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# **Physical Discipline in Samoan Families**

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## ABSTRACT

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Child Maltreatment in Samoan Families of New Zealand examines parenting and childrearing in the context of Samoan families in New Zealand. It is apparent that each culture has its own parenting and childrearing methods. For Samoans, their child rearing practices in relation to physical discipline have been brought under scrutiny by New Zealand society. This situation has created an environment of challenge in the media and assumed cultural practice not only from non-Samoans but also from within the Samoan community regarding physical discipline in the Samoan home.

This thesis takes an in-depth look at the use of physical discipline in Samoan parenting and child rearing. The literature review looks at past and current events of physical discipline in New Zealand. It places the Samoan community in context to this literature and how that relates to their families. This research is supported with data drawn from twelve Samoan leaders in the community through a qualitative interview. These twelve leaders have come from different cross sectors of employment ranging from Government departments to community agencies. They were selected specifically on the basis of their highly regarded reputation and passion to work with Samoan families in the community. The qualitative interviews indicated that physical punishment as a means of discipline was an issue of concern among Samoan parents in the community since it was viewed as the most preferred method to bring about effective change to unacceptable behaviour.

The implications of this research can only make the Samoan community aware of the reality of their parenting and childrearing methods in their families and advance as a community looking at alternatives to physical punishment. In doing so, they take ownership of and responsibility for their disciplinary methods and address it in the constructs of Fa'asamoa within the family. The relationship

with the children is retained as well as their Samoan heritage whilst living in New Zealand.

The greatest significance of this thesis will be to those of Samoan ethnicity since this research embraces the heart of their cultural values and beliefs, 'their collective families'. Any research that addresses physical discipline goes to the heart of Samoan households because it targets their children and youth. Samoan children and youth do not come in isolation from their families; clearly a child needs to be examined and understood in the context of this unit.

The thesis concludes with a Samoan response to section 59, of the Crimes Act 1961 and how Samoans would see the repealing of this section being appropriately addressed in the Samoan community. It also puts forward recommendations to government to advise policy how best to work with the Samoan community on the issue of physical punishment in the home.

It is my hope in the conclusion of this research that whoever picks up this piece of work will have a greater understanding and insight to Samoan parenting and childrearing within a cultural context, but more importantly how to work effectively in a culturally appropriate model that will bring about conducive changes that will not only benefit Samoan families but any government agency and community group that works with Samoan people.

Before one places a judgment on any cultural group it takes more than just a day to walk in their shoes to fully grasp and appreciate what it means to be Samoan! I challenge the reader to put aside his or her own cultural expectations and judgements to understand the heart-felt passion and difficulty of my journey in presenting this information to my Samoan community.

## DEDICATION

*This research project is dedicated to my siblings, Joseph Folau, for sharing my childhood years with me and Siedah Sulita Diana, the miracle and blessing that entered our family home in the latter years of our lives.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The inspiration of this research came from a heart that desires to work in truth and transparency with my Samoan community regarding Social Work Practice and Community Development. The journey to ensure completion of this work has been long and challenging, but it has not come without the collective support and love of family, friends and colleagues that ensured that I persevered. This is truly a celebration of your contribution to my life and education.

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I want to personally thank the **IOANE** and **LEALI'IFANO** families (there are too many of you to name) that hail from Vailu'utai, Vaitoloa Upolu & Auala, Avao Savaii. My heart-felt thanks to all my uncles, aunties, cousins and in-laws for your immense contribution to me personally. As far as I can remember you have always been a very active part of my life. You have all shared every milestone I have had to this day. Great advocates and supporters of further education! Thank you to both extended families, for all your support, continual love and endless encouragement.

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Lastly, but not the least, an enormous **THANK YOU** to the twelve participants who agreed to be interviewed. It has been such an honour and privilege for me to have you contribute to this research. Thank you for sharing your personal and professional experiences. My prayer is that I have presented your views well and that this research will benefit the future development of our Samoan community in Aotearoa New Zealand and our Samoan communities overseas. For the participants that agreed to be named, a very special and heart-felt thanks to:

Karl Pulotu-Endenmann, Ben Taufua, Malaga Va'a, Nicholas Tuitasi, Allan Va'a, Leva Aati Schuster, Moka Ngaro, Mary Watts, Dr Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop and equally the three unnamed participants. Fa'amalo Fa'afetai!

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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Aiga	Family
Aiga potopoto	Extended family
Ali'i	Noble men/titular High Chief
Alofa	Love
A'oa'i	To reprove, to correct, to rebuke
Aoga Amata	Samoan pre-school
Ava fatafata	Respect that is accorded to one of status, usually a High Chief.
Aua	Do not
DCYFS	The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.
E sