this process, the researcher moved back and forth between the themes evolving from their stories, key patterns and relevant literature about work, migration and sense of identity. The explicated themes and patterns were then compared for consistency with the original accounts of the participants. The study showed that, for women in this study, work played an important part in their identity processes.

During the interpretation of the data, the following major domains involved in identity formation by way of 'being at work' crystallized: 1) changes in self-views through introspective processes, 2) transformed self-views through relationships with others, 3) self-processes linked to lived space over time.

The data analysis showed that the processes in these domains were of an interacting, reciprocal nature. It also showed that the changes in the participants' sense of identity were created by reflective processes such as internal dialogues. Having reassessed and changed some of their ways of 'being and doing' created changes in the participants' roles in relationships with others. As their status changed from being positioned as not-knowers to being acknowledged as employees who had unique skills to offer to their colleagues, the participants underwent changes from being 'outsiders' to becoming 'insiders' at work. The participants' increase in status at work, in return, gained them status as experts, advisors and advocates in their families and community. Elders and males who

initially opposed these women's career ambitions at work now acknowledged them as experts in their field of work or as professionals who were in a position to assist and support them in a number of ways. The changing understanding in the wider socio-cultural environment about Samoan women's choices shaped how they experienced their life-worlds and, ultimately, perceived themselves. These identity processes continued 'over time in historical space'; they changed the participants' — and ultimately other Samoan women's — social standing at their workplaces and in their community.

The participants' accounts indicated that being in paid work served a number of purposes, such as financial and personal autonomy and having more control over their choices about the ways they wanted 'to be' and 'do things'. Over time, for the participants, the benefits of being in paid work in relation to their self-development were: a) moving from shyness and insecurity to increased levels of assertiveness, autonomy and control over their lives through exploring and applying their strengths, b) moving from not-belonging and being 'strangers' to being part of the 'home-group' through affiliation with others at work, and c) increased social status and roles as change agents at work, in their family and community through transferring cultural knowledge and work skills across these domains, and thereby contributing to changes in their cultural environments over time and across space.

In conclusion, for the Samoan migrant women in this study, 'being in paid work' was experienced as more than a source of sustaining their existence. In particular, 'being skilled working women' added to their sense of identity via opportunities to explore their latent skills and develop new competencies. Likewise, for women in other cultures, migration and work can provide opportunities for personal development not accessible in their country of origin.

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***'...The knowledge of the man who acts and thinks within the world of his daily life is not homogeneous; it is (1) incoherent, (2) only partially clear, and (3) not at all free from contradictions.'***

Schutz, A. (1964). *The stranger: an essay in social psychology*. In: *Collected papers*. Vol. II. *Studies in social theory*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

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## Key to transcripts

The following abbreviations and conventions have been used in this thesis, including the excerpts from the interview transcripts:

<i>Italics</i>	the words used by the participants themselves; the words in Samoan language
[ ]	words or comments added by the researcher to provide clarity and explanation
...	material edited out
' '	phenomenological terms
<u>Underlined</u>	words emphasized by the participants
Names	pseudonyms were used for all participants

Samoan terms used in this thesis are accompanied by the corresponding English term

## **MY INTEREST IN MIGRANT WOMEN, WORK, AND IDENTITY AS A RESEARCH TOPIC**

### ***Introduction***

Work represents one arena in which individuals experience a sense of purpose that drives their aspirations and achievements, provides them with a sense of meaningfulness and potentially adds to their psychological health (Frankl, 1986). Consequently, psychologists, among other researchers, have taken an interest in this topic and produced knowledge about the qualities of work that are perceived as salient. Research in this area — usually conducted in Western mainstream cultures — shows that, while remuneration typically plays an important part in seeking and taking up work, most people also perceive work as meaningful in other, non-material respects, for example, experiencing a purpose in life (e.g., Morse & Weiss, 1955; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998; Vecchio, 1980). Hence, work typically has both financial and non-pecuniary features at the psychological level. The latter influence how people feel about themselves and who they are. In short, work contributes to people's sense of identity.

Finding work is also, often, a reason for global migration (Inkson, Carr, Allfree, Edwards, Hooks, Jackson, & Thorn, 2007). For many migrants, work plays an important role in the decision to move to a new country (Knowles, 2003; Sassen, 1990). Surprisingly, in this era of steadily increasing migration, the salience of work to the self-concept of migrants has not been well researched. While financial reasons will play an important part in migrants taking up work in another country, especially for migrants from financially underprivileged countries (Knowles, 2003; Sassen, 1990), it would be presumptuous to assume that migrants experience work only as a means to an end. However, there is a scarcity of knowledge in the field of migrants, meaning of work and sense of self. There is a scarcity of knowledge about work in conjunction with sense of identity, especially in regard to female migrants. In particular, for those migrant women who have dedicated much of their time to unpaid work before leaving their home country, paid work might play a positive role in personal development and sense of self.

Being a migrant woman myself fuelled my interest in female migrants in paid work and their self-identity. I was born in Canada, educated in Germany, worked and lived in seven countries, traveled extensively and lived in diverse cultures. I came to

New Zealand ten years ago and, through work and study, changed many perceptions and perspectives I held about myself. While work has meant a means to sustain living, it has also been an important contributor to my sense of purpose and self-identity. During my journey of settling in Auckland, I experienced various psychological states that included excitement about the newness of living close to the beach and nature, resentment regarding the loss of familiar conveniences, and struggling to develop a sense of belonging and what I could consider 'home'. I felt unresourceful and low in self-esteem when I was unable to find work where I could use skills and knowledge I had brought with me from overseas. Even though I was equipped with a German tertiary qualification, I had to retrain to find suitable employment. On the positive side, I discovered my inner strength, resilience and ability to persevere within the context of setbacks and challenges. Additionally, I discovered other competencies in areas of work new to me. The vicissitudes during my journey of finding my place in this country and the world of work came in the form of challenges, opportunities and discovery of my weaknesses and strengths.

My rationale for choosing to focus on Samoan women's self-identity is that in New Zealand, apart from the indigenous Maori people, the largest Polynesian group is Samoan. They are one of the most visible minority groups although only accounting for six per cent of the New Zealand population. According to Statistics New Zealand (2004), Samoans make up more than half of the Pacific Island population. However, compared with European New Zealanders and Maori people, little is known about Samoans' — especially women's — identity processes in conjunction with finding their place at work in New Zealand. Apart from their achievements in sports, arts and music (Fatialofa & Gifford, 1996; Mallon & Pereira, 2002), little is known about Samoan people's contributions to society and the world of work in this country.

Although my German-Canadian background may seem more akin to European New Zealand customs, I may share with Samoan migrant women a journey through various psychological states while trying to find a niche in a new culture. I cannot claim any Samoan cultural heritage but I have visited the country a number of times, interacted with the Samoan community in Auckland and consider myself fortunate to have Samoan women among my friends. Traveling and working in different cultural settings over the years has opened my mind to different ways of being and doing. This helped me to be aware of the influences of my own cultural heritage while listening to and interpreting others' experiences of Auckland's world of work.

My interest in this topic was furthered when I scanned the literature in psychology about transitional processes of migrant women. I discovered that many studies centered on males' experiences or on migrant women as wives and followers of their husbands. Female migrants were often described as unskilled and difficult to employ. A number of studies portrayed their participation in the labor force as incompatible with family commitments and, thus, the reason for cultural constraints within their communities (Brettell & Simon, 1986; Dion & Dion, 2002). Rarely were the researched migrant women themselves given the opportunity to reflect on their skills and knowledge and how they might put these to use at work. Rarely were they asked how they had experienced the challenges and opportunities of becoming part of New Zealand's workforce. Little seemed to be understood regarding the ways in which 'being at work' can positively contribute to migrant women's sense of identity.

I concluded that the imbalanced portrayals of migrant women in the workforce, and the lack of knowledge about how being at work relates to their self-concepts, created an opportunity for further research. The Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research (CACR) (2007), in its Diversity Research Report 2007, also confirmed my notion of the scarcity of research with a positive focus in the area of migrants and work. In that report, the Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research (CACR) listed 'migrant employment' and 'integration in the workplace' as two of the key issues in need of more research. Further, the report stressed the importance for researchers exploring these issues to draw on migrants' views — on 'real-people perspectives' (p.10) — about their work situations, their aspirations, expectations, career development and well-being. The Diversity Research Report (Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research, 2007) further suggested 'veering away from the usual topics that focused on negative aspects of migrant employment experiences.' Instead, it was suggested to build studies around the success stories of migrant workers, for instance success in job searches and workplace integration. The Diversity Research Report echoed my own notions of the importance of writing about the experiences of migrants from their perspective and making their success stories known. The report also pointed out the 'obvious' need for 'more research on specific ethnic communities, including Pacific Island populations'.

Even though the number of Samoan migrant women seeking work in Auckland increases steadily, not much has been written about their achievements, skills, contributions and aspirations in the world of work (Statistics New Zealand, 2004).

There is little literature regarding the contributions of Samoan migrant women to New Zealand society (for an exception see Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2003, 'Widening Choices' where Samoan women are portrayed as contributors to the world of work and the wider society), although more information is available about overall poor socio-economic standards for Pacific Island peoples (Spoonley, Bedford, & Macpherson, 2003; Teiwa & Mallon, 2005).

In agreement with a number of scholarly authors, I perceive such negative positioning as pathologizing of migrant women. For example, Alvesson and Billing (1997) criticized that 'Misery stories and an emphasis on problems are popular' in writings about migrant women (p.7). Deficient, one-sided approaches in migrant research that portray migrant women as unskilled and difficult to employ but omit information about those women who adjusted well and experienced being at work as meaningful to their existence, are cause for concern. Such approaches in research about migrant women invite stereotypes that may become self-fulfilling prophecies. Positioning migrant women as unskilled and hard to employ can construct negative self-beliefs about such women's competencies and stifle their motivation to find employment and further their careers. The issue of how work can contribute to migrant women's sense of self deserves special attention since increasingly more women leave their home country to live and work in other countries (Freidenberg, Imperiale & Skovron, 1988; Gammage, 2004; Sassen, 1996). About half of the migrants in the world today are women. As of 2000, about forty-nine per cent of the world's migrants were women compared to forty-six per cent in 1960 (Zlotnik, 2003).

The topic of this thesis will not center on 'problems and deficiencies' of migrant women at work. The question this thesis asks is, 'How do Samoan migrant women, who are embedded in a strong cultural framework and who left their familiar environment to engage in work in the city of Auckland, perceive their transitional processes? How do these processes influence their views about themselves — who they are?' Rather than problematizing migrant women's transitional processes, this study permits positive outcomes to become known. The focus is on how the women use opportunities and challenges at work to their advantage in their self-development. I hope that this contributes to more balanced views about female migrants' adjustment and self-processes.

The ways in which Samoan migrant women working in New Zealand experience themselves in their transitional processes can best be understood by drawing on

their own reflections. The women participating in this study experienced 'being at work' within a personal context, and varying contexts let individuals arrive at different realities and truths. Exploring the participants' experiences via a phenomenological research approach — centering on reflections on personal experiences within 'time and space' will best reflect their personal perceptions and reality. This research adopted a positive-humanistic psychology standpoint, which centers on optimizing individuals' potential. The emphasis on human virtues and personal expression, positive psychology (Seligman, 2002; 2004), as a quite recent approach to understanding people's psychological processes, draws on the core ideas of humanistic psychology. Similarly, the good potential of human beings and their lives guided the interest of this study. It leans towards Allport's (1961) views on positive self-concepts, Jahoda's (1982) positive criteria on what might constitute a well-functioning human being, Jung's (1933; 1958) concept of people becoming all they can, Frankl's (1986) and Maslow's (1968) concept of self-actualization, and Rogers' (1980) work about the individual's striving for better functioning.

In summary, my interest in exploring Samoan migrant women's personal development was evoked by my own identity journey as a migrant woman, my interest in the meaning of work to the individual, the special status of Samoan migrants in New Zealand and the under-representation of migrant women's achievements at work in research. My aim was to explore how the experience of being in work has shaped the identities of Samoan migrant women and to focus on the positive aspects in their transitional processes.

### **Thesis outline**

This thesis is organized into nine chapters. The introduction provides a statement of the topic and the relevance of this research project to psychology. Additionally, the introduction outlines the purpose and aims of this study.

Chapter 1 presents a review and evaluation of relevant literature and theories about work and people, work and females, work and migrant people, and work and female migrants.

Chapter 2 evaluates relevant theories and approaches to understanding 'sense of identity' and assesses the compatibility of these theories with the philosophical framework of this study.

Chapter 3 introduces the philosophical paradigm, ontology and epistemology underpinning this study. It includes samples of the theoretical perspectives important to explaining the phenomenon of being a Samoan migrant woman working in New Zealand.

Chapter 4 discusses phenomenological methodology and research design used in this research.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the socio-cultural historical background of Samoan women. This chapter contains information relevant to the readers' understanding of Samoan women's cultural background and upbringing in conjunction with gender role expectations and work.

The data chapters, Chapters 6, 7 and 8, are organized around super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes emerging from the lived experiences of Samoan migrant women at work. The chapters are organized into the following themes:

1. Changes in self-views through introspective processes.
2. Transformed self-views through relationships with others.
3. Self-processes linked to lived space over time.

Chapter 9 brings this research project to closure by providing a final synthesis of data about 'Samoan women at work and sense of identity' within the context of the earlier literature review. It relates the outcome of this study to the field of psychology and highlights important issues for people living and working with migrant women.

## CHAPTER 1: THESIS FOCUS

Work, migration, and women have been researched by a number of academic disciplines including anthropology, sociology, cultural studies and psychology. Each discipline has brought its own theoretical frameworks and related research traditions. In anthropology, for example, the emphasis lies on culture, place and habitat, in the history of people and culture, and events in time. In sociology, there has been a focus on social equity, equal access to work and resources and other societal issues. Psychology, in turn, has focused on the functioning and operation of the individual person in their social environment. While various theories about the constructs of work, migration and women, either separately or in conjunction with each other, have been developed, these three constructs have not been linked to sense of identity.

This thesis explores work, migration and women in conjunction with sense of identity, taking a psychological approach. However, whilst the center of interest is the individual person, the context is also important, specifically socio-cultural and historical context, shaping the participants' ways of being and doing. This thesis will draw on a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives to generate knowledge of how work contributes to Samoan migrant women's sense of self. A model of the thesis foci is shown in Figure 1.

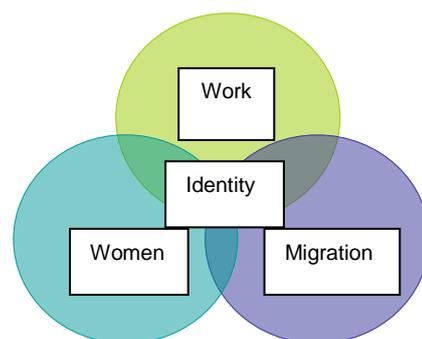


Figure 1: Migrant women at work and sense of identity

### **WORK**

Work has many forms, including both paid and unpaid. Supportive, financially non-productive roles in the community and family are more often performed by women than by men (International Labour Organisation, 2002). Women often perform unpaid work such as domestic chores at home, charity work within their

community, or work in the informal sector including the exchange of goods or money. The activities involved in these types of work are generally crucial to the operation and functioning of the family and community; however, they do not give these women the status of being employed. Further, while these types of work do not provide them with an income, they usually also do not offer them any career prospects (Portes & Haller, 2005).

Another type of work activity which does not meet the criteria of 'formal employment' is performed in the informal sector. As opposed to formal employment, economic activity in the informal sector is neither taxed nor monitored by a government. Such work activities are commonly exchanged for goods and services with economic value (Portes & Haller, 2005).

### ***Work in the informal sector***

The low productivity and poor working conditions prevalent at the informal level (ILO, 1972; 1997, 2002) stand in contrast to the formal sector. It is the very low level of entry costs, as well as the mobility of the operation, that makes informal work an attainable work option and a source of livelihood for large numbers of the poor.

The characteristic features of people's economic activities in the informal sector have been identified in the ILO Report on the Employment Strategy Mission to Kenya in 1972 as 'ease of access and entry, small-scale, labor-intensive undertakings, usually family-owned, with a reliance on indigenous resources and informally acquired skills, and operating in unregulated, competitive markets' (Brand, 1986).

For many of the poorer countries, the informal sector plays a major role as a labor source. The informal sector might be seen as an 'employer of last resort' for some, but is nonetheless an important means of income for those who are excluded from formal employment (Brand, 1986). In Brand's (1986) study in Harare (N=184) most of the interviewed participants (57%) indicated that they participated in work in the informal sector because they could not find employment in the formal sector. Another reason mentioned (25% of the respondents) was poverty and the need to support others through supplementary sources of income.

On one side, a number of work skills can be acquired in the informal sector, such as organizing, trading, sales or manual skills and other trade-related abilities. The disadvantages of working in this grey area between unemployment and formal

employment are: dependence upon petty trading and small-scale production in town, the lack of recognition for these activities, the dangers of operating in an open-air, unsheltered workplace with unhealthy conditions (Brand, 1986), a very low level of earnings, absence of job contracts, unstable working conditions (Balakrishnan & Huang, 2000), poor access to social services and absence of fringe benefits (Benería, 2004). In short, unstable jobs and economic insecurity result in poor living conditions. These are especially prevalent for a large proportion of women in developing countries.

In an article on gender and global change, Lourdes Benería (2004), Professor of Women Studies and Director for Programs on Gender and Global Change, argued that the growth of women's participation in work in the informal sector results in a vicious circle of poverty and economic insecurity. Also, it diminishes women's mobility and autonomy. Benería stressed that poverty eradication programs must emphasize the need to generate decent jobs. The importance of women's participation in paid work for their well-being has not been sufficiently translated into practical action and policies. Consequently, to decrease poverty and increase well-being amongst women, opportunities to participate in paid formal work need to be generated for women who have been denied them. It is hoped that the present research project, with its focus on the positive contributions of paid work to migrant women's sense of self, can contribute to generating an understanding about the importance of generating such work opportunities.

For Samoan — as for other — women, informal work activities are generally important contributions to the sustenance of families. However, the women performing these activities do not hold the status of 'being part of the work force'. As for domestic and charity work in families and the community, there are commonly no promotions or career prospects in the informal sector (International Labour Organisation, 2002). So becoming a member of the workforce can change the social status of those who have not been in paid work. Such changes in social status are likely to influence their identity processes and their understanding of who they are.

While unpaid work, such as caring for family members, domestic chores or volunteering time to charitable , is part of many people's work experience (Engels, 1994), this thesis (Figure 1) explores migrant women's experiences of paid work, since seeking employment plays a major part in migrants' decisions to leave their

home countries. It is the context of paid work in relation to Samoan women's identity processes which is the focus of this research.

A body of research documents numerous positive psychosocial consequences of paid work — henceforth interchangeably referred to as 'work' or 'employment' - for people. Throughout their life, individuals have experiences that stimulate a sense of growth and a search for a meaningful and purposeful existence (Brewer, 2001; Seicol, 1997). Work typically plays a major part in an individual's life, as it offers an income that can be traded for goods, services and access to desired activities (Winefield et al., 2002). Work also allows people to put their skills, knowledge and physical energy to use in ways that are meaningful to self-development (Brewer, 2001). Paid work is therefore an activity in which people spend much of their time and energy, and where they are faced with challenges and opportunities that can stimulate personal growth (Kovacs, 1986).

### ***The meaning of work***

While financial security is important for people's existence, work becomes 'meaningful' to people when they experience 'intrinsic rewards', for example, when they perceive the outcome of their work as having an important effect or purpose salient to their lives (McCall & Simmons, 1966; McKenna, 1997; Stryker, 1980; Thoits, 1986). Research outcomes have consistently shown that perceived meaning of work and significance of tasks give people a sense of purpose (Jahoda, 1980; Morse & Weiss, 1955). Individuals who perceive such purposefulness tend to view themselves, others and their environment in positive ways, and life in general as worthwhile (Maslow, 1973; 1999; 2000). Work plays a major role in how people feel about themselves and their outlook on life. Further, since work is a major motivator for migrants to leave their home country, it seems sensible to research these factors in conjunction.

Work can be inherent in a person's sense of fulfillment when experiencing feelings of resourcefulness, for example, through putting one's skills and knowledge to use (Argyris, 1957; Maslow, 1973; Spear, 2006). Carl Rogers (1959), in his writings about the 'meaning of work', saw in people the '...tendency to actualize [themselves], to become [their] potentialities ... — the urge to expand, extend, develop, mature — the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism' (p. 72). Rogers understood work as one resource to fulfill psychological needs contributing to an individual's sense of self-worth. Since work can provide

people with a sense of achievement and fulfillment, it forms a complex relationship with a person's sense of self (e.g., Brewer, 2001; Jung, 1953; Maslow, 1948; Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, & Zeisel, 1975, Paul & Batinic, 2009). It is not merely the status of being at work that provides people with a sense of purpose. For work to play an important role in people's psychological processes, people need to experience work as personally meaningful (Feather, 1990; Winefield, Tiggemann, Winefield & Goldney, 1993); they need to understand the significance of their doing (Heidegger, 1960; 1962).

Morse and Weiss (1955) conducted one of the earliest studies in the USA about the meaning of work for employees, which showed that work serves other functions besides economic ones. The participants, belonging to middle and working class occupational groups, were asked: 'if they inherited sufficient money to live comfortably without working, would they continue or give up working?' Surprisingly, at the time, eighty per cent answered that they would continue working. The reasons — each participant indicated multiple reasons — for wanting to continue working for non-financial reasons (sixty-three per cent) ranged from wanting to keep occupied (thirty-two per cent) to keeping healthy (ten per cent), enjoying their work (nine per cent), or deriving feelings of self-respect and seeing work as a justification for one's existence (five per cent each). Interestingly, even though work constitutes a major domain for establishing social contacts (Kovacs, 1986), only one per cent of the participants named 'being with people' as a reason for wanting to continue to work (p.192). Thirty-three per cent, however, stated that they would 'miss friends' if they stopped working. Avoiding unpleasant consequences, for example, feeling bored, made up thirty-seven per cent of the responses. While people in the middle class occupational groups emphasized sense of accomplishment and interest in their work, members of working class occupations emphasized occupying their time as their main reason for wanting to work. Extended participant interviews might have uncovered underlying meanings in these answers and explained the variations between these two occupational groups.

Morse and Weiss's (1955) study could be critiqued for a number of reasons. For example, while the study showed reasons for wanting to work, such as keeping occupied to avoid boredom, the potential of work to add to personal growth would have deserved more exploration. In addition, questions which provide limited choices for answers, such as the 'lottery question' discussed before, do not allow individuals to communicate how they personally perceive work as meaningful. A more severe

flaw was that Morse and Weiss's research did not reflect the views of female employees. Their sample consisted entirely of males and female employees were invisible in their study. Since females have always been a large part of the workforce in the USA, it seems an oversight to have excluded women from such a groundbreaking study.

Some decades later, Vecchio (1980) replicated Morse and Weiss' (1955) study in the USA. His results similarly showed that most (over seventy-two per cent) of the participants, even if they did not need to, would want to continue working. However, as Vecchio (1980, p. 336) himself admitted, if his study had been replicated outside the United States, the findings might have been quite different. Neither study was conducted across cultural settings nor reported on possible cultural variations. As such, their research approaches did not reflect or do justice to the variations of 'meaning of work' across culturally diverse groups of people and individuals. An understanding of cultural context, in increasingly heterogeneous work environments, is important to understand the psychological processes of people's ways of 'being and doing'. Like Morse and Weiss's sample, Vecchio's sample consisted entirely of male participants. Neither Morse and Weiss (1955) nor Vecchio (1980) have taken into account that, due to gender-role expectations, perceptions about the meaning of work can vary between males and females. Males' and females' perceptions of the meaning of work are likely to play a role especially in settings where women are widely excluded from work outside their homes. Thus, it is important to represent women's views about the meaningfulness of work in research. Women's perceptions about the meaning of work to their sense of self will be explored in this thesis.

Most of the research about paid work and its role in people's lives has been conducted in Western European settings (e.g., Morse & Weiss, 1955; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998; Vecchio, 1980). However, since people's views on the role of 'paid work' in their lives can be expected to vary across and within cultures, research conclusions cannot be generalized across socio-cultural settings. While people in most cultures work to sustain their lives, their work values and reasons for perceiving work as meaningful may differ. Studies in Western European cultures showed that work values can differ markedly (e.g. Hofstede, 1980). Work values tend to vary more across groups with distinct cultural backgrounds. Dollard and Winefield (2002) argued that high rates of unemployment in Aboriginal communities are often seen as 'negative social indicators', yet these reflect, besides structural inequalities, a different cultural value system (p. 16). Studies regarding 'work values' in Australia

have been conducted almost always in the context of Western cultural conceptions, such as 'self-sufficiency'. This is a concept which many people of Aboriginal culture do not use. Hardly any research about conceptualizations of work has been conducted among Aborigines to reveal how they derive meaning from work. Knowledge derived from such studies could provide information about their value systems that might explain, and assist to reduce, the high unemployment rate for this group.

Cultural conceptions and meaning systems of 'work' can vary widely from culture to culture. At a time when the compositions of societies, cultures and groups of people are changing rapidly, it is ever more important to step away from broad approaches and, instead, to research the role of work in people's lives within specific contexts. In multi-cultural environments, to appreciate how individuals derive meaning from work, and how this contributes to their psychological development and well-being, psychologists need to accommodate cultural variations in people's understandings of work (Davidson & Reser, 1996).

Harpaz's (1989) study, an example of research on meaning of work with a focus on cultural dissimilarity, showed variations between cultures. Responses to the 'lottery question' ('would you still work if you won...') ranged from a low of sixty-nine per cent in Britain and seventy per cent in Germany to a high of over ninety per cent in Japan. However, Harpaz did not explore variations within nations. Later, Harpaz (2002) conducted similar 'meaning of work' studies, posing the 'winning a lottery question', in Israel. Ninety per cent of the two samples (1981, 973 respondents; 1993, 942 respondents) answered that they would continue to work after winning a substantial sum of money. Interestingly, significantly more participants named relations with others as a reason for remaining at work in 1993 compared with the study conducted in 1981 (Harpaz, 2002). So variations in reasons for wanting to work can occur not only across different cultures but also through time. For example, changes in the labor market, high unemployment and inflation can lead to higher valuing of materialistic reasons for finding work important. A further study by Harpaz (1999) showed an increase in perceived importance to earning a high salary, which could be linked to economic recession at that time in Israel. Since research shows that time factors (historicity) and socio-cultural environments (space) evidently play an important role, they cannot be ignored when exploring people's thoughts and feelings about the meaning of work. The present study, therefore, seeks to explore the meaning of work within the socio-cultural and historical context of the

participants.

The meaningfulness of paid work for people's self-understanding has been of interest to a number of other researchers (e.g., Kaplan, 1985; Kaplan & Tausky, 1974; McCall & Simmons, 1966; Stryker, 1980). To date, though, with a few exceptions (e.g., Brewer, 2001; Frankl, 1988; Klinger, 1977; Terkel, 1972; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Yalom, 1980), the meaningfulness of work for people has mostly been assessed through questionnaires. Since 'meaning of work' is subjectively perceived, the administration of questionnaires providing pre-formulated choices does not seem to be an optimal method to explore people's personal thoughts on this issue. In contrast, open questions during personal interviews can motivate participants to reflect on and verbalize their own perceptions and convictions. For example, in studies where participants were given the opportunity in research interviews to reflect on the role of work in their lives, culture and gender-specific issues were evident (Acker, 2004; Glenn, 1999; Lott, 1996; Moghadam, 1999). To enable the participants to reflect on and talk about what work means to them, this thesis took an explorative research approach using face-to-face interviews with broad-based questions.

The above-mentioned studies implied that experiencing one's work as purposeful adds to a person's sense of meaning in life. Conversely, the absence of work in an individual's life can add feelings of emptiness, purposelessness, worthlessness and other psychological stress factors.

### ***Work and psychological well-being***

To establish a link between being in work and psychological well-being, one vein of research compared paid employment with unemployment. A loss of income from being made redundant was found to be detrimental to people's psychological and physical well-being in various countries, for example, in the USA (Kessler, Turner, & House, 1987), in the UK (Rodgers, 1991), in the Netherlands (Schaufeli & Van Yperen, 1992), and in Sweden (Kieselbach & Swensson, 1988). Consequently, in accordance with other research and literature about work and its importance for psychological and physical well-being (e.g., Giddens, 1991; Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2001; Pugliesi, 1995; Schwalbe, 1985), while a change from employment to unemployment can cause a deficit in well-being for individuals, any transition from unemployment or unpaid to paid work should improve the person's well-being.

In 1994, in a guest lecture to an audience at Massey University, David Fryer, a visiting psychologist from Stirling University in Scotland with a background of 14 years of researching the psychological effects of unemployment, explained that research into the effects of unemployment over the last 60 years has consistently demonstrated that up to forty per cent of unemployed people suffered psychological distress (Fryer, 1995). The findings of cross-sectional studies showed that groups of unemployed people experienced anxiety, depression, dissatisfaction with their present life, strain, low self-esteem, hopelessness regarding the future and other negative emotional states to a higher degree than the matched groups of employed people. The implications of psychological stressors on a person's mental well-being generated by unemployment have also been mirrored in some of Fryer's (e.g., 2007) most recent publications (also Fryer & Fagan, 2003). Fryer's research findings imply that, if unemployment can be detrimental to a person's well-being, employment potentially contributes to an individual's well-being. A number of researchers indeed established a link between work and physical and mental health (e.g., Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2001; Yahoda, 1980; 1981).

Work can contribute to an individual's physical and mental well-being, positive self-concept, overall life satisfaction (Pugliesi, 1995), participation in social networks and relationships (Giddens, 1991), self-esteem and sense of mastery (Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2001; Schwalbe, 1985). Longitudinal studies in Australia showed mental health to be poorer in people without paid work than in people with work (Winefield, 1995; Winefield et al., 2002). These studies indicated that employment is related to increased well-being, while unemployment is associated with reduced well-being (Winefield & Tiggemann, 1989a; 1989b; 1990). In Winefield and Tiggemann's (1990) study in Australia, survey forms were administered to participants at the time of leaving school, and then again after intervals of two and three years when the participants were in the labor force. The questionnaire included the following psychological scales (closed option measures): Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem and Depressive Affect Scales, the Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (Nowicki & Duke, 1974) and a seven-item negative mood scale (Tiggemann & Winefield, 1984; Winefield & Tiggemann, 1989a; 1989b). Compared with those employed, the unemployed showed lower self-esteem, greater depressive affect, negative mood, and externality in locus of control. This study, representing people in the Australasian region, has an important place in the body of research into work as it suggests that work adds to psychological well-being, which may not be present without paid work.

However, the study raises an important issue: that 'time' played a role. The clear differences observed after three years, which were not apparent after two years, suggested that being without work could have delayed effects on a person's well-being. Thus, the effects of being in or out of work need to be explored over time. Furthermore, changes in 'states of being' become more distinguishable over a longer time and the resulting effects, such as self-changes, might have become more noticeable to participants. Therefore, to illuminate self-changes to participants over a longer period of time, one of the selection criteria for participants in the present thesis requested a minimum time lapse of five years between taking up work and the present time.

Overall, a number of research projects on the salience of work in people's lives showed that being in work is, in psychological and other ways, vital to the self. Jahoda (1980; 1981), in her work deprivation model, claimed that even a bad job can hold some intrinsic value and, thus, would be preferable to no work.

#### ***The work deprivation model***

In her writings about the psychological significance of work, Marie Jahoda (1980) postulated that, over and above a time structure and purposeful activity, employment could also provide goals, status and social identity through shared experiences at work. Jahoda (1980; 1981) understood employment as a social institution with consequences that occur for all employees, regardless of individual differences. She distinguished between the 'manifest' and 'latent' consequences of work. The former are understood as deliberately intended and include earning a living as the central goal. The latter are understood as 'unintended by-products of purposeful action', which are nonetheless essential for healthy psychological functioning. Five such latent consequences of employment are:

1. Time structure on the working day
2. Shared contacts and experiences with people outside the nuclear family
3. Common goals that transcend personal goals
4. Provision of status and identity for the individual
5. Enforced activity

Jahoda's (1980) study shares some ground with other 'meaning of work' studies. Similarly, both Morse and Weiss's (1955) and the Meaning of Work (MOW) Project's International Research Team (1987) findings showed that work means more than earning an income and that employees allocate intrinsic values to work. Both Jahoda and the MOW project pointed out that the work setting is a place where people's

need for social interaction — essential to their psychological well-being — can be satisfied (Jahoda's 'contacts and experiences with people' closely resembles the domain of 'interpersonal relationships' in the Meaning of Work Project). However, unlike other research into work, Jahoda claimed that even a bad job, since it can hold some intrinsic value, would be preferable to no work.

Jahoda's (1980) claim, however, was disputed in Winefield and Tiggeman's (1990) work study in Australia. The researchers stated that, 'intuitively', they thought it to be unlikely that employees would like a job when they perceived the work conditions as unacceptable, especially when they had to work under conditions that were detrimental to their physical health. However, if Winefield and Tiggeman had explored experiences of feelings of work deprivation specifically after long-term unemployment, the core concept in Jahoda's (1981) work deprivation model, they might have come to a different conclusion. It might 'intuitively' seem unlikely that work which involves unpleasant working conditions should be preferable to no job. But Jahoda's claim that 'a bad job is better than no job' might hold some truth for migrants who felt they needed to leave their home countries to find work and who took into account that their initial jobs might be just a stepping stone to further their careers. It remains to be explored whether even bad jobs have 'psychological significance' for the development of migrant women coming to New Zealand to work.

Overall, the majority of work studies suggested that the provision of work could assist people's well-being, although Sennett (1998) explored negative consequences of paid work. Sennett argued that the economic systems in individualistic societies stimulate psychological conditions for fragmentation and personal disintegration, that companies' restructuring schemes eroded stable work conditions and undermined the basis for social responsibility, and that increasing individualism creates for employees a sense of lack of control over their working conditions. To find solutions for improvements, it is important to research unfavorable work conditions and their negative psychological implications for employees. However, it is equally important to make transparent the positive contributions of work to their sense of self. The fact that, in psychology, there is a scarcity of positive research approaches to understanding people's ways of functioning (Seligman, 2002; 2004), makes positive approaches in research to understand human functioning ever more imperative.

While perceptions of salience of work can vary across cultures, understandings about the role of work can also vary across gender especially, since for many

women, access to paid work is still restricted and opportunities to excel at work are limited (Acker, 2004; Glenn, 1999; 1990, Lott, 1996; Moghadam, 1999).

## **WOMEN**

### ***Work and women***

Despite extensive research about, and outcries against, gender inequities and disadvantages for women at work (Carly & Eagly, 1999; Deaux & Kite, 1993; Gilligan, 1982; Harding, 1991; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; 1991; Ortner, 1996; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002), these conditions still prevail to varying degrees across cultures. Especially in the 1970s, a number of academics explained these differences as a socio-historical development instead of a naturally occurring human condition (e.g., Apfelbaum, 1979; de Beauvoir, 1953; Bem, 1974; 1993; Kanter, 1977). Twenty years later, gender inequities upholding the status quo at work are still a topic in research (e.g., Apfelbaum, 1999a; 1999b; Cherry, 1999; Kandel, 1999; Worrell, 2000; Yoder, 1994).

Women continue to have less access to productive resources, education, skills development and labor market opportunities than men in many societies. Largely, this is because of persistent social norms ascribing gender roles, which are often slow to change. Furthermore, women continue to undertake most unpaid care work (International Labour Organisation, 2002). Women's strong involvement in community and domestic duties can make it difficult for them to take on paid work. Such socio-economic disadvantages are caused by gender-based expectations for them to take on the double roles of being a worker and a caretaker for society. Further, they often earn less income than men and are more often affected by long-term unemployment. This makes women, particularly in developing countries, 'the world's working poor' (Portes & Haller, 2005).

Theories basing gender variations at work on biology have furthered gender biases, gender stereotypes and gender discrimination (Apfelbaum, 1999a; 1999b; Harding, 1991; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; 1991). Such views have been criticized by numerous researchers who blamed one-sided research outcomes on gender research which neglected to study the conditions under which men's and women's behaviors are learned and practiced (e.g., Apfelbaum, 1999a; Gurin, 1999; Hilton & von Hippel, 1996; Lott, 1996; Marecek, 1995). A number of researchers have stressed that gender variations in skills and competencies at work are the

product of socio-cultural influences rather than biological differences. They have also stressed that, to do a job well, women do not have fewer potential skills and competencies than males (e.g., Carly & Eagly, 1999; Deaux & Kite, 1993; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002). Gender-specific upbringing, role expectations and social practices construct gender differences in roles and tasks at work (Gilligan, 1982; Harding, 1991; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Beliefs that women are biologically predisposed to engage in essentially different tasks from those men perform still exist. For many women, such beliefs manifest in gender-specific upbringing, socialize them into traditional gender roles and prevent them from becoming part of the work force. Many are expected (without being given a choice) to take on the role of housekeepers and family nurturers. Often, women who engage in domestic work in their families or in informal work feel that their contributions are undervalued or not sufficiently acknowledged even though their unpaid work plays an important role in the functioning of the family (Portes & Haller, 2005).

For other women, paid work plays an insignificant role beside that of family carer. This is not a phenomenon of the past but is prevalent in current times and in non-Western as well as in Western cultures (Apfelbaum, 1990; 1999b; Kandel, 1999; Ortner, 1996; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002). Like other women, many migrant women were exposed to gender-specific upbringing and role expectations that have prepared them for roles as family nurturers rather than roles as employees in the workforce. For some, though, these role expectations would have been more enforced in their home country than in their adopted country. For those women, finding their place in male-dominated work environments (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988) in their new country of residence might be less challenging than in their home country.

In many countries, the aspirations of women still tend to be ignored, which potentially restricts their privileges and often results in their silencing (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). In some societies, males decide whether women should or should not enter the work force. While dominant male decision making can also be found in Western cultures, in some places, traditional gender roles are strictly enforced to the disadvantage of women. This is the case, for example, where women's movements are restricted by males in the Middle East and North Africa (Freedom House, 2005). In these, and many other, societies, womanhood becomes synonymous with domestic life: childbearing and rearing; cooking, scrubbing, cleaning, and other household chores become their socially defined and often

inescapable roles. These duties were — and still are — performed without formal recognition or remuneration (Hansen, 1992). In settings where women exclusively perform unpaid, domestic duties, the ‘meaning of work’ for those women is likely to differ from males’ who are in paid employment. For those women, work might mean being restricted to activities at home; it might also mean feeling isolated (Freedom House, 2005).

In many traditional African societies, domesticity is deployed to disenfranchise women systematically from accessing and controlling resources (Hansen, 1992). Laws in many Arab states still penalize women who leave the home to work without their husbands’ consent. In these cases, women’s domesticity is culturally generated, used as an ideology and closely linked to patriarchy, gender/power relations and artificial private/public distinctions (Hansen, 1992). As for Pacific Island cultures, married women are commonly expected to be of service to the families of their husbands, and males are often the decision makers about women’s participation in work outside home. This is also often the case for many Samoan-born women, particularly for those who grew up in rural areas (Connell, 1984). Typically, women take care of the appearance of the village grounds, health and education. Paid work for the advancement of an individual woman can be deemed unacceptable; often, those women who decide to engage in paid work or careers are faced with hurdles and restrictions (Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998). These restrictions deny women opportunities to participate in work activities outside the family on an equal footing with men. However, for those women who made it into the world of work despite these restrictions, the gender inequities often continue (Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998). Most important, the success stories of those who made their place in the world of work, despite the difficulties and hurdles that strict gender role prescriptions presented for them, are still widely invisible in the research literature. To encourage women facing similar challenges to make the leap into the world of work and follow their aspirations, it is imperative to make such success stories known. It is the aim of the present thesis to contribute to making such stories known and encourage migrant women, whose self-aspirations have been widely ignored by others and who have to struggle for access to the world of work, to follow their hopes and dreams for their self-development.

In contrast to environments where men tend to overlook women’s self-aspirations, Finland - like other Scandinavian countries - represents a model of gender equality in the world of work. This can be attributed to the absence of a

traditional male breadwinning role in Finland that prevented the development of a strong patriarchal culture (Julkunen, 2002). Conditions in societies like Finland, where women's right to personal income and a secure level of subsistence is achieved through gainful employment, often serve as ideals and desirable standards for women in countries showing lower levels of gender equality at work, where they have to struggle for access to the world of work.

The trend to achieve gender equality in the world of work became evident in the 1970's, when feminists made certain that the invisibility of *European* women's work competencies and achievements became an issue in scholarly literature (e.g., Apfelbaum, 1979; Bem, 1974; Kanter, 1977). However, while there is plenty of recent research about work and careers relating to *European* women (e.g., Carly & Eagly, 1999; Deaux & Major, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Harding, 1991; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002), *migrant* women who, despite living under gender constraints and despite hurdles posed by their host country, successfully participate in the world of work are under-represented. The context of, for example, North American women's upbringing, socio-cultural environment, and career opportunities can hardly be generalized to those women who have had to struggle with oppressive gender role prescriptions, punitive measures if they do not adhere to these, and lack of opportunities to engage in paid work. The success stories of women of non-Western cultures, who have made their way into work despite such challenges, need to be made known as they potentially serve as inspirations for others in their struggle to fulfill their aspirations.

For many women, paid work has become a primary source of identity (McKenna, 1997; Simon, 1997). Overall, research about women and work seemed mostly concerned with issues about women feeling inconvenienced through being dissatisfied with work conditions, a low pay rate, salary disparities, inconvenient work hours, or male-biased behavior towards female workers (e.g., Phizacklea & Wolkowitz, 1995; Jackson, 1991; McGauran, 2001; Rauscher, 2007; Stewart, & Moore, 1993; Zhou, 2000). In comparison, fewer studies focused on women's sense of self in relation to employment. In particular, very little is known about how women from non-Western cultures experience work as meaningful, and how this relates to their sense of identity cultures. The under-representation of women of non-Western cultures in research about work and sense of identity needs to be remedied. It is the aim of this thesis to contribute to the pool of knowledge in this area.

How work is experienced as meaningful and how work contributes to a sense of identity is likely to vary across different cultural groups of women. Since the world of work is still dominated and controlled by males, an understanding about the level of importance of work to women's sense of self deserves more attention. The underlying processes of being at work and personal development are insufficiently studied, especially in groups of migrant women. Those few studies focusing on women's identity and work were generally conducted around the turn of the century and later. Liversage's (2009) study (N=15, using narrative interviews) with high-skilled East-European women in Denmark, for example, showed that paid work and use of one's skills were a major source of identity for those women who were well trained and skilled. Skilled women who were unemployed perceived 'becoming just housewives' as a threat to their identity: they felt that their identities as skilled women were evaporating (p.129). However, the women in Liversage's (2009) study were of European descent and highly-skilled and, thus faced with fewer hurdles to finding employment compared to unskilled or low-skilled women from minority cultures. There still is a dearth of studies representing the identity processes of non-European, low-skilled migrant women trying to find their place in the world of work.

## ***MIGRATION***

### ***Migration decisions***

Much has been written about migration, about people 'moving and mixing across cultures' (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). Migration has existed for as long as people have traveled and exchanged business. People have 'moved and mixed' for many centuries; cultures have influenced one another through trade, and the exchange of information, ideas, and talents (Jensen Arnett, 2002). Migration research involves many different issues. What many studies have in common is that they refer to broad groups of migrants and convey relatively little about the everyday experiences, processes and situations from the perspective of the individual experienter.

In research, migrants are differentiated from refugees. While the latter are forced into exile, migrants are seen as leaving their country of birth by choice and generally experiencing less trauma and mental health issues than refugees fleeing their country (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Espin (1999), however, points out that such a distinction is too broad as it overrides '... the realities of the situation as experienced by the person who migrates' (p. 17). The degree of psychologically experienced intentionality or voluntariness tends to vary among migrants. Not all migrants leave their home country on voluntary conditions. For example, for many young Samoan

migrants, the decision to migrate is made for them by family members. Typically, older brothers or other male family members were first sent to New Zealand and younger siblings followed. Some of them felt reluctant to leave their home country, while others were looking forward to immigrating to New Zealand and felt prepared for their change of location (Macpherson, 2002). It remains to be explored in this thesis whether such differences at journey commencement for Samoan migrant women have influenced their personal experiences regarding the process of establishing roots in New Zealand and at work.

What migrants will have in common, regardless of their level of participation in their migration decision-making processes, are a change of location and culture and some likely experiences of changes in beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, feelings, and ways of being over time (Espin, 1987; 1999; Liebkind, 2001). Another common experience for many migrants is the search for work in their new country. Work-related issues are a major motivating factor in deciding to leave their less wealthy home countries and find employment in richer societies (Knowles, 2003; Sassen, 1990). A literature analysis from a New Zealand perspective about migration and talent flow — the flow of skilled migrants from one country to another — by Inkson et al. (2007) indicated that career opportunities are a main motivator in migration decisions. Working overseas had provided New Zealand expatriates with independence, confidence, interpersonal, and cultural skills. The interviews in this thesis assisted in revealing if Samoan migrant women coming to New Zealand to work experienced similar benefits.

### ***Migration and work***

Apart from cultural and family reasons and lifestyle migration, the most frequent reason for migrants' deciding to leave their country of origin is to find work in another country that is economically advantaged as compared with their country of origin (Knowles, 2003; Sassen, 1990). Migrants make up large numbers of the workforce in wealthy countries and employees represent diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Portes and Manning's (1984) research included Jewish, Korean, Japanese, and Cuban migrants in the United States and demonstrated that migrant groups vary in their economic successes. (A closer view of these samples would show, in all likelihood, further variation across ). What these groups had in common, though, is that work was salient to their existence and psychological well-being.

Further, work can also play a role in their acculturation processes. Aycan and Berry's study (1996) examined the role of work in migrants' acculturation processes and psychological well-being in Canada. Using questionnaires, they surveyed 110 Turkish migrants. Their findings indicated that unemployment and underemployment, when these conditions were experienced as stressful, had a negative impact on both adaptation to the migrants' new environment and their psychological well-being. Similarly, Richmond (1974) saw employment status as an important factor in migrants' adjustment to their lives in Canada: '... alienated immigrants whose failure to obtain steady employment at a level commensurate with their qualifications [generated] social isolation and lack of acculturation [and] deep-seated dissatisfaction' (p. 47). In short, participation in the labor force of the new society can be critical for the successful integration and psychological well-being of migrants. Interestingly, while Aycan and Berry (1996) acknowledged the role of work in migrants' acculturation processes and psychological well-being, the significance of work, however, did not become a central part of Berry's (1990; 1997b; 2003) acculturation theories.

The following study by Constant, Gataullina, and Zimmermann (2006) on ethnic identity and work showed the overall importance of paid work for migrants' lives in Germany. The researchers' objective was to measure the impact of ethnic identity on the migrants' participation in the labor force – they were from Turkey, Greece, Italy, Spain, and the former Yugoslavia and were not born in Germany. They surveyed a sample of 1,236 migrants, half of whom were females. Their measurement of ethnic identity was a set of indices (five groups of quantifiable cultural attributes, including ethnic self-identification), which estimated the migrants' adjustment to the host society and their attachment to the culture of origin. Constant, Gataullina, and Zimmermann (2006) further explored gender differences on the probability to work. While commitment to their culture of origin played an important role in adjustment to their host culture, another important outcome was that the *working* group of male and female migrants appeared to be more integrated into the social structure compared with their non-working counterparts. The working migrants demonstrated a higher commitment towards the German society and culture; they were better adjusted to their host country and less marginalized than their non-working counterparts. Most interestingly, females were better adjusted in the labor force than their male counterparts because they showed a strong commitment to *both* their home and host countries. In other words, for migrant women, maintaining their commitment to the country of origin along with a strong adjustment to the host society had a strong,

positive effect on their participation in the labor force, which in return enhanced their levels of well-being.

The above study, while pointing out the important fact that work is central to migrants' adjustment, could have been improved by including personal in-depth interviews. This would have given voice to the participants' perspectives regarding the importance of paid work for their adjustment. The use of interviews might have revealed whether the female migrants used any culture-specific competencies in their positive overall adjustment and participation in the labor force. In-depth interviews might also have revealed if commitment to their culture of origin equipped the migrant women with psychological strength and resilience to challenging situations at work. Such information seems crucial to the understanding of migrant women's skill utilization and adjustment processes at work. There is a need for in-depth knowledge to gain a better understanding about migrant women's psychological acculturation processes and the possible roles of work in these processes. Such knowledge about women's acculturation processes has the potential to counter-balance negatively skewed views about migrants and work and could contribute to migrant women's employment chances.

For some migrants — as for some non-migrants — insufficient skills, unemployment, and underemployment are problems and have been made an issue in scholarly literature (Brettell & Simon, 1986; Dion & Dion, 2002). However, while underemployment and unemployment for migrants deserve attention in research, it is of no help to migrants' sense of identity to omit references to their potential agency, resilience, and strengths. Similarly prevalent in migration literature is a focus on losses, for instance, experienced loss of familiar frames of reference and loneliness (Alvarez, 1999a; Attanapola, 2006), separation issues, and culture shock (Simms, 1999; Vogel, 1999), and social and emotional costs of migration (De Leon, Stefanisko, & Cortez, 1999). Theories about migrant adjustment and acculturation often focus on acculturative stress in the form of psychological, somatic, and social difficulties, resulting from migration (Alvarez, 1999b; Ausubel, 1960) or 'psychic conflict' (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936, p. 152). Adjustment and acculturation processes are indeed important issue for migrants (e.g., Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Phinney, 2003). Adjustment issues have been widely explored and resulted in popular acculturation theories (e.g., Berry, 1980; 2003; Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987).

Many researchers have since claimed that acculturation presents a significant problem for minority members (e.g., Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987; Burnham, Hough, Karno, Escobar & Telles, 1987; Hovey, 2000). Other researchers, though, thought that acculturation and adjustment processes may not necessarily result in negative experiences and found no evidence that acculturation is necessarily distressful (e.g., Inkeles, 1969; Rudmin, 2003; Sam, Vedder, Ward & Horenczyk, 2006, pp. 127-130). However, studies focusing on positive adjustment processes, such as successes at work, are in the minority.

Ward and Styles (2003), as one example, using quantitative and qualitative approaches (questionnaires), researched the adjustment strategies migrant women (N= 154) were using to achieve a sense of belonging to their new country and subsequent emergence of a new self (p.352) amongst English and Irish women having moved to Australia. They concluded that the multiple losses of home, attachment figures, community, culture, and social networks could cause grief, identity confusion, and psychological distress if the final stage of the grieving process (acceptance) is not reached. However, if migrants have 'appropriate strategies' to achieve their settlement, they are likely to achieve a sense of belonging to their new home. While the authors highlighted the importance of migrant women's 'involvement in their environment to be an integral part of that environment' including joining clubs and seeking employment (pp. 362), they do not further elaborate on the role of work for migrant women's sense identity, which is the focal point in the present thesis.

Overall, while migrating to a new country does incur changes, such as leaving one's familiar environment behind and needing to adjust to new values and ways of doing things, how these processes are experienced is likely to vary. Adjustment processes do not inevitably result in psychological trauma and lasting distress. On the positive side, change processes might result in reflective processes, self-exploration and reconsideration of one's personal aspirations. Furthermore, these processes might create opportunities for personal development, such as finding one's vocation and deciding to further one's education, or discovering job opportunities.

Within a New Zealand context, Inkson and Myers (2003) have researched work abroad in conjunction with personal development. The focus of their research, however, has not been on migrants coming to New Zealand, but on expatriates returning to New Zealand after having worked overseas for a number of years. In

addition to working overseas being a cultural experience, the overseas experience effected the sojourners' career development. On their return home, the expatriates had gained increased autonomy, independence, adaptability, self-directed learning skills, and multiculturalism — qualities that are increasingly requirements to establish careers in multi-cultural work environments. Furthermore, expatriates brought back 'new knowledge capital' to their home country (Inkson, Arthur, Pringle, & Barry, 1997). Sojourners in Inkson and Myers' (2003) research survey reported that they had experienced an increase in self-confidence and assertiveness and that they had developed close relationships with other people; also, their mind had been broadened. In short, they had 'grown up' and made the transition from student to professional. This kind of research implies that work experiences in various cultures constitute an opportunity for personal change and development.

Similar benefits may apply also to migrants coming into economies like New Zealand. It is more than likely that migrants working in New Zealand have experienced challenges similar to those of expatriates — for example, situations that required them to acquire a degree of independence, broader thinking, and adaptability. It is likely that they, similar to expatriates, have undergone processes stimulating their personal development. But the links between migration, work and self-development are an under-researched phenomenon, especially in regard to migrant women. While the lack of understanding of migrants' personal processes in conjunction with work potentially limits their personal development, it also generates 'talent waste'. Talent waste among new migrants in New Zealand can be observed in particular amongst culturally dissimilar groups of migrants including Pacific Island groups (New Zealand Immigration Service, 2003). Within these groups, numerous migrants experience a lack of recognition or appreciation for those skills and knowledge which they brought with them. A deeper understanding of the links between a) migrant women, b) work and c) sense of self (including their personal understanding of their competencies) could constitute one way to remedy talent waste amongst migrant women in New Zealand and elsewhere. It is hoped that this thesis contributes to a better understanding of these links.

To understand the nature of the links between migrant women, work and sense of self, these need to be explored from the perspective of the experiencers. Migrants, as the experiencers, need to be in a position to disclose the 'unexpected' in narrations during personal interviews. However, often in research conclusions are drawn without hearing the participants' voices, which may lead to one-sided, biased

information. One-sided information in social dialogue and media reports about migrants from minority cultures has contributed to stereotyping them as deficient in skills, dependent on the social system and problematic (Larner, 1991, p. 19-20). The migrants' own views on these issues might uncover a more detailed picture about the underlying reasons for being unemployed and working in jobs that do not match their skills.

Carr, Inkson, and Thorn (2005) drew attention to the phenomenon of 'brain waste' (where immigrants' skills are underutilized in their new country) and the phenomenon of 'talent waste' (when skilled workers migrate into employment where they cannot utilize the skills, knowledge and experience they brought with them to their new country of residence). Talent waste affects new migrants, particularly the culturally dissimilar, including Pacific Island groups. For them, not being able to use their skills often results in having to accept social security benefits, which can generate feelings of lowered self-esteem, especially when the affected individual has a strong work ethic.

To explore the scope of negative characterizations for Pacific Island employees in the media in New Zealand, Loto et al. (2006) examined 65 printed media reports over a three-month period. The articles showed a strong emphasis on problems and negative news including fifty-two comments referring to Pacific Islanders as 'unproductive or inferior to others' (p. 105). Only thirty-eight comments referred to this group as hardworking (p. 106). Such a tendency to typify migrants as deficient and problematic is also reflected in research that neglects to take into account the variations between migrants' experiences in arriving at universal conclusions. This neglect, together with circulating negative stereotypes about migrants' competencies and adjustment processes, creates a need for research that delivers in-depth information and analyses specific to the context of particular groups of migrants.

Women of cultural minority groups living in dominant (mainstream) cultures were one of the most neglected groups in social science studies (Abel-Kemp, 1994; Gills, 2002). Female migrants from these groups often struggle with the 'double burden' of meeting challenges in their positions as migrants new to this country and gender stereotypes (Liversage, 2009). In the following section, studies and theories regarding migrant women, their skills and work will be reviewed.

### ***Migration, women and work***

Over the past decades there has been a steady increase in numbers of women migrating. Moghadam (1994) and Mohanty (1997) use the term 'feminization of migration' in the context of globalization and mobility. Despite the growing feminization of migration, this area has continued to receive little attention in research within the context of New Zealand's work environment (Badkar, Callister, & Krishnan, 2006).

In New Zealand, as in other geographical areas, males dominated the early stages of international migration. Immigration regulations considered female migrants as family nurturers rather than laborers (Bhabha, 1999; Bhabha & Shutter, 1994). At that time, research on international migration contributed to female migrants being stereotyped as 'house-bound'. The research focus centered mostly on the experiences of male migrants (Boyd, 1986). This trend is still reflected in some studies and literature portraying female migrants as 'trailing their husbands' (Raghuram, 2004), in the role of 'trailing spouses' moving to join their male 'breadwinner' (Yeoh, Huang, & Gonzalez, 1999), or as 'accompanying family members' of male labor migrants (Gammage, 2004).

Japanese women who migrated to other countries 25 years ago, for example, had the status of 'dependents following their husbands' (Nakazawa, Yui, Kamiya, Kinoshita, & Takeda, 2008). Back then, researchers in the area of migration took little notice of their existence. Similar to views about migrating women in other countries, the general assumption was that men were the primary migrants, and that women were the passive, trailing spouses (Nakazawa et al., 2008). While increasing numbers of Japanese women migrate these days, Japanese men are still seen as the primary migrants since they are the ones who are sent to work to other countries by their companies, while their spouses generally gain employment overseas only through their own initiative (Yui, 2009).

The perception of female migrants 'accompanying immigrant men as wives' (Connell, 1984, p. 965; Centner, 2000, p. 120) deprives migrant women of their status as individual beings and potential members of the workforce in their new country of residence. Female migrants become mostly 'invisible' in the labor market. A volume edited by Simon and Brettell (1986), for example, explored such and other issues of migrant women's participation in the labor force of their new country of residence.

So migrant women not only face the challenges of finding their place at work as strangers new to a country, but also as women in male-dominated work environments (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Liversage, 2009). Raghuram (2004) suggested that one reason for the overall lack of acknowledgement of migrant women's strengths and skills at work might be the 'trailing' discourse, and an overemphasis on their affiliation needs in research.

In past decades, one-sided research foci often viewed male migrants as job seekers while understanding migrant women as being confined to domestic chores (Alvesson & Billing, 1997; Buijs, 1993). Migrant studies about male migrants mainly focused on waged labor, while studies of female migrants concentrated mostly on family concerns (Hoerder, 1988; Nash & Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Sassen, 2000; Sassen-Koob, 1984) or their social integration needs rather than on their professional aspirations (Larner, 1991; Raghuram, 2004). While, on the one hand, migration studies focused on males' personal development, on the other hand they focused on females' need for 'affiliation and contact with others' (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; 1994). The point here is not to deny that affiliation needs are important in research about migrants. Affiliation needs are in fact important for both female and male migrants, especially after leaving family members and social networks behind. The criticism lies with the gender-stereotyped focus on affiliation needs in some migrant studies neglecting to take into account women's potential aspirations in the world of work. Such a biased focus in research serves to maintain social role expectations and stereotypes about migrant women as domestic beings; such a focus does not serve to optimize their positions as job applicants.

While many women are in the position of family caregivers and are doing domestic chores, this may not be necessarily be their choice or be experienced as satisfactory. On the contrary, many migrant women staying at home experience the role of full-time child and family caregiver as isolating and stressful (Ataca & Berry, 2002; Kagitcibasi, 1986) or perceived being 'just housewives' as upsetting (Liversage, 2009). A number of researchers and authors across academic disciplines (Hoerder, 1988; Gabaccia & Iacovetta, 2002; Groupement de Recherches, 1985; Nash & Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Sassen, 2000; Sassen-Koob, 1984) criticized studies that depict migrant women as content and contained in families and disinterested in work because it interferes with family responsibilities and domestic duties. Noh, Wu, Speechley and Kaspar (1992) suggested, consistent with role overload

interpretations or the 'double burden', that migrant women (similar to women in general) regarded employment as stressful when it made fulfilling domestic and parenting responsibilities more difficult. An alternative perspective on the 'double burden' issue is to consider the confinement to domestic responsibilities as stressful and making paid work difficult. However, the problem with both perspectives is that they generate a picture of 'housebound migrant women', which signals migrant women's limited availability to the job market (Raghuram, 2004). Such a picture is unhelpful to those migrant women who wish to find employment.

Overall, there is still a dearth of studies portraying female migrants as competent employees. Espin (1999), amongst others, pointed out that psychologists have neglected to conduct detailed studies of female migrants' stories and their experiences of strengths. One-sided reports about migrant women from minority cultures are stereotyping them as uneducated and under-skilled, unemployed and dependent on social welfare. Those reports rarely mention the efforts of migrant women to put the knowledge and skills they brought from home to use. Such reports might be based on a crucial 'attribution error'. Rosenwald (1988) explained that psychologists, due to an oversight of available sources of rich data, often fall victim to an 'attribution error': the misperception of problems as the individual — rather than socio-cultural conditions — creating conflicts. Applying Rosenwald's notion to unemployed migrant women, it would be an 'attribution error' to assume that the reason must lie in their lack of skills or unavailability to the job market. Such an erroneous assumption is contrasted by studies like Constant, Gataullina and Zimmermann's (2006), which showed that female migrants from South European countries were strongly motivated to participate in the labor force and adjusted well — more so than the male migrants in their study. Their study indicates the possibility that the reasons for employment problems might not lie in the individual but result from unfavorable socio-cultural conditions.

It would have also been worthwhile for Constant, Gataullina and Zimmermann (2006) to explore possible links between their participants' a) motivation and participation in the workforce and b) their knowledge and skills. Studies creating knowledge about possible links between migrant women's potential competencies and motivation might assist to create a social environment conducive to increasing these women's job chances in their host country. Studies generating knowledge about migrant women's potential might help to decrease problems like under-employment and unemployment. From a psychological standpoint, lack of

employment for groups of migrant women is of concern because — as the ‘meaning of work’ and ‘work and well-being’ studies showed — work deprivation can be detrimental to an individual’s self-development and psychological well-being (e.g., Jahoda, 1980; 1981; 1982).

The positioning of migrant women as being difficult to employ constructs and maintains stereotypes likely to influence their views of themselves (Valentine, 1968; Hall, 1996). Literature devoid of migrant women’s success stories and instead focused on deficiencies not only contributes to creating stereotypes, but also to constructing negative self-identities in that migrant women internalize others’ negative views. How people are perceived, talked about and portrayed by others often does not just reflect, but also compellingly construct their realities (Shotter, 1993). Knowing that, once stabilized as a dominant image, negative identities become hard to contest (Gergen, 1994), it is all the more important to highlight the stories of migrant women being successful in the labor force.

There are positive accounts, albeit few, about migrant women and competencies acquired in their country of origin, who were enthusiastic about extending their knowledge and skills in their host country (Gabaccia & Iacovetta, 2002; Groupement de Recherches, 1985; Nash & Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Sassen, 2000), and who desired to become ‘...productive members of society ...’ (Espin, 1999, p. 35). It is predominantly the more recent research, conducted by female academics, that reports on migrant women coping well and contributing their skills to a new community and society (e.g., Fitzgerald, 2001; Goldring, 1999; Mahler, 1999; Pedraza, 1991; Pessar, 1999). Gabaccia and Iacovetta (2002), for example, elaborated on Italian migrant women’s flexibility in adjusting to cultural change. Colson (1991), as another example, found that female migrants in their new environment generally showed ‘... greater resilience and adaptability than do men’ (p. 9). A few studies suggested that migrant women not only adjusted well in their new place of residence but that, simultaneously, their understandings about their gender roles and the resulting responsibilities changed. Those migrant women who underwent renegotiations of expectations and responsibilities pertaining to family roles (Dion & Dion, 2002) emerged from their ‘invisibility’ (Boyd, 1986) and engaged in new leadership practices (Cranford, 2007). From a psychological standpoint, it would be of interest to learn in what ways these role changes and participation in the world of work influenced migrant women’s sense of self.

### ***Migration, women, work and sense of self***

The increasing number of female migrants seeking work over the past decades has shown that male migrants are not the sole breadwinners. In fact, many women migrate by themselves to seek employment and become providers for their families back home, as, for example, the Haitian migrant women in Gammage's (2004) study. Many of those women who migrated with their husbands became the breadwinners for their families, like the Latino women in Canada and America in Cranford's (2007) research and Hispanic-Latino migrant women in Hondagneu-Sotelo's (2000) North American study. For many, these roles were not available to them in their country of origin.

A number of research papers and reviews indicated that Western cultures — even though women of these cultures also tend to be subjected to male-biased performance criteria — permit migrant women to express ways of being that would not have been acceptable in their home country (Afkhani, 1995). In Korea, for instance, women tend to obey their husbands because husbands have financial power and provide for their family, and because this is a socially defined expectation (Lim, 1997). However, after migrating to North America, the Korean women took up paid work and generated their own income. The changed family circumstances generated changes in gender role behavior; the Korean women were more apt to speak out about issues they previously refrained from addressing, and 'their voices got louder' (Lim, 1997, p. 38). As another example, Gitmez (1983) wrote about migration as an opportunity for Turkish migrant women to gain employment in Germany and generate their own income, which put them into more powerful positions than in their place of birth. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) wrote about migration as an increase of opportunities for education and improved quality of life for Latina women in the United States, which would have been inconceivable in their home countries. Williams (2001) talked about 'new possibilities of choice' for migrating Samoan women to deal with constraining cultural and gender issues that may have discouraged them from seeking employment back home.

Despite these potential advantages for migrant women, however, many women do not experience working in their receiving country positively. These women experience working in their new location as exploitation (Attanapola, 2006), degradation and eroding their lives (Mehra & Gammage, 1999). Such negative experiences have been shared by Sri Lankan women who migrated from rural to urban settings for reasons of finding employment. In her study about national female

migration, employment and identity, Attanapola (2006) interviewed 13 Sri Lankan women who experienced ill-treatment, being yelled at, harassment from males and unhygienic conditions at their working places. It is noteworthy, though, that most of the interviewed women did not wish to return to their home village since earning money gave them a sense of independence and empowerment — a phenomenon which would support Jahoda's (1981; 1982) claim that 'a bad job can be better than no job' (discussed in chapter 1, *work deprivation model*).

Other negative post-migration experiences for women include that many are the first to be laid off during organizational downsizing. In addition, they might find themselves in low-paid female-typed service jobs, for example, as nurse aids in elder care positions, or in fast food chains working irregular, unsociable hours, adding stress to their lives (Acker, 2004; Larner, 1991; Phizacklea, 1983). A number of Samoan women, for example, found it difficult to rise up into prestigious jobs requiring specific skills; they related the barriers to those jobs to discriminating views by others at work (Gibson, 1983; Spoonley, 2001). In New Zealand, they encountered the 'glass ceiling effect' — the invisible barrier to stepping up into prestigious jobs — which mirrored their experience in Samoa where management positions were dominated by men (Levy, 2003). However, there have been some exceptions and more recent changes in Samoa. Fairbairn-Dunlop's (2003) report about female workers in Samoa's coconut oil mill showed that, in this company, women dominated the management positions.

The barriers for migrant women trying to find their niche and advance at work in their country of choice has been the focus of a number of research projects and academic literature (Acker, 2004; Gibson, 1983; Larner, 1991; Phizacklea, 1983; Spoonley, 2001). It is important to draw people's attention to how migrant women are affected by unacceptable work conditions, discrimination and exploitation.

It is equally important to focus on the opportunities and potential benefits that migration can hold for women, such as increased employment opportunities, training and education increasing chances for promotion at work, and the prospect to renegotiate traditional gender roles that constrain women's decisions about their lives. For example, in a recent journal article about transnational migration of Indonesian domestic workers Williams (2008) highlighted the purpose of migrating as getting away from the 'self-sacrifice model'. To explore the links between migration, religious beliefs, and migration, Williams interviewed women from the poorer East

Indonesian islands who migrated to Java to find work. The women, 'following God's will' (p. 346), endeavored to find work opportunities, personal freedom and happiness, relief from their confined gender roles as mothers, sisters, and daughters, and respite from male control (p. 345). While there are some recent studies focusing on the benefits of migration for females, such as skilled women making use of skill shortages in other countries (Ho, 2006) or women in patriarchal communities gaining more personal freedom and autonomy in bigger cities (Williams, 2008), women developing more self-confidence after having dealt successfully with post-migratory changes (Ward & Styles, 2003), there is ample of literature focusing on problematic issues, disadvantages, and inadequacies in migrant women. Alvesson and Billing (1997) pointed out, 'misery stories and an emphasis on problems are popular' in literature and discourse about migrant women (p. 7).

Such emphasis on deficiencies in migrant women can result in self-fulfilling prophecies and learned helplessness; a bleak picture about the future of employment-seeking migrant women can lead to learned hopelessness and depression as a result of a perceived absence of choice and control over the outcome of their situation (Seligman, 1975; 2004). Learned optimism, on the other hand, can assist to believe in, and strive for, a positive outcome of one's efforts and add to one's psychological well-being (Seligman, 1998; 2002). It is, thus, important for researchers to avoid over-emphasizing the negatives, and to focus on the opportunities and potential benefits of migration for women. The scarcity of research with a positive focus on migrants' potential skills and aptitudes, rather than on deficiencies, has also been confirmed by the Center for Applied Cross-cultural Research (2007) in their Diversity Research Report 2007.

Unquestionably, discrimination, objectionable conditions at work and exploitation exist for many migrant women in their receiving country and are unacceptable. Williams (2008) argued that, despite finding increased personal freedom, 'when women migrate, they move from one marginalized position to a different marginalized position, relative to their host community and employers' (p. 346). It needs to be noted, though, that for many migrant women the conditions in their home country, - compared with their new country, were similarly if not more unpleasant: exploitation and abuse were part of work life there, too (Gitmez, 1983). Undoubtedly, for many women, migration and paid work are avenues out of dependence and oppression. Women from minority cultures, though not exclusively from these cultures, increasingly migrate to countries with more promising conditions to escape the

limitations put upon them by cultural restrictions, gender role stereotypes, or by lack of availability of work. In such cases, even low-paid, temporary or part-time, insecure jobs *might* be perceived as 'better than no jobs when these jobs do improve the lives of those women who have them' (Standing, 1989). Not only women from minority cultures experienced pay inequity and lack of social advancement. Nakazawa, Yui, Kamiya, Kinoshita, and Takeda (2008), in a recent interview survey of Japanese migrant women, exploring their reasons for migrating, concluded that many Japanese women migrated because of limited career prospects in Japanese cultural practices. Many women had to succumb to unstable, low-skilled and low-paid work and left the country to improve their work situation.

Migration is a means for many women to improve their lives by way of education and job opportunities. It is, therefore, important for the receiving countries and their people to support migrant women in their search for work by refraining from prejudgments about their skills and abilities and by making work available to them. It is the responsibility of academic researchers to provide knowledge for a better understanding about migrant women's work needs, aspirations and skills. Such knowledge could enable the members of the host culture to adjust their views about migrant women's skills.

Fletcher (1995), an advisor for the Labour Market Policy Group in New Zealand, suggested that, for researchers to arrive at a balanced portrayal about migrant women at work, they needed to look beyond the transitional phase of migrant women in employment because, at a later point in time, their situations and profiles may have changed. Principally, a *recent* time of immigration relates to lower education and low paid jobs. By omitting information on strengths and *later* successes, literature constructs and maintains an imbalanced portrait of migrant women, which will not assist them to find their niche in their host culture. Support for migrant women to put their skills and knowledge to use needs to be extended beyond the initial adjustment processes to their new country. Since imbalanced, unfavorable views are part of the problem of unemployment and under-employment amongst groups of migrant women, support also needs to be extended beyond practical assistance. I hope that this thesis will be a contribution towards more balanced views on potential competencies in migrant women. The thesis aims to accomplish this by generating first-hand knowledge about how migrant women themselves experiencing their individual processes as employees in their host country's workforce.

Migrant women's psychological experiences of adjusting to socio-cultural change tend to vary, depending on context, across and within cultural groups (Acker, 2004; Garcia, 2002; Mohanty; 2003). Findings about women in one specific environment do not necessarily apply to women in other environments (Billing & Alvesson, 2000; Buijs, 1993; Espin, 1999). Overly generalized views about women from non-mainstream cultures evoked critiques from members of both non-Western and Western research communities (for example, Hurtado, 1996; 1997; Richter, 2004). Mainly, the critiques concerned cultural mainstream research approaches not taking ethno-cultural variations among women into account (Baca Zinn, 1995; Hurtado, 1997). For example, it cannot be assumed that all women put equal value on achievement in paid work. Consequently, research about migrant women's 'self' and 'sense of identity' needs to consider their socio-cultural origin and its prevailing gender culture together with other circumstantial influences (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Betancourt & Lopez, 1993; Buijs, 1996; Cerrutti & Massey, 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; Richter, 2004). As Pedraza (1991) pointed out, researchers '...have yet to develop a truly gendered understanding of the causes, processes and consequences of migration' (p. 318).

### **Summary**

Meaning of work is subjectively experienced. Studies showed that for most people, intrinsic rewards, such as finding their tasks purposeful and work outcomes making a difference, are at least as important as financial gains. In many societies, the extent of participation in paid work varies between men and women (Buijs, 1993; Burton, 2004; Espin, 1999; Freeman, 2004; Gottfried, 2004; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; Pessar & Mahler, 2001). Access to work can change self-concepts especially for women who have experienced constraints and limited access to paid work (Dion & Dion, 2002; Gammage, 2004; Kaspar & Noh, 2001; Kinnon, 1999; Sassen, 1996; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999; Mahler, 1999; Pessar, 1999). This is especially so when they migrate to an environment that differs from their birth culture in ways of work availability and different gender-role expectations.

Until today, many studies in psychology defined migrant women's processes without regard to women's personal views and experiences (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Gupta, 1999; Worrell, 2000). Further, migrant women are often indiscriminately categorized as difficult to employ, showing adjustment problems and skill deficiencies, and are hard to employ (Richter, 2004). With some exceptions, the skills, achievements and emancipation aspects of migrant women from minority

cultures are rarely highlighted in psychology research. Such imbalanced, victimizing portraits are not likely to assist migrant women in their employment and psychological well-being.

While changes after migrating are often portrayed in academic literature as 'loss and identity confusion' (e.g., Fukuyama, 1990; Ward & Styles, 2003), such changes also constitute opportunities for migrants to further their skills and knowledge. The fact that migrant women's competencies are often negatively portrayed (Alvesson & Billing, 1997) while, at the same time, they have not been given the opportunity to communicate their skills and aspirations constitutes a gap in literature in psychology. Such omission of information may lead to distorted views unhelpful to migrant women's adjustment at work in their migration country, and detrimental to their self-development.

In short, 'migrant women at work' deserve attention in research, especially since, in the age of 'people moving and mixing' (Hermans & Kempen, 1998), more and more women leave their home country to live in other places. To counter migrant women's instant positioning as skill-deficient and hard to employ, more emphasis needs to be given to their strengths and skills (Raghuram, 2004). Not much is known about migrant women's achievements at work and the psychological implications for their self-concepts. There are no combined work and migration theories with an established link to migrant women's self-concepts.

To explore the experiences of migrant women at work and to uncover the underlying psychological processes affecting how these constructs contribute to their self-concepts, researchers need to employ methods that can generate authentic, in-depth information. In conclusion, to avoid overly generalized studies and to arrive at an in-depth understanding about the self-concepts of women who have moved to a new socio-cultural environment to take up paid work, there is a need for qualitative studies, focused on the lived experiences of specific cultural groups of migrant women. To elicit authentic information, the lived experiences can only be explored through the migrant women's own accounts from their own perspective.

In the following chapter, some theories about 'self' and 'identity' will be reviewed and their value for this research assessed.

## **CHAPTER 2: AN EVALUATION OF THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING SENSE OF IDENTITY**

### ***Introduction***

Due to the variations in people's lived experiences, the concept of 'identity' has different connotations for individual experiencers. Researchers subscribing to various perspectives promote various ideas of what identities and selves are and how they should be studied. The array of theories has become increasingly complex which makes it difficult to evaluate their variety, similarities and differences. To an extent, their boundaries are blurred and the perspectives lie somewhere along a continuum with individualistic views (e.g., Crossley, 2000; Erikson, 1963) and social perspectives (e.g., Atkins, 2004; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) on either end. The roots of theories about person-culture relationships go back, amongst others, to Hegel, Kant, Marx, Herder, and von Humboldt (Fuhrer, 2004) but largely remain concealed in more recent theories and debates in psychology of what identity is.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider all the different theories available along with each difference between and within them. However, to provide a background understanding for how 'sense of identity' is viewed in this thesis, some major identity theories will be introduced and appraised next. The term 'sense of identity' in this study, even when it is used in a singular form, is always understood in the plural, for example, as multiple identities. Individuals have the potential to internalize, hold and move back and forth between, various identities (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Hermans, 2002; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Mead, 1934).

### ***Identity theories***

Social psychology and developmental theories have given rise to various conceptualizations of identity. Erikson's (1963; 1968) and Marcia's (1966; 1987) life stage and identity achievement theories defined identity formation as a 'normative, universal, ego-driven process' ideally resulting in a 'coherent, stable, healthy self'.

In contrast to these developmental stage theorists, Tajfel (1981), Hogg and Abrams (1998), Hurtado (1997), and Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherall (1987) theorized identity formation as a socio-psychological phenomenon in conjunction with membership in social groups. The latter definition, based on Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), emphasizes social categorization

(development of identity via belonging to a social group) in contrast to ego-driven identity processes (e.g., Erikson, 1968). Social Identity Theory grew out of research on stereotyping, which indicated that individuals strive to maintain a favorable image of their in-group even if the group is subject to disapproval or criticism.

Luhtanen and Crocker's (1990) perspective on identity reflects Erikson's (1968) self-driven individuated perspectives as personal identity processes, and also his Social Identity Theory's group-oriented processes in identity formation. Luhtanen and Crocker view a) personal processes and b) social, collective processes as two distinct forms of the self-concept. A partition was also made by Triandis (1989) and Triandis and Suh (2001), categorizing North Americans, Northwestern Europeans, and Oceanians (people from the Australian continent) as people with individualistic identities and the rest of the world as having collectivistic identities (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Sampson, 1988).

Other theorists attempted to integrate elements of developmental and social identity theories. Phinney (1989; 1992) advanced Erikson's developmental perspective and specified a theory of a) individuals striving towards identity achievement and b) belonging to social groups towards which their thinking, feeling, and behavior is oriented. Both identity processes involve cognitive 'components of search' and affective 'components of affirmation, belonging and commitment' (Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997).

Sluss and Ashforth's (2003) framework of understanding identity also avoided breaking the concept of identity into personal and social components. Their framework used a 'three-level view' of a) individual, b) interpersonal and c) collective levels of identity formation (p. 9). This framework has been adopted by a number of other identity researchers (e.g., Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brickson, 2000), who considered a) the individual level to relate to independence and autonomy (comparable to Erikson), b) the interpersonal level oriented towards interdependence and role-related relationships and c) the collective level to relate to oneself as a prototypical member of groups (similar to SIT).

Overall, although the division of social identity and personal identity has its value in explaining identity — in that breaking it up into components may make it more accessible to comprehension — such identity theories, frameworks and models can also be criticized for keeping personal and social identity separate. Concerning these streams of identity theories, Reid and Deaux (1996) spoke of segregation and

suggested that the self should be viewed as a composite of self-directed and socially shaped identity processes. Spiro (1993), as well, argued against mutually exclusive views of identity processes. He argued that the bi-polarization of the self as individual and collective, or Western and non-Western, was 'wildly overdrawn', 'overly generalized' (p.116) and 'much too restricted' (p.117).

There is no overarching, unanimous agreement in psychology on what constitutes a person's identity. However, a number of common features in explaining 'identity' can be found across these theoretical frameworks. There is *some* common ground amongst these theories on these dimensions: overall, they agree that identities and selves are largely shaped by psychological processes and by the socio-cultural context of people's life-worlds. However, these theories on identity formation show variations in the degree of emphasis placed on each, socio-cultural and individual factors, and how these factors contribute to explaining and understanding identity (Smith & Sparkes, 2008).

In agreement with Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones (2006, p.19), this researcher believes that dichotomous views of people as identifying either individualistically or collectivistic is 'overly simplified', and that people's sense of identity lies somewhere along a scale between these two opposites. Individuals' positions along this scale will vary, depending on their social and individual background. This view is shared by a number of identity theorists (e.g., Fuhrer, 2004; Giddens, 1991; Spiro, 1993; Valsiner, 2000).

No single theory fully captures the essence of individuals' identity processes. Therefore, in accordance with Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones' (2006) suggestion, this study will draw on a number of conceptions of identity that are 'flexible enough to be applied across different socio-cultural contexts' (Spiro, 1993). In agreement with Reid and Deaux (1996), and a number of other identity theorists who disagree with divisive and fragmenting identity theories (e.g., Giddens, 1991; Mead, 1934), in the present study, self-identity and social identity are not viewed in isolation but understood as inextricably linked and feeding into each other. Further, in this study, identity processes are understood as being of a fluid, rather than a staged, nature and that they continue throughout people's lives.

***Identity as the link between individuals and their socio-cultural environment***

In this thesis, the sense of identity is seen as a composite of self-directed processes- created by the individual through reflection - and socially-shaped

processes -created by others in the person's social environment (Reid & Deaux, 1996; Giddens, 1991). While the individual is viewed as having choices and being able to make decisions about who, what, and how they want to be, at the same time a person's sense of identity is seen as informed by the socio-cultural context and psychological processes of constant changes (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). In other words, the development of self-identity is not merely an internal process, since self-processes always occur within social contexts, settings, situations, activities, and practices where the individual and cultural environments 'co-evolve and transact', or, where the individual and others shape each other (Fuhrer, 2004; Valsiner, 2000). While the constant, continuing changes in identity formation occur for every individual, these are more rapidly experienced by migrants who leave their 'place of belonging', move into new places, and need to adapt to novel systems of values and ways of doing things (Attanapola, 2006). Kazmierska (2003) suggested that for migrants who have established a strong sense of belonging and strongly identity with their culture, identity change often happens as a 'turning point' instead of a slow process. Turning points in the sense of identity happen for people when 'critical incidents' occur in their lives. Kazmierska's (2003) autobiographical narrative about one Turkish migrant woman living in Germany showed that the woman's home country's culture differed widely from that of her host culture. Kazmierska likened the woman's experiences of such cultural changes to critical incidents which generated a turning point in self-perception. Kazmierska acknowledged, however, that the deeper changes, 'coming to terms' with some aspects of one's identity, occur as long-term processes. In short, identity transformation, even when generated by sudden, critical incidents, is subject to constant change (Strauss, 1969).

The development of self and its foundation for identity begin in early life and emerge from environmental cues, life experiences, and personal perceptions (Phares & Trull, 1997). Identity, thus, is never complete (Hall, 1997). The formation processes take place on a number of different levels. Their contributions to a person's sense of who they are cannot be understood separately since they are of a reciprocal nature. Identity processes are formed in a complex interaction between events, imagination, significant others, routines and habits, thoughts, talk, and stories about those (Ezzy, 1998, p. 251). These events take place every day, during people's 'being and doing' where they organize their views of themselves in 'some manner' (Bruner, 1990). While the processing of self-views occurs individually and internally, 'others' play an important role in these processes: Individuals experience themselves from the

standpoint of 'other' members of the social group they belong to (Mead, 1934, p.138). In short, identity processes are based on inter-subjective relationships — meaning the self and others. It is, thus, a 'self-making' from both the inside and outside of the person with the 'inside' referring to memory, feelings, ideas, and beliefs. The 'outside' refers to the regard of others and the expectations that people pick up from early in their lives — reflexively and reflectively — from the cultural context in which they are immersed (Bruner, 2001; 2002).

In this sense, 'identity' is the link between individuals and their socio-cultural environment. For the individual, identity — since it is linked to one's life-world 'out there' — is a way of giving meaning to lived experiences. Identity processes involve locating one's 'being within the world' and 'sense of belonging to others', as well as experiencing 'uniqueness' as 'being different from others' (Woodward, 1997). Identity is informed by social surroundings. However, people as active agents in their identity processes tend to facilitate self-identity by asking questions like, 'who am I' and 'where do I belong'.

These questions serve individuals to re-create, re-form, or re-establish their sense of identity by spawning dialogues between the self and internal representations of the social environment (Hermans, 1996; 2001; 2002; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2004; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Mead, 1934). These internal dialogues about 'who am I' involve continuing compromise between one's roles representing, for example, one's gender, ethnicity, culture, and other positions in society such as 'being at work'. In this respect, identity consists of 'multiple selves' (Bhatia & Ram, 2001), or, a 'multiplicity of inner voices' which manage 'tensions and conflicts' between 'parts of the person' and negotiate 'differences between the conflicting demands of various [...] identities' (Babad, Birnbaum, & Benne, (1983, p.41).

The self fluctuates among different and even opposite positions, and imaginatively provides each position with a voice. In imagined conversations, the self moves back and forth between the person's own position and the position of a real or imagined adversary. Through this process, relations between positions can be established. The internal dialogue between these role representations, thus, is of particular importance to identity formation.

In these internal dialogues, the voices function like interacting characters in a story, involved in a process of question and answer, agreement and disagreement. These characters exchange information about their respective positions, generating complex self-concepts marked by discontinuity and continuity (Hermans, 2001). Similarly, in this thesis, identity will be viewed as a *continuing* process of constant changes rather than an already accomplished state. For migrants, when bringing their 'self' from their country of origin to a new location, their new location has significant implications for their sense of self (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Schwartz, Montgomery, Briones, 2006). Commonly, they are exposed to new surroundings, a new culture and different ways of doing things. Practices, activities, group membership, status, and personal expectations, often change for individuals through migration, (Kinnon, 1999). While their sense of identity originates from culturally shared representations (Moscovici, 1976; 1985) it will also underlie specific individual experiences and meaning-giving (Shweder & Bourne, 1984; White, 1992). Their self will be moving back and forth between old and new practices and beliefs in a continuing process of constant change- from one position to another in accordance with changes in 'space (situation) and time'.

In summary, there are a number of -levels, which cannot be understood in isolation from each -other, on which the self is experienced, including a) the self as an internal dimension, b) in relationships with others, and c) in relation to socio-cultural environments. (This researcher acknowledges the existence of the self as a spiritual dimension. However, 'spirituality' - an internal process not necessarily synonymous with 'affiliation to the church' - has not been a central point in the participants' accounts and, thus, will not be a focal topic in the present thesis). To understand how the different contributors to identity feed into a person's self-processes, one needs to understand how the person makes sense of experiences, talks about these experiences in internal dialogues and to others, and ultimately converts these stories to knowledge of self, other and the world in general (Singer, 2004, p. 438; McAdams, 1997; 2003).

### ***Identity from a phenomenological perspective***

This study bases its exploration of people's every-day experiences - centering on working migrant women and how these experiences contribute to their sense of identity - within phenomenological assumptions which will be outlined in the next

chapter. This section serves to outline briefly phenomenological perspectives about identity processes.

Human beings can only understand themselves through situated processes of person-environment interactions and transactions (Briggs, 1992; Cole, 1996; Shweder, 1991; Valsiner, 2000). In these interactions and transactions, individuals are conscious decision-makers and reflective beings who externalize their inner processes via language. From this perspective, identities are considered as internalized life stories, created by the self within social, historical, political and cultural contexts that develop and change over time (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Polkinghorne, 1988; Ricoeur, 1984).

In accordance with the socio-psychological perspectives about identity (as self-directed and socially shaped) outlined before, the phenomenological view of people's understandings of 'self' and 'identity' centers on the internal processing of their experiences. The phenomenological view acknowledges the important role of the socio-cultural context in making meaning from experiences. Contrary to other theories, which view 'identity' as a development directed purely from the 'inside' (Gal'perin, 1967), phenomenology understands self-processes as a synthesis of a) internal processes and b) the socio-cultural conditions within which people socially interact and experience themselves (Hurrelmann, 1983; Wertsch, 1998). Identity is a process which is influenced by an individual who actively designs his or her life, not only reacting, but acting — 'not only taking up suggestions, but providing some' (Fuhrer, 2004).

Since people are the meaning-makers of their experiences, they, as the agents, actively create their life-worlds and their identity processes (Fuhrer, 2004). As beings in time, individuals could be compared with a ship that sails through life. However, they are also '...navigators. We care how our lives go' (Flanagan, 1996, p. 67). The important characteristic of phenomenology is that it understands individuals as competent designers of their own lives. While the course of the ship needs frequent adjusting by the navigator, the port of its departure remains the same. In other words, 'identity' is marked by fluctuations and permanence.

Phenomenology, in accordance with the socio-psychological theories, acknowledges the aspect of 'permanence' in identity: it is the same self that now reflects on 'what has been'. As an example, I am the same human being as my mother's born child, despite the obvious alterations of a half-century, because my

'being in the world' has been continuous. As far as a person's consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person. At the same time, the phenomenological standpoint takes into full account the temporal dimension (temporality) of beings who, by existing with others in a shared world, transform themselves in the course of a life history. We experience ourselves and others as temporally stable and continuous, yet we also notice ourselves and others as changing. In short, selves 'embody both change and permanence simultaneously' (Fraisse, 1963, p. 10).

In this thesis, the phenomenon of interest is the role of 'being at work' for Samoan migrant women's identity processes. By migrating to Auckland and seeking work, the participants embarked on self-journeys that may not always have been smooth sailing since some of the contextual provisions were beyond their control. As agents of their life journeys, however, they could influence the course of their self-development. As for the continuous aspect (continuity) of identity in phenomenology, the Samoan migrant women will always remain of Samoan origin; as for the temporal aspect (discontinuity), some of their self-views are bound to change over time within changed social space. In her research about Samoans' beliefs, domestic violence, gender and conflict resolution, Wurtzburg (2004, pp. 51), interviewed 24 Samoans living in Christchurch, New Zealand. With regard to 'Samoans creating New Zealand-styled Samoan identities', Wurtzburg suggested that two significant components are involved in their identity formation. These are the 'insider affiliation and reliance on cultural traits' that have been socio-culturally established (those traits that will continue — the 'continuity aspect') and the self-definition, involving reflective processes and changes as a result of communication and 'contact with others who are different' (those facets that will transform — the 'discontinuity aspect').

Identity formation processes involve others from a) one's home group with whom one feels affiliated and b) others whom one perceives as different and who contrast one's own characteristics (Schutz, 1944). Self-perceptions of identity, thus, involve not only those people and places with whom one identifies but also those with whom one does not yet identify. This view fits the situation of Samoan migrants who are confronted with new ways of being and doing in New Zealand. By understanding who they are not, they perceive who they are. They ceaselessly rediscover who they are by finding out how they are in comparison to others.

The phenomenological notion of lived experiences creating constant changes in one's self-conceptualizations is well reflected by the dialogical view of internalized, interacting characters involved in a 'process of question and answer', generating complex self-concepts marked by 'discontinuity and continuity' (Hermans, 2001).

### **Summary**

This study has introduced and drawn on a variety of perspectives and theories about identity processes in search of their utility for exploring the contribution of work to a sense of identity in Samoan migrant women in Auckland. Socio-psychological theories, as far as they acknowledge the interactions between individuals as psychological beings and their everyday experiences in a social context in identity processes, are compatible with phenomenological assumptions of people as meaning-makers actively creating their life-worlds. Socio-psychological approaches to understanding identity formation can assist in answering phenomenological questions centering on 'how do practices such as engaging in work contribute to processes of identity for Samoan migrant women in New Zealand'. This thesis will also draw on the dialogical view of internalized processes of question and answer, creating continuous and discontinuous self-concepts (Hermans, 2001).

The next chapter puts the previously-introduced concepts of sense of identity, work, and women (Chapter 1) within the context of the participants' culture of origin. It also provides information necessary to understanding the participants' socio-cultural and historical background.

## **CHAPTER 3: SOCIO-CULTURAL HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: SAMOANS, WORK, GENDER AND SELF**

### ***Introduction***

People from the Pacific Islands have been traveling and migrating to New Zealand for over hundred years. By the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the number of Pacific Island people had increased to over 6 per cent of the New Zealand population. Auckland, particularly, experienced a 'browning' of its population as part of the 'Pacific globalizing process' (Anae, 2004). The diverse Pacific Island communities in New Zealand include over 20 cultures. In addition, over 50 per cent of New Zealand-born children of Pacific families are of multiple ethnicities (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003; Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

The 2006 Census (Statistics New Zealand 2006; the following data was updated May 2008) showed that Samoans were the largest Pacific ethnic group in New Zealand, making up 131,100 or almost 50 per cent of New Zealand's Pacific population (265,974) and 3.2 per cent of the total New Zealand population. Some 60 per cent were born in New Zealand, while 40 per cent counted as migrants (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The sex distribution of Samoans is almost evenly balanced with 49 per cent males (64,530) and 51 per cent females (66,573). At the time of the 2006 Census, 67 per cent of Samoans (87,003) lived in the Auckland region, the commercial center. The number of Samoans in Auckland is steadily rising: there was an increase of 14 per cent (16,083 people) since the 2001 Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The fact that Samoans make up a significant and growing part of New Zealand's labor force (81,138 people, 65.5 per cent Samoan males and 53.2 per cent females (Statistics New Zealand, 2006) makes their ways of doing and being at work and their well-being at work a valid research topic of interest to this thesis.

Paid work is a major motivator for Samoans, male and female, to migrate to sustain their families in New Zealand and Samoa (Centner, 2000; Franco, 1985; Macpherson, 1992; 2001; Macpherson, Shore, & Franco, 1978; Parker, 2005; Spoonley, 2001; Williams, 2001). For the female Samoan migrants, coming to New Zealand often means moving from unpaid, domestic work to paid employment. This move potentially changes their social status and increases their economic significance within their families since they are now able to contribute in new ways to kinship activities. Such changes in social status are likely to influence their understanding of self and identity processes. It is the context of paid work in relation

to Samoan women's identity processes, which is the focus of this research. An overview of socio-cultural historical facts about Samoans, work, gender and self, necessary to understand the context of this research project, follows.

### ***Samoans coming to New Zealand: demographic data***

Samoa is located south of the equator, approximately halfway between Hawai'i and New Zealand in the Polynesian region of the Pacific Ocean. The Census 2008 estimate for the Western Samoan population was 188,540 people (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The total land area is approximately 3000 km<sup>2</sup>, consisting of the two large islands of Upolu and Savai'i and eight smaller islets of which two are inhabited. From the end of World War I until 1962, Samoa was governed by New Zealand, first under a League of Nations mandate and then under a United Nations Trusteeship. In 1962, Western Samoa, its capital being Apia, gained independence and signed a Friendship Treaty with New Zealand. The economy of Samoa has traditionally been dependent on development aid from New Zealand and other countries, private family remittances from overseas, and agricultural exports (Macpherson, 2004; 2006; Spoonley, Bedford, & Macpherso, 2003).

### ***Samoans in New Zealand's workforce***

The 2006 Census showed that 59 per cent (47,922) of the Samoan adult population in New Zealand were employed either full-time or part-time. As shown in the following table, a higher proportion of Samoan men were employed than Samoan women (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

*Table 1*

#### **Proportion Employed (2006 census)**

*Samoan, total Pacific and total New Zealand populations 2006 Census*

Working age population only (ages 15 years and over).

<b>Population</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total</b>
Samoan	65.5	53.2	59.1
Total Pacific	64.8	51.7	58.0
Total New Zealand	71.5	59.0	65.0

(Statistics New Zealand, 2006)

Sixty-one per cent of New Zealand-born Samoans aged 15 years and over were employed compared with 58 per cent for those born overseas. This difference is likely to be attributed to the differing age distributions of the two groups and possibly the different distribution of social capital.

The 2006 Census recorded just over 10 per cent (5,517) of the Samoan labor force as unemployed, which was a decrease of 6 percentage points since 2001. As shown in the following table, the unemployment rate for the Samoan population was lower than for the total Pacific population and higher than for the total New Zealand population (Statistics New Zealand 2006).

Table 2

**Proportion Unemployed (2006 census)**

*Samoan, total Pacific and total New Zealand populations*

The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed people expressed as a percentage of the labor force.

<b>Population</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>Per cent</b>		
Samoan	8.0	12.1	10.3
Total Pacific	9.0	12.6	10.7
Total New Zealand	4.4	5.7	5.0

(Statistics New Zealand, 2006)

The unemployment rate also varied between New Zealand-born (13 per cent) and overseas-born Samoans (9 per cent) (Statistics New Zealand 2006), one reason being that more NZ-born Samoans are in tertiary education.

In 2006, the three most common occupations for Samoans in New Zealand were laborers (19 per cent), machinery operators and drivers (15 per cent), and clerical and administrative workers (14 per cent) (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2008). New Zealand-born Samoans are increasingly moving into white-collar work. There were marked differences between the sexes. Samoan men are much more likely than Samoan women to work as machinery operators and drivers, and as technicians and trades workers. Women, on the other hand, especially those born in New Zealand, are more likely than men to work as professionals, community and personal service workers, clerical and administrative workers and sales workers (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

***History and culture***

Samoan people do not have the same support and access to government resources as the indigenous Maori people — the *tangata whenua* — and New Zealanders of predominantly European ancestry, the *pakeha* (Ausubel, 1960; King, 1999), who make up the populations dominant in numbers in New Zealand society. Despite Samoa's Friendship Treaty with New Zealand, they have to negotiate, like other Pacific Island communities, for these resources as matters arise (Spoonley, Bedford, & Macpherson, 2003). After gaining their independence, Samoans had

privileged, though restricted, access to New Zealand. In the 1970s, some Samoans became victims of the campaigns against illegal overstayers in New Zealand (Spoonley, Bedford, & Macpherson, 2003). The campaign lasted only a very short time; however, it generated widespread protest because of the indiscriminate focus on Pacific people amongst other, including European, overstayers.

As a result, the sense of kinship between New Zealanders and Samoans was ruptured and, at that time, made it difficult for many Samoans to establish New Zealand identities (Teaiwa & Mallon, 2005).

Not too long ago (between 1919 and 1962), Samoans encountered New Zealand as a colonial power. Pacific Island peoples share this historical experience with Maori. Both populations originate from Polynesia and share some commonalities of geography, culture and history. Both suffer from historically produced disadvantages as they have been dominated and colonized by European cultures (Teaiwa & Mallon, 2005). Both populations have made socio-economic gains over recent decades, but at the same time account for the lowest incomes in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2006; Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2002). However, there is a difference in status as New Zealand citizens: while the Maori people are the *tangata whenua* — the first people of New Zealand — and, consequently, have equity status, Samoan people, who are migrants to New Zealand, rely on principles of minority rights (Teaiwa & Mallon, 2005).

Samoan people, among other Pacific Island populations in New Zealand, inhabit a cultural space between Maori as *tangata whenua*, mainstream Europeans — in Samoan terms *palagi* — and other migrant populations. In this context, the status of Samoan people provides them with different challenges in forming their identities in New Zealand (Teaiwa & Mallon, 2005).

Some Maori people consider the Samoans, due to some shared Polynesian background, as elder siblings, *tuakana* (Davidson, 1984). At the same time, Samoans and Maoris preserve their cultural ways. Despite some cultural similarities with Maori people, Samoans have a distinct cultural heritage and knowledge that make them unique. This has been well documented in academic literature in history and anthropology (e.g., Freeman, 1983; 1999; Krämer, 1923; 1995; Mageo, 2001; Mead, 1928; Meleisea, 1987; 1999), sociology and socio-cultural studies (e.g., Anae, 2001; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1995; Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003; Macpherson, 2001; 1997; Pitt & Macpherson, 1974; Schoeffel, 1983; Shore, 1982; Spoonley, 2001).

While Samoan migrants in New Zealand generally maintain and identify with traditional Samoan ways, the *fa'asamoa*, Samoan culture is undergoing transformation, reflecting the new social and economic realities (Macpherson, 2001; 2004; 2006). The development of new cultures within the Samoan community in the Samoan population nodes is increasing. Many Samoans in Auckland are forming new identities, oriented towards *fa'aAukilani*, consisting of the cultural practices of their homeland and of New Zealand (Auckland) ways of operating (Spoonley, Bedford, & Macpherson, 2003). Such versatility makes Samoan migrants different from Samoans in their homeland: Samoans living in New Zealand can draw on their Samoan as well as on acquired Western knowledge. Yet, *fa'asamoa* maintains, to varying degrees, an important role in Samoan people's lives. *Fa'asamoa* still is the operating culture in Samoan communities, families and in some workplaces who employ groups of Samoans (Anae, 2000; Macpherson, 2004; Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003). The successful functioning of *fa'asamoa* relies on the principle of reciprocity, the principle of returning favors, '... a give-and-take process, meaning that one act of giving begets another [...] emphasizing values such as courtesy, respect, compassion, trust and charity towards people at home and at work (Mulitalo, Menon, & Tofilau, 2005).

*Fa'asamoa* refers to an all-encompassing traditional system of behavior and responsibilities that defines each person's relationship to others and to persons holding positions of power. Yet, how Samoans define their identity varies individually. Franklin's (2003) research about Pacific people's definitions (in internet discussions) of their identity processes, for example, showed that many of the participants defined their identity 'on their own terms' (p. 465) based on 'individual, community and cultural understanding of race/ethnicity, sex/gender and class/status' (p. 470). In their exchanges of their perceptions about their identity processes and some related every-day experiences, the participants made transparent that they were 'determined to decide themselves' how to integrate the allegiances to individualist societies such as New Zealand and the communal Pacific Island societies (p. 479). The discussions also showed, overall, that the participants perceived preserving cultural traditions and practices as important to them, however, preferably as an option rather than an obligation.

Instead of an obligation, *fa'asamoa* with its principles, customs and practices could be understood as a guideline or 'possibility' (Drozdow-St.Christian, 1997, p.

33), or a philosophy — a ‘process of desire rather than a fixed standard of regulation’ (Gershon, 2007, p. 813). Despite almost two centuries of European influence, Samoa maintains its historical customs, social and political systems, and language. Samoan culture is centered on the principle of *vā fealoa’i*, the relationships between people. These relationships are based on respect, *fa’aaloalo*. In addition to prescribed familial relationships, which extend to Samoans’ entire extended family, the *aiga*, with its familial chief, the *matai*, the Samoan individual also owes respect to other persons in positions of authority, to people who are senior in age and to customs of long-standing tradition (Macpherson, 2004; Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998).

### ***Samoan women and fa’asamoa***

Like strong traditional cultural influences in other Pacific Islands (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1979), *fa’asamoa* maintains the status quo of gender inequity, upholds patriarchy, and constructs the roles for Samoan women in and outside Samoa (Cribb & Barnett, 1999). However, looking back in Samoan history, gender inequity and restrictions for women have not always been the case. Samoa has inherited these concepts, manifested in the *fa’asamoa*, during long periods of colonization and exposure to Christianity (Schoeffel, 1983). Colonization and Christianization contributed to a system of social control for Samoan women: new values, ideas, and beliefs replaced some of the traditional ones.

Before Christianization in the nineteenth century, Samoan women had access to formal political economic power. Even though communities operated with a gender division of labor, there was an equal distribution of status for men and women (Schoeffel, 1983; Simi, 1991). As a result of missionary interventions, women were expected to take on the biblical role of devout, compliant wives, which drastically changed their status in their extended family and community (Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998). The Christian faith had strong strictures on wives being faithful and obedient (Griffen, 1987). What is now called ‘traditional’ in Samoan communities and families are roles and responsibilities influenced by the missionaries and colonial powers. With their arrival, women’s participation in public and political affairs became limited. Wives became the lowest ranking adult group in the communities in Samoa, had fewer rights than males, and were expected to serve their husband and his family (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1996). In these roles, women were equated with the terms *faletua*, meaning ‘back of the house’, and *tausí*, caregiver.

Many of the characteristics and principles of the *fa'asamoa* established in the 1800s and 1900s still exist and have implications for women in present Samoan culture (Sua'ali'i, 2001; Tupuola, 2000). In reference to the data in the analysis chapters some of these principles will be briefly defined:

a) *Pule*, authority, includes the power to determine women's labor and resource allocation. It is commonly exercised by males, for example the *matai*, leader, or the head of the family (Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998). Decisions over women taking on paid labor will be based on status and financial issues. Women have to ensure that any generation of income outside the community does not compromise their social responsibilities linked to their traditional gender role (Croulet & Sio, 1986).

b) *Tautua* refers to the duty to help, share and donate, including money obtained from paid work. This duty applies to three areas: the family, the community and the church.

c) *Status* is linked to financial income determining the sum of donations, which families are expected to contribute to their community and to *fa'alavelave*, the donations in family crises, including extended family, *aiga*.

d) *Feagaiga* is the term for the special role of brothers as protectors of their sisters. The status of a sister is sacred in relation to her brother. The brother is responsible for his sister and is charged with her protection and control, especially of her purity (Schoeffel, 1995).

The *aiga*, extended family, has substantial influence on women's gender identity formation starting in early childhood. The *aiga* is of a collective nature including grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins who are entitled to discipline the child — including the use of physical punishment (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998; Taule'ale'ausumai, 1990). Samoan children's fear of punishment leads them to conceal their needs and comply with the principles of *fa'asamoa*. The strict rules apply beyond childhood and especially to young women. Once female children turn into young women, their social life will be generally strictly monitored by their *aiga* (Shore, 1981; Shore, 1987). At this time, their brothers take on the roles of chaperons and protectors of their sisters' moral standards and reputation. The enforcement of strict traditions generates increasingly more value clashes between members of the older and the younger generations (Strachan, 1999).

This is particularly the case for Samoan women being raised abroad, for example being born in, or having moved at a young age to, New Zealand. Especially young Samoan girls often have different ideas about their role in social life and how to socialize than members of the older generation in their community (Mulitalo-Lauta & Menon, 2006). However, while the philosophy of *fa'asamoa* was originally intended to

prepare males and females for their social positioning and work tasks in the Samoan village system, some of the principles and practices can collide with the social context in New Zealand. Pacific Island women increasingly voice concern about some of the restrictions imposed by male-biased applications of traditional values and practices (e.g., Tupuola, 2000). This is reflected in some research outcomes and literature.

Pacific Island participants in Griffen's (1987) Workshop on Women, Development and Empowerment in Fiji in 1987 reported that, regardless of cultural setting, the expectations for Pacific Island women as mothers were strictly defined for them: they were expected to fulfill obligations to their children first. Men, on the other hand, could *choose* whether or not to take on responsibilities in this area. A main point raised about the family was that women were given a specific role in families as wives and mothers but were not expected to be heads of households. Although women were often consulted in decision-making regarding the family, the home, the church and the community, they generally were not given responsibility for the final decision. Samoan women in Samoa, in keeping with the principles of the *fa'asamoa*, still do not have as much influence as men in communal decision-making. While they operate their women's *komiti* (committee), their decisions can be vetoed at any time by the *fono* (males' committee). The women in Griffen's (1987) workshop felt that this did not constitute real empowerment. Their input into decision-making was limited especially when they were expected to follow their husband's career rather than the other way around, or when training or appointments were decided. While there was some disagreement amongst the participants over the extent of oppression in their families, they all agreed that women needed to be taught skills and to acquire knowledge of their choice.

Some participants pointed out that many Pacific Island women still feel powerless to change conditions in their lives because they are economically dependent, and emphasized the need for women to be economically independent and improving their access to resources. Overall, Griffen's (1987) report reflected the importance and meaningfulness for Samoan and other Pacific Island women to be employed not only for economic reasons but also for their sense of independence and autonomy. This study is just one example of voices critical of the way *fa'asamoa* is practiced and applied, especially for women. A number of research reports and documentations of personal stories showed that by no means all Samoan women agree with the 'gender-biased' exercising of values and protocol (e.g., Tupuola,

2000). In more current research, Tupuola's (2000) female participants, Samoan and New Zealand-born, criticized the attitudes, 'old-fashioned expectations' and 'gender-biased philosophies' of some elders towards young Samoan women (p. 66).

Macpherson (2006) termed these relational constellations of older migrants structuring the lives of the younger ones 'gerontocratic, and somewhat autocratic', even though the directions of these older migrants are 'readily accepted' by many newcomers, although not necessarily by those raised in New Zealand (p. 115). Some of Tupuola's (2000) participants talked about their apprehension of reprimand and 'severe consequences' if they chose to 'disobey the expectations of their aiga' (p. 68). Especially those women from rural Samoa or 'traditional households in New Zealand' expressed fear of being ostracized if they did not conform to their elders' expectations. Even though the practice of *fa'asamoa* is undergoing transitions in some respects (Macpherson, 2004), some Samoans still strictly apply some of its elements. Far from being content with their situations, a number of women in Tupuola's (2000) study suggested that *fa'asamoa* needed to acknowledge 'modernity and Westernization' and that respect and reverence should go to people not merely based on age but to 'people who have earned it'. While they did not wish to cut themselves off from traditional *fa'asamoa*, they desired an 'independent life style'. The wish for increased personal freedom and autonomy from family decisions is especially, but not exclusively, prevalent in young New Zealand-born Samoan women (Tupuola, 2004; Macpherson, 2004). While the younger New Zealand-born Samoans enjoyed an increase in control over their lives, Samoan-born elders, on the other hand, regretted the decrease in control over access to land and resources they had control over in Samoa (Macpherson, 2001; Wurtzburg, 2004). Elders with control over land are traditionally *matai*, generally male chiefs. Advantages and disadvantages of living in New Zealand, evidently, vary across age and gender groups.

As indicated earlier in this section, *fa'asamoa* is transforming and adjusting to different socio-cultural contexts, and openness towards women's needs and requirements, overall, is increasing. This is a process which will take time, and the readiness of elders and other family members to make these adjustments varies. In her speech to Pacific graduate women, Luamanuvao Winnie Laban, (2003), Samoan woman and Member of Parliament in New Zealand, said:

*'...women's primary role as family care givers – all these factors are seen as stopping women from taking their place in the leadership arena. When we look at*

*these factors in detail, we find that they are not necessarily barriers to opportunity. Traditional male hierarchies. In the fa'asamoa, women are not necessarily excluded from the highest positions. ... It is not that women cannot or have not received the highest titles – it is just that at this time in our history men are dominant.'*

While *fa'asamoa* does not exclude women from the 'highest positions' (Laban, 2003), the highest leadership positions in Samoan society are commonly allocated to *matai*, those with chiefly titles. These are predominantly male (Pitt & Macpherson, 1974, p. 63). This situation is expected to change as the criteria for leadership roles are being redefined to allow for the creation of increasing numbers of female *matai*. In 2000, less than ten per cent of the *matai* titles were held by women (Tcherkezoff, 2000). Overall, many Samoan women are still struggling to overcome the barriers to realizing their aspirations, especially in the domain of paid work and careers.

### ***Samoan women and work***

In Samoa, the village system divides labor distinctly into gender categories: the 'village of men' and the 'village of women' (Shore, 1981). The 'village of men' consists of the council of chiefs and various committees. Men's work commonly consists of outdoor and agricultural work. Political and public affairs are entirely the concern of men in Samoa. The 'village of women' includes the women's committee, village girls' association, group of chiefs' wives and the weaving organization. The women take care of the appearance of the village grounds, health and education and, generally, do not hold formal political power (Janes, 1990). Voluntary and unpaid labor plays an important part in Samoan culture in the form of service to others, *tautua*, (Franco, 1985).

Within the principles of the *fa'asamoa*, males are often the decision-makers about women's participation in work outside home and married women are expected to be of service to the families of their husbands. The men's power to intervene includes Samoan women's decisions about working outside the family. Within the principles of the *fa'asamoa*, paid work is considered as acceptable if it matches the woman's central responsibility to enhance the status and advancement of their families. Paid work for the advancement of *individual* women, on the other hand, can be deemed unacceptable (Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998). However, the increasing financial demands of the *fa'alavelave*, the expected donations in times of family crises, mean that women's incomes become increasingly important to Samoan households. Nevertheless, those Samoan women who decide to engage in paid work or careers often have to overcome some hurdles and restrictions first.

Another element of the *fa'asamoa* which has the potential to restrict women's generation of money by paid work is the principle of *feagaiga*, the responsibility of brothers to look after their sisters' economic and social well-being. Women often were, and some still are, discouraged from exercising their rights to autonomous decisions because doing so might imply that their brothers were neglecting their responsibility to look after them (Fairburn-Dunlop, 1996). Women's activities had been restricted to family welfare and education in the past, and a number of researchers (e.g., Cribb & Barnett, 1999; Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998; Shore, 1981; Tupuola, 2000) argue that the contemporary understanding of the Samoan way of life, *fa'asamoa*, still largely upholds these values. A strict application of these values potentially restricts women's participation in the labor force. On the other hand, women play important roles in organizing the family and wider community.

### ***Samoan women within their community and family***

For Samoans, the word 'community' usually refers to the extended family, the *aiga*, and the village (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1979). If Samoans travel overseas, the community remains open to their return, providing they have maintained their links with their *aiga* while they were away. Absence will not close the door, even if the community member is geographically distant. Family name and ancestry place a Samoan person socially and psychologically into their community setting, even if they have moved away. What makes their community 'Samoan' in New Zealand are their language, mythology, stories, ceremonies and the conservation of traditions, among other features (Biggs, 1967), and a strong emphasis on genealogy, status, authority and the sharing of resources (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1979).

Yet, while both female and male Samoans strongly value their families, and while their roles in community life complement each other, men and women are not of equal standing. The status of Samoan women — as for other Pacific Island women — with regard to control over assets and wealth and exercising decision-making power in the community, outside domestic affairs, is lower than that of their male counterparts (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1979). For many Samoan women, life centers on social aspects — for instance, managing the family and community — while men take care of political and public affairs.

However, these and other traditional characteristics, principles and applications of *fa'asamoa* are gradually changing inside and outside Samoa. Inside Samoa, there has been an increase in individualism in communities and decentralization of power.

In some areas, there is an incremental decrease in power of the *matai*, the predominantly male leaders, as state authority has increased (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1991). These dynamics are partly the effect of globalization: to function within the international business world, Samoan society needed to adjust their standards in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998). Those Samoans living in New Zealand are even more exposed to the values and norms of Western cultures. For many Samoan women, coming to New Zealand requires, as for other migrant women in other countries (e.g., Buijs, 1993), the acquisition of additional skills to earn an income in addition to adjustment to new norms and values. While, on the one hand, Samoan migrant women are exposed to new values and ways of doing things, they are, on the other hand, also expected to take on supportive, financially non-productive roles in the community and family (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1993).

Samoan women's strong involvement in community and domestic duties can make it difficult for them to take on additional roles, for example at work, in business, and politics (in 1995, in their home country, out of 49 Members of Parliament, only two were female (Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998); in 2008, three women were Members of Parliament)).

However, Samoan women's limited participation in business, politics and paid work does not necessarily mean they do not have the skills to participate. The multiple roles Samoan women take on in their community and families — their responsibilities on these levels requiring management as well as organizing, problem-solving and decision-making skills — must have equipped them to be suitable job candidates in many areas of employment. Franco (1991) pointed out, though, that many Samoan women, who have always played important socio-economic roles in a family setting, could not apply these skills in their country of migration and experienced a devaluation of their skills. In many cases, their qualifications were not recognized in the host countries. In New Zealand, the skills which the Samoan women had practiced at home were less valued than in Samoa. Many of these Samoan migrant women have not experienced their transition to New Zealand as an upward career move, even though they had become a vital part of the New Zealand labor force (Larner, 1991). An increasing number of Samoan women work outside the family for wages (Koloto & Sharma, 2006) and some made their place in the world of business, for example, *the Women in Business Development in Samoa and New Zealand*, and in politics, for example, the first Samoan woman MP

in the New Zealand Parliament, Luamanuvao Winnie Laban. However, a knowledge gap remains concerning the experiences and personal processes of those Samoan migrant women for whom working in New Zealand eventually turned out to be an upward move.

### ***Samoan migrant women in New Zealand***

Samoan women were especially welcomed in New Zealand as workers because they appeared to be undemanding and hard-working. Some work areas, usually the lower-paid, unskilled jobs, were easier to access for Samoan women than others. At the turn of the 21st century, more Samoan women than men were employed in New Zealand (Cribb & Barnett, 1999). However, even though some women were the main income earners of their families, many did not receive the recognition as the head of the family and leadership often remained with the Samoan men (Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998).

In addition to the lack of recognition from males in their families for their paid work (Teaiwa & Mallon, 2005), many Samoan migrant women did not feel sufficiently acknowledged at work for their efforts. For a long time, Samoan migrant women appeared to be invisible in the area of management and leadership positions. In addition, Samoan women's achievements were under-represented in New Zealand's mainstream media. Until recently, the well-documented New Zealand achievements of Samoans in arts, music, film and sports very much centered on Samoan males (Teaiwa & Mallon, 2005). (This is a fact that also earned criticism for creating a stereotyped view of Samoans as 'native entertainers' and 'physically gifted athletes' (Grainger, 2006)). The frequency of male, as compared to female, portrayals in the media in New Zealand created a picture of male dominance (Teaiwa & Mallon, 2005) (which can be seen as a general trend in wider New Zealand where inter-cultural dominance of masculinity and patriarchy has prevailed over generations). In recent years, though, Samoan women's accomplishments have received increased coverage in the media.

The book 'Pasifika women - our stories in New Zealand' (Kailahi, 2007) sets a positive example. The representation of Pacific Island women in the public domain in this book — including stories of a number of Samoan female high-achievers in the areas of work, politics, sports and arts — is, however, the exception rather than the rule in the printed media. On the other hand, information about the traditional roles and role expectations for Samoan women is readily available in texts in social

sciences. The roles of Samoan women as managers, organizers, negotiators or other important roles at work, however, received less emphasis in academic literature — an outcome that also concerns other groups of minority migrant women (Gabaccia & Iacovetta, 2002).

Statistics show that many Pacific women rated paid work, education and careers as important to them (Koloto & Sharma, 2006). The rate of participation of Pacific women, including Samoan women, in New Zealand's labor force has increased from 49 per cent in 1996 to 54 per cent in 2004 (Department of Labour, 2005). Further, more Pacific women than men engaged in formal training and tertiary studies in 2004 compared to 2002. Pacific women are more likely to participate in tertiary education (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2008). Unfortunately, as Koloto and Sharma's (2006) report showed, Samoan and other Pacific women are still over-represented among the unemployed and low-income earners in New Zealand (p. 4). Pacific women earn significantly less than their male counterparts and other groups of women in New Zealand. In 2004, the median hourly earning of Pacific women was \$12.30 compared to Pacific Island males who earned \$16.50 (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2006, p. 13). Many Pacific women occupy the less well-paid jobs in New Zealand and work long hours at inconvenient times including night shifts (Byers, 2003) and remain responsible for childcare and household duties (Janes, 1990).

Reports like Koloto and Sharma's (2006) draw attention to a need for improvement for Pacific women's employment status and opportunities. However, to arrive at a more balanced view and to put an emphasis on the positive outcomes for Samoan and other migrant women, the success stories of those women who broke the cycle of unemployment and low paid work deserve a strong focus in academic and other research. The fact that Samoan women's achievements at work are under-represented in literature and research is one reason for my interest in exploring their perceptions of their *selves* in the areas of competencies, skills and knowledge.

### ***Samoans and the concept of self***

While a number of researchers wrote about Samoans' and other Pacific Island peoples' sense of self as communally oriented rather than relating to the 'self' (e.g., Bush, Collings, Tamasese, & Waldegrave, 2005; Tamasese, Peteru, & Waldegrave, 1997; Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave, & Bush, 2005) others clarified that Samoans also draw on individualized self-concepts (e.g., Mageo, 2001). As much as there are different theoretical frameworks about self-identity in mainstream social psychology, there are different conceptualizations about the 'self' among Pacific researchers.

'Samoan identity' rests on distinguishing traditional principles and practices and needs to be seen as distinct from other Pacific Island identities; there is no collective Pacific Island identity as much as there is no collective European identity (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998). Macpherson (1986) pointed out that amongst Samoans, too, there are variations in their commitment to *fa'asamoa*, in their involvement in cultural practices, and ties to their aiga. Thus, they cannot be viewed as an undifferentiated cultural group. Because of the complexities of family life, kinship and networks, people may choose different identities depending on the situation. While there are variations among Samoans in their self-understandings, they show a number of commonalities in their ways of being and doing. Overall, Samoan selves are reliant on the 'space' that relates and gives meaning to things, the *va* (Anae, 2007). The concept of *va* includes the space between self and parents, other family members across geographical space and is understood as important for the individual Samoan's well-being (Tamasese, Peteru, & Waldegrave, 1997). Family, village, religious affiliation and Samoan cultural values play an important part in Samoans' identity processes (Bedford & Didham, 2001). Thus, as the context of the *va*, the space of between-ness, changes, the relationships and the self-understanding of a person involved in these relationships can change. In other words, Samoan self-understandings underlie socio-cultural constructions, are fluid in nature, and overlap (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003; Tupuola, 1998; 2004).

Mageo (2001), a cultural psychologist and anthropologist, has written extensively about Samoans' sense of self and identity in a number of journal articles (e.g., 1991; 2001; 2002) and in book chapters (2003). In her book 'Theorizing Self in Samoa' (1998), based on psychological and historical ethnography of Samoa, she introduced a theory of the Samoan self. Mageo (1998) argued that the polarization of people as either egocentric or sociocentric is a common illusion of personhood (p. 15). She explained Samoan selves as being only partly shared and inclusive of a self-system affirming 'that is me'. Self-components are seen as images, or *personae*, which a person takes on. Being 'me' can take on many forms and can be seen, according to Mageo, as role performance, *aga*. Whichever *aga* is performed is based on the social context.

These *aga* images, Mageo (2002) explained, can remain separate and incongruent, but can also be complementary and combined as one dimension. (The concept of plural images, *aga*, could be compared to the concept of flexible, multiple

identities in mainstream psychology. In phenomenological terms, the co-existence of multiple images is 'manifold experiences of the self' (Ewing, 1990)). If these images can be integrated, the plural *aga* may not be experienced as conflicting. An integration of plural *aga* — an inclusive self — can alleviate internal identity struggle and sense of fragmentation (Mageo, 2002, p. 343). The aggregative relation between the various *aga* is not limited to a Samoan geographical context. As socio-cultural context varies, the natures of the *aga* vary as well. Global interchange is likely to result in people 'confronting, experimenting with and creating non-traditional ways of being' (Mageo, 2002).

Hereniko (1997), a Rotuman researcher, explained identity as 'a journey in which we never arrive', 'who we are is not the rock that is passed on from generation to generation, fixed and unchanged' (p. 428). These understandings about self-identity mirror the notions of multiple selves (Bhatia & Ram, 2001) and dialogical interactions of these introduced in chapter two (Hermans, 2001; 2002; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2004; Hermans & Kempen, 1998). The understanding of the self as moving from one position to another in accordance with changes in situation and time, fluctuating between different and even opposed positions and being involved in continuing compromises reflect the concepts of performed *aga* based on the social context (Mageo, 1998). Hereniko's (1997) metaphor of identity being 'a journey in which we never arrive' reflects the notion of complex self-concepts marked by discontinuity and continuity (Hermans, 2001). The complementarities of these notions about identity formation processes indicate that they form a suitable foundation for exploring sense of identity in this study.

Since 'culture' is basic to Samoans' sense of belonging and identity (Anae, 2001; Macpherson, 1996), Samoan migrants' identity processes cannot be understood purely from a standpoint of Western conceptualizations. While the processes of identity formation and reformation can be explained with western models, the way in which these processes are experienced by Samoan women can only be explained by Samoan women. It is, therefore, important to let the participants tell their stories about their identity journeys, especially since this researcher's cultural background is different from theirs. The involvement with Samoan colleagues and friends provided me with guidance while exploring how work might be an important area for Samoan migrant women's sense of self.

### ***Samoan people, work, and identity***

As discussed in the previous chapter, 'identity' had been identified as a dimension in meaning-of-work studies conducted in a number of Western cultural settings (e.g., Brewer, 2001; Eikleberry, 1999; Morse & Weiss, 1955; Webb, 2004). Franco (1985), in his doctoral thesis 'Samoan perceptions of work: Moving up and moving about', showed that the concept of 'identity development through work' plays an important role for Samoans as well.

In his thesis, Franco (1985) referred to four main dimensions, which Wallman (1979) specified as relevant to Samoans' meaningful associations with work: 1) the resources produced and their value, 2) incentive, 3) identity and 4) time. The time dimension includes, similar to workplaces in many other cultures, timing of daily work activities, pace and rhythm, and individual life cycle (Wallman, 1979). The role of work in generating resources — for instance, to buy goods and services — and in self-processes seem culturally overarching since they also had been identified in research in Western settings (chapter 1, 'Work'). Similarly, incentives like external goals that have the capacity to motivate behavior to work also play a role for people in many cultural settings (e.g., McClelland, 1961; Herzberg, 1968; Vroom, 1964). What seems specific to Samoans is the incentive to work well, long, hard and skillfully. This may be driven by extrinsic factors as much as it is by factors which are intrinsic to the work and can partly be explained by the fact that rural Samoans have to work hard to reap rewards, and produce resources that are difficult to bring into being (Franco, 1985). The outcomes of this hard, long work then feed back into identity processes: once resources are produced, this enhances the individuals' groups' status and political power, which links to the concept of identity.

For Samoans, as in others' identity processes, identity derived from work can be inclusive of 'others' like family, kin and social groups (Franco, 1985). Work is one way to generate the resources to serve and repay those whose 'sweat they had eaten': those members of the family who had labored to support their offspring (Macpherson, 2004). Like in other communally oriented societies, (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997; Yeh & Hwang, 2000), achievement often is considered a group result rather than an individual one. A family member's achievement can contribute to the family's pride and sense of identity. However, work-related 'identity' can take on different forms for Samoans; for example, cultivation work primarily relates to group achievement and identity, whereas work like carpentry that requires specialized skills is linked to the individual

person. Consequently, while individual persons are always members of a kin group and their work, and attitude to work still reflects on his kin group, individualized conceptions of self-identity do exist among Samoans. In short, not all Samoans base identity processes exclusively on collectivistic concepts. Questions of actualizing one's skills, generation of self-esteem and social upward mobility, group status and political power (Franco, 1985) can be relevant to Samoans even though their understanding of self would include important others (Tamasese et al., 1997). Evidently, Samoan people's conceptualization of self can vary and reflect the context in which it is expressed.

Even though coming from quite robust, continuous cultures, individuals from Pacific cultures vary in their perceptions of self and others. Bleakly (2002), for example, found in her study with Tongan women that modes of thinking and operating varied according to kinship relationships, social status, access to resources, education and the nature of their life experiences. Accordingly, Macpherson (2001) voiced a caution not to treat Samoans and other Pacific women as undifferentiated cultural groups. Often, differences within a group can be greater than differences between cultural groups. As Le Roux (2002) put it, there are a variety of factors, besides culture, which determine who, what and how we are and which can override cultural similarity. Along these lines, Franco (1985) argued that Samoan women have distinguishing work perceptions. All in all, sense of self and meaning of work vary and can only be understood from the viewpoint of the experiencing individuals — in this study, the Samoan migrant women.

### ***Exploring Samoan migrant women at work and sense of identity***

While there are a number of texts in academic literature concerning Samoan women at work in relation to various issues (e.g., Cribb, 1995; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1993; Pitt & Macpherson, 1974; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1979; Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998; Shore, 1981), little has been written about Samoan women in paid work in regard to their self-concepts and sense of identity.

Like many migrant women, the group of Samoan and other Pacific migrant women, while visible in our communities, has remained widely invisible in research. Mageo (2001), who conducted research in Samoa about the self in a Samoan context, argued that Western research on Samoan women positions them as 'deficient' and groups them broadly as in need of development. She further suggested that, as long as Samoan women are viewed within a dominant framework of preconceived deficiency, they would continue to be misrepresented. Research has

led to preconceived ideas concerning Samoan and other Pacific women's skills and socio-cultural status. Fairburn-Dunlop (2003), a Samoan academic researcher in social sciences in New Zealand, stressed the need to explore and record more detailed knowledge about Pacific people's work, skills and identity processes. She also pointed out that all discussions around migration processes '...inevitably turn back to questions of identity and culture' (p.10).

Samoan migrant women commonly grew up, to varying degrees, with strong traditional cultural principles, which consequently informed their sense of self (Anae, 2001; Burns McGrath, 2002; Macpherson, 2004; Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998; Spoonley, Bedford & Macpherson, 2003; Tupuola, 2004). For many of these women, as for other migrants (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Phinney, 2003; Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006), their self-perceptions will have changed after leaving their home country. While components of socio-cultural identity such as values, norms, practices and beliefs can remain stable and serve as an anchor within a changing environment, these components are also open to adaptation and addition as the socio-cultural context changes.

As also discussed in the previous chapter, people's identity processes are context-dependent and shaped by complex processes, which are culturally distinct (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006). Identity is a continuous process of experiencing oneself in relation to the world and other people, involving an integration of past experiences with anticipation of what is to come (Wiley, 1995). 'Consciousness' around new experiences is likely to influence one's sense of self (Belay, 1996; Hall, 1996; 1997). Consciousness generates reflections about the way of being in the world and being with others which, in turn, transform thoughts, feelings and ways of doing things. While individuals have culture-specific ways of interacting, they can at the same time perceive themselves as part of a new social group and culture, which will affect their interactions. Thus, an exploration of Samoan women's identity processes after having moved to a new social environment, and interacted with others from a variety of cultures, can be expected to bring to light a number of changes in their self-conceptions.

To understand the significance of such change processes for the Samoan women in this study, 'moving to another country to gain paid employment' must be considered from their experiential perspectives in conjunction with their socio-cultural historical background. The New Zealand environment puts emphasis on the individual and being independent, different from the predominantly communal outlook on achievement in Samoan culture. *Fa'asamoa* puts emphasis on family and interdependence between individuals. Meleisea and Schoeffel (1998) argue that, if Samoan employees followed

the mainstream way, the work outcomes might not be as good; if they followed the Samoan way they might get into trouble with their employer. It remains to be seen how the Samoan women participating in this study experience their status as Samoans working in New Zealand. Referring back to the theories postulating that people commonly hold multiple identities, Samoan women might not experience as much conflict as suggested by Meleisea and Schoeffel (1998). Being, doing and meaningfulness are dynamic entities (Skeldon, 1997) and can take on different shapes for people even though they share the same cultural background. Thus, individuals can be different 'people' in different places — shaped by the social composition of the situation.

Just as there is no universal meaning of work, it can be expected that there is no single uniform understanding of 'being' and 'doing' among Samoan migrants in New Zealand. People's being, doing and meaning-making are closely linked to their cultural background, social interactions, sets of social norms and controls and gender affiliations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Pope, Cheng, & Leong, 1998; Smelser & Swedberg, 1994). These play an important role in this research about Samoan women, meaning of work and identity formation. This study's focus lies specifically on the various meanings communicated by the participating Samoan women. It treats the question of 'paid work and identity' from a phenomenological perspective with the purpose of describing and understanding the experience of Samoan migrant women who, at a given moment in their lives, came to Auckland and took up professional activities that became personally meaningful to their self-conceptualizations.

My intention is to contribute to an understanding of Samoan women's experiences in the world of work and the influences on their conceptions about themselves, in other words, what it means to be a Samoan migrant woman at work in Auckland and how this informs their sense of identity. A phenomenological research approach in this study will provide for exploring the lived experiences as perceived by the participants and generate answers to the question 'what it is like to be in the world of Samoan migrant women at work'. Within the framework of phenomenological understanding, this research will center on the participating Samoan women's identity processes in relation to *their* experiential world.

In the next two chapters, the underlying paradigms in phenomenology (chapter 4) and the research approach and process (chapter 5) will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS**

### ***Introduction***

Phenomenology has been a significant philosophical movement in the twentieth century in the social sciences and has informed research in sociology, psychology, education, health sciences, and other fields. Rather than focusing on the facts of a situation (the phenomenon), the emphasis in phenomenology is to understand what meaning events and objects carry for the experiencing person. The aim of phenomenology is to study human phenomena without considering questions of their causes or their objective reality (Husserl, 1982). Phenomenological enquiry is of interest to those researchers in psychology who particularly focus on the person's experience of the world and how these are perceived (Meinong, 1988).

Phenomenology is a branch of philosophy, with its origin in the work of Husserl (1982) and later scholars like Heidegger, a central philosopher in phenomenology, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and others who extended phenomenological ideas into existentialism. Phenomenological psychology exists as a sub-discipline of psychology (e.g., Frankl, 1971), where the emphasis is on understanding a person's experience of a situation of concern. For the researcher, this means trying to understand experiences in the context of the person living through the situation (Daniels, 2000).

Because phenomenological research can provide a deep understanding of people's lived experiences, it offers itself to research in fields of psychology exploring people's experiences in a given context (Moustakas, 1994; Willig, 2001). The phenomenological research is well-matched for this study, exploring how Samoan migrant women experience themselves in paid work and how this is meaningful to their sense of identity. While this research takes an idiosyncratic approach to exploring the participants' experiences, it will also make transparent the interconnectedness of human experience and synthesize the participants' experiences about the phenomenon of interest - how being at work can contribute to sense of identity - into a 'coherent whole picture' (Willig, 2001).

### ***Phenomenology - exploring the meaning of lived experiences***

The phenomenon (the presence of a 'given') explored in this study centers on sense of identity. People's unique experiences of their life worlds - how they experience themselves, others, and things and objects in their worlds - inform their sense of 'who they are'. Lived experiences are, consequently, paramount to their sense of identity (Geertz, 1973; Giorgi, 1970; Haußer, 1983; Kohler Riessman, 2002; Kvale, 1996). Phenomenological enquiry is an approach to revealing the connections between the participants' sense of identity as 'inner

experiences' with events in their lifeworlds as 'outer experiences'. The appearance of experiences varies across individuals according to their subjective ideas, judgments, beliefs, values, emotions, and aims (Overgaard, 2004). This implies that the route to understanding the participants' sense of identity is to explore their subjective meaning-giving of their lived experiences. My aim is to make transparent the connection between the participants' 'outer' experiences in the world of work and the 'inner' experiences of sense of identity, while my emphasis lies on the 'meaning' the participants' experiences hold for them.

It is the personal meaning of each participant's experience through which she creates the reality of their 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger, 1962). In this sense, the participants' 'lived experience' is not something that happens to them, but rather something they actively produce in relation with their world. In their consciousness, awareness, and reflectivity, they form beliefs, ideas, and meaning. Consciousness and reflectivity also create the capacity to question the existing conditions that constitute their environment. In other words, the participants in this study have a status of active beings - of creators of their lifeworlds - able to influence their social circumstances and to make sense of their experiences in articulate and meaningful ways.

### ***Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology***

Heidegger (1962; 1971) maintained that phenomena are merely 'things' that exist but that human interest lies in knowing how these things are experienced. He argued that there are many possible perspectives on a phenomenon, like if turning a prism, one part becomes hidden, and another part opens. It is the variation and commonalities of how people experience their lifeworlds that are of interest. Heidegger's (1927) approach to understanding responses to human life was initially inspired by Husserl's (1900/1970; 1913) phenomenology, whose interest centered on the essence of lived experiences as internal processes. Over time, though, Heidegger drew on hermeneutics in his approach to understanding human experiences. Heideggerian phenomenology centers on human beings' actions, feelings, and mental states (e.g., thoughts and ideas); it relates the phenomenon of interest to people's 'conditions of existence', along with meaning-making (von Eckartsberg, 1998; Heidegger, 1927). The subsequent hermeneutic interpretation of the documented data about a given phenomenon emphasizes historical time and context and presupposes and that what is to be interpreted contains meaning (Gadamer, 1994). Accordingly, in this study, to uncover the meaning, I intend to go beyond the 'mere description in written text' - the transcripts of the participant interviews - and to uncover underlying 'meaning' (Heidegger, 1962). This process involves taking into account the context as it is subjectively experienced by the participants - an approach which Husserlian phenomenology rejects.

While Husserl (1900/1970; 1913; 1958) insisted on describing the pure essence of lived experiences - the attributes of what an experience fundamentally is - Heidegger (1962) combined hermeneutics with phenomenology - interpreting lived experiences by relating them to relevant context. Heidegger rejected the possibility of a 'simple, direct grasp' of the essence of an experienced phenomenon, arguing that people necessarily interpret everything in terms of situatedness (social events). Husserl (1913; 1958), on the other hand, argued that 'being' is merely a correlate of consciousness and that experience relates back to pure consciousness - that how we think and perceive makes an experience. Heidegger (1962, 1971) objected to this 'phenomenological reduction'. He saw 'being in the world', rather than consciousness, as the starting point in phenomenological research.

In contrast to Husserl (1900/1970; 1913; 1958), Heidegger (1962) maintained that it is the personal experience that makes us think and feel. Rather than the other way around, 'inner processes', such as reflections on events and people, exist because of experiences around 'outer objects', the events and people themselves. We experience 'object-oriented' and 'in social context' by 'being in the world'. We can only interpret others' experiences by being empathic and not merely by systematic observations as preferred by Husserl (Heidegger, 1962, 1971). When we are empathic towards another person, when we attempt to understand what the other person feels and thinks, this means that we try to interpret how the other experiences the world. Empathy, however, cannot be separated from subjectivity; when we attempt to understand another person's experiences, we can only do so via our own being. Consequently, our thoughts and judgments are not neutral; they can never be objective since we perceive events and people from our perspectives informed by our personal experiences.

In accordance with Heidegger's views (1962; 1971), I believe that consciousness alone will not make experiences meaningful to human beings, and that experiences are embedded in a world of socio-cultural context, temporality, historicity, and relationships with others. The present study views lived experiences (Erfahrung) as dependent of external, social, and cultural forces (situatedness), which the individual then internally processes.

### ***Hermeneutic existential phenomenology***

Heidegger's approach to understanding human life was further inspired by Kierkegaard's existentialism (Kierkegaard, 1999). Heidegger (1927) developed existential phenomenology, which focuses on life experiences that can be made explicit. Existential phenomenology contrasts transcendental (experiences existing in a broader realm transcending the self and any objects) phenomenology, which focuses on consciousness as an inner experience (Valle, 1998). Existential phenomenology means the application of phenomenological method in research about issues of human existence (von Eckartsberg, 1998). Existentialism specifies

the essential themes of human existence as embodied in time, values, choices, relationships, and self-fulfillment, while phenomenology in research contributes to the understanding of experienced phenomena. Existential phenomenological research approaches can make transparent an individual's interpretations (inner experiences) of events and encounters with other people (outer experiences) within social context of the individual (Ashworth, 2003; Giorgi, 1970).

The topic of the present study - relating to human existence as embodied in time, values, choices, relationships, and self-fulfillment - makes an existential phenomenological research approach suited. It is suited to gaining an understanding about how Samoan women experience themselves in paid work, about their perceptions of their identity processes, and about the shared meaningfulness. By leaning on hermeneutic interpretation (explicated in the previous section in this chapter) of the participants' personal accounts about their lived experiences, I am aiming at creating in-depth information about the phenomenon of identity processes of Samoan migrant women in paid work in New Zealand.

Hermeneutic interpretation in existential phenomenology differs from empirical existential phenomenology. Empirical existential phenomenology has a defined structural orientation, as it is very explicit about methodological steps of data analysis and explication. It is guided by considerations of replicability, verification, and reliability (Giorgi, 1970). Hermeneutical existential phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962), in contrast, uses a reflective-interpretive approach to analysis with less structure than empirical existential phenomenology. It is idiosyncratic but at the same time explicit about how the researcher moves from descriptions of an experience to conceptualizations. The present study, in its approach to understanding the participants' experiences, in their meaningfulness to them, leans on hermeneutic existential phenomenology.

The hermeneutic understanding about a person's being in the world, 'Dasein', is based on the paradigm that phenomena occur within context, and the context of differing worlds lets people arrive at different perceptions, realities, and truths. One person's view about another person's reality is likely to deviate from that other person's reality. Consequently, phenomenological researchers do not understand their views about another person's experiences as the 'one and only truth' (Rodgers, 1991). The hermeneutic approach to understanding participants' experiences and the personal meaning demands the researcher's awareness and acknowledgment of the different realities of researcher and participants. Like the participants, researchers are equipped with 'a pre-understanding of their worlds' (Heidegger, 1962). As much as any other individual, researchers interpret their realities - external conditions they reflect on - uniquely and subjectively. For that reason, my own

'situatedness' informs my interpretations of the respondents' accounts. Thus, in context of this study, my awareness about my own preconceptions - and making these transparent - are essential to the quality of the data analysis and interpretation.

Another point needing to be addressed is that the researcher and respondents potentially influence each other's construction of reality by their status and positions. The participants' positions as cultural authorities and my position as an academic might influence the way how questions are asked (e.g., leading questions) and how these are answered (e.g., oriented towards the researcher's assumed aims). Therefore, to remain aware of this point and to capture the complexity of researching phenomena within people's contexts requires moving back and forth between the participants' descriptions of their experiences and the researcher's own life world (and additionally referring to literature about similar experiences).

This dialectical interplay of sets of experiences - establishing truths on both sides rather than disproving one argument - comprises the 'hermeneutical' feature in Heidegger's phenomenological approach to research (Heidegger, 1962; Kögler, 2006). In context of this study, I - a migrant women myself, having experienced the processes of finding my place in the world of work - need to remain aware of my pre-understandings about the phenomenon under study and make my implicit assumptions overt in self-reflections and dialogues with others. Awareness about one's preconceptions, however, is not synonymous with eliminating - in Husserlian terms 'bracketing out' - those preconceptions.

It is my view that a pre-understanding cannot be 'bracketed out' as Husserl (1913) believed. The shared knowledge between the participants and researcher about the phenomenon of interest, 'being a migrant women at work' in conjunction with sense of identity, forms the basis for me to comprehend the participants' accounts of their experiences. Words and sentences are made intelligible and can be understood for their 'shared meaning' (Dilthey, 1958). My own pre-knowledge about 'being a migrant women at work', however, cannot inform me about how the participants experience this phenomenon in ways meaningful to their sense of identity. To arrive at psychological interpretations reflecting the participants' experiences, I must move back and forth between my knowledge and the participants' accounts of their experiences as migrant women at work. This hermeneutic approach to interpretation of spoken and written words promotes authenticity of the participants' accounts and allows generating meaningful knowledge in psychology about the phenomenon of interest.

### ***Meaning making in phenomenological research***

The full meaning of experience is not simply 'given' in the immediacy of the lived moment but emerges from explicit retrospection. In Schutz's (1967) words, 'Meaning does not lie in the

experience. Rather, those experiences are meaningful which are grasped reflectively... The reflective glance singles out an elapsed lived experience and constitutes it as meaningful' (pp. 69-71). Meaning giving allows people to understand (verstehen) the significance of their being and doing and of how things in their existence relate to each other (Heidegger, 1960, p.151; 1962, p. 193). This understanding is commonly made explicit by discourse in that people signify (Bedeutung geben) meaningful experiences by talking about them (Heidegger, 1960). An important characteristic of phenomenological enquiry is that the language reflects the participants' voices and, later, the analyst's personal reflections under avoidance of the use of technical jargon common in psychology. Language in phenomenology gives priority to personal experience over theory; it uses examples and quotes of individuals' experiences, which make the research issue of interest more transparent to the reader and deepen an understanding of the subject of interest (van Maanen, 1995). A major benefit of this approach to 'transparent' language-use in research is that it makes it easier to transfer the gained knowledge to the real world.

Simplifying Heidegger's conceptualization of meaning, meaning is the 'so what' (interrogation) of life (Brewer, 2001). For people's understanding of their self, finding meaning in their being and doing is vital (Heidegger; 1960; 1962). People's 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger; 1960; 1962) is marked by reciprocal interdependence between self, others, and objects, which come into people's awareness, or, show up against the every day background. 'Being' encompasses who one is in this world, how one experiences it, and how one makes sense of the world. One's being is composed of one's persona (linked to inner processes) and socio-cultural environment inclusive of values, beliefs, and ideas (linked to outer experiences). Being consists of having been, current being, and becoming. It is inclusive of past and potential future forms of one's existence.

Doing, in contrast, refers to people's actions. It is the 'how' of life as it involves using one's knowledge and skills to convert ideas, ambitions, motivation, and goals into outcomes (Brewer, 2001). Doing is related to being in that being is the prerequisite for actions stimulated by experiencing. 'Consciousness' about one's being and 'intentionality' in one's thoughts lead to expectations about an envisaged outcome (Heidegger, 1960; Searle, 1994). These expectations, in return, initiate 'doing'.

Consciousness (taking notice) underlies individuals' being, doing, and meaning making. 'Moments of perception bring into consciousness fresh perspectives', which deepen what something is and means (Moustakas, 1994, p. 53). Consciousness is a combination of outward appearance (external perception), for example, of a tree that 'is', and the object 'tree' as contained in the person's subjective memories, images, and 'meaning' (internal perception)

(Giorgi, 1985). In phenomenology, consciousness is the medium to access experiences. Only when lived experiences become conscious can they be converted into meaning (Cousineau, 1994; Giorgi, 1970). As we become conscious about experiences, we engage in mental processes and develop thoughts, ideas, and beliefs around those experiences. These mental processes are coupled with 'intentionality'.

The concept of intentionality refers to the relationship between individuals' mental, internal acts and their external world. 'Intentionality' means here: a directedness of our thoughts, ideas, beliefs, hopes, judgments, intentions - and other mental phenomena - towards some 'object' (thing; situation) that can be both mental and non-mental. This means, while objects (things; situations) can lie outside the mind, they are also present to the mind (Brentano, 1874/1911/1973; Searle, 1983; 1992). Thoughts are directed towards something, and the something becomes an object of the mind. Hence, this means that a person cannot demonstrate such mental states as loving, hating, desiring, believing, or judging unless there was something (objects) to be loved, hated, believed, or judged (Gegenstandstheorie/ theory of objects) (Meinong, 1904/1960; 1924; 1988). In short, mental phenomena like beliefs, hopes, judgments, or intentions display intentionality and are directed towards something (Brentano, 1874/1911/1973; Crane, 1998). It is intentionality, which enables people to allocate meaning, to things, occurrences, being, or doing. With regard to the present study, the participants could not have experienced the phenomena of hopes and intentions for themselves without something worth hoping for being present. It was their intention towards becoming working women (the 'object' in this case) that enabled them to generate hopes and aspirations.

The above-explicated phenomenological concepts are part of the philosophical framework within which this study explores the phenomenon of interest. The philosophical framework in phenomenology determines the viewpoint and approach of exploration, type of data generated, and the analysis of the data (Willig, 2001).

### ***Phenomenological framework and assumptions***

Phenomenological methodology is underpinned by a paradigm of reference ordered around specific assumptions of what can be known and how it can be identified. The experiencer's reality is seen as mediated by ideas, beliefs, feelings, and judgments based on socio-cultural conditions. However, at the same time, people are understood to be more than beings reacting to socio-cultural forces and causes; they are considered as being reflective and able to change meanings of lived experiences (Todres, 2002).

Heideggerian phenomenology acknowledges that people's life worlds emerge from socio-historical-cultural influences and personal preferences. Unlike research approaches strongly emphasizing social (external) constructions of ways of thinking, phenomenology also explains how people exercise choice. While people's ideas, beliefs, and thoughts are influenced by cultural socio-historical background, these mental phenomena would not have meaning without the consciousness and intentionality of the meaning givers (Searle, 1983; 1992). It is the focus on people's lived experiences and their meaning-giving which sets phenomenology apart from other qualitative research approaches.

Concerning how knowledge can be identified, phenomenology postulates that quantitatively assessed phenomena do not reflect the person's actual lived experiences of phenomena (Giorgi, 1985). As Safranski (1994) put it, reasoning about people's experiences from an experimental standpoint demotes people 'out of being' into objects. Phenomenological research, since it centers on how the experiencers gain knowledge of their 'life-worlds' (Giorgi, 1970; 2000), takes a strong participant focus, a non-judgmental attitude, and a striving from the researcher's side for authentically representing the participants' accounts about their experiences. Heidegger (1962) emphasized the importance of refraining from value-laden, judgmental ways to explain how people experience and gain knowledge of their life-world.

Within phenomenology, the research approaches are of exploratory nature and underlie some aspects of qualitative methods in social science. Phenomenology is, thus, not a hypothesis testing method in research and is not guided by theoretical models. The research mode entails 'emergent structure' and the emphasis is on understanding the personal, subjective experience of people's lifeworld, because '...the knowledge of the man who acts and thinks within the world of his daily life is not homogeneous...' (Schutz, 1964, p.3). Since there is no single, unitary real world, and since people experience the world uniquely and subjectively, people's experiences cannot be explained in terms of quantitative research (Heidegger, 1962). Natural sciences cannot provide answers relating to 'meaning' of phenomena since people's realities cannot be hypothesized and compared against hypotheses. The phenomenological approach is characterized by the assumption that human meaning is the key to understanding lived experiences. Thus, to uncover knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation, I need to become as familiar as possible with the participants' experiences as they are meaningful to them, and not let my preceding beliefs and knowledge about the researched phenomenon dominate my understanding (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). It is the viewpoint of the participant, which is of interest in phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994).

From a phenomenological perspective, a person's reality is 'created and lived' as a result of the meaning the experiences have for that person. In this sense, experience is not something that happens to people, but rather something they create in relation with their world. The importance of this philosophical position is that it views each person's 'being in the world' as unique even though individuals co-create and share experiences and understanding in their social relationships (Heidegger, 2002).

Through lived experience, as we consciously take in the world around us, we know that the world 'is'. It reveals itself to us - it is explicit - before we talk and think about it. First, objects 'are' and second, we reflect on them. Then, we understand the 'being' of things (objects, situations, thoughts) and express this in our behavior ('comportment') with others and ourselves (Heidegger, 2002, p. 29). In short, 'being' is self-evident before speaking.

Ontologically, phenomenology assumes that a real world exists. Researchers, who carry out phenomenological research, engage with real-world issues. Phenomenology's assumptions about how things exist are that ideas or thoughts around objects have the status of reality for the perceiver. In accordance with object theory, thoughts are directed towards something, for example, a tree; thus, the something, the tree once reflected upon, becomes an object of the mind (Meinong, 1924). Objects around individuals take on the status of reality only after they have processed them in their minds. For the participants in this study, the context of being at work and its events and people, once they have reflected on these, becomes subjective reality.

In summary, as to 'how things can be known', phenomena need to be explored within the context of the experiencer; and the meaning-giving of the experiencer becomes the key to understanding the phenomenon of interest. Thus, in phenomenological research, people's subjective life worlds (Lebenswelten) are the foundation for knowledge (Ashworth, 2003; Heidegger, 1962). As to 'what can be known', phenomenology assumes that there is more than one reality. While phenomenology deals with real-world issues, an individual's experience of the issue is a subjective reflection of the issue at hand (Searle, 1980). In short, what can be known is how people *perceive* an experience - not, how it is (Føllesdal, 1982).

## ***Methodology***

Phenomenology is dealing with 'how people make sense of what happens' - rather than with 'what happens'. Consequently, the research methodology focuses on meaning and context to arrive at an interpretation of the data. Since empirical methodologies cannot answer questions about personal experiences and meaning-giving, which are of non-empirical nature, phenomenology is receptive to a variety of qualitative methods of enquiry. Phenomenology has in common with other qualitative research approaches that it is interpretive and inductive and that it is centered on understanding particular perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

The researcher is seeking to make sense of the participants' sense-making of their lifeworlds. In doing so, she must make use of similar methods of analysis as the participants in their 'common-sense world': reflecting on and interpreting their being and doing by asking 'how' and 'what' questions (Cornelius, 1996). The researcher chooses those aspects of people's lives that they themselves often take for granted, but which are of interest for the objectives of the researcher's study, gaining an understanding on how being at work contributes to sense of identity. The objective is to bring to light the forms of unique and shared experiences and how these become meaningful for the experiencers.

Phenomenology does not provide a step-by-step research guide. The only guidelines are the recommendations for a dynamic interplay among the following research activities: commitment to an issue of concern, an oriented stance toward a research question, investigating the experience as it is lived, and making sense of the phenomenon through writing and rewriting while considering parts and the whole (Beshai, 1971; Polkinghorne, 1989; Wertz, 1983). While focusing on uncovering meaning in experiences, this research is concerned with creating rich and deep account of the phenomenon of interest, sense of identity. Hermeneutic existential phenomenology avoids method for method's sake.

In this study, first, a full set of accounts will be gathered from persons who had the particular experiences of interest to the researcher - in this case, Samoan migrant women who have gathered experiences of 'being at work'. Next, these accounts will be analyzed in order to grasp common elements in these experiences. A clear, accurate and articulate account of the meanings of the phenomenon will be given so that it can be understood by others. In this process, I attempt to generate differentiated, in-depth information about the phenomenon of interest, how being at work is meaningful to the participant's sense of identity. Finally, underlying themes or patterns for the phenomenon under research will be located (Polkinghorne, 1989).

In short, hermeneutic existential phenomenology as a research approach cannot be explained by teachable, step-by-step method. It is a way of systematically dealing with interpretations in that, by reading and rereading the text, meaningful interpretations crystallize from a day-to-day background of experiences and form a pattern (Gestalt) (Spiegelberg, 1982). The interpretation of meaning emerges in non-linear patterns (Giorgi, 1970; Heidegger, 1962).

Phenomenology's guiding ethos in research is to consider what methods are best suited to answer a question of interest rather than adhering to a method and making the question fit. Consequently, qualitative interviews are well-suited in phenomenological research approaches (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). In this study, the participants' narratives about what it means to them to be working reflect their understanding of this phenomenon.

The methodological approach in this study, hermeneutic existential phenomenology, endeavors to bridge the 'insider-outsider status' of the respondents and the researcher - the insider status being the respondents as the providers of information about their personal experiences, and the outsider status of myself attempting to understand those. To build a bridge between their positions, it is paramount to establish a comfortable, trusting relationship between those two parties. To arrive at interpretations with a high level of authenticity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005) of what it means to be a working migrant woman in respect to 'sense of self' for the twenty women in this study, it is important that I arrive at a clear understanding of the respondents' accounts. The participants share their experiences of being at work and how these changed their 'being in the world', while I interpret their information from a psychological standpoint and, at the same time, keep closely to their shared thoughts and feelings.

### ***The researcher's core beliefs***

My focus is oriented towards the positive potential in my participants. As stated in the introduction of this thesis, this study leans on the assumptions of positive psychology (Seligman, 2002; 2004), emphasizing the human virtues and personal expressions, and drawing on the core ideas of humanistic psychology. It leans towards Allport's (1961) views on positive self-views and personal functioning, Jahoda's (1982) positive criteria on what might constitute a well-functioning human being, Jung's (1933) concept of people becoming all they can, Maslow's (1968) concept of self-actualization, and Rogers' (1980) work about the individual's striving for better functioning. Horney (1951), one of the earlier positive psychologists, argued that 'people can free themselves to grow', 'whether for themselves or for others' (pp. 15-16).

I share the core belief of positive psychology that the developmental force resides in people (Rogers, 1964); however, the outcome of people's development also depends on how conducive their environment is. Linley and Joseph (2004) used the analogy of an acorn needing the right environmental conditions such as soil, water, and light, to develop into an oak tree. Similarly, Heidegger (1960; 1962) postulated that one's being is composed of one's persona and socio-cultural environment inclusive of values, beliefs, and ideas. I share the focus on people's positive potential, their striving for self-development, and their ability to change their ways of being and doing. Accordingly, the interpretation process is informed by my focus on the positive potential in the participants.

As stated earlier, I believe that my own socio-cultural background cannot be 'bracketed' (neutralized). However, attentiveness to my own convictions during the data processing will reduce the likelihood of the data interpretation being subjugated by my own views. I am aware that it is impossible to fully understand my participants' experiences, as I will receive an edited account about these. The thoughts and feelings expressed in spoken words cannot mirror an entirely accurate account of a personal experience since it is recalled from an earlier point in time. I assume, though, that the essence of experiences - their meaningfulness - is preserved in the participants' 'present being' and will be meaningfully recounted during the interviews.

My aims are to provide insights into the process of how being in paid employment becomes meaningful to Samoan women and how this contributes to their sense of identity. The research process consists of an in-depth data gathering and analysis of the responses to questions on employment experiences and meaning for identity (self) processes. One of the advantages of this technique is its focus on situational context that surrounds the experiences of engaging in paid work - for example, how the participants arrived at their views, insights, perceptions, how they used their competencies, skills, strengths, knowledge; how these processes contribute to their identities. It is hoped that making transparent the link between experiences at work and identity processes will create knowledge that can provide meaningful avenues in assisting Samoan women in their personal development and well-being. In the next chapter, the research process for this study will be outlined.

## CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH APPROACH AND PROCESS

To make transparent the meaning of Samoan migrant women's outer experiences of paid work to the inner experiences of identity processes, for the present study, a hermeneutic existential phenomenological approach was chosen. The research aims are:

To provide insight into the process of how Samoan woman derive meaning from being in paid employment and how this contributes to their sense of identity.

To create knowledge that can support and assist migrant Samoan women in their personal development and well-being as they adjust to a new culture and the work environment.

Lived experiences as embedded in socio-cultural context while at the same time being unique to the experiencer, renders hermeneutic existential phenomenology suited for interpreting and presenting the experiences of the participants in this study from their perspectives. A phenomenological approach is appropriate for gaining an understanding of how these women experience themselves in paid work and how this is meaningful to their self-processes.

My aim is to link the concepts of migration, women, work, and identity and create a holistic understanding about these phenomena.

### ***Cultural considerations***

Heidegger (1927) emphasized the cultural embeddedness of human beings in their development and called for recognizing human being's cultural embeddedness as the basis for understanding their psychological functioning. This standpoint becomes ever more important with the increase of migratory activities and the decrease of homogenous communities, groups, and workplaces. Acknowledging people's cultural embeddedness generates mindfulness of the application and practice of psychology in diverse cultural settings (Eisenberg & Wang, 2003). Since the present research project involves 20 women of Samoan background and a researcher of predominantly European background, the acknowledgment of the participants' cultural embeddedness presents an important issue.

The fact that I am of a differing cultural background to the respondents requires careful consideration and decisions about ideological and methodological paradigms. To fully respect the respondents' ways of understanding their own life experiences, I must approach data gathering and interpretation techniques with caution. These issues have been addressed in

the MUHEC (Massey University Human Rights and Ethics Committee) application (Appendix 1), and consent to proceed with this study was received. Intensive studies of literature of the Samoan way, *fa'asamoa*, cultural guidance from Samoan academics and friends, involvement in the Samoan community, and visits to Samoa have facilitated my understanding and appreciation for Samoan ways of doing and being, and for Samoan paradigms, practices, and culturally appropriate conduct.

Being a cultural outsider does not necessarily hinder the establishment of rapport with respondents. During previous research projects, I experienced my different cultural status as being encouraging to respondents of another culture in that they confided and disclosed thoughts and feelings they may not have freely addressed with their own kin. My cultural outsider position seemed to suggest a view unprejudiced by expectations prevailing in their own families and community. Granted confidentiality from my side created a safe environment to disclose personal thoughts and feelings. This has also been experienced by Tixier Y Vigil, and Elsasser (1976), a Latin American and an Anglo-American researcher, who both separately interviewed the same Latin American women, using the same questions and textual analysis process. The Latin-American respondents discussed experiences of inequity and discrimination more openly with Vigil, the Latin-American interviewer. However, the respondents were more open in providing intimate, detailed information about themselves towards Elsasser, the Anglo- American interviewer. (Similarly, in the present study, a number of women addressed issues that they thought an outsider without expectations of cultural orthodoxy might better understand).

## **The research approach**

### ***Participants***

For this study, individuals were purposely selected for the relevant information they can provide about the research topic (Ezzy, 2002; Maxwell, 1998). The participating women, aged between 25 and 62 years, were selected according to the following criteria: born in Samoa, have lived in New Zealand for at least five years and have been employed in a variety of work fields; fluent in English to understand the nature and procedures of this research project and able to respond to interview questions.

Using an abbreviation of the information letter, participants were approached via email advertising through the Auckland Ethnic Network (AEN). Fifty-six women responded to the AEN posting and all received an email with further information about the nature of this study and its objectives from the researcher. The respondents initiated contact with the researcher and they were aware that their participation in this study was voluntary and confidential.

Twenty-three women did not qualify for this study because they were not born in Samoa or were not of Samoan background, did not have work experience, or were not based in Auckland. Of the remaining thirty-three women who met the selection criteria, twenty-seven expressed an interest in participating. These women were contacted by phone and received further information regarding participant expectations and research process. At the same time, all received the full information letter via email and were invited to participate in this study. Three women withdrew their interest due to unexpected family commitments. Twenty-three women were available and arranged times for interviews. The aim was to receive data from twenty interviews; however, three extra participants were included in case someone became unavailable.

Two respondents did not turn up at the scheduled interview time, and one woman's data could not be used (due to personal distress, which needed to be given priority but changed the focus of this interview). Twenty interviews took place over a period of six months during the second half in 2006 and early 2007.

#### *Demographic information*

A set of structured interview questions was used to gather information regarding the respondents' age, cultural background, geographical place of origin, and work history.

All participants were born in Samoa (formerly Western Samoa), eighteen on the island of Upulo with its capital Apia, and two on Savai'i. Of the eighteen women from Upulo, 11 were raised in or near Apia, which is urbanized; however, most of the women from Apia, especially those who lived on the outskirts, described their life-style as rural. The two women from Savai'i grew up in smaller villages.

The women were aged between 25 and 62 years. Most had arrived in New Zealand as teenagers or young women, either with their parents, older siblings, or relatives. One participant had arrived during her early childhood. All of them had grown up with the cultural practices and principles of *fa'asamoa*. Seven participants migrated to New Zealand by choice, eight had no input into the decision-making about their departure from Samoa as their parents or other relatives made the choice for them, and five had some input into the decision-making process. The participants had spent between six and forty-two years in New Zealand.

All participants were fluent in English. They had learned some English in Samoa at school; some had attended high school in Auckland. Those who had not attended school in New Zealand had upgraded their English skills either at evening classes, language courses, or with

the support of friends or colleagues at work.

Twelve women were married with children, two were married without children, three were single without children, three were single (one divorced and two never married) with children. One woman was the main breadwinner, while her husband attended to the children and the housework. Six participants, married and unmarried, lived with other dependents like elderly parents or young siblings. Nearly all participants were supporting - or had supported in the past - family members in Samoa or related Samoan migrants new to New Zealand.

At the time of the interview, the participants had gathered between five and forty years work experience in New Zealand. Seven worked in varying social professions, four were academics, four had clerical positions, three were employed by government departments, one worked in the area of property sales, and one practiced law. Out of the twenty participants, thirteen held supervisory or managerial positions.

#### *Potential benefits for the participants in this study and other migrant women*

The participants will receive written feedback regarding the conclusions of this study. The feedback and the interview process itself have the potential to highlight the participants' personal strengths how these strengths can be put to use at work. The highlighting of Samoan women's strengths in this research is hoped to contribute to an increase of others' appreciation for their competencies and, also, to a better understanding of work in migrant women's acculturation processes. (At the end of the interviews, during the conversational phase, some participants said that reflecting on their skills and their strengths had added to their self-esteem and encouraged them to contemplate further education or a career change).

#### *Participant-researcher relationship*

To get close to the participant's perspective, I located myself in the research dialogue. Rather than positioning myself as 'the interviewer', I established a rapport with the participants, which created a conversational atmosphere. The involved individuals, the participant and me, became part of a relationship rather than being researcher and researched. As a result of these relationship-building processes, a number of the participants maintained contact with me after the interviews and continue to do so to this present point in time.

#### ***Rationale for the data gathering approach***

To gain authentic knowledge and a deep understanding about Samoan migrant woman at work in Auckland, it made sense to communicate face-to-face in personal interviews. Personal,

in-depth interviews are well suited to capture the variations of experiences and meaning making of people (Gergen, 1985) and can generate thick' information (Geertz, 1973), capturing the participants' perspectives about their meaningful experiences playing a role their identity processes.

Another convincing feature of indepth-interviews as a qualitative method is the increased accuracy it brings to research because it allows for the uniqueness of people's experiences within their socio-cultural context (Ezzy, 2001; 2002; Fuchs, 1984; Gergen, 1985). Interviews, where people can formulate their own answers, can capture people's culturally shaped perceptions and their understanding of events (Carr, Marsella, & Purcell, 2002), reflect cultural variations in people's backgrounds, and reduce potential ethnocentric biases not uncommon to psychology (Marsella, 1998). Interviews using broad questions allow the participants to engage in narrations, or story-telling, about themselves. Story-telling is a technique Samoan people are accustomed to and generally comfortable with (Menon & Mulitalo 2006a; Menon & Mulitalo 2006b).

### ***The interview principles and process***

The interview guide was developed leaning on Flick's (2000; 2001; & 2003) episodic interview model, and based on relevant literature on inquiry in qualitative research in social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1997; Kvale, 1996). While the questions are overall non-directive and encourage respondents to reflect on their personal perceptions, at the same time the questions lead the respondents to focus on specific situations and relevant experiences in their life. Because semi-structured interviews lead to responses that are more specific than responses in unstructured interviews, they can narrow down the data (Flick, 2003). Semi-structured interviews simplify the process of targeting the relevant data for this study. At the same time, the interview questions are general in their focus to encourage the participating women to account experiences relating to their processes of migrating, and the consequential changes in the areas of family, work, and community life. To clarify the nature of the questions and to allow the participants to reflect on issues, I use prompts (Flick, 2000; 2003). The interviews are audio-taped and later transcribed.

The following interview principles (Flick, 2000; 2003) will be acknowledged in this study. Experiences are understood as part of a person's knowledge, which is linked to concrete events, circumstances, incidents, situations, time, space, or persons. The focus of the interview remains on invitations to recount concrete events, which the respondent sees as relevant experiences related to the issue under study. The researcher guides the focus on the areas of interest and how general or how specific the information should be, for example by prompts

like, 'Can you tell me more?' The interview aims at eliciting information as descriptions of experiences in the form of short narratives (Flick, 2000).

The interview process (Flick, 2000) involves the following activities. The participants outline the initial situation (how everything, migrating and taking up work, started). The participant selects subjectively relevant experiences from the whole host of experiences. The researcher discovers a coherent progression of the experiences presented by the participant. The researcher presents the situation at the end of the development and asks for clarification (what became..., how became..., when became...).

Contingent on the relevance of the questions to the participant and the participant's readiness to recount episodes, the degree of detail used, and the degree of comprehensiveness or the necessity for me to ask for clarification, the timeframe for the interviews is 90-180 minutes. This timeframe includes time for an initial introduction, the participant's feedback, and a debriefing period. It also allowed for an informal conversation as part of the relationship building process between the participant and me (Appendix 4).

Accommodating the needs of the participants, the interviews were conducted at my office at Massey University School of Psychology, the participant's home, or their workplace.

#### *Pilot study*

The interview questions were pre-tested with four Polynesian women who have migrated and gathered work experiences in New Zealand. During this pilot study, the quality of the questions (comprehensiveness and appropriateness to elicit targeted information) and suitability of the timeframe (90-180 minutes) were tested. The four women were asked if they perceived any of the questions or the wording as objectionable or had any thoughts or suggestions concerning the content or the questions.

The interview protocol has undergone only minor modifications as the participants provided predominantly positive feedback about the type and wording of the questions (e.g., participants' references to clarity and relevance). The timeframe (90-180 minutes) was suitable for the participants to reflect on questions and talk about events and thoughts they thought as relevant to the topic.

Three women expressed their appreciation about 'someone drawing attention to Pacific Island women's strengths, 'leadership skills', and 'lack of appreciation by some of the palagi (European New Zealanders)'. Two thought that 'it was about time someone did such study'. One woman thought this research was a good idea but cautioned me - 'Please take care; we

don't need a second Margaret Mead' - to remain aware of possible biases in my research.

### ***Procedure***

Before being interviewed, all women were invited to bring a support person. Two participants accepted this invitation. The support persons provided transport but also accompanied the participant during the interview because they, too, were interested in this research project. Two participants were befriended and chose to be interviewed together. In my opinion, this did not influence the degree of their disclosure as they openly discussed differences in their attitudes towards some Samoan traditions and customary practices.

Each participant received a printed version of the information letter (Appendix 2), including the researcher's contact details. Each participant received a financial contribution of NZ\$30 toward their travel expenses and for their time. I introduced myself, talked about my cultural background, and related my own personal journey to being interested in migrant women at work and identity.

During the introduction, I reiterated salient points on the information sheet: the participants' involvement in an interview, my interest in their personal experiences, the timeframe, and the voluntary nature of their participation. All participants expressed their consent to have their interview audio-taped (Appendix 3). I reiterated and emphasized the precautions taken to preserve confidentially for the participants' information. The participants would not be identifiable in my written thesis. The content of the interviews would not be shared with others, apart from the support person, should individual participants want someone to be present. The information provided by the participants would be used in my thesis mainly in summarized form. Some excerpts of the transcribed interviews would be used without any information (names, workplaces, specific activities) that would identify the participants. The tapes and notes would be kept under lock and not be made accessible to others.

I also explained the measures taken to ensure the participants' well-being, for example, that they would not be put at risk or suffer any disadvantages by participating, and they could leave at any time without any repercussions. All participants were encouraged to contact me - at home or in the office - should they have questions or want to further discuss some questions. Contact details for my supervisors and me were provided to all participants on the information sheet.

### ***The interview questions***

The focus in the semi-structured interview questions, leaning on Flick's (2000) episodic interview technique, allowed exploration of variations and similarities across Samoan women's

experiences at work and specific events in their lives. Unstructured interviews were not chosen because they can promote deviation from the topic under exploration (Flick, 2001; Guba & Lincoln, 1997). The interview questions kept lengthy digression from the topic of interest to a minimum, served the purposes of exploring specific experiences, and encouraged the participants to tell their stories.

To achieve greater relevance to the topic in this study, some of the original headings of Flick's (2000) episodic interview (Appendix 4) were altered. Phase 4, initially titled '*Focusing on the central parts of the issue under study*', was renamed '*Participant's personal relation to the issue: philosophy, (past) experiences of moving and taking up work*'. The chosen heading still focused on the central issue of the study, but emphasized the 'personal meaning' of migrating and working to these women. The heading of Phase 6 - initially: '*Evaluation and small talk*' (Flick, 2000) - had been changed to '*Evaluation/ participant's feedback, and questions*'. To assess whether the meaning of the respondents' experiences had been captured correctly, the participants' feedback had been sought during the 'summary of statements' phase (Appendix 4).

The semi-structured questions were initially general in their focus; for example, 'When you look back, how have you felt about leaving Samoa and coming to New Zealand?' Prompts were used when it seemed that participants needed more clarity regarding the nature of the question; for example, 'Would you please tell me about a typical situation that comes to your mind? What were your first thoughts/feelings? What did you do then?'. The interview questions aimed at addressing events of 'changes' in the participants' lives and at receiving information about the participants' coming to live in New Zealand and taking up employment (Appendix 4).

An initial question, relating to personal experiences and the person's ideas and beliefs about moving from one's birth country to another environment, for instance, 'What was on your mind for you when you were moving from Samoa to New Zealand?', allowed participants to revert back to the 'beginning' of moving and related experiences; for example, thoughts about opportunities, losses, and uncertainties back then. Such broad, reflective questions helped the participants tune in to the topic of this study.

Questions about work-related and daily-life examples, general aspects of adjusting to living and working in New Zealand, and specifically positive incidents allowed participants to reflect on issues as they had experienced them. For example, 'Could you please recall an incident where you thought you coped particularly well with 'a challenging situation? What do you think, why did you do particularly well in that situation? What helped you?' (Appendix 4).

I encouraged the participants to elaborate aspects not addressed by interview questions but perhaps relevant to Samoan migrant women's sense of identity by asking, 'Is there anything you would like to talk about that we have not covered so far? Anything that is on your mind?' The interviews always ended on a conversational note. This final period lasted between ten minutes and one hour depending on the time and need of the participant.

I chose not to conduct a focus group meeting since she considered this as not appropriate for this type of study. One reason was the guarantee of confidentiality of the data and attendance of the participants. A focus group would have revealed the participants' involvement and some of the information they provided in the interviews. A focus group might have put them into situations of involuntary disclosure of information of personal thoughts, beliefs, feelings, or actions. The fact that some participants knew about each other's participation and the content of the interviews was based on the participants' choice. Another argument against using focus groups in phenomenological research is that phenomenology seeks knowledge about a phenomenon in an approach that invites an individual to describe their experiences 'uncontaminated' by comments or interjections of others (Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook, & Irvine, 2009).

For the above-outlined reasons, the interviews were conducted with only one interviewer, myself, and one respondent (except in those cases where the interviewer brought a support person into the interview).

Since the received information was based on the relevance to the participants, credibility issues were considered only in context to the participants' accounts. During interview, the researcher frequently summarized and sought feedback to ensure her understanding of the participants' information was congruent with their accounts of events. Seeking feedback from the interviewees - for example, by paraphrasing, intermittent summarizing, or asking for clarification - increased credibility of the later interpretations of the data (Cassell & Symon, 1994).

### ***Data Management***

I chose not to employ a transcriber and personally transcribed all interviews. By listening to and transcribing the tapes, I familiarized myself with the ideas, thoughts, feelings, and conclusions of each participant. This put me into the position of forming an initial overall picture about the salience of work to the participants and its level of importance for their sense of self. The other advantage of transcribing the interviews myself was that I was able to recall the interview situations, the participants' body language, overall conduct, gestures, and facial

expressions. All these observations were not captured on the audiotapes but, since they could put a different weight on words or let them appear in a different light, were part of the personal communication. Listening to the tapes and recalling the context could also clarify the meaning of some words or phrases, or help to bridge some voids in the recordings. In short, the listening and transcribing was part of the hermeneutic interpretation process (moving back and forth between the bigger picture – the overall outcome of the interviews - and details, and the participant's and the researchers' interpretations).

### *Explication of the data*

The process of 'explication' implies an investigation of the components of a phenomenon 'while keeping the context of the whole' (Hycner, 1999, p. 161). This is different to 'analysis', which usually means a 'breaking into parts' and therefore a loss of the whole phenomenon. The data explication involved interpretation processes of the transcribed data. These processes involved the researcher interpreting and representing the participant's 'voices' without having full access to their experiences - as Kohler Riessman (2002) stated, 'We cannot give voice, but we do hear voices that we can represent and interpret' (p. 220). Throughout the analysis process, I was required to make 'representational decisions'. At the same time, I continuously alerted myself to my own socio-culturally shaped views and their possible influences on the interpretation process. As I went through various levels of interpretations - listening, transcribing, explicating (analyzing), and reading the product - I realized the difficulty to be 'neutral and objective' in my representational decisions and to merely represent another person's world.

A prominent characteristic of this interpretive activity is the 'double hermeneutic' (Heidegger, 1962). Firstly, the research participants perceived their personal life experiences and shared these with the researcher. Secondly, I interpreted the participants' told experiences. The participants, in response to my questions, reflected upon actual events. Thereafter, I reflected on and interpreted the participants' accounts and narratives about the lived experience of being at work and the meaning to them. I then built conjunctions between the participants' reflections on meaningfulness of work to their sense of self and my own reflections on the 'meaning of the meaning' of the participants' accounts.

Cognitive processes involved in this interpretational explication of data were: Comprehending the phenomenon under study; synthesizing a portrait of the phenomenon that accounts for relations and linkages within its aspects; theorizing about how and why these relations appear as they do; recontextualizing, or putting the new knowledge about phenomena and relations back into the context of how others have articulated the evolving knowledge (Morse, 1994).

The approach used in this study focused on each individual's detailed experience and understanding. As such, each individual case was fully analyzed before analyzing the interviews as a whole. The movement from the individual case to the group of cases represents the synthesis element of this approach.

The data (the women's stories) was evaluated for: a) personal meaning, b) within cultural context and, c) evolving themes (Ezzy, 2002). The data evaluation process relied on thematic analysis to identify recurring topics and patterns in meaningfulness of work to sense of self. The interpretation process involved the following activities:

To develop a holistic sense, the 'gestalt', I repeatedly listened to the taped interviews. I then transcribed and word-processed the tapes. Specific Samoan terminology needed interpretation by the researcher's cultural advisors who speak Samoan.

Next, I taped the pages of each transcribed interview together. I then read and re-read each transcript. This process served to identify essential issues and ideas (van Maanen, 1995). Statements that were shedding light on the researched phenomenon were highlighted.

I scrutinized all statements and summarized them by a keyword or short phrase, documenting these in the margins. After re-reading the script and its notes in the margins, I marked statements with similar meaning with specific colors and marking the respective text passages with the same color so they could be easily found later when looking for illustrating quotes. Next, I carefully scrutinized the statements and eliminated redundant units (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000; Hycner, 1999).

Then, I reflected on and clustered the remaining statements to form preliminary themes/units of meaning. I recycled the previous activities and, if indicated, made changes and renamed preliminary themes. Once all interviews had been processed this way, all preliminary themes (310) were written on index cards. By moving back and forth between viewing the units (parts) and the overall picture (the whole set of data) (van Maanen, 1995), I elicited the meaning of these preliminary themes (e.g., what do they indicate about the participants' processes) within the bigger (overall) picture of the researched phenomenon.

The index cards were then laid out. I considered and reviewed overarching themes (52) expressing the essence of the preliminary themes. Next, the overarching themes were written on index cards and redundant themes were removed. The overarching themes were evaluated for key themes and sub-themes; some overarching themes were further merged

into key themes, some were split up into new themes, some were eliminated (Hycner, 1999).

All index cards with key themes and sub-themes were shuffled and the activities outlined in the previous paragraph repeated; the purpose was to examine if the previous order would hold up or a different (more plausible) order emerged (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). The key themes were reviewed for ideas for binding topics, which then became three chapter topics. Once the topics for the three chapters were established, the key themes and sub-themes were reviewed, reordered, and moved a number of times until a best fit was achieved (Hycner, 1999).

I arrived at further insights about the meaning of work for the participants' sense of self through 'writing and rewriting text' (van Maanen, 1995).

### ***Authenticity***

To remain truthful to the participants' accounts, while at the same time arrive at creative insights, the above listed activities called for my careful judgment and skill. Deviation from the participants' accounts and meaning making was limited via frequent re-reading of the interview transcriptions and my interpretations of these (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005) and recycling some of the activities in the interpretation process. The interpretation process was supported by the use of notes to record key items of information, new ideas, and relating propositions (Ezzy, 2002).

Since the interpretations of the Samoan women's told experiences also carried the context of my interaction with the women, the preferred quality control procedure was a constant review and reappraisal rather than any form of external member checking. A person who has not been part of the participant-researcher interactions cannot have a good understanding or appreciation of the context in which the research interactions took place. First, these interactions, including body language, facial expression, and intonation of words, play a role in interpretation, but are not known to an objective auditor. Second, interpretation and meaning-making are subjective processes, which underlie the philosophical standpoint of the researcher. As such, it defeats the integrity of the data to have external auditors assess the interpretative decisions made by the researcher. Phenomenology holds the assumption that there is no fixed truth of reality that can be accounted for by a researcher and confirmed by a respondent (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Also, members may relay accounts during an interview that they later regret or see differently. Periods of review and reappraisal during the interviews made transparent the procedure and demonstrated the reasonableness of the analysis to me. I have sought cultural consultation throughout the

research process. The initial cultural advisorship had ended due to relocation of the person in the advisory role. Various women of Samoan background then took on this role.

The explication process was concluded by a synthesis - reflecting the context from which the themes emerged (Hycner, 1999; Moustakas, 1994) - in which participants' everyday expressions were 'transformed' into expressions appropriate to scientific discourse (Babich, 2004). Conclusions about the findings and the resulting new knowledge were then developed.

The findings of this research will be discussed in the next three chapters 6, 7, and 8 preceded by an overview of the organization of these chapters.

## ORGANIZATION OF ANALYSIS CHAPTERS 6, 7, & 8

### *Introduction*

The chapter structure, which emerged during the data processing, reflects three levels of identity development for the participants after they had come to Auckland and taken up paid work. The identity development took place 1) as internal dialogues with the self; 2) in relationships with others at work and in the family and community; and 3) in unfolding processes over time in historical space.

While the developments on these three levels were of an interacting, reciprocal nature and cannot be seen as separately occurring, the participants' stories showed that the changes in their self-conceptualizations tended to be initiated by processes of reflective, internal dialogues. Having started to feel and think differently about some of their ways of being and doing created changes in the participants' relationships with others. These newly defined relationships changed the participants' status at work and in their families and community. At work, the women had gained acknowledgement as colleagues and employees who had unique skills on offer, and in their community, they were recognized as experts or professionals, who were in the position to assist and support its members in a number of ways. Most participants experienced a shift in others' attitudes at work and in their families with regard to role expectations towards them. Some participants thought that the choices of Samoan women to be 'career women' also had initiated changes in attitudes in their wider social environment towards Samoan women's roles; other participants thought that these changes had yet to happen. Others' changed expectations over time in the Samoan women's socio-cultural environment would, in return, shape the women's experiences about themselves in their lifeworlds.

The data explication, with its focus on how paid work changed the participants' sense of identity, produced the following structure:

1. Experiencing themselves at work generated introspective processes for the participants, which led to changes in how they viewed themselves.
2. Transformed self-views changed relationships with others in the immediate environment.
3. Transformed self-views and changed relationships with others created the potential for socio-cultural changes in their wider environment.

On the whole, the evolving picture showed a continuous spiral of changes feeding into each other. While the spiral of changes was initiated by the participants' reflections on their ways of being and doing, the altered attitudes of others towards the participants and the changes over time in their cultural environment eventually filtered back into their self-views. According to this picture, the chapters are organized as follows:

Chapter 6 Experiencing the Self: introspective processes

Chapter 7 Experiencing the Self in relationships with others: individuals, groups, and community

Chapter 8 Experiencing the Self in time and space

## **CHAPTER SYNOPSES**

### ***Chapter 6 Experiencing the self: introspective processes***

This chapter highlights four key points in the participants' self-processes after coming to New Zealand and taking up work: their personal reconciliation processes of Samoan and European cultures; an increase in taking control over their lives and making decisions for themselves; their explorations of their competencies and potential skills; and how they realized and performed different identities at home and at work.

The chapter shows that following their aspirations at work presented a number of challenges for the participants. At times, conventional role expectations threatened to take precedence over the participants' pursuit of self-fulfillment. Being at work, however, played an important role in the participants' lifeworlds. The exposure to new opportunities and perspectives generated introspective processes and reflections on their ways of being and doing, their potential skills, their aspirations, and their choices for their future-being as working women. New opportunities and perspectives helped them to explore their competencies and make choices for themselves. However, for the participants, different aspects in their identities came to the foreground, on one side at home and on the other side at work. In internal dialogues, they negotiated and reconciled - with varying success - these different aspects of their self.

Overcoming their shyness, increasing assertiveness levels, mastering incongruence between others' expectations at work and Samoan cultural principles, and increasing English language proficiency had changed the participants' self-perceptions. Work had become a place for expressing their ideas about being in the world. For the participants, acting on the opportunities in their environment contributed to their perceptions of '*who I am*'. The interactions of

opportunities on one hand and their actions on the other were important contributors to the formation of their sense of self. As the participants' self-perceptions and their ideas for their future-being had changed, this had implications for their relationships with others at work, in their families and in their community.

### ***Chapter 7 Experiencing the self in relationships with others***

This chapter brings to light changes in how the participants experienced themselves in relationships with others at work and in their Samoan community and family. It shows how the Samoan women's altered self-perceptions influenced the interactions with others at work, how this altered their relationships and positions at work; and how this influenced their relationships with other Samoans in their family and community.

Relationships with others at work created a feeling of belonging for the participants. Standing out as a 'stranger' or 'other' had changed into 'being part of' the people at work and becoming experts in their field of work'. From being learners, the participants had moved to being teachers: they taught others about the benefits of doing things the Samoan way in some areas in their work. Their cultural knowledge and their high input into work gained them the respect of their non-Samoan colleagues. The participants' position of being 'other' changed into being a valued 'part of the group' at work through the processes of relationships building, sharing their knowledge, and finding their niche at work.

Family and community members, who were initially critical of the participants' commitments to work outside the family and dedication to careers, increasingly benefited from the women's knowledge and they acknowledged this. The participants became role models, educators, advice givers, advocates, and intermediaries for others in their families and community. They had gained their elders' respect and new status as authorities and holders of knowledge. Through this new social status, they felt encouraged to voice their ideas and opinions about the application of those cultural principals and practices in their community they did not agree with.

The changes in other people's attitudes at work and in the community towards the participants contributed to changes in the participants' sense of self. The changes in the participants' sense of self and in their being with others potentially initiated wider socio-cultural changes over time.

## **Chapter 8 Experiencing the self in time and space**

This chapter centers on four key points: how the participants' upbringing in Samoa shaped their values and attitudes towards work; how they experienced gendered work and power distribution back home; how working in New Zealand initially turned out to be a downward slope and how this turned into upward mobility; and how these processes changed the meaning of work for the participants from 'working for the benefits of others' to 'working for the benefits of others as well as myself'. Their reflections about their self-changes in these areas generated contemplations about how views and attitudes in *fa'asamoa*, the Samoan way, with regard to women might change over time.

During their upbringing, the participants were handed down long-existing values, beliefs, and principles, which formed the foundation for their gender roles and initial perceptions of self. Some participants started to question their roles, specifically in regard to work, when they compared their lives with those of their male counterparts. Back in Samoa, their chores, tasks, and roles in the family system differed from those of the males. After leaving home, some ideas and beliefs around these principles and work practices were no longer complied with but were now rejected. The participants were brought up with high standards for quality of work, which became deeply ingrained and later became apparent at work in New Zealand. Initially, a number of participants were disappointed with respect to their expectations that their way of life in Auckland might improve. Eventually though, by taking up the opportunities that working in New Zealand provided, they turned life into an upward trend towards advanced positions at work. The meaning of work changed from 'making a living' to 'actualizing self-aspirations'. The participants envisaged that their examples as achievers and experts supporting others in their community would, over time, contribute to dismantling socio-cultural restrictions for Samoan women. They also envisioned that New Zealanders' views about Samoan women at work would become more positive at the same time.

## **CHAPTER 6: EXPERIENCING THE SELF: INTROSPECTIVE PROCESSES**

This chapter makes transparent how the women in this study reconciled the different aspects of Samoan traditions and being at work. It shows how different components of identity were brought together. The participants achieved this by reflecting on the usefulness of the ways of doing they had learned and brought with them on one side, and the ways of being and doing they experienced at work in Auckland on the other side. Often, they felt pushed and pulled towards one or the other. Internalized cultural role expectations stood in contrast with the participants' need for making their own life style choices and decisions. To alleviate the resulting psychological tension, their different components of the self - internalized cultural expectations and self-aspirations - engaged in internal dialogues (Bhatia, 2002) and, this way, lessened the incongruence between those.

The participants' new work environments and its new possibilities were major contributors to changes in self-identity. It is not uncommon for people who adjust to new environments to derive, and maintain, meaningfulness from concepts and principles deeply ingrained through their upbringing, and at the same time 'put new actions and ways of being into place' (Gal'perin, 1967). What varies among people, though, is the way they reconcile concepts from past-being and present-being.

This chapter views how the participants experienced the process of reconciling some concepts based on 'being Samoan' with new concepts relating to 'being women at work', and its outcomes for their self-identity. It shows four main areas: how the participants brought together their customary ways and the ways of being at work in New Zealand, how they increasingly took more control over their life and made their own choices, how they embarked on exploring their skills and competencies, and how they started to expand their self-concepts towards being holders of multiple, complementary identities.

### **1 Reconciling Samoan way and palagi way - codes of conduct**

Feeling shy and unassertive was an imperative issue for the participants as they were new to the New Zealand world of work. Unassertiveness became apparent especially in interactions with non-Samoan colleagues but also in situations where they found themselves in supervisory positions to older Samoan co-workers.

### ***Getting out of my shyness and becoming assertive***

As they entered the world of work in New Zealand, most of the participants initially felt shy and anxious in their interactions with others. These feelings had two sources, one being their upbringing which taught them formality and reserve in interactions with persons of higher social status, elders, males, or strangers. The other source of feeling timid was the contrast between the Samoan and New Zealand code of conduct at work. However, for many, their first work places in Auckland eventually '*opened the gates to confidence*'.

The principles of *fa'asamoa* demanded coyness - especially towards males and people in superior positions - in young women (Tupuola, 2000). Assertiveness towards elders and superiors was regarded as inappropriate. Based on their learned shyness, some women initially felt comfortable with being told at work what to do rather than being challenged with decision making, like M. and A., for example:

*'I felt so shy then [when I came to New Zealand]... I did not even know how to dress when I had to work with customers. The majority was older; I was the youngest at work. Well, I did not have to make decisions; there were always others who told me what to do. And I was comfortable with that, back then.'*

*'I was always the obedient one at home, I was always the shy one that never talked or said anything. I just did what I was told to do. I could not bear venting my feelings or opinion in case I upset someone. I couldn't even establish eye contact ... But then, I wanted to get out of this shyness. It had become unhelpful, this fixed part. It inhibited me from interacting with others at work and from voicing my thoughts.'*

At work, the women experienced that voicing one's thoughts and opinions was not only considered as appropriate at times, but also expected from them. The disparity between the learned principle of 'being humble' in their community and the norm of 'assertiveness' at work initially generated psychological tension for these women. Voicing their thoughts proved especially difficult in situations where they disagreed with decisions and actions of people in senior positions at work. However, while on one side, they felt that they should be 'modest and humble' in these situations, on the other side, they observed that others '*got away with speaking their mind and it even earned them some respect*'. Seeing that being assertive could put employees into stronger positions encouraged P., for example, to follow the examples of those who spoke their mind:

*'In Samoa ... you need to show respect. That's something everyone learns ... That's why I always said 'yes' and agreed. I thought that the manager is the boss and I must do as I am told. And then I watched them [the other women at work]; they did*

*not always do as they were told. Not when they thought it was wrong ... I thought, oh, they are so strong ... So why not do the same thing ... And I did it and felt sooo much better about myself. It's about being honest, being true to yourself.*

Being 'true to myself' meant congruence between what the women felt and how they acted towards others. It meant speaking one's mind when one felt like doing so. Some chose the faster way to becoming assertive: they internalized the behavior of others at work and made it their own. Others though, chose the longer way: they furthered their education so that they felt entitled through their upgraded position to voice their opinion. As 'juniors' at their job, they had '*done as I was told*' even when they felt treated unjustly. Only after they felt on equal footing with those who had previously bossed them around did they feel comfortable to object to unreasonable requests of others at work. This was reflected in T.'s narration:

*'Oh, they bossed me around! At hospital, even I was very experienced, I was the junior because my education was not as good as theirs, and they always asked me to clean up the mess. You know, at the maternity ward, there is a mess after giving birth and usually those being in that room where the birth was happening had to clean up. They called me ... And I wasn't arguing. I am not a person to slap back. I dealt with it otherwise. So I came back after I had trained and learned more. So that others can't tell me, send me to clean up the mess ... Now, of course I will speak up! I am not that shy girl anymore. I think we have the same status. "It was your labor room, be responsible for it!" I'd say. Me, cleaning up your mess - I don't think so!'*

While T. had felt the need to acquire a senior status at work to 'speak up' and voice her concerns, others who simply followed the examples of their outspoken co-workers, queried this principle of '*not speaking up unless you're of a higher status*'. 'Passively internalized replica of cultural prescriptions' (Mead, 1934) - such as '*being humble even when you felt treated unfairly*' - did not make sense to them in some situations. The participants transformed old, learned perspectives into 'perspectives that fitted their social needs' (Fuhrer, 2004).

However, while they increasingly experienced raised self-confidence in interacting with their colleagues from mainstream cultures, the participants had yet to solve some difficulties in their interactions with Samoan fellow workers who were of senior age to them but not their seniors at work in Auckland.

### ***Reconciling 'respect towards elder's' and 'my duties as a supervisor'***

As young Samoan women, most of the participants had been exposed to the teachings of *fa'aaloalo* and *ava*, the principles of respect and obligation as codes of conduct between older *aiga* [family] members and young women (Sua'ali'i, 2001, pp. 161; Tupuola, 2000, pp. 62). A number of participants had grown up with the fear of

being penalized for speaking up towards elders and some had experienced the consequences. As a consequence, to avoid criticism of their elders, they had extended these learned principles to their workplaces in Auckland.

Some of them, as staff members in supervisory positions were required 'to give orders to our elders at work'. This put them into an uncomfortable position, as they wanted to maintain 'respect for elders' on one hand, and fulfill their supervisory tasks on the other hand. In keeping with Pitt and Macpherson's (1974, p. 92) accounts of the internal conflicts of younger Samoans in supervisory positions, giving orders to elders conflicted with the participants' understanding of 'being respectful', which they had learned in Samoa. To build a bridge between these two aspects, the principle of respect was given a new meaning, as T's account showed:

*'It was difficult to keep everyone [elders at work on one side and managers on the other] happy. I needed to balance those expectations here. And I thought, respect doesn't have to mean that can't issue orders to the older ones. It is how you do it! I did it the way that I was never bossy with them and always asked them before I made decisions, always. In that way I showed respect, and I listened to what they say. So they respected me. And the managers were happy, too.'*

The adjusted meaning of 'respect' created 'new possibilities for acting and being' (Boesch, 1991; Simmel, 1968) for these women. The adjusted meaning of 'respect' allowed them to preserve cultural principles on one hand, and to include new aspects of doing on the other. The 'cultivation of the internalized' (principle of respect) and the 'externally' introduced (task-requirements at work) (Fuhrer, 2004) alleviated inner conflict. The two cultural aspects (the Samoan way and the way at work) that became integrated into their personal sphere jointly turned into a 'formative element of their self' (Simmel, 1968).

The participants had left their comfort zone and mastered the challenges of 'speaking up' and 'giving orders to elders' at work. The experience of mastery subsequently generated an increase in feelings of self-confidence. However, other hurdles were experienced in the area in overcoming language barriers at work.

### ***Overcoming language barriers at work and at home***

After they had arrived in New Zealand, it was their limited English language skills that hindered a number of participants from engaging in contacts outside their Samoan community and churches. The use of the Samoan language anchored these women to their sense of self. Unlike many Samoan women who are New Zealand-

born and never experienced the island (Anae, 2001), the participants derived a potent meaning from the use of the Samoan language: it represented familiar traditions values, and norms (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, 2001). This is a widely shared experience within the group of Samoan migrant women in New Zealand (Pitt & Macpherson, 1974). However, while the participants derived a sense of comfort from using their mother tongue, at the same time, they perceived their lack of English language skills at work as '*inferiority*' or '*embarrassment*' and felt discomfort. On one side, the use of Samoan language provided the participants with a sense of safety; on the other side, the English language barrier to interacting with non-Samoans at work resulted in isolation, like, for example, for A.:

*'So I had to start work without speaking the language [English] properly. I never could express what I thought, and that was a big, big challenge for me. ... I felt so disadvantaged ... because you can't mingle with everybody because you can't speak the language. Marginalized, I felt marginalized ... even the Samoans who grew up in New Zealand mocked my pronunciation!'*

The necessity of speaking English to find skilled job positions motivated the participants to master the language barrier. For some, a comparison with other Polynesian women new at work who spoke less English encouraged them to use their English, however little it was. The 'comparison and putting into perspective strategy' helped to increase their confidence and self-assuredness. The participants benefited from becoming bi-lingual as this opened up a wider range of possibilities to interact with others at work and elsewhere. Speaking English in- and outside of home, however, earned some participants criticism as '*being fa'apalagi*', being like a European (Anae, 2001), or '*having become a real coconut - brown on the outside and white on the inside*'. O. recalled the time when she had arrived in New Zealand as a young women to join her relatives:

*'I was not allowed to speak English at home; I didn't dare to at the beginning. I was accused of being ashamed of my heritage and disrespecting our language. But all I wanted was to be able to make contact with others ... make friends at work. I mean I was too shy anyway... I mean I didn't have any back then, but even if I had wanted to, I couldn't have brought palagi friends home because we would have had to speak English...'*

For some participants, learning a new language meant taking two hurdles - one being to overcome their embarrassment for their lack of English skills and the other being to come to terms with others' unjustified criticism for abandoning their mother tongue. However, those participants speaking two languages were considered to be

in an advantaged position as this enabled them not only to find work but also to move out of isolation and socialize with others from a variety of cultural backgrounds. While English was carried outside work into the community, Samoan language was carried into work to assist Samoan migrants new to New Zealand. This transaction of language skills across the two environments of work and home had contributed to an expanded sense of self as being '*sophisticated enough to move in different circles*' on one side, and had helped to maintain and reinforce the participants' sense of Samoanness, as they used their mother tongue as a cultural anchor, on the other side.

In summary, mastery of challenges in the areas of overcoming shyness, increasing assertiveness levels and speaking up, conquering incongruence in expectations at work and cultural principles, and the acquisition of English language proficiency had transformed the participants' self-concepts. The resulting increase in self-confidence established an '*I can do it*' self-concept, which encouraged the participants to pursue further upgrading of their competencies in other work domains. The increase in self-confidence had wider implications for the participants: It encouraged them to 'take more control' over other areas in their lives.

## **2 Taking more control over my life – making my own choices**

The women in this study commonly experienced that their families readily accepted when young males, brothers, cousins, or nephews ventured out into the world of work and moved into their own living spaces. The women also experienced that the family's control over the males' lives lessened when they started to work outside home. However, the participants themselves were not granted the same liberties and many found that role expectations continued to be kept tight after having come to Auckland.

Some of them experienced objections from their parents or other family members when they voiced the desire to find work outside the community - especially when this involved leaving home or even town. The participants tried to avoid '*fall outs*' and attempted to '*maintain harmony*' by negotiating the conditions that might convince their parents to let them leave home. This included coming home for the weekends, participating in community and church activities, and agreeing to relinquish varying amounts of their wages to their family. It is common for Samoan women to be expected, when they work outside the community, to ensure that this would not compromise their social responsibilities in their traditional gender roles (Croulet &

Sio, 1986). Due to the *tautua*, the duty to help, share, and donate, Samoan women in paid labor may neither have their wages fully at their disposal (Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998) nor more freedom in their movements and activities – which is different to Samoan males. However, once they had embarked on their journey into the world of work, the participants contemplated changes for their lives in a number of areas.

### ***Financial independence - My ticket out of home***

The participants, when they lived at home, had surrendered parts - if not all - of their wages to their parents. Over time, though, paid work enabled them to save some money which meant ‘a *ticket out of home*’ into autonomy. The participants saw work and income as a means to provide them with their own living space where they could ‘*have things my way*’. For M., like for other women in this study, financial independence meant:

*‘... The sense of independence - just going to work was awesome ... while I was at work, I didn’t have to answer to them [parents]. It was like going out, even if it was just for a few hours. But then [I wanted] ... to live the way I want ... all the restrictions back home, all the things you couldn’t do, you know ... not having to do things secretly any longer ... I wanted to feel, I can pay my own flat with my money, buy my own food ... Come home when I want. Smoke a cigarette, which you don’t do - didn’t do then - as a Samoan woman. I had my way! I mean, I did things secretly before, but I didn’t want to be a hypocrite any longer. Eventually, work was my ticket out of home’.*

A number of participants recalled that they felt relieved once they had their own living space and when they could give up their ‘*secretive, hypocritical behavior*’. Living at their own premises provided them with more freedom from parental rules and restrictions, more control over their wages, and allowed for some life style changes. Like migrant women in other geographical locations (Pessar & Mahler, 2001) with financial independence, they increasingly ascertained their individual agency and followed their aspirations. At the same time, while autonomy was enjoyed, it was important to the participants to be seen as ‘*being responsible with my money*’ and ‘*not being selfish spending it all on myself*’ and remaining committed to supporting their families. Commitment to supporting the family on one side, and gratitude for increased independence on the other, are often simultaneously experienced by migrant women who grew up with traditional gender role expectations (Jones-Corea, 1998).

However, combining those two aspects could be a challenging process as the participants needed to weigh up their own, their closest family's, and their *aiga's* (wider family's) financial needs in their decision-making as to how to allocate their money. At times, perceived cultural pressure strongly influenced these processes (the pressure to donate to family members in crisis, *fa'alavelave*, will be further outlined in the third analysis chapter). Upholding the Samoan principle of helping and financially supporting their families, however, did not mean that the participants were willing on all accounts to continue adhering to family members' expectations to be 'good Samoan girls'. Having gained financial autonomy, they made choices for themselves about 'how to live my life'. Carrying responsibility for their lives endowed them with a sense of 'power and decision-making', which also has been observed in other Samoan women after leaving home (Schoeffel, 1983; Simi, 1991).

### ***Reconciling' making my own decisions' with 'expected gratitude'***

Decisions about young women's future were traditionally made by parents, elders, and also older brothers in the family. For a number of women in this study, this meant that either their families in Samoa or their relatives with whom they lived in Auckland made choices for them. The choices made for them by family members in Samoa followed some participants to New Zealand. For others, after arriving in Auckland, the church took over the role of decision-making. The women, however, once they had started to enjoy their increasing self-confidence, sense of mastery, and exploration of their 'inner potential', preferred to make their own decisions over their lives. At the same time, they were expected to show gratitude and respect towards relatives in New Zealand who were providing for them. Expected gratitude and respect included 'leaving it to others to know what's best for you'. A number of participants, like M., experienced oscillating between 'duty to show respect' and 'autonomous decision-making' as an inner struggle:

*'We were brought up that your family did it, making the best decision for you. I want to respect them, you know. You do that because they have looked after you and done their best. But I have learned now that you have to follow your own ideas ... because you know yourself and what you want best. I say then, "I am sorry, but I need to do this myself". My auntie here thinks of me, "Oh, she is so proud" ...'*

The dilemma of being expected to show gratitude and adhere to others' decisions while at the same time wanting to make their own decisions was also experienced by L., who had not met her relatives before coming to New Zealand. In

her case, there was not much opportunity for negotiations and she even experienced physical punishment for disobedience:

*'When I came here, I stayed with my auntie. I didn't even know her, never met her before. I didn't like the way they treated me... as if I can't think ... she tells me how to do things and what to do. She even beat me! And I couldn't say much because you had to be thankful that you had the shelter ... When I did this boring job, clean and wash dishes over and over and then at night coming back to a place I couldn't call home - that also did something to me. Anyway, I found it really hard. And I moved out as soon as possible... and I lived my life the way I wanted...'*

Another sector that impinged on the participants' decision-making power was the church. As one pillar of their community, the church has always played an important supportive role for Samoan migrant women in New Zealand (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1979), especially for those new to this country. While overall, the participants felt committed to their church, some questioned the level of authority the church held over them. After having gained increased independence not only financially but also in personal life, it did not make sense to them to have the church decide over matters important to them, as P. explained:

*'According to my parents, you grew up to obey and listen and dedicate yourself to the church ... As part of the Samoan culture, I had to obey. It was the only way for us growing up; my dad put an emphasis on obedience. So did the church. You would be totally reliant on them I guess. But then, work was a place where I learned to grow more and more confident with my own decisions. It just doesn't make sense to have my decisions made by the church. I make my own decisions now rather than seek advice at the church.'*

The participants who felt controlled and restricted in their decision making by family members or church shared these experiences with many other Samoan women, who felt that *'control operated on all levels inside Samoa and New Zealand'* (also written about by Cribb & Barnett, 1999) and restricted them in exercising control over their own life. While they strived to be the decision makers in the areas of finances and life choices, others in their family, church, and community frequently reminded them of their duties of gratitude and service. The process of reconciling those two positions - compliance to adhere to their duties to others, but also wanting to make their own decisions over their finances and time - turned out to be a difficult one.

Initially for many, this process meant choosing between autonomy but feeling guilty, or following their duties to serve and respect others but being left with little

money and time to look after their own needs. Some women experienced being judged as lazy and feeling guilty when they took time out for themselves. Spending money on themselves was viewed as *'being selfish'*. Some, like O., heard the *'nagging voices'* of family members even when those were not physically present:

*'In fa'asamoa, how much one contributes to 'serving others' strongly influences how one is seen by others. You can't help it; the principles of our upbringing are deeply ingrained. Even now their words can get you ... You keep hearing their voices and you end up feeling guilty.'*

A number of women who felt such deeply ingrained sense of obligation at the same time felt resentful about being dutiful. They felt that their *'goodwill to be of service to others'* was at times exploited up to the point of constant labor and care for others. This anger, together with their increased levels of assertiveness, self-confidence, and outspokenness, motivated the participants to take control over their ways of showing gratitude and service. T. thought that:

*'... Choices about how much you want to be involved [in your community] need to come from the inside, not from the outside. If I feel it's right, I choose to do so.'*

T. began to decide how much time she wanted to allocate to the areas of work, self-care, and community involvement. However, the process of feeling comfortable with such decisions took some time. What helped them to reconcile the push to be of service to others and the pull to look after one's own needs was the notion that *'one cannot support others if one does not care for one self'*. The participants felt that, *'If I am following others' decisions and expectations, I will not be happy. And that means, I cannot make others happy in the long-run'*, or *'If I want to be resourceful, I first need to replenish my own resources'*. These lines of reasoning made sense to the participants, as these reduced feelings of guilt and allowed them to make choices and decisions that took into account others' as well as their own needs. Contributing to the well-being of others in their families and community *'felt good now because it is based on choice'*.

The meaning of 'control' had changed from 'being controlled' to 'being in control'. Some of the women, as their ultimate conception of control, had harbored the dream of taking on high-powered positions and being in command of others. This dream expressed in various ways in their later careers in Auckland.

### ***Dreaming about power positions: 'the woman in police uniform'***

Within the traditions of *fa'asamoa*, women are holders of specific positions and roles in their families and villages, which equip them with knowledge, skills, and competencies. Yet, the areas in which Samoan women can exercise power are restricted. The identities 'bestowed and confirmed' at home and school were those as mothers and household careers - seen as 'indispensable functions' of women - and excluded women from 'becoming professional competitors in a man's world' (Siers & Siu-Maliko, 2003). Having experienced restrictions like '*others controlling my life*' and '*doing as you are told*', a number of participants dreamed as young women of being in authority positions and '*exercising power over others*'. Some pictured themselves in positions of policewomen like, for example, F.:

*'You know, I wanted to become a policewoman when I was in Samoa ... That was my dream back home. Every time we finished school we walked past the police station. I said to my friend, I am gonna wear this uniform. There were policewomen then and the uniform attracted me. And they look really kind of, that they have power, you know the hats and so on. That, to me, [was] meaningful: to have authority and make decisions, take action...'*

Visualizing themselves as being policewomen carried meaning for these women because in this position, gender inequality could be overcome. Doing such a '*power job*', which is '*traditionally allocated to males*', would make them '*feel in charge*'. The uniform symbolized '*being an authoritative woman*' and '*in power to make decisions*'. Standing at an intersection and giving directions meant to A. being seen as powerful and being in control:

*'Caring for others. That's what the Samoan culture would expect from women. But I dreamed about that [being a policewoman] when I was younger. The attraction would be to direct traffic - standing amidst all these cars at an intersection and directing them left quite an impression on me as a young girl. You know, I saw a woman doing this job! Well, first seeing a woman doing this job is different from seeing a man in this role. I admire this confidence in her; it is not the norm, not a traditional woman's occupation. It gives her control over a crowd! ... She is powerful ... in charge! You feel more empowered as if you would be a caregiver, I think.'*

'Being a police woman' became a metaphor for being powerful and in control instead of being disempowered and controlled by others. Being 'a woman in uniform', defying the traditional gender role expectations of being a caregiver, meant to be on equal footing with males. 'Standing at an intersection and directing' meant standing at a crossing point, changing directions, and choosing the course of one's path. For these women, being decision makers and making their own choices became the invisible uniform of strength and empowerment.

'Making personal choices' about what one wants to be is important to people's existence because 'making personal choices' is essential in identity creation (Sartre, 1956). In contrast, abdicating one's autonomy and allowing someone else to make the choices for one's life means to generate immobilization for oneself. The participants felt immobilized and halted by '*being told what to do and how to live my live*', which principles to adhere to, which expectations to fulfill, and which aspirations to forego. To feel mobile and flexible in their development, the responsibility of choices needed to be their own and could not remain with others. To be able to appreciate themselves for their competencies and to believe that they were 'good enough', they needed to revisit their understanding of the principle of 'showing humility'.

### **3 Exploring competencies**

The participants had begun to implement their choices, decisions, and aspirations for their future. They had entered the world of work and started to explore their 'inner potential' - the competencies and skills, which they had taken for granted for a long time since they had received little recognition for those. As their 'self-appreciation' was increasing, some participants experienced this as conflicting with their learned emphasis on 'humility'. To alleviate inner conflict, the participants reconciled these seemingly conflicting concepts by defining their achievements as 'God's gift' and by passing on the benefits of their success at work to others.

#### ***Reconciling humility with self-appreciation***

Samoan women have a long-standing reputation for being hard-working and undemanding - qualities which made them welcome as migrants to New Zealand and its workforce in the past (Cribb & Barnett, 1999). In their families, however, despite their financial contributions, Samoan women tend to receive too little acknowledgment for their hard work (Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998). Such experiences of working hard for little recognition from their families have been shared by a number of participants. L. and T., for example, reported that:

*'Back home [in Samoa], people didn't tell you when you have done well - even when you've worked really hard. You also didn't ask for it; humility, you know!'*

*'You were expected to be humble ... You know how it is, that Samoans don't say when you are good. That way, you learn to believe that you are not good enough.'*

These experiences continued for some Samoan women after coming to New Zealand - even for those who were the main income earners of their families. It was, thus, a new experience to them when they experienced being praised at their work places. Initially, praise was perceived as embarrassing. Eventually, it was experienced as *'life changing'* as a number of women, like for example B., recalled:

*'One thing, in Samoa, people don't tell you when you have done well. Here, people tell you. It took me years to accept compliments, it was just embarrassing. Now, I feel confident in taking compliments because I trust myself. I know when I am good. I feel good about achievements and can even tell myself 'Ah, well done'. Understanding that I deserve appreciation changed my life! I used to say, 'Ah, it was nothing, anybody could do this. But I am not anybody any more. I am somebody good at my work'.*

Being praised for their work attitudes and 'doing a job well' carried meaning for these women as it generated a sense of being competent and resourceful. It generated a shift in their self-concepts from vaguely defining themselves as *'anybody who can do this'* to distinctly seeing themselves as *'somebody good at work'*. Appreciating themselves as *'good at what I am doing'* added to the meaningfulness of their efforts at work. When people perceive their actions as being meaningful, this contributes to a positive sense of self (Frankl, 1986). It validates their identity as *'being somebody good at what I am doing'*, as mirrored in E.'s statement:

*'I always said, it's nothing. I do it the other way now; I praise myself in every area of my life. I also look at my achievements, my skills, my knowledge, the way I am, and cherish them as special, as gifts'.*

The notion of *'being good at what I am doing'* became part of the participants' self-concepts. While they acknowledged their own *'hard work'* in arriving at these self-concepts, they also called their achievements *'God's gift'*. Looking at their achievements as a combination of their own work and *'God's gift'* reconciled the concepts of *'self-appreciation'* - I have achieved by working hard - and *'being humble'* - God has given me the stamina to work hard. This way, integrating the two seemingly opposing concepts of self-praise and humility into their sense of self, the women preserved their psychological equilibrium. Their perspectives about their achievements also changed when they reviewed their understanding of skills as being *'natural talents'*. The participants began to appreciate themselves for learning and putting to work their *'talents'*; by doing so, they created identities as agents of their achievements.

### ***What I called 'my natural talents' are valuable skills at work***

Initially, the participants thought that their ways of *'being good with people'*, *'being good at organizing and leading others'*, or *'being good with finances'* were talents natural to them since, *'that's how we are'*. In their families in Samoa, all of them had been involved in the typical daily chores which included delegating and allocating tasks, supervising younger siblings' duties, organizing large households, planning, and managing resources and finances. Rather than seeing their competencies in these areas as skills, the women initially thought, *'that's what you naturally do'*. However, at their work places in New Zealand, these *'natural talents'* earned them praise and were in high demand. One of the skills that was sought after in New Zealand was *'being good with people'*, which, to the surprise of some participants, was called *'interpersonal skills'* at work. *'Interpersonal skills'* were also essential to the effective functioning of families and villages in Samoa.

The participants became increasingly conscious of the value of the skill *'being good with people'* as they experienced that this was an important asset here at work. I.'s example mirrored the experiences of a number of other participants:

*'Coming to think about it ... I have always had those skills in me, like managing and organizing things. I did this at home in my family [in Samoa]. No one took much notice. Well, we all had to do it. It was just natural. But here, in New Zealand, there was a need for these skills. I could fully use them at work, exercise what I have learned ...'*

In Samoa, social interaction with others - in their *aiga* (extended family), in *komitis* (committees), at church, and in other areas in their community - is central and vital to people's lives and to the operation of Samoan culture (Sua'ali'i, 2000, p.172). These frequent and close interactions with others taught the participants to *'read people'* and *'understand patterns'* in their behavior or *'sense when people change, when something is happening in that person's life'*. Like others, E. had learned such skills during her upbringing:

*'... It is experiences in the family, which make you ... skilled. You see things from different perspectives, well ... I mean that's what my dad taught me, too, not turning away from difficult people because you never know when you meet them again. Also, there was no time for asking a lot of questions; you do have to learn ... to read people. You know how large our families are. The house was crowded; there were many people to feed and my mum run a tight ship. She did ten things at one time and was fast and efficient. No time to ask too many questions. You had to know the patterns. And be friendly! I definitely learned this from her...'*

While many participants thought empathy and intuitive understanding of others, 'reading people', to be innate, at work in New Zealand they experienced that, 'These things that we had done naturally in our daily lives were not present in every body'. 'Being good with people', for example, showing empathy, negotiating, mediating in conflict situations, and being observant put them into the category of 'being skilled', as F. learned:

*'It's that certain warmth which you would expect, it's just natural, I thought. So when others said I was good with others and I communicated so well with customers, I replied, "Isn't that the natural way?" But they had a name for it; they called it "customer service skills". So, they said so often, "Oh, you are so friendly!" In the workplace ... I can be friendly with everyone. So, I guessed then, this is a skill and I have it and it is not natural to everyone'.*

By and large, the participants began to develop an awareness of their skills learned back home as being 'valuable skills' at their work places in New Zealand. Migrant women in other cultural settings as well had experienced an increased consciousness about their 'imported' skills. Latina migrant women, for example, showed an increased awareness about their strengths and skills after migrating to the United States and engaging in paid work (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; 1994). Increased skill awareness seems to be especially the case for migrant women who were previously excluded from work life in their home country (Burton, 2004), like a number of participants in this study.

Their new understanding about talents being skills meant a shift in identity for a number of participants. Initially, they had compared their education with New Zealand standards and concluded that they were 'under-skilled' or 'under-educated'. After understanding that their 'talents which had been there all along' and 'been taken for granted' were considered as skills, they perceived themselves as 'women who had something on offer' and who had the 'inner potential' to do well.

### ***My inner potential***

Understanding themselves as 'skilled' women gave the participants confidence to further explore 'what I had in me'. Being conscious of their latent competencies, their focus shifted from 'present being' towards 'that which it is not yet'. By thinking about what was possible, they made their world 'a space of practical possibilities' (Mulhall, 1996, p. 84). Reflections on their 'inner potential' created new ideas about life, which were to be carried through. Reflections such as S.'s typified the women's explorations processes:

*'... I felt I had more potential than working in places like warehouses. I wanted to use my full potential, what I was capable of. I still had to find out what that was but I knew it was there [laughs]. I got sick of these jobs where I couldn't use my knowledge. I knew more than they demanded of me ... I had it in me. But first I needed to develop the courage to draw on my knowledge.'*

However, self-doubts, for example, about English language skills and fitting in as a newcomer, first needed to be overcome. The required courage was generated by affirmative self-talk like, *'I know I have it in me to do better than that'*, and positive comparisons with others in senior positions as, *'This this could be me, I sure can learn that'*. The participants, as their inner self fluctuated between different positions, endowed each position 'with a voice starting a dialog and exploring the different positions' (Hermans, 2001, p. 249; Hermans & Kempen, 1993) – in this case, doubt on one side, and the knowledge that they 'had it in them' on the other. For the women, bringing to fruition their potential was a step towards affirmative self-concepts as 'women who had it in them'. Actualizing *'what I have in me'* meant bringing latent talents to the outside. These talents, once acted out at work, were positively appraised by others, which, for the participants, created inner identity processes. In Fuhrer's (2004) words, 'discovering the potentialities' in oneself and 'realizing which ones lead to fulfillment in life' were closely linked to identity creation.

For the participants, the integration of others' appraisals as outer experiences, and self-concepts of being skilled as inner experiences, generated further self-trust in the attainments of their aspirations. At the same time, the participants experienced that cultural protocol and expectations in their family could constrain the attainment of their aspirations.

### ***Reconciling 'being for others' and 'pursuit of self-fulfillment'***

Some principles in *fa'asamoa* did not encourage women to make paid work *'the center of a woman's life world'*. Following their aspirations at work, thus, presented a number of challenges for the participants. At times, family members' conventional role expectations threatened to take precedence over the participants' pursuit of self-fulfillment. Some were expected to take on roles exclusively as mothers or carers of family, which would have left them no or little time for work outside home and made it difficult to achieve advanced positions. Such expectations did not match the dreams about advancement and career at work, as B.'s contemplations showed:

*'... You know in our culture ... we are expected to do things for other people first; we sacrifice our needs for the family.... I tell you that's very true, I mean that our culture influences our career ... I had to take over from my other sister who looked after our mother, and now it is my turn ... But I still have other things I want to finish ... I have my dreams about my career. I want to excel. I am more than a mother or caregiver, you know!'*

Regardless of age, many participants felt that their advancement at work was important to them. Some were aged between 20 to 30 years with younger or no children, while others belonged to the age group of 40 to 60 years with older or adult children. A number of women rated work as important as their families, and a few had put their work careers before establishing a family. These women explained that *'being confined to the house'* had made them feel *'restless'*. *'People commonly feel discontent unless they are doing what they feel is meaningful to them'* (Maslow 1959; 1968) and accordingly, the participants experienced *'restlessness'* or felt *'trapped'* while they were in roles they had not chosen. To catalyze their dreams about advancing at work, some women visualized being *'achieving women'*, as for example, P.:

*'I visualized myself as a successful working woman. Sitting behind a desk and doing something that has implications for others, perhaps policy making. So, when you meet up later on with people, who say, 'Hi, so what are you doing?' you don't need to feel like, 'Oh, uh, I am just being a mother' ... Thinking something like, am I going to be a couch potato? I did not want ... for the rest of my life [to] pop out babies. I thought there is more to life.'*

Others used metaphors like seeing themselves *'in the big chair'*, being *'on the upper floor'*, or *'not taking orders any longer but signing the orders for others'*. Analogous to Maslow's (1968) notion of the interconnectedness of *'meaningful doing'* and *'self'*, the participants derived a sense of self-fulfillment by putting into action the choices that were meaningful to them. However, at the same time, the participants experienced feelings of *'guilt for self-indulgence'*. At times, others criticized them for neglecting their familial duties; at other times, the participants experienced self-criticism in the form of *'inner, nagging voices'*. To alleviate the resulting psychological tension, the pursuit of self-fulfillment and expectations of being there for others needed to be made compatible.

A number of participants made self-fulfillment justifiable by considering others in the family and community as the secondary beneficiaries of their aspirations for themselves. As one participant explained, *'To be resourceful for others, I need to feel good about myself. If I feel happy, I can make others happy'*. However, despite such

inner reconciliation strategies, a number of participants experienced emotional strain in their pursuit of finding fulfillment at work and '*keeping the family happy*'. By resorting to internal dialogues, the participants furthered their perseverance in defending their goals against objections from others.

***Ideas and goals' opposed by others: internal voices as an ally***

Some parents, elders, or male family members were opposed to the participants' wishes to take up work when this involved leaving the family, sharing living quarters with non-Samoan '*naughty girls*', or moving to another city. While the participants generally tried to operate within the framework of respect and obedience, and mostly avoided direct confrontation with others in their family, at the same time they persevered in aiming at their objectives and drew on their sense of determination to reach those.

At a young age, the participants had learned that '*so often, the expectations of others did not match your own aspirations, and to get what you want you had to persist*'. As a result, as adults some had learned to be '*determined and perseverant*' in pursuing their '*hopes and dreams about life*'. They developed ways to defy others' attempts to put a stop to their plans of taking up work and leading an independent life. Perseverance and determination were fuelled by internal dialogues with the self - especially when others tried to thwart their objectives. In these cases, 'the dialogical self', became an 'ally in support' (Hermans, 2001) of their goals. For E., internal dialogues became useful in breaking through internalized, unconstructive male views about women as achievers:

*'I am determined to do well and think nothing is impossible. You know, I tell myself, as Polynesian women, we struggled long to get through and that's why I didn't give up. I say to myself, if men can do it why can't I! ... In my mind, I take on the voice of others telling me that I can't. And then I start arguing ... I tell myself not to back off when things get difficult.'*

In an imagined conversation, E. moved back and forth between her own position and the position of an imagined interlocutor, which in her case were the voices of others opposing her engagement in a work career. E's self could imaginatively take on either position, give it a voice, and generate a discussion between the different positions. Allowing their internal voices to function like interacting characters in a story, and involving them in a process of agreement and disagreement (Bhatia, 2002; Hermans, 2001), helped a number of participants to arrive at an integrated sense of

self. In these internal dialogues, the participants were able to confront others' expectations or objections and to develop strong arguments for their own ideas and goals. These dialogues stimulated determination and persistence - which had already sprouted at a young age when they had learned that '*to get what you want you needed to be persistent*'.

Overall, while entering the world of work in Auckland provided its challenges, it also provided the participants with opportunities to explore and express their inner potential and strengths. A sense of perseverance and determination assisted them in actualizing their sense of self-fulfillment. Actualizing their potential, mastery of challenges at work and in their families, and appreciating themselves for their achievements laid the foundation for their identities as competent, achieving working women. As they felt increasingly assertive, the participants voiced a number of issues that had been subjected to latent rebellion in the past.

#### **4 Experiencing my 'self' in many identities**

Having entered the world of work, the participants experienced identity struggles and changes neither shared by their 'palagi' colleagues nor by male Samoans who joined the job market in New Zealand. Both groups, the 'palagi' colleagues and the Samoan males, were not exposed to the same levels of control by their families as the women in this study. The participants perceived these differences in standards as unjust. For a number of participants, the seed for finding gender-specific treatment objectionable had been laid, however mostly not been acted upon, in their younger years in Samoa. Experiencing in present-time how 'palagi' women '*did what they want and get away with it*' further added to their sense of objection to restrictions and control from parents and relatives. A latent sense of rebellion turned into overt rebellion. This earned many participants, who so far had been considered as '*good daughters*', the reputation of '*bad daughters*'.

#### ***Covert rebellion turning into overt rebellion***

Women with traditional upbringing commonly experience identity struggles after moving to countries where young women are encouraged to seek independence and autonomy from their families (Espin, 1999). In such scenarios, especially the older generation tries to preserve the old ways, which can create conflict for the younger women (Pedraza, 1991). Correspondingly, the women in this study had to defend their ideas and aspirations against those who strictly adhered to traditional values. For example, what was deemed appropriate behavior for women of mainstream

culture in New Zealand often clashed with the lifeworlds of relatives who expected the participants to be *'good Samoan daughters'* and fulfill their traditional role obligations. Like P., others explained that they had developed a sense of *'inner rebellion'* against some of the expectations from their elders long before they came to New Zealand:

*'Back on the Island, I walked the fine line. Of course, I mainly did what I was told when I was young. You don't wanna get penalized. But I guess it was also my rebellious time which equipped me with the experience I can use now ... These experiences made me understand that I was strong enough to handle challenges here.'*

At home in Samoa, and initially after they had arrived in Auckland, many participants preferred to refrain from open rebellion out of fear of being disciplined. The *aiga*, including grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins, who are entitled to discipline the child including the use of severe punishment (Taule'ale'ausumai, 1990), has substantial influence on young women's development. Nevertheless, *'maintaining true to my ideas and ideals'* became increasingly important to the participants. While the physical discipline experienced by some ceased as they became older, they could still be reprimanded for non-compliance with the expectations of older family members. While the intention of the older community members is to protect the young women by surveying their social life (Menon & Mulitalo, 2006b), it might drive the latter into secrecy and hiding (Tupuola, 2000). Accordingly, many participants had developed strategies of covert resistance towards others' expectations by *'secretly doing what I want'* like, for example, S. and T.:

*'... Doing things anyway ... sometimes without asking. Then there comes the time, where it becomes second nature - you do things your own way and others don't even notice ... So, while I had my areas at work now where I felt more and more independent, the family kept me dependent. So, here was this independent Samoan girl at work, who, when she was at home still very much tied to the family.'*

*'I was dependent on the family. But when I was at work, I looked as if I was the party girl, the center of everything. But at home, I was the child ... It was like living two lives. At home, my mother said, "You gotta be humble" 'I tried to fit all this [need for independence] with my Samoanness, and making the most of it.'*

For these women, covert resistance was the first step towards overt rebellion later in Auckland where relative independence was the norm for young women. Restricting norms, values, and control, experienced by the participants as adults, distanced some from their families and pushed them towards open rebellion (also written about by Cribb & Barnett, 1999; Harvey, 1994; Nash, 2002). Some, who

became rebellious and '*did what I wanted*' experienced that defying the traditional expectations could earn them the reputation of a '*bad daughter*' and produce repercussions.

### ***Being the 'good Samoan daughter' and being the 'bad daughter'***

Many Samoan women share the stressful experiences of role expectations and pressure from their families to conform to the standards of the Samoan way of doing and being (Janes, 1990; Strachan, 1999). Young women raised in Samoa commonly experience the enforcement of *fa'asamoa* to stay at home and '*be a good girl*' (Koloto, 2003). Once female Samoan children turn into young women, their social life will be generally strictly monitored by their *aiga* (Menon & Mulitalo, 2006b; Shore, 1981), as experienced by O:

*'It was sometimes hard to socialize after work. As a young woman, you don't date, you don't go flatting. Only naughty girls do those things because they want to go out with boys. That made socializing difficult if not impossible.'*

Young Samoan women in Auckland, however, often have different ideas about their social life than their families (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1995; 2003). This has also been the case for many women in this study who, when they were in their twenties, moved back and forth between meeting the expectations to be '*a good daughter dedicated to family life and community activities*', and fulfilling their desire '*to work and live my own way of life*'. On one side, they feared being met with anger or being ostracized by family members if they did not conform to their wishes. On the other side, frustration about being strictly monitored grew. O., like other participants, experienced that, while for their female '*palagi*' colleagues in their mid-twenties, going out for a drink after work on a Friday was '*normal*', she was expected to come home or otherwise risked to be criticized as a '*bad daughter*'.

Negotiating for independence and '*freedom to move around*' was more difficult for the women in this study as compared to their brothers or male cousins. The women's efforts to match the social norms and values prevailing amongst their colleagues - to work and live outside their family - often were interpreted as '*being disrespectful of Samoan culture*'. It made some of them a '*bad daughter*' in the eyes of their family. For the Samoan males in the family, in contrast, working and living independently was deemed as appropriate. For the women, forfeiting the family's expectations to take up work and leaving home not only meant risking the '*good*

*Samoa daughter*' reputation but also becoming ostracized by her family, as M. experienced:

*'I was determined to ride the roller coaster ... without backing off'... Being true to myself was important and I no longer wanted the secrecy... My family didn't talk to me, specially my mum, for about a year ... Severing the family ties is one of the hardest challenges I've ever been through'.*

Living independently was hardly possible as long as the participants had to relinquish most, or all, of their wages to their families and as long as their moves were under close surveillance. A number of participants, who found themselves in such situation, voiced their frustration about the strict rules in their families, which meant risking being labeled a *'bad daughter'*. They had experienced colleagues at work having their wages at their disposal, socializing with others after work without restrictions, being outspoken, and opposing others' views. All these behaviors were widely accepted *'in the palagi world'*, and became increasingly desirable to the participants. A few of them, whose paradigm was *'being true to my own interests and acting on it'*, had not only been called *'bad daughters'* but also experienced physical punishment. When F., after coming to New Zealand, defied the request of her aunt to abandon her career aspirations and do what *'auntie considered as right for me'*, she experienced verbal as well as physical abuse:

*'For being disobedient ... she shouted at me and hit me ... I ended up leaving that place and staying with my brother. This is something you don't do as a Samoan girl ... there were phone calls from here to there [Samoa] because I had my own ideas. I was strong-willed and my auntie said I was a bad daughter ... But I read Angela Davis, the Black Power Freedom fighter, then. And I felt strong. Freedom didn't come cheap for me, but I felt strong in the end. My anger helped me to survive all the shouting and hidings I got from my auntie'.*

It has been noted in other groups of migrant women that moving in a space that required a switching between long-established and the new values prompted the development of *'strength and agency'* (Pessar & Mahler, 2001). Similarly, a number of participants turned from *'covert rebels'* into *'overt rebels'* and acted on their aspirations. To some, *'being a bad daughter'* did not so much carry a negative connotation but meant being someone who had developed the *'sense of strength to be true to myself'*. At the same time, most participants took utmost care to avoid severing their family ties.

### ***Being true to myself: switching between identities***

While the participants were determined to follow their aspirations and excel at work, they did not intend to sever ties with their families and the Samoan community. As they perceived both their cultural ties and their work as being important and meaningful, they learned to skillfully switch back and forth between the different environments and expectations. It became '*second nature*' for some and they developed '*moving back and forth between identities*' into a skill, as M.'s account showed:

*'Moving back and forth between identities became my second nature. Here, I have learned to voice my opinion and to hold it back at home. It was confusing to switch back and forth at the beginning ... but in the end not difficult once I could understand the Western mentality. And what I did was: I imitated. But I also tried to fit all this with my Samoanness, switching back and forth between two cultures and making the most of it.'*

M., like other participants, learned how to respond differently to people from two or more culturally different groups, while she found it neither desirable nor possible to shed her identity as a Samoan woman. The participants made choices as to which ways of doing and being to adopt, which to maintain, and which to forego. Their choices required flexibility in their identities: As the participants moved amongst Samoans, their sense of Samoanness was in the foreground while New Zealand mainstream ways of being retreated to the background. At other times, New Zealand mainstream ways of doing things emerged, as L's suggestion highlighted:

*'You can be Samoan and at the same time change the ways you do things and look at things. You can feel comfortable doing this ... Just play your roles right. Wear your tights when you go out with your work mates and feel like it, but wear your lava-lava when you go to a matai meeting. It's not about giving up one thing for the other; it's about adding on to what you have.'*

As they moved back and forth between different environments and mental spaces, some participants found that, by doing so, '*the true me*' - an identity encompassing a number of ways of being - crystallized. Once the various identities were experienced as not conflicting with each other, there was no necessity to prioritize one over another. To reconcile the various identities into '*the true me*', the participants changed their understanding of 'being a Samoan woman'. S. explained:

*'I am Samoan, yes. But that doesn't mean that I am just fa'asamoa full-stop. I am many things. I am here now and I am working with people from so many cultures and some of my best friends are not Samoan. I do Samoan things and things that are*

*definitely not Samoan. That doesn't make me less Samoan but it makes me, uhm, well, many things'.*

For S. and others, being Samoan had become '*being many things*'. Analogous to Ricoeur's (1992) suggestion, the women in this study experienced a sense of self in 'two ways' - those of 'continuity' and of 'wanting to be same as others'. The women experienced a sense of permanence and continuity in 'being Samoan'. The other component, the self as 'wanting to be the same as others', expressed itself in that participants added new ways of doing and being to their repertoire. These two experiences of self commonly overlap and become indistinguishable from one another (Ricoeur, 1992). The processes of switching between continuing self and adapted self became less conscious over time, and eventually, those selves were difficult to tell apart.

At times, however, being Samoan and being '*palagi*', mainstream, seemed difficult to reconcile. Rather than finding a 'perfect fit', the different ways needed to be matched '*by its smallest denominator*', as A. explained:

*'If there is no perfect fit (between Samoan and palagi culture), then you have to make it fit. For example, focus on similarities and not on the differences. And maybe, there's only ten percent similarity. But so what! It depends what you put your weight on. Start equating the two cultures by its smallest denominator. It can always grow bigger'.*

The interviews showed that cultural context has 'the potential to transform people's identities' (Shweder, 1991; Valsiner, 2000). Working in multi-cultural contexts had the potential to generate identity processes towards being '*Samoan and being other things*'. However, it became apparent that it was not the mere exposure to new cultural contexts, but making these experiences meaningful - viewing them in context to their existence - that had changed the participants' self-understandings. Transformation of self happened because the women had evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of the various values, practices, and roles related to work and to the Samoan community in conjunction with their aspirations for themselves. This became especially transparent as they talked about making choices and changes in the areas of decision-making processes and leadership.

### ***Leading from the back – leading from the front***

Male leaders, the *matai*, and the head of family still exercise *pule*, authority, which includes the power to determine women's labor and resource allocation. The

decisions over women taking on paid labor have been commonly based on status and financial issues (Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998), although this is changing due to the financial demands of *fa'alavelave*, the expected financial support in family crises (this will be discussed in the third analysis chapter). In Samoa (and also in New Zealand), a number of participants had experienced male ruling preventing them from being leaders in the public sphere but permitted them important social roles within the constraints of limited decision-making. As holders of these roles, the participants had developed a number of leadership skills, which they had predominantly applied in domestic circles and in areas of community building in Samoa. These leadership skills proved to be transferable: after coming to New Zealand, they could be used not only at home but also at work, as E's testimonial showed:

*'... I see myself as a leader because of my culture, my family, the opportunities I had back home ... others trusting in me and seeing my leadership skills. That has not changed. Similar to what I did in Samoa in the community and at church. Others here say they see me as a leader and I have many leadership positions. I have a lot of phone calls here from people asking for personal advice. Last night, some called to ask who to vote for the city council, what would be a wise vote, you know. Well, I did have others asking my advice at home [in Samoa] too. But what had changed is that here [in New Zealand], it [being a leader] is also at work'.*

The empowering potential in these women's traditional social roles played an important part in becoming leaders at work. This potential seems to have been overlooked in most migrant studies where males in paid labor were regarded as the 'sole power holders' (Boyd, 1989), and where leadership skills of migrant women as organizers, mediators, and spokespersons at work were seldom pointed out (Gabaccia & Iacovetta, 2002). Samoan women as community builders had always been bearers of important social roles (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1996; Pitt & McPherson, 1974; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1979; Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998; Shore, 1981). As with other migrant women, their contributions and potential as leaders often remained unacknowledged in the 'male-dominated' world of work (Dunlop, 1999). As T. explained:

*'I have always been a leader in all areas of life - only, that wasn't obvious. Or, it wasn't noticed. We [women] tend to lead from the back. That is, we don't stand in the limelight like the men'.*

Back in Samoa - more so than in New Zealand - leadership roles at work and in public domains commonly used to be taken up by males (Levy, 2003; Grevel-

Lameko, 2003), though no longer exclusively (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2003). While a number of participants had not worked before they came to New Zealand, those who had worked in Samoa commonly found themselves in the 'backseat' at work. However, as the participants discovered opportunities for leadership roles in Auckland at work, they did not want to take on the position as the *faletua*, 'the house at the back', any longer. They wanted to 'take the front seat' and 'be on an equal level with males', as T. and L. explicated:

*'I remember the time where we Samoan women operated from the back ... where males didn't share the glory and the power. But now is a time where we are leading from the front and not being 'the house at the back' anymore. We have been doing the donkeywork all these years and the males got the credit for it. I don't want to stand in the lime light like our males, but I think I deserve the credit for the work I have done'.*

*'... There is the famous saying, "Behind every successful man, there is a woman". That fits in very well with our tradition, the fa'asamoa. In New Zealand it's different, women are on an equal level [with men] and that opens doors for them. Being a Samoan woman over here, you don't have to be in the background [laughs]... Ahhh, it was time when we women emerged out of silence ...'.*

The participants' accounts also showed that, within the principles of being of service to others, they did not aspire to be leaders solely for self-purposes. They frequently referred to 'leading through service', which they based on the Samoan proverb *o le ala i le pule le tautua*, 'leadership given through service' (Franco, 1991). While they deemed this traditional Samoan leadership principle worthy to be upheld, implementing this principle from the front rather than the back became their preferred option. When implemented from a front-leading position, 'being of assistance, help, and support to others' lost its notion of servitude, which it had taken on in combination with being 'the house at the back'. Overall, to most of the women in this study, being leaders at work - to one's own and others' benefit - had become an important part of their identities.

### **Summary**

Experiencing themselves in meaningful ways at their workplace played an important role in the participants' self processes. Being working women in Auckland exposed them to a variety of possible self-concepts and provided them with a wider choice of values, principles, and ways of being and doing. The exposure to new opportunities and perspectives generated introspective processes and reflections on their self-views, their potential skills, their aspirations, and their choices for their

future being. Rather than replacing one identity with another, the participants' self-processes reconciled Samoan traditional ways with new ways of being and doing.

Most of the women in this study had experienced struggles of defending their ideas about their life style choices against the wishes and expectations of family members. Perseverance and determination, together with exposure to opportunities at work, helped them to develop assertiveness, explore and apply their competencies, make decisions and choices for themselves, and look after their own needs. 'Being a Samoan woman' meant making choices, most importantly, about how they wanted to be Samoan women.

The participants had balanced and reconciled a number of identities at home and at work. In internal dialogues, different aspects of the self - often internalized expectations of others in addition to one's own ideas - entered negotiation and reconciliation processes. Even though the principles of *fa'asamoa* and internalized expectations of others were strongly present, their ideas that represented their aspirations for themselves persevered. These ideas generated a sense of determination that was reflected in the participants' advancements at work.

The participants' identity - who they felt they were - crystallized by being 'true' to themselves and their aspirations, and by acting on the opportunities in their environment. The interactions of opportunities 'out there' and their decisions 'in here' to act on those were equally important contributors to the formation of the self. Analogous to Heidegger (1962), who sees the uncovering of the 'true', authentic self as an achievement, obtained by 'clearing away coverings and obscurities', and breaking up the disguises, the participants needed to 'clear away' the obstacles of customary gender role expectations and 'break up' the cloak of compliance converting it into 'choice'.

Drawing the involved psychological processes together, being at work prompted the participants' review of self-concepts, potential skills, aspirations, and choices. Being at work fostered the exploration of trust in latent strengths and competencies; this trust generated visions of achievement. The objectives of wanting to achieve strengthened the participant's perseverance and determination. Perseverance furthered their levels of assertiveness, which changed decision-making patterns. New patterns and choices countered the internalized expectations of others. To achieve equilibrium, inner struggles were followed by reconciliation processes. These

resulted in an integration of the various components of the participants' identities. Overall, meaningful experiences at work became the catalyst for self-transformations.

For the participants, work had become a place for self-expression and revelation of their being-in the world. As the participants' self-conceptions and their ideas for their future-being had changed, this had implications for their being with others at work, in their families, and in their communities as well. These processes and changes will be explicated in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 7: EXPERIENCING THE SELF IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS: INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND COMMUNITIES

The previous chapter viewed the participants' developmental processes from an angle highlighting the role of reflections and self-awareness in their identity processes. Reflection and introspection - together with their reserves of perseverance and patience - generated an increase in confidence, assertiveness, and control over their lives. As they moved across different cultural environments, they had developed skills in switching back and forth between identities. Over time, identity polarization diminished and the women could not tell 'where exactly my Samoan self leaves off and where my Western self starts'. 'Myself' (Samoan) and 'they' (mainstream New Zealanders) - initially experienced by some as extreme poles on the otherness scale - moved closer together.

While the previous chapter centered on self-reflective processes, the present chapter focuses on experiencing the 'self as being with others'. In Heidegger's (1927; 1962) words, the person is a being for whom the world matters because others in their world matter. While the previous chapter viewed the intra-personal processes of reconciling different aspects of the self, this chapter centers on inter-personal processes. It views identity formation as a co-creational process in which others play an important part.

In phenomenological understanding, to experience oneself as one's own, one must dwell within one's dependence (need to belong) on others. To be a person is to see oneself in the context of 'being with others' (Heidegger, 1962). While the Samoan women experienced their ways of being at work as 'self being', they were, at the same time, beings amongst others in a shared lifeworld (Heidegger, 1927). To be a person is to 'stand in a dynamic relation with the concealing (self being) and exposure (being with others). To authentically be a person means to have one's being as one's 'own', but it is also to dwell within one's own restrictions and dependence on 'being to belong'. To be a person is never to be a self-contained subjectivity, but to see one-self in the 'being with others'.

In phenomenological terms, the world of being (*Dasein*) is a 'with-world' (*Mit-sein*) (DiCenso, 1990, p.45). The world is always 'already there' and a place to be 'shared with the others'. Therefore, 'other' essentially includes the self, 'those among who one *is*'. Being-in the world is being-with others (*Mit-dasein*). While I experience

myself amongst others, self-experience and other-experience are not different sides of the coin any longer (Schutz, 1932). As Heidegger (1927) sees it, the others are 'the they' (*man*) in my everydayness - not specific persons or a definite group - which I am part of most of the time.

The participants' self-and-other-experiences showed that social membership and sense of identity evidently 'entail one another' (Lave & Wenger, 2005, p. 53). This becomes apparent in this chapter when the notion of being 'other' - the 'not being part' of the 'they' at work - diminished for the participants as they became 'part-of' through the processes of building relationships, sharing their knowledge, and finding their niche at work. In return, as these relations at work developed, feelings of otherness as outsiders further retreated. For some, though, getting out of 'otherness' at work resulted in being 'othered' in their community as their cultural integrity was now questioned. However, once it became evident that belonging to the workforce did not weaken the women's loyalty to the Samoan community but, on the contrary, could be beneficial to Samoan community members, the participants' 'insider status' was not only reinstated but also upgraded. The participants' self-identities as professionals in their field of work gained them increased social status as holders of knowledge and expertise beneficial to family and community.

This chapter shows that for the women in this study, being with (*Dasein mit*) others at work provided an important context for becoming who they wanted to be. It shows how 'being different', which was initially experienced with some discomfort, turned out to be an advantage for these women. Coming from a different cultural place meant being able to draw on a variety of sources of knowledge and finding alternative ways of doing when the conventional approaches failed. This advantage made the Samoan women advice givers, coaches, and educators in their areas of expertise at work and in their community. The chapter further shows how the changes in the participants' self-understanding resulted in changed viewpoints of others around them, and how this fed back into their self-views. The involvement of 'others' in the Samoan women's identity processes and its bi-directionality highlights the inter-subjectivity of 'being in the world': relations with others were indispensable for understanding the self (Overgaard, 2004).

### **1. Myself amongst others at work – being different**

A number of the women in this study were not working outside home before they came to New Zealand but took care of household and family. Here in Auckland,

where they now lived in fragmented families away from the closeness of their aiga, being at home felt isolating. The resulting need to socialize with others was stronger than the initial discomfort of being strangers to others. For the participants, the work place became an important arena for establishing social relationships and arriving at a sense of belonging.

Initially, the participants felt very self-conscious about being different. When they were around others at work, it created an awareness of 'who I am and what I am doing' (Packer, 1985). The recognition of the self, in front of the background of others, created self-reflection and feelings of uncertainty. The next sections show how initial discomfort about 'being different' eventually turned into appreciating 'being me'; how the women's self-processes influenced the self-conceptions of others at work; how these mutual self-changes influenced work relationships; how the altered relationships changed their positions at work, and how this, in return, influenced their relationships with other Samoans in their community.

### ***Exploring otherness – the constant look into a mirror***

New at work, the women observed differences between their own and others' ways of being and doing things. At the same time, they were seen as 'being different' by others. For the participants, this resulted in constant consciousness around their otherness and in self-exploration, as N's statement showed:

*'First, I didn't know how I fitted in. I felt like constantly looking into a mirror, and I saw a lot of things of myself that I didn't notice before. I felt in awe. Like, this was not me, this was a stranger'.*

Feeling 'other' was a necessary, temporary condition to arrive at an integration of having-beeness (before coming to New Zealand), present-being, and future-being (choices about their way of life) (Heidegger, 1927). By allowing themselves to be affected by it, the participants opened up to otherness. As they embraced their otherness, it became inherent to their self (Heidegger, 1962). Otherness was not an obstacle any longer but part of 'being me'.

For these women, being different became a vehicle to becoming part of 'others at work'. In their interactions as newcomers with the 'home-group' (Schutz, 1944; 1964), the women first experienced that their own ways of being and doing did not always fit with the ways of the local people. Experiencing such 'incongruence of the contour lines of the relevance systems' (Schutz, 1944, p. 102) positioned them on

uncertain grounds. Such obstacles needed to be experienced, though, since they served as a vehicle to reflecting on who one is (present-being) and who one wants to be (future-being). For the participants, such reflections involved thoughts about their conceptions of self and the world, about which ways they wanted to maintain, and those they wanted to change.

These identity-negotiations were sometimes obstructed not only by others in their community who questioned the participants' increased commitment to work outside their community and their cultural integrity. In addition to such challenges from outside the workplace, some co-workers treated the participants initially as being 'other' and allocated them an identity as tradition-bound Samoan women. This happened while the women themselves shifted towards new ways of 'knowing' and 'doing'. The stereotypical views of some co-workers seemed like attempts to push back into their past-being, as B. explained:

*'There is a certain image that people are looking for when you say you are from Samoa. You must act 'Samoan', whatever that means. But you might not even feel that much Samoan in that situation [at work]. You are in the middle of finding out what's good about their [palagi] system and they try to push you back'.*

Feeling 'pushed back' into customary identities by others was not conducive to the participants' identity journeys. After they had to struggle for, and defend, their identity choices towards others in their families and community (explicated in the previous chapter), they were not prepared to let others at work interfere with these choices by pushing them back. To feel part of the group at work, the participants wanted others to accept them for who they truly were. Only after receiving acceptance in one's identity, a person can experience '...a condition of belonging, of being at home in the world' (Kerdeman, 1998, p. 252).

However, the women were not prepared to gain acceptance at the price of assimilating 'the ways of their home-group' (Schutz, 1944; 1964). While on one side, the participants wished to overcome 'being different' as an outsider, they at the same time wanted to maintain their authenticity and feel unique as 'self'. The processes of bringing together the aspects of past-being, present-being, and 'becoming' involved decisions as to which aspects to maintain and which to adjust.

### ***In-between tradition and newness: the smile of otherness***

Drawing on their Samoan ways and adjusting to the ways of the palagi at work, the women lived in an 'in-between space of being familiar and being stranger' (Schwandt, 1999). These experiences of tension - often perceived as uncomfortable - between 'feeling at home' with their known ways and 'feeling in exile' in a strange world (Kerdeman, 1998, p. 252) were the very condition that helped them adjusting to their new world. Appraising the different ways of the palagi world and Samoan world resulted in conscious choices of whether to adopt others' ways or to cultivate one's own.

Heidegger contended that while it is others - the 'they' (*man*) - who define an expectation of how one should be and thereby direct the way people live, people can make choices whether they want to reduce, or perhaps accentuate, their 'being different' (King & Llewellyn, 2001). The participants were faced with numerous situations where they had to make such choices. For example, at work they experienced that others' interpretation of their open smiles - a form of signaling friendliness - could well vary from their own. The cues, which these women received from others at work, initially resulted in monitoring their body language and facial expressions as I.'s and M.'s stories show:

*'You know how we smile when we meet others, at work or in the streets! I never thought about it because it was part of my nature, that smile. And all the time, I just had this smile. But then I learned that when you smile at Europeans, they can interpret it differently, that you are asking for something, that you like that person, I mean they personalize it ... and then I said to myself, well I better not keep that smile all the time. It was just so natural [in Samoa], but here, I felt that I couldn't be myself any more'.*

*'I learned ... that you don't just smile to someone in the street here. That was one thing I learned, that you don't smile to everybody... Yes, I smile less, hmh. I smile less and draw back from people. I am most of the time but not always that outgoing, friendly Polynesian woman any longer ... I learned that here'.*

Other women, - despite the risk of being misunderstood as sending a different message - opted for '*keeping a smile on my face*' and preserving their outgoingness since they perceived this as an authentic, important part of 'being me'. The experience of being misunderstood in their intentions was another opening towards evaluating the different ways of being, the familiar Samoan ones and the other, *palagi* ways. As Samoan women exposed to new ways, they let their experiences of otherness speak to them. It was this 'being awake' to their living in-between tradition and newness that enabled them to learn from their experiences (Gadamer, 1989, p.

361). For the participants, the tension of 'exposure' to otherness, while at the same time '*looking into the mirror*' and reflecting on the self, initiated processes of weighing up which ways should be maintained, and which ways should be adopted as part of 'being me'. These processes were ruled by a strong sense of authenticity.

### ***Otherness as a way to inclusion: being different making a difference***

The women in this study experienced that becoming part of their work environment was compatible with maintaining the traditional ways of being and doing that were meaningful to them. Being a stranger to one's new 'home-group', as Schutz (1944) explained, will not result in social assimilation when one is willing to accept strangeness as unavoidable in a shared social world (pp. 91-92). Schutz further explained that, to get out of the otherness as being a stranger, the newcomer must engage in 'doing' and 'being an actor' rather than remaining an observer. It was precisely L.'s role as an actor (taking action), her affirmative display of authenticity at work, which dismantled her role as a stranger. L., for whom singing in her mother tongue made her 'feel authentic' and felt like an 'anchor of safety' (Heidegger, 1927; 1962) in an alien world, had arrived at accepting 'being different' as part of her identity:

*'People say that I am so different. And I say, "Yeah, I guess I am different". You know, I, I do that [singing and dancing] in my office and the girls come and say, "What are you doing"? You know, and I'd say, "Oh I am just letting myself go! [laughs]. I want to use and show all the ways I am and that includes singing and dancing. That's how I am". And others say, "Ahhh, that's her"'*

Self-acceptance and others' acceptance of 'being different' mutually influenced L.'s sense of identity. Like L., other participants experienced that acceptance (from self and others) had an affirmative effect on their sense of identity. These processes were not just one-sided: as social beings, people reciprocally influence each others' self-conceptions. This became evident as the Samoan women gained appreciation from others for their ways of being and doing things at work. In return, others at work eventually felt prompted to reconsider their own ways, as B.'s story showed:

*'I experienced when I started at XYZ, that people in admin were yelling a lot, like, 'can you get me this... where is the file... when is this person supposed to come in' ... I always walk to the person's office and ask rather than yelling. Some people ignored this or gave me funny looks. I think some were jealous because I was so friendly. But I didn't want to be like them. But now most people say, "Oh it's so peaceful since you are here. It makes such a difference." ... It is a matter of courtesy not to yell and others noticed the difference and remarked on it ... Why should I change that! Well, we get along fine now'.*

Rather than assimilating a work culture that showed lack of courtesy, B. consciously chose to maintain her way of being and doing, while eventually others adapted to it. While it was important to B. to maintain the way of doing she felt was right, it was also crucial to her to experience others' appreciation at the same time. While she wanted to maintain her 'being different' for good reasons, she did not wish to remain a stranger amongst others at work.

Being exposed as strangers to others' evaluations of strangers, a number of participants initially felt as though they were on uncertain grounds. To feel appreciated as 'being different', they needed, like B., affirmative feedback from others. Hearing that the office felt more peaceful since B. was working there meant that she no longer was seen as an outsider. For B., this expression of appreciation played an important role for her in understanding her 'being different' as an asset. For the participants, learning what image they had in others' eyes prompted reflective processes about who they were. At this stage, many of them realized that they were in transition from being strangers to 'belonging'. They were in a liminal space (van Gennep, 1960), a conscious, transitional state of being between two different existential planes (Turner, 1967, pp.23-59). During the interviews, many women talked about specific persons who were of particular support to them during these transitional processes.

### ***Becoming part of 'others': people who made the difference***

When they arrived in Auckland, the participants were neither part of their new social environment nor any social groups other than their family (for some, even the relatives were strangers to them as they had not met them before). This, after having left their familiar environment with its significant relationships behind in Samoa, left them feeling dislocated and bereft of significance. Thus, for a number of these women, affiliating with others at work came to play an important role in re-establishing a sense of belongingness and finding their place.

In Samoan culture, the closeness with others in their *aiga*, extended family, play an important role for people's overall well-being (Fitzgerald & Howard, 1990; Pitt & Macpherson, 1974). As A. explained, '*You come from a village where everybody knows you. Wherever you go, you know the people. It makes you feel safe*'. Those participants new to New Zealand who were on good terms with their relatives experienced loneliness and alienation to a lesser degree. Others, though, were

strangers to their relatives in Auckland. The decision to stay with these unknown, or hardly known, relatives was made by elders in Samoa. For the participants, this resulted in feelings of loneliness and earning wages was not the only reasons to seek employment soon after their arrival. Meeting others was one of the reasons that made work meaningful to them.

Some of the contacts at work developed into supportive relationships, which helped counterbalance not only the feelings of loneliness but also feelings of frustration and tension under often difficult and unpleasant work conditions. Relationships at work can be 'a critical factor in changing psychological phenomena' such as pessimistic feelings and thoughts (Kostogriz, 2004). In accordance, a number of women, like M., experienced that relationships with others at work meant being cared for in moments of self-doubt and dissatisfaction:

*'My experience was that when I doubted myself, it's talking to others, I mean others showing me that they care, which helped me to get over it ... I think people, friends, mates, make the difference when you are facing a challenge. Just by being there for you or showing an act of kindness. It makes you feel human when others show you that they care'.*

Since work is not merely a place of production but a place where people talk together, the dimensions of 'doing' and 'being personal' can become a joint experience (Kovacs, 1986). For a number of participants, a job they did not like very much became meaningful and was experienced as a 'good job' 'because others were there for you', or, 'because of the good laughs we had'. It is this informal nature of the social contacts at work that allows people to explore their commonalities on a personal level (Jane & Peeler, 2003; Peeler & Jane, 2005). Exploring sameness on such personal level helped a number of participants to overcome feelings of isolation, as for example B. experienced:

*'The longer I worked with T. and I., the more similarities I could see in our backgrounds and experiences. There was this feeling, even though we were from different cultural backgrounds, that we had some things in common. Not just our work. But, yeah, we shared the good times and the bad times there. That was the basis for our friendship, I think. We were in it together. That made the job bearable'.*

'Being in it together', being able to share challenging experiences, generates close association and feelings of equality in individuals who submit 'together to the general authority' (Turner, 2000/1969), in this case, those who determined the procedures and practices at work. For a number of participants, forming relationships

generated feelings of cohesion and camaraderie in their dissatisfaction about challenging work conditions and those responsible. Sharing the challenging experiences meant mutual support. Shared laughter re-established their feelings of comfort in an otherwise dissatisfactory situation.

Several of the participants reflected on *'the person who made the difference for me'* or *'my mentors who took me under their wings'* when they had been new at work. The mentoring relationships often involved depth and trust on personal levels. It has been posited that, because women's learning and development is often rooted in relationships (Gilligan, 1982), mentoring may be especially beneficial for women. Gilligan (1982) argued that women commonly have the capacity - acquired in early socialization processes towards becoming caring nurturing beings - to use these relationships to their advantage (Johnsrud, 1991). Heidegger (1962; 1992), on the other hand, conceptualizes 'caringness' not as gender-specific but as a human quality as such; both men and women would show these qualities had they been socialized in similar ways. The phenomenological understanding about people in their fundamental nature is that they are beings for whom others in their world matter, that they care and, at the same time, like to be cared for (Heidegger, 1962; 1992). It is likely, though, that the women in this study, who grew up with a traditional understanding of women as carers and nurturers, responded specifically well to affiliation-oriented, mentoring relationships.

Being new in New Zealand, the 'taken-for-granted' practices and unwritten 'things-we-have-always-been-doing' (Kostogriz & Peeler, 2004) at work were often unclear to the participants. In such situations, the women's relationship with someone being familiar with the New Zealand work setting helped to adjust to new and unfamiliar routines at work, and to alleviate feelings of 'otherness'. Mentors and caring colleagues made it worthwhile for F., when she was new to New Zealand, to persevere and overcome challenges such as language barriers at work:

*'I felt quite alienated at times. And then the women, the owner, brought me picture books to learn English ... This couple helped me so much. You know how I didn't speak to people before when I worked in the kitchen? Well, the couple, both of them said, "You have to talk to people. Never mind your English, that's how you'll learn it in the first place". So they sent me out to serve people. I didn't want to ... But ... it helped me so much ... And as I became more confident, I took over new tasks like doing orders ... It wasn't a great job, but them being so caring and supportive of me made it special. One could say, they were my family then, more so than my auntie! And I also learned that there are people to help and support you outside your aiga'.*

The caring attitude of her mentor made an important difference in F.'s adjustment as well as in her self-processes as it gave her a notion of being amongst family and being cared for. It is not unusual for Samoans to consider someone at work as part of the family. This understanding usually applies to authority figures and superiors (Mulitalo-Lauta, Menon, & Tofilau, 2005). In F.'s case, though, giving someone at work the status of a family member was based on the merits of being a caring friend.

Support that was '*offered and up for choice*' - different to unwanted criticism imposed by others - spoke of caringness to the participants. Being able to choose if one wanted to be helped felt empowering, as B.'s account showed:

*'It was not about being criticized, it was about being there for me ... She was patient and stayed with me after work. I mean, she didn't force that on me ... I could choose. I wanted it and said, "Show me anything and I can learn it". Her helping me in that way made me feel special ... I felt more confident and wanted to take on new tasks because I knew then there was someone I could ask [for advice]...'*

In contrast to criticism targeting deficiencies, the caring support from their mentors constructively focused on helping the women to learn and do the job. Those colleagues '*who made the difference*' at work helped to promote positive self-concepts in these women. Experiences of feeling cared about turned work into a communal experience showing '*not only a personal but also a [...] social dimension*' (Kovacs, 1986, p. 197). Being with others at work created a feeling of '*being in it together*', and being part of the group at work. Having become a member of the new social group created an identity of someone who socially belonged and who had found her niche as a proficient employee.

### ***Creating my position at work: from not-knower to twofold-knower***

Cultural versatility skills are considered in this day and age as indispensable for competent interaction in multicultural environments (Lynch, 1999). Thus, when the Samoan women started work in Auckland's culturally diverse environment, it was to their advantage that they had brought with them interpersonal and cultural versatility skills. Work became the place where the participants found their niche as '*knowing two ways - the Samoan way and the palagi way*'. This made them feel resourceful and competent. Once they had the opportunity of proving their skills, they were seen as indispensable in many work areas as the accounts of T. and I. (whose clients included migrants from various cultural backgrounds) showed:

*'People coming here new look for somebody brown to get help. It's their way of connecting. If they are interviewed by a palagi person, they don't get the encouraging smile ... There are more palagis who deal with Samoans and Tongans ... But it is us, we have the knowledge how to deal with Samoans and other Polynesian people because we are like them'.*

*'... And they really are desperate for someone who speaks Polynesian languages because often when families come in, the mum and dad don't speak English and then the palagi psychologists come and they ask simple questions like who are you, but the language barrier is there. So when (the Pacific Island clients) are asked how they feel, they can't express themselves because of the language problem ... they can open up [when they] talk in their own language ... because things they say will be understood'.*

In some areas, the participants' cultural knowledge was critical to the success in their work, as for example for L. and for B. who both work - not exclusively though - with Pacific Island clients:

*'When the prisoners find out that I am Samoan, there is a level of trust, straight away, and they listen to me. It means a lot to them when they hear Samoan words coming from my mouth. ... It does magic, believe me'.*

*'... The older ones say, "Our parents hit us and see, it has done no harm" ... I then can argue, because I went through that myself ... It does something to them. I have not only the Samoan experience, but also the knowledge to look critically at it. And I know how to talk to the older ones'.*

In addition to knowing the cultural practices and principles essential to gain the trust of the clients, the Samoan women also had gained insight into the operation and functioning of the organizations and institutions they worked for and, thus, could help their clients to have access to the offered services. At other times, they worked as mediators between their organization and clientele. P.'s example of cultural mediation represents a number of similar accounts by other participants:

*'... When we disagree in our team about removing children from families ... I have learned to speak up ... As a Samoan, I understand better than the palagi social workers what it means for a Pacific Island child to be removed from a family. I can estimate better what a Pacific Island family can or cannot offer this child ... You know, those people, the palagi psychologists, they only sit with the child for two or three hours and then they make decisions ... this will have a big impact on others' lives ... On the other hand, I also understand when I have to compromise. I look at the psychologist's report, and sometimes, a placement may indeed be the better solution. But other times, this may be the wrong decision because palagi psychologists don't understand the significance of family ties for Islanders'.*

The participants had created their place at work: being in the position of holding skills and knowledge that were needed made them indispensable and earned them

respect from their co-workers. These experiences generated a shift in their self-views from not-knowers new to New Zealand to two-fold-knowers being versatile in Samoan and European, *palagi*, ways. The new self-concept of being two-fold-knowers installed self-confidence, which worked as a means to excel at work, as M.'s example illustrated:

*'We [Samoans] were skillful in relating to others in our way, while they [palagi] had skills relating to the palagi way ... We learned theirs... It took my confidence to a different level because now I saw how I could fit in. It was a new door opened. And they made me group leader because of my skills. A new chapter in my life'.*

From self-concepts of being inexpert, unqualified, or unskilled, the women's identities had shifted to being achieving women '*on my way up*'. In phenomenological terms, the participants had transcended their self; they had 'risen above and gone beyond the self' (Frankl, 1970; 1971; Kovacs, 1986) as they utilized their potential as two-fold-knowers at work. A number of participants exceeded their learner positions and became advisors and teachers to others at work and in their community.

#### ***A prestigious standing: myself as a teacher at work***

Relationships to others at work continued to be important throughout the participants' history as employees. Over time, though, the uni-directional nature of their advisory relations had changed. At this stage, the Samoan women's roles had expanded beyond being learners to also being teachers and coaches to others at work. Reciprocal processes of teaching changed their standing at work and put them on equal footing with their non-Samoan colleagues. In some work fields, it was essential to understand the Pacific Island ways of doing to achieve the desired work outcomes and to maintain good relations with people across cultural settings. The need for understanding the ways of being and doing of Pacific Island people was an opportunity for the participants to become teachers in their cultural domain, as A.'s narrative illustrated:

*'There was a funeral done by the council... The person who passed away has done much for the Pasifika community. So that needed to be acknowledged. Except that the mayor totally overlooked this. I had to intervene and ask, "You are not going to do a straight palagi council plain way ...?" ... So they asked for my advice and then I taught the community board the protocols. This went really well and it is one of my roles, improving the cultural awareness'.*

While the demand for knowledge about Pacific Island cultures provided an opportunity for the participants to create their place at work, it was through others'

appreciation of the participants' cultural expertise that they felt valued in their roles as advisors and teachers. The role of 'others' in the participants' identity formation processes became evident in most interviews. Opportunity and affirmation of others generated identities of being cultural knowers, teachers, and experts in their field of work. Here, two aspects of identity were brought together: being Samoan and being a working woman.

Being with others is essential for understanding the self (Heidegger, 1927; 1962). For the participants, reflecting on the self became activated through 'being with others' whose ways of being were different from their own. The participants viewed their selves not only via introspection, but also through the eyes of others. Analogous to Sartre's (1956) view, it is by, '... the mere appearance of the other, I am put in the position of passing judgment on myself' (189). The 'self', now seen as it appeared to the other person, had at this instant become recognizable to these women. They now viewed parts of their self that they had not noticed before, or taken for granted. The raised self-awareness about their unique way of being and, thus, of being different from others at work felt at times uncomfortable.

At the same time, this new consciousness helped them to take ownership of 'being different' as a strength. The second important function of 'being with others' at work was the provision of friendship and support for the participants. Affiliation to others at work added to their sense of self-worth in a social sense and, consequently, to their psychological well-being. Shared experiences with others at work established feelings of communion, which played an important role for these migrant women's adjustment and their views of themselves. Work no longer meant 'being other' but 'being part of' as cultural experts who knew 'both ways'. Standing out as a 'stranger' and 'other' had changed into standing out as an 'expert' as 'part of' the people at work.

The resulting roles and self-understandings as experts and teachers, in return, influenced the women's relationships in their community. Being authorities at work ultimately gained them the respect of elders who previously did not approve of their career aspirations. Further, it put them in the position of advocates and role models passing on their ideas to others in their communities.

## **2. Myself amongst Samoans in New Zealand**

Like other migrant women with strong traditional cultural backgrounds (Pedraza, 1991), the women in this study had to defend their new views and ways of doing things against long-established social values in their families and community. The older generation's efforts to preserve the old ways created conflict for those participants who had developed their own views about their roles as women. The participants had found their niches at work, had careers at work in mind, and invested time and energy into work. Especially older and male family members thought that this time and energy should be dedicated to family and community. However, as these critics increasingly benefited from having well-educated, professional women in their community, and as these women became role models, the critics began to appreciate the women's achievements. During their process of becoming 'part of' work, some of the participants had felt that they were seen as no longer 'being part of' family and community. This had changed as they felt welcomed back as accomplished, qualified working women, which awarded them a higher social status in their community.

Arriving at this new standing was a long process not without obstacles, since contemporary understanding of *fa'asamoa* still largely upholds traditional values, including those of women's gendered roles (Cribb & Barnett, 1999; Shadrake & van Diermen, 1998; Shore, 1981; Tupuola, 2000). Despite an increasing exposure to European cultural influences, the Samoan culture overall is 'constant and persistent' among its people (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1991; Macpherson, 2001) and some of the participants, who did not meet others' role expectations (discussed in more detail in the previous chapter) had felt at times like outsiders in their own family. Being experts at work opened the path for them to be re-embraced into family and community. However, their new status had further implications for them: it raised new expectations, which were often experienced as a 'mixed blessing' by the participants.

### ***From criticism to praise: being welcomed back***

While, in general, the older generation's propensity to preserve the old ways can put limitations to women's life choices, the Samoan conventions pertaining to gender (Williams, 2001) and male leadership (Cribb, 1995) created further obstacles to the participants' development. Even though European cultures have influenced the Samoan way of life, male leadership in extended families is still widely acknowledged by their family members, and women find themselves in the role of house wives depending on the husband's income (Cribb, 1995). (This, however, is changing since

the financially draining *fa'alavelave*, discussed in the next chapter, increases the need to generate financial resources). These conditions were also experienced by a number of the women in this study who reported that they needed to defend their life choices of 'being a working woman' against the traditional views of some family members (explicated in more depth in the previous chapter). As they progressed in their careers, the participants encountered a variety of stereotypes, including:

*'My uncle was worried that I would not get married once I started my career',*

*'My father got angry and said that he wanted to see grand children in his house. A working woman would not have time for getting children, he thought...',*

*'My mother said that the role of a Samoan woman was to be at home to look after her husband and children...',* or,

*'We got flak from our families when we told them that I took on a job and my husband stayed home with our kids. This has been unheard of in our aiga... I was quite unpopular and at times felt like a stranger in my own family'.*

A number of women who were criticized for their dedication to work and career, felt estranged from their family by this lack of understanding for their 'passion for work'. However, ironically, those issues subjected to criticism, in the end, gained them their elders' and male relatives' respect as became transparent in O.'s account:

*'In many ways, things have changed [after advancing at work] for me... you get recognition also in your family and they listen to you. You have the knowledge - you have a strong voice. A strong voice, it is like in Maori families where women are listened to because they have a strong voice ... So they sort of look for my advice and listen. And not only women, but also males! Those who didn't think much of my passion for work now listen'.*

A number of the participants experienced such changes in attitudes in their families since they had become working women and experts in their work fields. Centner's (2000) interviews with Samoans in Auckland women, too, showed that the women gained greater prestige in their families through their status as wage earners. Corresponding with Meleisea's (1987) text on traditional authority in Samoa, explaining that the deference to people in status positions as 'higher people' and as people with high levels of authority is based on cultural values instilled from a young age, a number of participants experienced an upgrading of status due to their positions at work.

Due to their upgraded status, those who felt criticized and pushed into an outsider position before were now welcomed back as 'knowers and experts' in their families and communities. Others, including elders and males, now sought the participants' advice and guidance. For the participants, standing out as a stranger in their own community had changed to standing out because of their skills, knowledge, academic degrees, and senior positions at work.

### ***Building bridges with knowledge – being an intermediary***

With self-concepts as 'knowers and experts', ensuing from their skills and knowledge, the participants now felt acknowledged at work as well as in their family and community. On account of their competencies, the women had become '*the bridge*' between those in the community who were less resourceful on one side, and government institutions and organizations whose ways of operating were less than transparent at times, on the other side. Many of their former critics benefited from the women's expertise and elders now listened to their advice and suggestions. The women were consulted for their English language skills, knowledge of law, career opportunities, social welfare, budgeting and accounting, or health issues, as M. explained:

*'There is the need for people like us to explain these things to other generations. Also, help others with the language barriers. For example, to explain the social welfare system, the entitlement for benefits. Or translate at court hearings to help see it through the eyes of Pacific Island people. And vice versa, translate to our people. We are the go-betweens.'*

Taking on the role of a mediator between cultures is not uncommon among Samoans: Macpherson (2006) and Anae (1998; 2003) have written about Samoan settlers and their roles as mediators between Samoan and European societies. It needs to be noted, though, that these authors' writings refer to New Zealand-born Samoans. The participants in the present study, though, who found themselves in the roles of mediators, were Samoan-born and, overall, traditionally brought up. While the New Zealand born Samoans grew up with both cultural ways and were more readily accepted as intermediaries, the women in this study had to prove themselves through outstanding achievements to earn their positions as mediators. This journey was made all the more difficult due to conventional protocol, pertaining to gender, disapproving of women standing in the foreground as speakers and advocates; men were expected to take on these roles (Williams, 2001). Taking on

positions and roles, which put them into the foreground despite these predicaments rendered the participants' accomplishments exceptional.

Being pillars of support as teachers, advocates, and intermediaries to others in their families and community instilled a sense of achievement for 'self and others' in these women. The meaningfulness of being at work was not derived through the mere activity of work, but how work was put to use for others, or, 'how one does with who' (Kovacs, 1986). For these women, being at work meant a two-fold strengthening of their identities: they experienced affirmation for their contributions of their cultural - and other - skills at work, and they gained acknowledgment for their expertise from people in family and community. Identity processes took on a cyclical nature: the changed, positive views of others in the community were then feeding back into the participants' sense of self as being a successful Samoan woman in the world of work.

Now that the participants had formed identities as experts, teachers, advisors, and mediators at work and in their community, they began to voice their ideas and opinions about some of the changes they would have liked to see in place in their community.

### ***Giving a voice to how I think and feel – becoming a change agent***

Migrant women in various cultural settings experience restricted rights to voice their opinion, which is often understood to be a male prerogative (Centner, 2000; Gammage, 2004). Tupuola (2000), a Samoan woman and gender researcher, as a young outspoken Samoan woman was deemed as not having the right to publicly speak about, or criticize the Samoan cultural practices and principles (p.63). Some participants' experiences reflected Tupuola's experience. However, despite others' disapproval, they increasingly exercised their voice. Being at work with colleagues had changed the participants' sense of self towards becoming outspoken and voicing their opinions (explicated in more detail in the previous chapter). 'Voicing their opinions' eventually exceeded the domain of work to interactions with others in their family and community. As holders of increased social status, the women felt encouraged to voice their opinions and concerns about some long-standing principles and practices that were not in synchrony with their own views and perspectives any longer. As S. put it:

*'Obviously, mixing with people from other cultures and getting an education made me ... question practices which didn't make sense to me any longer. For example, that women shouldn't speak up in public'.*

Despite fearing being penalized by elders for voicing ideas and opinions that deviated from traditional *fa'asamoa*, it felt important to the participants to be 'true' and 'authentic' and consistent with their personal beliefs and life choices, including on newly adopted views as well as the Samoan way. '*Being truthful*' meant being true to their manifold selves and bringing these into the open. Making one's authentic self noticeable by unmasking it into the open (Heidegger, 1971, p. 138), however, did not come easy for a number of participants. Some people in their community chided them for their speaking out as violating the traditions of the Samoan way. One participant, M., experienced that not only the elders, but also younger males rejected her outspokenness because she was female - even though she was expected to be given a prestigious chief title:

*'I will receive the matai title eventually ... But because I haven't got the title now, some of my younger male cousins think I should not speak up. But I say, "You respect my wisdom and experience, I am older and have learned a lot!" I have come so far and I am not hiding my thoughts any more. It's honesty; it makes you feel good'.*

Like M., others felt that speaking up for their beliefs felt rewarding because of experienced '*honesty*' and sense of integrity. At the same time, they wished for acceptance from their opponents. It felt especially gratifying when their strictest adversaries, including matai and other influential males, could be convinced of the women's perspectives. Some issues, though, the participants said, remained sensitive topics even for them as well-respected, accredited women. Work and training had changed their views, given them a background as authorities in some matters, and encouraged them to '*speak up*' about practices they themselves had experienced, but had felt they could not question in the past, as exemplified by A.'s narration:

*'You know, it is a problem that often happens in our families, that the parents hit children. I was hit, too. But I know now it is not right, it is bad for children when they are scared of the grown ups. This is not real respect they learn then, they are scared to speak their own mind. Last week, I talked about all this to one of our families. But I know it takes time for them to understand. I know because I am a Samoan woman, and hitting has been around a long time as part of our culture. But I learned [during her training to become a social worker] to look at things differently here. And I have the standing in the community that I can talk about this'.*

Similar to A., other participants' identities as experts and knowers in their domains of work gave them a sense of authority to voice their views and beliefs at home, church, and community meetings. A number of them felt that without '*willingness to stand up and say no*', changes would be unlikely. The participants understood that 'communities stagnate without the impulses of individuals with new ideas' (James, 1890/1983). Consequently, they pursued changes in practices that did not make sense to them any longer. By doing so, they had created yet another identity component for themselves: that as change agents.

Being successful at work and well regarded in their community as advisors, intermediaries, and change agents made the participants role models for other women around them. This new status, however, felt as a blessing as well as a burden at times.

#### ***Prestigious standing as a role model - blessing and burden***

As a '*woman excelling at work*', many participants were 'pioneers' in their families and community. This commonly put them into the positions of being role models for other younger women to follow their examples, as T. experienced:

*'I feel blessed - I am a highly regarded woman now! I am the first one who came away from the Islands and got an education, amongst my siblings! They look at me different, like a strong woman. But for me, for us Samoan born, many of us never thought that they themselves would get an education when we came here. We get married, we have children... So, people see me as a pioneer in our family, a role model.'*

On one side, being seen as a role model was perceived as an honor and made the participants feel special. On the other side, being a role model could feel like burden. Being a 'first' to have achieved an academic degree or high-ranking position in the world of work raised new expectations in others around them. While the participants had been confronted with traditional gender expectations in the past, they were now confronted with expectations to be motivators, inspirers, and mentors especially for younger ones to follow into their steps as well-educated, achieving women, as S.'s and F.s narrations exemplified:

*'I was the first doctorate for my church community. And I was also the first in Dad's and Mum's families. People look at me and I now can talk about changing things and improving situations. Which is good in a way, though I find it sometimes hard to be this role model and I talk a lot to parents to go with their children's talents rather than forcing them into something they do not enjoy doing.'*

*'... I am also feeling the burden of being looked upon. There is the frustration of young people being told to become like me. If I can do it, then they should be able to do it, too. But it doesn't always work like that. Not everyone can be an academic and I feel sorry for the pressure they experience by their parents. It, it's almost like a comparison [from the parents] resulting in "what is wrong with you?" for some kids'.*

Both women feared that a new stereotype might be added to an old one. While the traditional gender ideal for women was becoming a family nurturer, the new ideal might be *'...my daughter should be an academic, just like XX'*. Some participants felt uncomfortable being made a *'showpiece'*: they objected to help pushing other young women into life choices (the unhelpfulness of pushing young Samoans into achievement rather than making this their own choice has been written about by Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003). At this point, the participants felt that, *'It is coming back to the importance of making choice for oneself'*. After all, *'making a choice of what one wants to do'* (as discussed in the previous chapter) had become a paradigm in their lives and a reason for entering the world of work.

Other participants also experienced that being a role model had its challenges. As their positions at work became more prestigious, they were expected to stand out in their community in ways of communicating, presenting knowledge, and other areas. Being a role model had produced a new but also familiar dynamic: the women found themselves, again, in the position of having to resist the pressure of *'fulfilling others' expectations'* (discussed in the previous chapter). Again, it came back to self-determining their identity. If they took on an identity as a role model, it needed to be on the women's own terms, in M.s' words, *'I am who I am; I am happy to help and give advice, but I don't want a halo'*. Yet, according to O., an identity as a role model also felt rewarding due to the transactional nature of setting a good example and *'feeling good about it'*:

*'It is like fulfilling a contract, isn't it! You expect me to be a good role model and help out with the young ones and I feel good about it'.*

The identity of a role model could also be seen as culture-induced and a result of the obligations of *tautua*, the duty to help and support (Pitt & Macpherson, 1974). For F., it was a matter of reciprocation - giving back for the times where others in the family and community had, as role models, sacrificed their time and resources to share advice, knowledge, and wisdom. When the demands of the duties of being a role model seemed overwhelming to F., she *'... took a moment to consider my place*

*in the world and the many things for which to be thankful*'. All in all, the identity as a role model was a *combination of choice and others' expectations*, which could be regarded as a contract of transactional nature.

Being a role model for others and being intermediaries also became part of the participants' role repertoire at work, especially when migrant women new to New Zealand needed encouragement and support.

### ***Being part of the 'home-group' and becoming advocates for others***

As they had benefited from support of others at the start of their work careers, the participants now took on the roles of being support persons to others. Their support was needed especially in two groups. First, there were the migrant women new to Auckland going through similar identity processes as the participants when they had arrived as strangers. Second, there were those in the Samoan community who had been in Auckland for a long time but who had remained strangers to its operations, processes, and language.

The participants had advanced to 'being part of the home-group' (Schutz, 1944; 1964), and were seen as persons of influence. Observing new migrant women 'from the Islands' in their struggles for independence from obligations towards family members let the participants reflect back on their own times of struggle and feel empathy. This was illustrated by T.'s recounting of her conversation with a friend new to the country and the world of work:

*'Many women come here with very traditional ideas and stick to what they've been brought up with, you know. I know a woman, she ... works and all her money goes to her sister, and she complains to me, "Oh I don't have any money on my own". I say, "Why do you endure this pain! You have choices. Move out; get a place on your own, take control over your money. It's your work – it's your money"... My advice to her and to any other woman is "Stop suffering. No one is obliged to suffer to meet someone else's expectations. Be independent" ... You don't have to fit into someone else's box - the fa'asamoa does that to you - but you can still be Samoan, on your own terms'.*

T.'s advice was based on the experiences of her own identity process; however, her advice did not reflect the challenges and time it took her to arrive at the assertive state of self she showed at the time of her conversation. In situations where 'newcomers' encountered the struggles the participants themselves once needed to master, help was sometimes limited to advice. The receivers of the advice needed to become agents of their own self-processes and experience their own struggles. Overall, though, it felt rewarding to the participants when they could be advocates

and chaperone those in whose position they once were. In their roles as spokespersons, for example, they explained '*the rights to receive fair wages and the benefits of going on strike*' or, 'to assist the new ones with formalities, and translations'. Having this insider knowledge that 'the new ones' did not have was an indication for the participants that they had become members of the 'home-group' (Schutz, 1944; 1964). Since belonging entails identity, being part of the home-group meant not only developing a sense of belonging but also taking on an identity as a home-group member.

The other group who benefited from the participants' influential status at work consisted of kin people who had been in the country for a number of years but had remained on the periphery of their work group. In their roles as supervisors, some participants had felt uncomfortable about giving orders to older Samoan colleagues (discussed in the previous chapter, reconciling respect towards elder's and my duties as a supervisor). However, different to the roles of being supervisors, being spokespersons for the older women did not conflict with the principles of 'respect and reverence'. Being a spokesperson - even though this seemed to put the participants into an authority position - meant 'being of service' in compliance with the principles of *fa'aaloalo* and *tautua*, respecting and helping (Pitt & Macpherson, 1974). On a more informal level, the younger women - despite their influential status - were still expected to adhere to a prescribed chain of command, as B's account showed:

*'... Some of the other women were older than me, but I became their spokesperson ... They don't mind me speaking on their behalf. It helped them out. However, when it came to getting the lunches I as the youngest was still the one who was sent (laughs). That didn't change'.*

While 'putting oneself to use to others' well-being' is an important principle in *fa'asamoa*, it is also a salient concept in the phenomenological understanding of the meaning of work (Kovacs, 1986; Yalom, 1980), which cannot be limited to the activity of 'doing' alone (Frankl, 1971; Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2008). Work becomes meaningful in 'how one does with who' (Kovacs, 1986) and strive towards something beyond themselves (Frankl, 1964; Visser, 2005). The participants had 'strived beyond their selves' and 'put themselves to use of others' by sharing their knowledge and by supporting those who had not yet become part of the 'home group'.

## Summary

In this chapter, the participants' accounts showed how being with others played an important role in their identity development. Their self-understanding widely depended on the reactions of important others; and sense of identity was gained through seeing themselves through the eyes of others (Mead, 1934; Kegan, 1982). Others' 'judgments and expectations' contributed to their 'awareness of being an individual' and, consequently, to their identity processes (Bruner, 1990).

Others at work mirrored those identity patterns the participants had not questioned in the past. Others questioned, challenged, affirmed and supported them in their quest to seek truthfulness to the self and authenticity. Others provided recognition that affirmed the women in their identity processes. Work, as an arena for being with others, provided an important context for these processes. This in itself made 'being at work' meaningful for the participants. The meaning-making processes, though, could only be experienced by 'being with others', because meaning is to be found in the social world rather than within one's own psyche alone.

The women's self-concepts changed in more than one respect: once the person takes on additional perspectives, the whole person is transformed. The participants made additional perspectives - in their roles of teachers, advisors, advocates, mentors, and role models at work and in their community - their own and eventually became them. These new self-concepts could only develop in co-existence and social transactions with others. For the participants, to be learners necessitated being in a learning environment with others. To be teachers meant to enact teacher-practices within teaching environments co-constituted by others. In these transactions, at times their place as learners had been in the foreground, while at other times, this position moved to the background and the participants took on the place of teachers. This gestalt-like phenomenon, as it changed their positions either to the fore or background, allowed them to view their self from different angles.

Identity proved to be not a fixed state but a situated processes of interactions with others and person-environment transactions. Identity was a co-creation where the participants and others made each other up. '*To be me*', the Samoan women needed to stand in a dynamic relation with the self and exposure to others. To authentically be themselves meant to have a self as their *own*, but also to dwell within one's dependence on being with others. As Heidegger (1962) has it, for the most part, we live amongst people and it makes sense to think as 'being part of the

others, rather than thinking in polarized terms as 'myself' and 'other'. The example of the 20 Samoan women in this study showed that developing an autonomous identity to fulfill one's aspirations in life is compatible with being oriented towards others' well-being. However, to be what a person wants to be, the person needs the opportunity of enacting their prospects in relation to other beings.

While 'self and others' in the Samoan women's identity processes had come to the foreground in this chapter, these processes were embedded in a wider socio-cultural environment. How history, social space, and time generated an interwoven pattern of identities will be viewed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 8: EXPERIENCING THE SELF IN TIME AND SPACE

While the first analysis chapter explored the participants' identity development from an introspective angle as processes 'with-in the self', the previous chapter investigated changes in their self-conceptions achieved by way of 'being with others' at work and other life areas. Others played a role for the changes in the participants' self-understanding at work, in their families, and community. While they had maintained their 'being Samoan' and, in this respect, 'being' was of continuous nature in its essence, they gathered new experiences at the same time and underwent transformational identity processes.

From a phenomenological standpoint, these self-changes are understood as permanent in the sense that they cannot be undone; they are, however, at the same time not fixed but continuously developing. Using Locke's (1956) metaphor, self-development happens like a flowing river - the water remaining the same yet changing shape. As being in the world is context-bound (James, 1890/1983), people's mental states are temporary. As the world around the participants changed, their self-views were bound to change over time and across places. In phenomenological terms, identity processes, while they are personal, cannot be separated from pre-given time and space (Heidegger, 1962). Consequently, the participants' views of themselves, the sense of 'who they are', underwent changes as they moved from Samoa to Auckland.

During their upbringing in Samoa, the participants were handed down long-existing values, beliefs, and principles, which constituted the foundation of their initial idea of self. Bakhtin (1986) compared initial identity formation with a body formed initially in the mother's womb, '...a person's consciousness awakens wrapped in another's consciousness' (p.138). The participants had left this 'womb' when they moved into a new physical space and encountered new values, beliefs, and principles in New Zealand.

This chapter explores the role of 'time and place' in the participants' identity processes. Being in a new place and being presented with new opportunities and possibilities for 'being in the world,' the participants reflected on how the principles and practices during their upbringing 'back then' and 'back there' in Samoa had formed their outlook on work in conjunction with their gender roles. They reflected on prescribed roles and desired roles and a change in place, moving to Auckland,

yielded opportunities to achieve the desired roles. Additionally, changing times - and with it changing views about women at work - worked in the participants' favor to achieve their aspirations.

Initially, life after migrating to New Zealand was experienced as a downward spiral from doing familiar tasks and being integrated into village life to doing unskilled labor in an unknown environment. While moving away from home was experienced as liberating in many ways, the loss of familiarity and integration felt threatening. However, it was this loss of familiarity that provided the foundation for life changes: having made the leap into a different socio-cultural space and being thrown into uncertainty meant being faced with alternatives and new choices for future-being. Making conscious choices and taking opportunities turned life into an upward spiral towards more prestigious positions at work. Eventually, the meaning of work changed from '*making a living*' to '*fulfilling my true calling*'. The participants envisaged that their - and other women's - examples as achievers, over time, would manifest as long-lasting changes in views about Samoan women in New Zealand.

The following sections make transparent how the participants moved back and forth in time and across cultural space in their identity processes. It shows how dipping into the past, dealing with the present, and reflecting forward about what they wanted to be shaped their 'being in the world'.

### **1 Where I come from**

Conceptions about one's identity are of shifting nature because how people experience themselves relates to 'being in time': to one's past, present, and future (Heidegger, 1962). Sense of identity relates to the space where and at what point in history people experience their 'being in the world'. Consequently, in their identity journeys, the women in this study moved between their past-being during their upbringing in Samoa (historicity), their present-being in Auckland, and what they hoped to be in the future (temporality).

The participants had in common their contingent time and place of 'beginning to be' - the place they were 'thrown into' at birth, which introduced to each of them an identity. Samoa was the place, during the time of their upbringing, they shared with others: the pre-given world whose concepts of truth and reality they shared, and which they took more or less for granted back then. The 'taken for granted', the handed down, shared understanding, is how people first understand their being

(*Dasein*) (Heidegger, 1962). Within people's shared lifeworld, the vague 'everyone' (*man*) understands cultural principles and practices in a specific, shared way. Matters talked about are thought to be already understood and their reality taken for granted. Initially, this understanding constitutes the basis for 'how to be-in-the-world. Within a normative *Dasein* in shared time and space, the participants learned 'what one does'.

However, as the participants had taken up work in a country new to them - and as their lifeworlds were exposed to the changing conditions of time and space - their understandings of 'what one does' were prone to changing as well. Similar to other Samoan women in New Zealand who substituted some of their traditional ways - despite those being strong and pervasive (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003; Koloto - 2003), the participants changed some of their views about themselves and their lives. The changes in their self-views became transparent as the participants moved back and forth in their stories between the place and time where they grew up into young Samoan women and their way of being in present time.

#### ***At home, fa'asamoa ruled - safety and restrictions came as one***

The 'home' as the place of birth is the starting point for every one's life journey (Schutz, 1971). It is from the home that we begin our journey into the world beyond the immediate space that we live in. The home, while it might be experienced as safe and familiar, also constitutes a boundary - a constraint - of one's space. Yet, 'boundary' contains also the possibility of 'liberation' as it is also that from which something begins its 'essential unfolding' (Heidegger, 1962). For the women in this study, 'home' was Samoa; this was the place where their 'being in the world' had its origin and from where their 'unfolding' of the self began. The origins of their being were intimately tied up into the women's present sense of self, shown in S.'s reflections on her upbringing:

*'At home, fa'asamoa ruled. It really meant two sides of the same coin - freedom and restrictions came as one. While on one side, our strict principles and rules in fa'asamoa gave me a sense of orientation - sometimes, they are still a safety anchor when I don't know what to do - on the other side, fa'asamoa did not allow for much leeway when you wanted to have things your own way. Whether you want it or not, even if you move on, these things stay with you. It becomes part of you.'*

During their upbringing, the participants had learned to comply with the norms and values of *fa'asamoa* as these were relevant to their environment, and as these 'made sense for the purpose at hand' (Heidegger, 1962). In other words, compliance had its values as an existential tool in Samoan culture as they grew up. (However, as

it became apparent in the previous chapters, some of the learned principles, like being enduring, conscientious, and perseverant also prepared them for later challenges elsewhere, such as at work in New Zealand). As the participants elaborated on specific norms and expectations that applied to work, it became evident how these had shaped their current ideas about work attitudes, but also how these had changed over time.

### ***If you do a job, you do it right***

Samoa culture had been 'given' to the participants at birth. Heidegger introduced the notion of 'thrownness into culture', which emphasizes an unchangeable, irreversible aspect of one's existence, *Dasein* (Heidegger, 1927). 'Thrownness' presented the participants with the 'then' and 'there': the socio-historical time and space with its practices, principles, and viewpoints, which laid the foundation for their present being, and which became apparent when they reflected on their work ethics. The participants tended to talk positively even about those jobs, which they found '*challenging*', '*boring*', and '*not meeting my aspirations*' (explicated in more detail later under 4: *The meaning of work*). They explained their overall positive work attitudes with the teachings of *fa'asamoa*. Back in Samoa, the teaching, '*If you do a job you do it right - no matter if you like it or not*' prepared them to cope with often unfavorable work situations later in Auckland. Many, like L., recalled that high work standards were instilled in early childhood:

*'Work started for me when I was a little child - as early as I could walk. Life in Samoa is work at all hours ... even at young age, it did not matter what you did or whether you liked it - you had to do a perfect job. You had to work hard. It's a cultural thing; we were not given choices. They told you "if you do a job you do it right". Not doing it wasn't an option for me.'*

The participants emphasized that they would not enforce such work ethics on their own children. Many of them disagreed with '*the harsh and unfair*' work expectations in *fa'asamoa* and suggested that '*in current times, you do things differently*'. However, they acknowledged that '*back then*', those '*teachings about work*' in some ways matched the context of their lifeworlds. Many of them were raised under circumstances where financial resources were restricted and '*it was essential to work hard to make ends meet*'. Early experiences about '*having to work hard for things*' had implications for the participants' future as well; these experiences prepared them for their later life in Auckland where, initially, resources were also less than abundant. F.'s reflections, for example, illustrated the far-reaching teachings against '*feeling entitled to things*':

*'I can see now that the tough teachings and chores back home were teaching us to value things in life. Things didn't come easy for us. I didn't take things for granted. And I still don't feel entitled to things ... My life in Samoa was simple, my parents not rich. I didn't have all these things [like here in New Zealand]. I was dreaming about them and that makes it [the things I have now] so precious. It [the teachings] made me not expect things to come to me but to work for them'.*

Even though the expectations of putting in hard work were exasperating the young Samoan girls and they often would have '*...preferred to play rather than running errands and serving those who were older and ranking higher...*', they generally, with occasional exceptions, '*followed orders*'. In their shared environment with others, shared practices were existential to their *Dasein*. Non-compliance would have meant '*you would be smacked*', and '*others give you a hard time*'. Hence, the participants responded to the demands of their world by settling for 'common practice', by 'what one does in shared time and space' (Heidegger, 1927; 1985). From a transactional perspective, agreeing upon public principles, practices, and common understandings made it possible for the participants to live in a shared world that provided feelings of belonging and safety.

The sharing of understandings and conformity to principles and norms also provided them with 'meaning of being and doing'. The shared meanings, however, bore a level of ambiguity. In their reflections on past and present, it was impossible for the participants to determine how much of what appeared meaningful to them was 'handed down' as opposed to 'arrived at'. The point in time and space which evoked their awareness that their way of being may not have been based on deep personal conviction but on '*Gerede*', ('word of mouth', 'what they say') (Dilthey, 1900) was after leaving home, when they experienced variations in standards of conduct. The strict work ethics and codes of demeanor for '*good daughters*' (also discussed in the first analysis chapter), and expectations to be '*role models for the whole family if not village*', did not apply for young Auckland women. Here, the participants experienced that women and men were, more or less, on '*equal footing*' in regard to making choices and decisions about their own life.

## **2 Gendered work and power distribution back home**

The representation of Samoan and other Pacific Island women in regard to participation in paid labor and decision-making outside domestic affairs is traditionally lower than that of their male counterparts (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1979; Waring, 1988; 1999). Accordingly, the participants' roles in Samoa centered very much on

managing the family, community, and social aspects while men took care of political and public affairs. This power inequity across gender has not always been prevalent in Samoa, but has been introduced and adopted during periods of colonization and exposure to Christianity (also Chapter 5; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1995; Schoeffel, 1983). However, many of the characteristics and principles of the *fa'asamoa* generated back then still exist and maintain the status quo of gender-imbalanced power distribution in Samoan culture, although changes are set into motion since Samoan women today raise issues of cultural *gender inequities* (Tamasese & Waldegrave, 1993). Gender issues also became subject of the participants' accounts of their early experiences about gender-division of labor, their feelings and thoughts around these, and the changes that they were experiencing over time.

### ***Daughters at work***

The participants reported, analogous to Dunlop's (1999), Fairbairn Dunlop's (1993, 1995, 1996), Fairbairn-Dunlop and Makisi's (2003) documentations about Samoan women's roles, that their chores and tasks differed from those of the males, and that they had roles different to males in the Samoan family system. Some participants, although in the minority, held paid jobs outside their family before they migrated to New Zealand. They had financial resources of their own; they also had opportunities to engage in social contacts outside their community. Most participants, though, stated that '*back home*', more males than females in their families were in paid employment while the women, doing domestic chores or handcrafts such as weaving fine mats, *ie toga*, depended on the males' income. Domestic work was considered as 'women's work' and freed up the males to engage in employment. S., for example, remembered:

*'I had to organize the household in Samoa from early age and take care of my 6 siblings. That continued on, so that my older brothers could go to work. In a big family, you are just expected to do your work to make the family function ... The boys don't do housework, the dishes; well, but they would do the outside cooking.'*

Many of the women in this study experienced that their work was seen as being of lesser value than the males' work in formal employment. Some of the participants carried out paid activities around the family such as trading goods or being of service to others. These informal work activities were crucial to the survival of the families, as Dunlop (1999) elucidated in her Masters thesis about Samoan women working in the informal sector, but did not have the same status and did not receive as much

recognition as formal employment, as T., who worked in the family's business, experienced:

*'...it paid for my things. I didn't get wages, though. ... I wasn't formally employed. I worked in my husband's family and then in the family shop. I didn't work outside the family and I felt very much taken for granted'.*

At the same time, expectations for the women's quality of unpaid work were high. The principle of *'doing hard work and not expecting much in return'* had been instilled during the times of childhood and adolescence. Especially the daughters of ministers and matai were expected to be role models for other girls and young women in the village and church. They were expected to do *'a job better than anybody else'* and to set an example by exceeding the prevailing standards. The expectations of showing high performance standards became deeply ingrained for these women and were later applied at work in New Zealand. However, the reasons for showing good performance standards had changed over time, as E.'s narration showed:

*'I have been a minister's daughter and had to be the role model for the whole village. ... How I behaved - I always had to be not only good but better than others. While this helped me to deliver quality work at the beginning when I did the lower jobs [in Auckland] ... later on when you found your way and your orientation, when you could make choices ... yes, you still delivered good work but it was different now. Yes, back then, you did a good job because they [in Samoa] taught you that. But now, you did a good job because you liked it; you wanted to'.*

The women had appropriated the meaning of *'being good at work'*, handed down to them 'back then', and now interpreted it on their terms. While in their early years, they could not decide on the cultural givens and understandings they were born into (Schutz, 1971), being exposed to other ways of being and doing at a later point in time enabled them to make their own meanings. However, the participants had to embark on a long journey to arrive at the place and point in time where work took on the meaning it currently held for them. The starting point of this journey was their primary socialization into gendered work.

### ***Mum's work***

Most participants named their mothers as role models for their own work ethics. They appreciated their mothers' *'hard work'* and *'dedication to bringing up us kids'*, and they talked admiringly about their mothers' relentless, selfless service to others in the family and community. Some Samoan women grew up with mothers who pursued work careers. In one case, a participant's mother brought up her six children

on her own, was the sole breadwinner, and cherished her financial independence from the *aiga*. Since she was exposed often enough to traditional gendered work in their wider family, this participant was aware that her mothers' pursuit of a career was more an exception than the rule in her community. However, her mother's '*hard work to be independent so that no one could tell her how to do things*' influenced her own views about the importance of work in women's lives.

Some of those participants who experienced their mothers in traditional gender roles, at the same time learned about the importance for women to earn their own wages. Their mothers, even though they were not in paid employment, taught their daughters to do differently. O., for example, learned from her mother that work was important for women since it could provide financial security:

*'Generating money is important for the bad times to come, for when things don't go right for you. You don't wanna depend on others. My mum said, your aiga is always there for you, but remember, there is no such thing as a free lunch. She meant they'll always call back for the debts.'*

Others' mothers, while they did not overtly diverge from traditions, exercised covert power where the men were permitted to believe that they were the sole holders of power while the women pulled the strings, as E.'s story illustrated:

*'The men thought they had all the power in our family. But it was really mum who held things together. She did the organizing and budgeting. Dad didn't have a clue about these things ... But men like to believe that they are in power even though we [women] knew that we held the things together. So, my mum said, "When you get married, let him sit at the head of the table - as long as you do the kicking under the table".'*

While E. appreciated her mother's diplomatic ways, she thought that '*times have changed*' and that women did neither need to be overly diplomatic about what they think is right for them, nor should they feel apologetic:

*'I would like those things to change. Women's places are at work as much as the men's places. Women are allowed to be achievers, why shouldn't they! That is an advice I would like to give others: Make your own choices even if your family doesn't like it. You are not doing it to hurt them. You just do what's right for you.'*

While the participants admired their mothers for their strengths and achievements in the family, they had their own ideas about the norms and values they intended to pass on to the next generation. Most participants emphasized that they '*adored*' their mothers (or grandmothers and aunts as primary caregivers) for their dedication to family and community

and for their personal sacrifices. However, the women, as for example, B., also stated that they would not instill these values in their daughters who they wanted to be able to 'look after themselves':

*'This is what I teach my daughters. Your security comes first. That means you gotta have a job with a good income. More important: you gotta like your job because you will only stay with your job and excel when you like it. That means you will choose your job and no one else. You see, the times are changing. This is also what we try to tell others back home and here. Those who still think that kids should listen to the elders and that things should be done the traditional way. No, time doesn't stand still. Girls should – and can – look after themselves. They don't need males for that. If they can find one who cares for them on top of that, that's a bonus, I'd say.'*

Not only did a number of participants want to see changes for themselves and their daughters, they envisaged changes for all women, since 'time doesn't stand still'. They thought that roles for women, which were deemed as appropriate 'back then' in one point at time, and which were also specific to Samoan context, could not be transferred to another time and place. In their words, 'Auckland is different from Samoa, and we need to make adjustments; and times have changed'. 'Ready at hand' norms from 'past-being' did not match the context of 'present-being' (Heidegger, 1962). Being in a different social environment, and being working women themselves, had contributed to the women's changed views. For some, the seed to view work and income as important for women had been sown in their childhood.

For a few women, the seed to choose an alternative to the traditional gendered work role was planted in their childhood when they watched 'dad at work'.

### **Dad's work**

As young girls in Samoa, most of the participants complied with the expectations to assist their mothers or other caregivers with their household chores. Their 'everyday compliance with practices' within their given value system was a way of 'coping with the world' (Heidegger, 1962). 'Back then', compliance made sense for the 'purposes at hand' (Schutz, 1971), for their existence in a world of interdependence between self and others. While women complied with what was expected from them, at the same time, a number of them longed to be like their fathers. They thought their fathers' work outside the household to be 'more important' and 'more interesting'. To them as young girls, domestic labor did not seem to be 'real work', even though the functioning of the family depended on it.

This line of reasoning was not surprising since other people around them rated formal employment as higher than domestic labor. As outlined before under 'daughters at work', 'women's work' was seen as being of lesser value than the males' work and served to free up the males to engage in employment. Unsurprisingly, some participants thought of their dads as '*doing the real work*' and, consequently, wanted to '*be like dad*'. A., for example, accounted:

*'My mother fulfilled the caretaker role. Back then, I didn't see it as work. It was my dad who brought the money home to buy things. That to me meant work. Bringing home the money felt more important than cooking and washing up. So I became my dad's girl'.*

The women's fathers worked outside the house, often on their land or in employment in the community, in factories, in companies, or other organizations. Consequently, the women became aware that there were options other than taking on the customary gender role. In her dad's work, I. recognized an alternative to housework:

*'... I was my dad's girl. I liked to do the things he did. Going hunting was nicer than washing dishes. I fulfilled my duties as a good Samoan daughter, but I hated housework. Some of the tasks I did in Samoa would be allocated to males'.*

Even though the participants generally complied with the expectations to do the '*women's work*', since this was '*what one did back there*', the early awareness of alternatives to '*women's work*', in all likelihood, played a role in later role choices. Another contributing factor to choosing work careers over the traditional gender role simply was 'opportunity': having left Samoa and living in New Zealand, the participants were provided with more employment opportunities to work outside home. Here, paid work was not as much a male domain as it was '*back home*' and '*one had more freedom to choose*'. A number of women were now in work roles, which, '*back home*' would have been occupied by males.

The example of I., the '*dad's girl*', went so far as to reverse traditional roles in Auckland with her husband who took on the domestic chores while she is in employment. I. explained that, while this deviation from *fa'asamoa* earned both of them some criticism here, in Samoa in her family, the role reversal would have been '*totally disapproved of and back then, we couldn't have done it*'. This example made explicit the link between the roles of inner processes and time and socio-cultural

space in identity development. While I. arrived at the decision (inner process) to be the only breadwinner after migrating (time) to Auckland (space), she could not have done so 'back then' (time) within her family in Samoa (space). Since identities are neither entirely social, other-oriented, nor purely based on individual accounts, 'selfhood involves a commitment to others as well as being true to oneself' (Bruner, 2002, p. 69). Accordingly, while I., when she lived with her family in Samoa, felt a strong commitment to comply with the wishes of those 'others' who reared her, now living autonomously in Auckland, she also felt committed to being true to her wish to start a work career.

In their present-being, the participants could make their own identity choices because to cope with their world, they no longer needed to adopt the path of 'everyday compliance with practices' (Heidegger, 1962). In their present-being, they had arrived at a level of autonomy, which allowed them to draw on new opportunities and make choices about their doing and being.

### ***New opportunities and possibilities of doing and being***

For as long as the ways of 'doing and being' seemed familiar to the participants in their everyday existence, they acted routinely. However, when they felt 'confronted with new ideas that seemed unfamiliar in their usual lifeworlds' (Conroy, 2003), they needed to react in new ways. While as young girls, many participants '*clung unquestioningly to the fa'asamoa*', after migrating, they were introduced to new possibilities and opportunities of doing and being.

A number of participants reflected on 'what would have been' if they had not deviated from the 'familiar ways', which they had unquestioningly accepted as young girls. They concluded that they would have been leading a different life, since '*on the Island*', they would not have been able to make the life choices they made in Auckland, as E.'s, T.'s, and A.'s reflections illustrated:

*'... Back then, when I was young, I thought this [getting married and staying at home] is what I would be doing. I tell you, on the island, as a woman, once you are married you provide support for your husband. Everybody else who I knew did it. So should I have been happy with it or not? But I wasn't. I knew there was more to my life.'*

*'In Samoa, things would have been different for me. You are expected to nurture your family [as a woman] and I would have to conform ... In New Zealand, it's different - women are on equal level with men. Being a Samoan woman over here, you don't have to be in the background. That's one reason why I want to be here [in*

*Auckland]. You can be out there and chose your job. I am in a senior position where I educate males as well as females’.*

*‘I know that not every Samoan woman is as lucky as me. Sometimes, the family ... wants them to marry a certain person, serve the family, and so on. And then? The woman ends up totally dependent on her family. Whereas, if she would have learned a profession, she would have had her own domain outside the family. She would meet other people, learn new things, and would take on a different perspective on life, outside the fa’asamoa. I would have hated it, if it were forced on me’.*

Within their shared world of *fa’asamoa*, the participants initially took its practices and principles for granted. Within their shared lifeworld, cultural principles, shared practices, and matters talked about were ‘intuitively understood’. The ‘taken for granted’ understanding constitutes the basis for ‘how to be in the world’ and is how people first understand their *Dasein* (Heidegger, 1962; 1985). Their *Dasein* in shared time and space taught the participants ‘what one does’. However, what had been learned about ‘being in the world’ came under review as they had left their familiar environment.

The availability of alternative ways of being and doing - the new ideas that deviated from the ‘ready-to-hand practices and principles’ (Heidegger, 1927) - had spawned the women’s critical evaluations about how consistent their learned ‘thinking about and acting with the world’ was in comparison with how they wanted to be. After migrating, encounters with new alternatives to the ‘ready-to-hand’ ways of being generated questions about the authenticity of their existence for the participants. Once these reflections started, their self-concepts and their acting began to change. They embarked on a journey to becoming the working women they wanted to be.

In summary, while ‘thrownness into culture at birth’ constituted the foundation for the participants’ primary identities, at a later point, as they encountered and explored alternative ways of being, they increasingly became proprietors of their selves. The participants’ stories about their self-development correspond with Bruner’s (2002) view that identities are based on constructions from both the inside and outside. On the ‘inside’, there were the women’s memories about their upbringing including cultural principles and beliefs around work. However, there also were beliefs that deviated from the traditional norms. Altogether, on the inside, there were feelings, ideas, and beliefs around these principles and work practices - ranging from compliance to rejection. On the ‘outside’, there were role models and the strong expectations from parents, extended family, church, and community members. At a

later point in Auckland, the outside provided expectations and role models that represented different practices and ways of operating. All these 'inside' and 'outside' aspects made up a composite identity for each individual.

While the early learning 'what one does' became internalized and part of the participants' self-understanding and enabled them to socially belong and be with others, at a later point in time and in a different place, those early learnings that did not match the new place, were adjusted accordingly. In these processes, the participants were identity receivers as well as identity creators who actively positioned themselves in their lifeworlds.

### **3 The unfolding of the process over time: downward spiral - upward spiral**

The participants had found themselves positioned in a shared world, in which they were also actively positioning themselves. They had complied with the ready-to-hand rules and principles as they grew up in Samoa and they had started to question those once they had chosen to follow their own ideas after having moved to Auckland. They had moved from unquestioningly accepting an identity bestowed on them by others to becoming proprietors of their self-concepts. However, these identity processes did not occur in an orderly, linear fashion. Rather, they took on the shape of a spiral initially turning downward, marked by disappointment, some turmoil, and initial uncertainty. Rather than feeling discouraged from pursuing their aspirations for themselves, these experiences fuelled the women's sense of determination and perseverance. Eventually, their life paths spiraled upward towards their envisaged objectives.

#### ***The honeymoon phase seems over - a downward spiral***

Most of the women in this study came to New Zealand to seek employment. Some women migrated on their own account and were, to a degree, prepared for their journey. Others were sent by family members, and a few left Samoa against their own wishes. In accordance with these differing situations, feelings of estrangement, abandonment, and loss were experienced to different degrees. The degree of informedness amongst the participants about what to expect in New Zealand and 'being at work' in this country differed as well. Some had clear ideas about the jobs or education they wanted to pursue. Other participants, mainly those for who the decisions to leave to Auckland had been made by others, were less prepared and informed about work opportunities and the needed prerequisites. What the women had in common was that, more or less, reality in Auckland turned out to

differ from their ideas and dreams. Having left their familiar environment meant 'being thrown' at a fast pace into anew, already existing society.

For the participants, after leaving Samoa, the familiar 'identity markers' (Conroy, 2003) - their every-day-coping tools including principles, and practices - were no longer 'ready-at-hand'. This meant, *'to get back on their feet'*, they needed to incorporate a vast amount of new knowledge in a short time. Coming from Samoa and its traditions, they *'felt thrown in at the deep end'* when they arrived in Auckland *'where things were so different to back home'*. On one side, they felt *'happy to have escaped the control of fa'asamoa and the harsh work morale'*; on the other side, they perceived a loss of familiarity in regard to *'what we were used to when it comes to work'*. Thinking back, B., for example, found that:

*'In Samoa, even though I worked from home and wasn't paid, at least I knew what to expect. I didn't expect an exciting well-paid job. But I had people, had friends around me. One knew how things worked. I realized what I had lost [after coming to New Zealand] and the honeymoon phase was soon over'.*

Having come to Auckland, the past social embeddedness was no longer safeguarding the women's sense of identity. Similar to Schutz' (1971) contemplations in his essay, 'The Stranger' about the foreigner no longer being able to take things for granted, the participants found their basic assumptions about being in the world with others called into question. As the foreigner in 'The stranger', the women initially took on the roles as reflective observers. Not being embedded in the safeguardedness of home any longer, and not being part of the new environment they were thrown into, they needed to rebuild their lifeworld. A new social embeddedness had to be accomplished by the women themselves. This was an arduous task for a number of women, because reality after migration did not meet some of their expectations. *'Domestic security back home'*, however constricting it might have felt, was missed now that it had been replaced by feelings of uncertainty, often taxing and unsatisfactory work situations, and disappointment.

In this context, a number of participants who talked about their initial ideas about how life would be for them in New Zealand used the metaphors of *'having had my rose-tinted glasses on'*, and *'the honey moon phase having come to an end'*. For many, New Zealand was not *'the land of milk and honey'* they had hoped for.

### ***Not the land of milk and honey***

Some participants initially felt taken by the ‘*clean, swept pavements to walk on*’, the weather-boarded houses, the supermarkets with their abundance of goods and foods, the variety of cars, and the dresses women were wearing. For one participant, the proverbial ‘milk and honey’ notion showed its magic in the form of milk bottles appearing at the doorstep.

*‘Coming out of one culture and entering another culture was difficult. You know, here in NZ, we put out a milk bottle at night and 20 cents, and then next morning, a new bottle magically appears. Which we don’t do, the way we do it is so different. The interpretation, my interpretation of life is different. You know, in Samoan, the closest we have is coconut milk, and it does not appear like magic. You have to go and get it. You know, I was in the ‘not have’ and here I am in the ‘have’. So it’s like, my life in Samoa, I didn’t have all these things and I was dreaming, you know. The reason why I say this, the life in Samoa was simple, my parents, they are not rich, but here, we consider ourselves as rich’.*

The experiences of abundance and societal wealth at present were only possible by comparison to ‘what has been’ back in time. The newness and the apparent magic were ‘seductive’ and soothed the feelings of estrangement from things familiar at home. However, the new wealth literally came at a price; to have access, the participants had to ‘*generate the means to afford them*’. While this principle also applied in Samoa, back there had been ‘*always a way to pay later*’ or sometimes ‘*barter*’ goods and services. This was no longer an option in Auckland. As their excitement of societal wealth and abundance had turned into consciousness about it being pricey, the urgency for the participants to find work increased. Generally, the initial jobs were of unskilled and semi-skilled nature, and many women felt over-skilled and thought that they ‘*could do better*’ (also discussed in chapter 6, ‘My potential’). While the participants saw the advantages of holding these low-key jobs - for example, achieving financial independence (chapter 6), and social interaction with others - (chapter 7), they found that ‘milk and honey’ did not flow at these work places. Like for other participants, the reality inside and outside work initially looked bleak for S.:

*‘When I came here first, I thought of New Zealand as heaven ... but my eternal holiday in the land of milk and honey didn’t last forever. Once ... reality set in, I found it hard. All these clean, beautiful houses and paths - but no one smiled at me. And then, my first job ... mind you I was glad that I had it, but it was hard earned money’.*

Such experiences evoked feelings of frustration in the women who had ventured to Auckland in the hope of self-fulfillment. At this stage in their lives, work meant

'*generating money*' to afford the style of life in Auckland or even to '*survive*' on a bare minimum of money. However, rather than submitting them to resignation, the frustration over their reveries being dismantled by unsatisfactory job situations served as a catalyst to excel, as T.'s narration showed:

*'Oh, New Zealand, I thought, "You'll walk on clean concrete, don't have to get up early, have a nice home"... You know, all these nice expectations. And then I started making toys from home. I was alone and it was hard. I kept hanging in, though. The low-key jobs were so frustrating. But it pushed me into decision-making about my working future. I had to get on my feet because I wanted a better job.'*

T.'s account about feeling frustrated, '*keeping hanging in*', and '*getting on her feet*' mirrored the qualities of 'determination and perseverance' that many others showed. These qualities had been instilled at a young age in Samoa (explicated in more detail in chapter 6). Having had to struggle to '*get what they wanted*' in the past in an environment with strict rules and expectations for young women prepared the participants for persevering at a later point in life. The women's past-being had contributed to building up resilience towards the hardship experienced in their present-being when the expected '*flow of milk and honey*' had proved to be an illusion, and when the loss of familiar surroundings and people became evermore an issue. As O. explained:

*'At home, in the village, everybody knew me. I could never feel lost. You knew all the places, where to get what and where to find people. We had not much and lived simply, but after I left, I felt how I missed all of it. You know, meeting in the village, at the street corners ...while you ran your errands. Stopping for a chat at the local shop...'*

O.'s narration paralleled the 'store/street corner/washroom culture' portrayed by Hoerder (1988) where, via domestic and informal work activities, women formed important community relationships as a basis for mutual support, coping strategies, and identity-building. For the participants, the shared 'street corner culture', together with their sense of determination, had been an important contributor to their levels of resilience towards the demands and challenges of daily life. E., for example, explained:

*'...In a way, our status as women and our frustration about inequity issues had fostered our resilience. Our endless chats at the markets, after church ... Oh, we developed higher level of resilience compared to our male counterparts. We had more to fight for; we weren't granted the same rights.'*

This resilience learned back home has helped some participants to cope with disappointment and frustration about the unsatisfactory conditions of their initial jobs in Auckland, and to look beyond these. Resilience learned back home had also helped other women adjusting to hardship after migration, for example, the Latin American migrant women in North America (Espin, 1999).

The participants' ability to consider their disappointment and dissatisfaction as a temporary condition helped them to cope with their initial work situations. Seeing beyond present-being into future-being motivated them to '*make use of the opportunities while they were out there*'. This outlook made disappointment and dissatisfaction a catalyst that turned a downward life spiral into one that moved upward. There was, however, the matter of '*finding the door*' to the upward spiral for the participants.

### ***Finding the door leading into the upward spiral***

'Necessity', needing to generate an income to produce 'the things necessary for existence', and not being in the position to negotiate about the type and quality of work had initially put the participants onto a downward life spiral. The familiar ways of doing and being, together with the hopes and expectations of a land of '*milk and honey*', had given way to the reality of unsatisfactory work tasks in often unpleasant and uncertain work environments. The participants had to take the uncertain nature of their new social environment as a given. 'Uncertainty', however, as it meant constantly changing situations, provided them with opportunities and openings. 'Opportunity', being in a new 'space in time' (Heidegger, 1962; 1985), in return, allowed them to make changes in their lifeworlds that eventually reversed the downward life spiral into an upward one. As M. put it:

*'Being thrown into a new situation, which you have to accept as it is, provides you with hardship but also with some opportunities to choose from. It makes you rethink a lot of stuff about yourself, too, and you start doing things differently.'*

Past, present, and future-being needed to be reviewed and reassessed for their meaningfulness by each participant. Not wanting to '*revert back to being what I was*', and wanting to maintain what was seen as worthy to be maintained, were the catalysts to what they wanted to become. One matter that was of importance was '*taking up the opportunity to prove myself*', show '*that I can make it happen*', and that '*I can make my own future even though I know my family is always there for me*'. The participants were determined to take it upon themselves to make their life spiraling

upwards; however, becoming what they wanted to be was contingent on '*finding the door*' to access the possibilities for '*spiraling up*' at work. At times, the participants wished for others to open this door to them, as I.'s recall of '*searching for the door*' showed:

*'I felt ... it's just that you don't see us. What I ask is, "Open the door and let us in"! Give me the chance to prove myself! I need to be given an opportunity in addition to my willingness and preparedness to learn and excel'.*

The participants made willingness and preparedness their strength in adjusting to the demands of the world of work. To adjust and find '*the door to success*', they had reviewed their ways of being and doing, they had reconciled past and new ways of being (first analysis chapter), and they had achieved social status in relationships with others (previous chapter). In their search for the door leading to their place on the upward spiral, they did not expect, to '*get it all on a silver tray*'. However, they felt entitled to be given the '*chance to prove*' their skills and competencies, as for example V.:

*'I came here and I did all the low paid jobs. You can't expect to come here and get it all on a silver tray. But eventually I felt, I'd paid my dues. I've worked so hard at myself! I was no longer the shy, young migrant woman that can't open her mouth. And most important, I had skills. I should get my chance now. So, hey, I said to myself, these people [superiors at work] should let me prove it. I didn't wait silently any longer, this was my time. And I walked up to the manager and said, "Look, I know I have it in me and I can do this. I am a fast learner. It is just a matter of you giving me the chance to prove myself." And I got the promotion'.*

Having found the door leading to advanced positions - by 'opening the mouth and asking for the chance' and by proving themselves as skilled, competent, accomplishing women at work - changed the motion of the life spiral into an upward direction for these women. The nature of this process was bi-directional: while changed self-concepts generated an upward motion of the life spiral, spiraling up affirmed the positive self-concepts as achievers. As the nature of the jobs and their self-concepts had changed, 'work' took on a new meaning, as well.

#### **4 How the meaning of work changed for me over time**

For most women in this study, their career journey started with low paid factory, kitchen, or cleaning jobs. At that point in time, work meant '*generating an income to survive*'. While some had successfully consulted the newspapers' job vacancy section, others found work through relatives or '*word by mouth*'. Some felt that they

were expected to be grateful for the help of their relatives even though they felt '*... the job was forced onto me by my relatives*'. In general, the women felt grateful for the '*opportunity to have an income and make ends meet*', even though they did not like the job. Even though these jobs were far from being satisfactory to them, the participants were searching for meaning in their work tasks. Meaning could be found even in low-key jobs as these provided opportunities to '*socialize with others*', '*make a difference in someone's life*', or '*receive positive feedback and feel good about it*' (discussed in the previous chapter). Ultimately though, doing meaningful work meant for the participants to be in a job where they would find their '*true calling*'. '*Doing meaningful work*', '*finding myself*', and '*following my calling*' became recurring themes.

### ***I worked to survive – now I follow my vocation***

The initial jobs the women took on after arriving in Auckland were not so much based on choice than on necessity to maintain a living and care for dependent children or family. Some worked because '*... I didn't have a choice. I needed the money. Any job would do at the beginning*'. Others came '*... alone first to generate money for my children to come*' or were sponsored by their family in Samoa '*... to work and get some money for my family's airfares*'. A number of participants had worked nightshifts, for example cleaning hospital floors, to finance their further education '*... because my parents and family in Samoa didn't have the money to support me*'. A few held two or three jobs a day '*around the clock*' to make ends for themselves and their families meet. For F. and others, any job would do because:

*'When you don't have money, work simply is getting out of hardship' ... at that time [being new to New Zealand], I couldn't afford to look for the right job ... Anything to earn money would do'.*

On the positive side, low key and cognitively undemanding jobs meant time for adjusting to the new environment. In comparison to Samoa, New Zealand was experienced as a '*fast paced world*' and '*adjustment required time and energy*'. Thus, '*a simple job helped*'. Low-key jobs were seen as temporary to make ends meet, while the participants had their future-being as women in advanced positions in mind. They felt that after leaving behind their home in Samoa and '*taking not much more than dreams and aspirations with me*', in the end, working to generate money for survival did not seem meaningful enough. As I. put it:

*'I could have done that [factory work] at home back on the Island. Coming over here, that means something more than earning money ... In a factory, I am just making money for someone else. But I would like to make a contribution, leave a mark, find my calling and do something meaningful'.*

The participants referred to meaningfulness of work in conjunction with *'following my vocation'*, and also *'leaving a mark'* by *'doing something where others could also benefit from'* in the wider society, the social, health, or educational sectors, or in their community. As S. explained:

*'Doing something meaningful, that's more than just doing your task. It is also more than generating money for back home. It is even more than supporting the family. Work should be good for yourself, the aiga, and people in the world'.*

The emphasis on meaning of work as *'doing something to the benefit of others'* relates to the principal *'being of service to others'* in *fa'asamoa*. However, the paradigm *'following one's vocation in the service of others'* is not unique to a specific cultural background. It is widespread across cultures and serves a purpose in identity formation. The experience of *'helping others'* can be understood as a link between personal self and self-as-being-part-of-others. Finding fulfillment in the service of others plays an important part in identity processes because, *'Values that define our public life by definition must somehow be found outside of the self and in recognition of what is [the] other to us'* (Taylor, 1991, p.17). According to Taylor (1991), many people feel *'called'* to make a difference for others and feel that their lives would be somehow wasted or unfulfilled if they did not do so. When employees talk about finding meaning in work by making a contribution through serving others, they relate to their inner life and sense of spirituality (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). They show a sense of connection to something larger than the self; *'a sense of community characterized by a feeling of connectedness to others and common purpose'* (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2008).

However, while work served a higher purpose than *'just making money for myself'*, the participants had arrived at a point in time where felt that they needed to review their definitions of *'doing something for others'*. They began to review this concept when they felt that *'working for the benefit of others'* turned out to be fulfilling others' expectations and putting considerable constraints on their own lives.

### ***Culture traversing time and space: fa'alavelave calling its dues***

Gadamer (1989) postulated that *'temporal distance'* can play a useful role in helping people to identify those pre-given understandings that exercise a problematic

influence on new situations. Distance from pre-given understandings allows an internal, dialogical interplay (Hermans, 2001; 2002) to understand and work through problematic elements. For many participants, their pre-given understanding of 'fa'alavelave', donating to family members in crisis, had become problematic in their present-being since these donations tended to involve large, often unaffordable, sums of money. The understanding of 'doing fa'alavelave' had been pre-given by Samoan tradition. For some participants, giving to members of the extended family in crises had become one of the meanings of work.

*Fa'alavelave* is linked to living up to one's rank, position, status, and financial income, which determines the sum of donations (Croulet & Sio, 1986). Once the women worked, they were expected to participate in *fa'alavelave* transactions. A few women, like L., saw one of the meanings of work as enabling them to fulfill the duty of *fa'alavelave*:

*'As a Samoan, you want to give to your people and the church. That's why work is important. I mean the fa'alavelave, the giving. I work, and my uncle can't give. So I do it for him. Working for me means funds for reciprocity. You work for the fa'alavelave, to give to others'.*

For a number of participants, the financial burden caused by the constraints of the expected donations had become a major issue. Some had decided against unconditionally obliging the calls for donations. While they saw the meaning of work in '*helping and being there for others*', they now applied this exclusively to the closer family and purposes of furthering the development of dependents, as L.'s and O.'s explications showed:

*'I don't do the fa'alavelave thing when it comes to extended family. You see, people who you have never seen or don't even know the name of suddenly turn up on your doorstep saying they are your relative and expecting to stay with you and be fed. Nuh, that doesn't work for me anymore. I like to work for my children's future, for their education. For us, education for or children is important, I am from a poor family. You and your children should come first'.*

*'Fa'alavelave - no! Helping my parents and reciprocating what they've done for me - yes! I want to improve things for my parents. They live in a simple fale [house made of mats woven from palm leaves], give them a nice home. Also, my earned money goes into a fund for when things go wrong. You never know what's going to happen and I want to be independent of any help from relatives. Work means you can look after yourself, a financial safety. That's why I refuse to give to churches or distant relatives. Making a living here comes before supporting others in Samoa. If I could change anything, I would change the fa'alavelave so that people aren't pressured with these obligations'.*

While a number of women saw working for financial safety for self, children, and parents as having priority over *fa'alavelave*, getting out of the obligations of *fa'alavelave* seemed a two-sided issue. On one side, in their present-being, they made their own decisions about '*how to live my life*' and '*how to spend my earned money*' (explicated in the first analysis chapter). On the other side, based on their past-being as subjects of their primary socialization processes, the women in their roles as 'nurturers and givers' felt an inner pressure and guilt if they did not give, or if they could not afford, the monetary gifts.

While those women had tried to put distance between their pre-given understandings of *fa'alavelave* and their present situations, they experienced that internalized concepts of *fa'alavelave* had traversed time and space into Auckland and '*called its dues*'. On one side, some felt strongly about not wanting to work for *fa'alavelave* obligations; on the other side, an '*internalized voice called*' to meet the expectations. In these cases, past-being attempted to take precedence over present-being, and the self was 'no longer autonomous but immersed in past relationships' (Frank, 2005). However, since 'it is the individual who carries past dialogues into the present' (Gergen, 1999, p. 131) each participant as an individual remained central to the interpretation of her inner dialogues. Those women, who emerged out of these internal dialogues as being in charge of meaning making, became the agents of their decisions over how much, when, and to whom to donate.

Understanding always occurs against the background of our prior involvement and our history (Gadamer, 1989). As the participants reflected on their past-being, they became conscious of how time and place affected their present-being. It became apparent that their identity processes occurred in conjunction with traveling back and forth between past and present while moving into the future.

***Dipping into the past, dealing with the present, and thinking into the future***

Some of the participants' ways of being and doing could no longer occur in the same way as they had in the past. Since it is neither possible to be exactly the same way in a different place nor extended through time (Locke, 1956), the participants' contemplations, reflections, thoughts, and understandings of self had changed in their new environment. Those women, who were expected to fit back into the family, slip back into their past-beingness, and play the part they once played as dependent

girls *'doing as you were told and enjoy being looked after'* knew that this was no longer possible for them. As financially independent working women, some felt that they could not *'wind back the clock'* and *'be like back then'*. L., for instance, experienced:

*'I was expected to take my old place in the family, to fit in. It seems taken for granted that I'll be the same when I'm with them. Even though my views about myself and some things about fa'asamoa have changed. You can't go backwards, can you!'*

Some women, who did no longer want to *'take their old place'*, found themselves accused of being too *palagi*, wanting to be like a European (Anae, 2001). That was not how the participants saw themselves; they felt that as a Samoan woman *'you can't shed your Samoan identity but you can start questioning parts'*. By having become working women in Auckland, they had not shed their cultural identity, but what was once handed down had now become *'something that was up for choice'*. A number of women said that in fact, they felt stronger about their Samoanness now that it had become a choice for them to what extent they wanted to live the Samoan way. Seeing that their choices between ways of being and doing had implications for themselves and others in their immediate environment, the participants understood that their choices of being and doing also had the potential to affect their wider socio-cultural environment over time. A number of participants made explicit the changes they wanted to see over time, like P. and M. for example:

*'We women were giving and giving and tended to put our personal ambitions on hold. This has changed for many of us. This is just the start. Changing myself also changed my views about fa'asamoa. And since other women in the community come to talk to me, eventually their views will change too. That is, if they haven't already changed them. This will have wider implications for our women's roles.'*

*'Times are changing. Things have changed over the last 10, 20 years ... you know the migration and the education here for women... So it's kind of the roles are changing. Us who have left to New Zealand are an influence not only of what happens here but also of what happens back in Samoa.'*

The women's changes in self-understanding were inextricably related to change processes in the wider setting, occurring *'as transactions between person and environment'* (Fuhrer, 2004). Since self-identity is not only influenced by, but also influences the social environment, the changes in their own self-understandings - as some women predicted - will have implications for *fa'asamoa* over time. While they were once thrown by birth into socio-cultural historical time and space, and while they could not influence this pre-given life world

back then, they could now influence their own ways of being in the world, their ways of being with others around them, and 'historical time and space' (Heidegger, 1962).

Bringing this back to Bakhtin's (1986) metaphor on identity formation - quoted at the beginning of this chapter - '...a person's consciousness awakens wrapped in another's consciousness' (p.138), the Samoan women had unwrapped out of pre-given consciousness and had unfolded their selves and lifeworlds. This, to them, meant being Samoan on *their* terms. It meant, amongst many other things, being Samoan women having extended their identity towards being successful working women.

### **Summary**

The participants experienced themselves as identity receivers, identity carriers, and identity creators in time and space. Born into culture, the participants initially were passive recipients of views and values. As their self-concepts changed over time in cultural space, the participants became active agents who could make choices about their ways of doing and being. They did so through reflecting upon the context of which they were a part, by 'considering the context of the past', and by 'imagining the context of the future' (Valsiner, 2000, p. 51). Through the processes of adapting to their changed life circumstances, they evaluated, reorganized into new forms, and re-internalized values, views, principles, and practices. They were 'reaching into' the cultural past, projecting into the future, and from the positions of past-being and future-being - what they were no longer and what they wanted to become - established their present self.

The women had come a long way in their identity journeys, where they experienced opportunities, hurdles, and challenges. They had shown determination and successfully made their place in Auckland and in the world of work. They also had proved wrong the stereotype that since *fa'asamoa* is a robust and stable culture, all Samoan women must be bound to, or choose, the customary gender role as family nurturers. Fairbairn-Dunlop and Makisi (2003), and Koloto (2003), Pacific Island researchers, also documented that, even though the traditions of *fa'asamoa* and other Pacific Island cultures are strong and pervasive, migrant women tended to substitute some of the traditional beliefs.

As socio-cultural historical space underlies processes of mutual constitution of the person and the social world (Shweder, 1990), the women's self-concepts as achieving women at work had the potential to contribute to dismantling socio-cultural

restrictions for Samoan women over time. For the same reasons, their ways of being and doing at work, including their achievements and relationships, also had the potential to change New Zealanders' understandings and views about Samoan women in New Zealand.

Having undergone processes of disintegration and re-organization of their selves, and having established new relationships with the world, the Samoan women had gone through profound changes. These changes are irreversible: one cannot revert to what one has been because time and space are of ephemeral nature and will not have remained static for a person to slip back into. Past-being can, however, be revisited. The participants needed to revisit their past to find a new connection between their present existence and past-being - 'to dig out their *own* identities, and to re-evaluate themselves in a new light' (Schutz, Alfred, 1971) - and to make this meaningful to their own future.

## CHAPTER 9: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

### Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the key concepts emerging from the research data followed by the development of an integrated theory of identity and acculturation through work with implications for future research.

This thesis originated with the question of how experiences of being working women have shaped the identities of Samoan migrant women in Auckland. It explored how these women, who grew up in a strongly traditional cultural framework, migrated to New Zealand and then engaged in paid work, experienced their identity processes.

The research focused on challenges as well as on opportunities influencing the participants' personal development. Identity development as a psycho-social process is of interest to psychology. The scarcity of context-specific knowledge in psychology about migrant women's identity processes in conjunction with work — together with the importance of this topic in times of increasing numbers of women migrating and looking for work — informed the thesis topic.

The Samoan women in this study negotiated the different identities of being women of Samoan culture and being women in paid work in a New Zealand setting in self-reflective processes (internal dialogues). When they managed to view the diverse aspects of two cultures as complementary rather than competing, they experienced a sense of integration of their various identities. However, when they experienced some of the aspects of their different cultures as conflicting, they could, depending on the situation, feel separated from either or both of their cultures. As the participants were exposed to changing situations in different cultural environments, which required different modes of thinking and doing, their internal negotiations between their different identities were of a continuing nature. Herein lies the essence of this thesis, which takes account of the ever-changing nature of experiences, practices and self-perceptions. It suggests that personal experiences create self-transformations, change how one relates to other people and alter one's position within one's social environment.

### **Acculturation involves transitional processes over time**

The Samoan women, while adjusting to work in New Zealand, also underwent adjustment processes within their families and community. As long as they fulfilled the expectations, for example of elders and males, towards being Samoan they were 'insiders' in their family and community, while being new to the ways of being at work made them 'outsiders' in the work domain. However, as the women proved their competencies at work and established social relationships with colleagues, their positions in the work place changed from 'outsiders' to 'insiders'. These new positions at work resulted in changes in other life areas. As the participants — now insiders at work — adopted various new ways of doing things, they became in some respects 'outsiders' in their families and community as some of their views no longer fitted previous cultural expectations. Over time, the participants' growing achievements and work-related competencies earned them recognition in their families and community and reinstated their 'insider' status. These transitions between insider and outsider positions — between feeling integrated and separated — were experienced in various situations when the participants needed to bring different expectations, values and ways of doing things together. The participants' recurring adjustment situations suggest that migrants' acculturation processes are of a cyclical, progressive rather than a consecutive, strategic nature as suggested in acculturation theory (e.g., Berry, 1980; 1990; 2001; 2003; 2005).

With respect to Berry's (1980; 1990; 2001; 2003; 2005) acculturation strategies, neither integration, separation, marginalization nor assimilation could be singled out as a dominant adjustment style for the participants in this study. The data indicated that, as the participants brought together various aspects of their home and their host country's cultures, they moved back and forth between feeling rejected by their new culture (marginalization) or withdrawing (separation), at times rejecting their old cultural identity (assimilation) and integrating new and old ways of being. Rather than understanding the acculturation strategies suggested by Berry as mutually exclusive, these should be regarded as components of one process. The adjustment processes of the participants in this study are, to some degree, coherent with Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Vedder's (2001) conceptualization of acculturation: the adoption of some of the host culture's ideals and practices and the retention of some of the heritage culture's ideals and practices. However, the present study's emphasis rests on the conclusion that these processes are of a continuing nature. They reoccur as new situations, which require the integration of culturally different aspects, arise.

### **Acculturation is mutually experienced by migrants and hosts**

Cultural adjustment and integration were mutually experienced processes for migrants and members of the host culture in social domains such as work. A number of participants experienced that, while they adopted some of the practices and perspectives of other people at work belonging to different cultures, others at work adopted some of the participants' views and ways. Other research similarly showed that cultural adjustment entails two-way processes of change (e.g., Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997). However, prominent acculturation theorists put their emphasis on migrants' adjustment as a response to their contact with the dominant majority in their host country (e.g. Berry, 1997a), although Berry (2005) later presented views about reciprocal acculturation processes of culturally differing groups in contact. These views did not receive much emphasis in acculturation theory, however. Although migrants' adjustment processes have long been studied, processes of the host cultures' members have been under-researched (Rudmin, 2003).

This thesis claims that knowledge about mutual acculturation processes plays an important role in fostering positive migrant-host relations. This claim is supported by the reciprocal learning-teaching relationships, and its mutual benefits, between the migrant women and others at work highlighted in chapter seven. In short, acculturation theory needs to put more emphasis on acculturation processes being reciprocal between migrants and locals in their post-migration environment.

### **Interpersonal relationships at work**

The role of interpersonal relationships at work in identity and acculturation processes has not been a major focus of many acculturation theories (e.g., Berry, 1980; 1990; 1998; 2001; 2005; Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1983). Many acculturation theories focus on whether or not relationships with others are sought and whether or not heritage culture and cultural identity are maintained. This thesis argues that instead of focusing on whether or not migrants seek relationships with members of their host culture, acculturation theory needs to focus on *where* and *how* these contacts are experienced and how these contribute to identity processes that explain acculturation.

Theories of meaning of work also have not emphasized the potential role of relationships with others in people's identity processes and adjustment to new environments. Generally, theories relating to meaning of work focus on, for example,

job satisfaction issues (Hackman & Oldham, 1980); employee needs and satisfaction (Alderfer, 1972); the role of work in people's lives (overview by Brief & Nord, 1990; Debats, Drost, & Hansen, 1995); the salience of work compared with other life domains (e.g., Stryker, 1994); or people's attitudes towards work (e.g., MOW International Research Team, 1987; Vecchio, 1980). While some 'meaning of work' studies in the USA and elsewhere refer to the 'importance of social contacts' at work for employees' well-being or fulfilment (e.g., Debats, Drost, & Hansen, 1995; Harpaz, 1989; 1999; MOW International Research Team, 1987; Morse & Weiss, 1955; Vecchio, 1980), the salience of others in making work meaningful to one's identity is still under-represented in meaning of work studies. One of the exceptions is Morin's (2004) research on 'The meaning of work in modern times', conducted in Quebec, France, Belgium and Brazil exploring the links of meaning of work with psychological well-being, psychological distress, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Morin, Professor of Organizational Behavior at the Affiliated Business School of University of Montreal, suggested that 'social purpose' and 'positive relationships' at work were existential human needs which can be met at work. Overall, though, the positive influence of interpersonal relationships at work for migrants' identity and adjustment processes has not received the attention it deserves in meaning of work theory.

This thesis highlights some of these processes which can be involved in individuals' post-migratory self-processes. The participants derived a number of benefits even from jobs which were badly paid and provided poor work conditions. Some of these benefits were the opportunities to establish relationships with others, learn about the norms, values and principles in their host culture from others at work, and engage in mutual learning and exchange of knowledge with others. In accordance with Jahoda's (1981; 1982) work-needs theory, even bad jobs covered some human needs — in the case of the participants, these jobs satisfied the need for affiliation with others. Meeting others at work raised the participants' awareness of aspects of their own identity, for example, their cultural beliefs and practices and the personal meanings these held for them. At the same time, the participants learned about the customs and norms of the host culture. Sharing the language and practices of colleagues generated a sense of belonging for the participants.

People at work functioned as role models for the standards, principles and practices prevailing not only at work but also in the wider Auckland society. For example, the participants learned, through watching others and others' reactions

towards them, that it is acceptable to be assertive, voice one's opinion and make one's own choices. Encouragement, assistance and guidance from others contributed to the participants' furthering of self-confidence and self-esteem, which became important aspects of their identities. The salience of interactions at work to identity and adjustment for the Samoan women in this study was mirrored by other Asia-Pacific migrant women who tell their stories in 'Weaving a Double Cloth' (Bourke, Holzknacht, & Bartlett, 2002), in which they stated that it was others at work who taught them to be more assertive about their own ideas, which earned them respect. For example, Anggraeni, one of the migrant women telling her story, stated that it was her work, which taught her to be more assertive. In return, she experienced how others took her more seriously.

The claim of this thesis that work is a location which contributes to migrant women's acculturation is also reflected in Pio's (2005) study about the working lives of Indian women. Pio suggested that the 'unwritten aspects' — those not covered in employment contracts — are the ones that occupied the minds of the women she interviewed. On one hand, through meeting others at work, the women in her study became aware of the distinct features of their own ethnicity. On the other hand, through learning about local food, ways of dress, music and behavior at work, these women were also adjusting to their host culture.

In summary, work provides opportunities for migrant women to communicate not only about how the work is done but also about themselves, their own and others' preferences, cultural activities, norms and values. By exchanging such information, migrants and hosts learn about and can adapt to each others' ways of being and add these facets to their identities. These aspects, identity processes and mutual acculturation are important to individuals' personal development and deserve to become integral in meaning of work and acculturation theories.

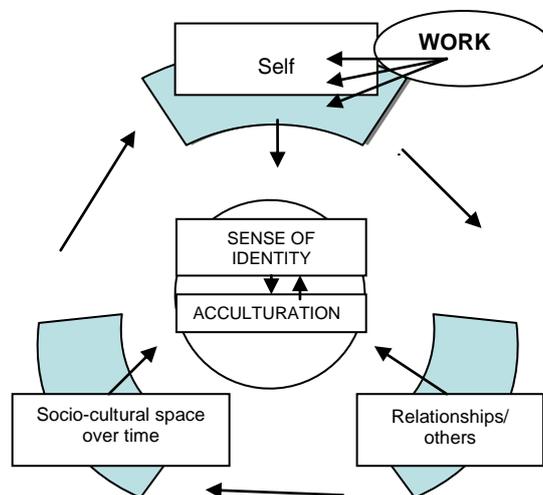
### **Theory of work, identity and acculturation**

The workplace as a core location for identity and acculturation processes has the potential to promote migrants' adjustment to their new living space and development of a sense of belonging to their new home groups. For migrant women, being in work changes their self-perceptions and immediate relationships with others. This influences their socio-cultural environments over time and becomes crucial to their identity processes. Further, as they learn about their local colleagues' ways of doing, work serves as a catalyst advancing migrant women's acculturation.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 identified three core facets relevant to migrant women’s identity formation: relationships with the self, relationships with others and socio-cultural context. The data presented in this thesis also indicate that these three concepts play an important role in acculturation processes. The inter-relationships of the three concepts linked to identity and acculturation within the context of work are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

*Processes in the areas of self, others and the social-cultural environment are continuously inter-related with each other*



### 1. Self

As the women entered work, introspective processes began, starting with self-questioning, for instance about the fit between their own aspirations and career goals and family expectations. These reflective processes, together with the women’s perseverance and others at work modeling assertiveness, generated continuing identity transformations that were directly related to acculturation processes.

The seeds for the participants’ personal development and the unfolding of their potential competencies had been planted in situations in which they encountered challenges that prompted them to develop a desire to achieve and a sense of determination. There was no specific beginning to the participants’ identity formation and, since their lives will take different turns over time and across cultural

space, there will be no endpoint to their identity development. Similarly, there will be no endpoint for acculturation. Situational changes will create an 'unsettled sense of existence in the world' (Heidegger, 1927; 1962) that prompts individuals to respond with adjustment to arrive at a sense of settledness. At the same time, these processes influence the actions and responses of others in an individual's close environment. Acculturation is, thus, a process of progressive, mutual exposure to new situations and adjustment is generated by contextual opportunities.

*Proposition 1: Acculturation processes reflect progressive transformation of identity*

Work provides opportunities for migrant women not just to meet basic needs but to engage in continuing self-reflective processes influenced by others within the context in which these processes take place. While the participants experienced constant changes as they integrated some views and practices from their host culture into their lives, their adjustment and identity processes also showed aspects of permanence such as the preservation of their cultural roots. Further research to explore this proposition could investigate the changing and stable aspects of identity in relation to experiences at work. While some aspects have been highlighted in this thesis, more work is required to arrive at a deeper understanding of the facets of being in paid work which potentially influence employees' identity processes and in which ways. Recent literature on migration studies has established that gender is central to all aspects of migrant research. As the groups of males and females tend to vary in their gender role perceptions, the post-migratory adjustment processes can vary across male and female migrant groups (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992; Pessar, 2005; Pessar & Mahler, 2006). A focus on male migrants with regard to gender roles, identity and personal development is under-represented in work studies, even though concepts of work are critically important in the construction of masculine identities (McIlwaine et al., 2006).

Studies have explored how male migrants' sense of identity and acculturation influenced their performance in the labor market. For example, ethnically assimilated migrant men and those with openness to both cultures seemed to outperform those migrant men who were ethnically separated and marginalized (e.g., Constant, Gautallina, & Zimmermann, 2006). A reversed directionality — for instance, exploring how levels of performance influence male migrants' sense of identity and belonging — would add to an understanding about different facets of work forming identity. The

importance of these issues will increase with growing global migration and the consequences of successful or unsuccessful acculturation for individuals and communities.

## **2. Relationships with others**

While it is important to understand how individual-level meanings of work are constituted, this presents only part of the picture, since people at work are interacting with others at work, such as co-workers and supervisors. Social relationships with members of the host culture are conducive to migrants' adjustment (Phinney et al, 2001, see chapter 1). The more migrants interact with groups in the larger society, the faster they acquire skills to manage everyday life (Remennick, 2004; Searle & Ward, 1990). Relationships outside their families are critical for the acculturation processes of migrants.

Since relationships with others form the social fabric of the workplace, these need to be given more weight in literature on the meaning, role or benefits of work for people. Since the group of Samoan women in this study showed that relationships at work were essential for their post-migratory identity processes, other migrant groups presumably feel similarly for the same reasons. In times of increasing numbers of people migrating, there is a need for research about the relevance of relationships at work for identity and acculturation processes.

*Proposition 2: Relationships with others at work play core roles in identity transformation and acculturation processes*

Further research might examine social processes at work as they affect migrants' acculturation processes with a focus on, for example, role models, communication and the acquisition of other empowering life skills. In this thesis, formal employment as a core location for acculturation and identity processes has been of particular interest. Since informal work is a major source of income for some groups of women in countries with low socio-economic standards (as discussed in chapter 1), further research might explore informal work as a potential location for identity development in migrant women.

Most research on the informal work sector compares the informal with the formal sector, for example, focusing on structure, organization, practices, influences on a country's economy, why people are pushed into the informal work sector, the type of

work activities people engage in or the resulting conflicts (e.g., Beneria, 1989; Castells & Portes, 1989; Gërxhani, 2004, Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Mkandawire, 2009; Sexsmith, 2009). While a number of studies have focused on these topics these topics, there is a shortage of research about the informal work sector with regard to the role of self-identity and development of women.

Since many women, especially those in poorer countries, engage in informal work, there is a need to investigate how this work sector could be acknowledged to enhance these women's 'sense of empowerment' (Al-Dajani, 2007; Harding, 2004; Harding, 2007; Moghadam & Senftova, 2005) and, possibly, over time help them to move out of poverty. Through the informal work sector, members mobilize not only finances — albeit these are most often minimal and keep women in poverty — but they also form social relationships and negotiate for social justice. These activities often lead to the development of specific skills, which may influence the members' sense of self and self-development in a number of ways. The skills the women in the informal sector develop can be equated with those of self-employed women (Kinyanjui, 2010). Putting this thesis into context with the above-discussed research resulted in the question: 'How can work in the informal sector provide experiences of increased autonomy?'

### **3. Socio-cultural space over time**

Over time, the participants moved through various transitional processes within varying social contexts. While the changes in their identity which they experienced during these transitions were not reversible, the participants could revisit any of their previous states of being from their new, current positions in life. The term 'revisiting' distinguishes itself from 'recycling' to previous states of being, in that the latter would imply moving back to a previous point. This is not possible: one can never fully return to how one has been before (past-being). However, one can revisit a previous state of the self from the present point in one's development. As one revisits previous states, which feed anew into relationships with close others affecting one's wider environment, the cycles of experience are deepened. For migrants, self-changes such as identity and acculturative processes are experienced in relation to others within a social context. A number of the participants in this study experienced that, while they changed their views and practices in various ways, others around them adopted some of their perspectives and ways of doing. Thus, it would be a 'misconception' to think of dominant cultures eliciting one-way acculturation processes in migrants (Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997). Evidently, both

migrants and members of their host culture are involved in post-migratory adjustment processes, and the resulting changes affect people's views and practices on a wide scale over time. These mutual, progressive developmental processes are not well reflected in prominent acculturation theories and still need to become a main focus.

*Proposition 3: Reciprocal adjustment processes occur in a social context over time and are progressive*

Since reciprocal acculturation processes and associated self-changes, to date, have not been given the attention they deserve, there is a need for research in this area. Also of relevance to understanding the psychological processes of people in adjustment situations are the differing contexts in which these processes occur. While this thesis focuses on international migration, further research might explore work as a potential location for identity development in women within the context of national migration.

Given the fact that many women who would want to improve their levels of autonomy and control over their lives do not have the opportunity to leave their countries, other possibilities of achieving these goals need exploring. For example, other types of migration such as rural-urban migration might in some circumstances also work as a means for personal development. While Sri Lankan women who moved from rural to urban locations to work reported ill-treatment and exploitation, they also experienced an increased sense of freedom and independence (Attanapola, 2006). Women in rural-to-urban migration in contemporary China also experienced frustration over some of the unfulfilled expectations but achieved some of their desired outcomes, such as an income and liberation from dependence on others (Gaetano & Jacka, 2004). Rural-urban migration, in these cases, produced some benefits for women's development.

Naturally, the experiences of intra-national migrant women are not homogenous and different geographical and economic settings will contribute to different outcomes but, potentially, intra-national migration could serve as a route to increased autonomy and empowerment for some women and may in some cases generate transformative outcomes. In light of those women who do not have the opportunity to leave their country but aspire to increasing their levels of autonomy, it would be worthwhile to expand research into intra-national migration and its impact on women's self-development. A better understanding about the role of intra-national migration in

relation to women's sense of self and autonomy might assist local governments and agencies to design educational programs, interventions and means of support to assist these women in achieving their desired outcomes.

### **Wider implications of this research for the world of work and communities**

For migrant women to actualize their life choices, they need financial independence and, consequently, work opportunities. Education and employment are paths to enhancing Pacific Island women's positions in their community and wider society (Bleakly, 2002). For the benefit of many migrant women, job placement opportunities need to be increased. Increased recognition of cultural and other skills brought into New Zealand would be one way to achieve this objective.

The women in the present study occupied important social and economic roles within family and community before they arrived in Auckland. These roles demanded a number of competencies, which, however, seemed to have had less significance once they had left Samoa and settled in Auckland. Consequently, for many this resulted in experiences of their skills becoming devalued. On the other hand, a number of participants exhibited competencies at work which they had not regarded as skills before coming to New Zealand, because they took these competencies for granted as 'natural'.

To prevent unwarranted experiences for migrant women of their skills being 'devalued despite the competencies they bring with them, the definition of 'skill' should be reviewed and further researched. The need for recognition of migrant women's skills has also been suggested by researchers in other countries, like Ho (2006) who argued that skilled migration programs in Australia are male-oriented in their assumptions of what constitutes a 'skill' and that no points are gained for skills related to domestic labor. The Samoan women's accounts of rediscovering those competencies, which were not officially and formally recognized as 'skills', indicated that these were valuable after taking up paid work in Auckland. However, they had not gained any points for these from the immigration department.

The social services sector was one area where the importance of cultural knowledge became apparent. Cultural versatility showed its importance for those working in education and academia who wanted to understand the barriers and

motivators for success for culturally diverse learners. Cultural knowledge was also essential in public service positions where policies needed to be negotiated with high-standing Pacific Island community members and policy makers. In sales and front desk positions, an understanding of *fa'asamoa* and similar cultural protocols ensured appropriate treatment of customers. Pacific Island migrants' cultural knowledge constitutes an important asset to the New Zealand workforce. If Pacific Island women in New Zealand gained more recognition for their cultural skills and competence, this might increase their chances of gaining skilled employment.

In general, migrant women's versatile cultural competencies contribute vitally to the functioning of globalized, multi-cultural societies. This study suggests that, to acknowledge and utilize migrant women's skills and, thereby, to support their adjustment, a revision of what constitutes a skill is indicated not only in the work sector, but also as part of immigration policy. In short, employers should be encouraged to make work more accessible to migrant women. To achieve this objective, immigration policies need to increase the recognition of cultural and other skills brought into New Zealand.

### **Conclusion**

Being employed in paid work plays an important role in migrant women's identity processes linked to self, others and the wider community. To migrant women, employment serves not only to satisfy the need to earn a living, but also has the potential to generate identity changes, foster contacts with others and a sense of belonging outside the family, and to achieve changes in gender role expectations over time. For many women, migration and work constitute opportunities they might not have had at home to develop and exercise their competencies. Work represents an arena where migrant women can shine some light on the unique skills they have brought into their host country. They have important cultural and other skills which are needed in today's diverse communities. A favorable view of migrant women and their contributions to society is likely to make them feel valued, helps to make their adjustment to their new environment easier, and has positive consequences for every one who lives, works or otherwise shares the environment with migrant women.

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## **Appendices**

### **APPENDIX ONE**

**MUHEC Ethics Approval**

### **APPENDIX TWO**

**Information Sheet**

### **APPENDIX THREE**

**Consent form**

### **APPENDIX FOUR**

**Interview Questions**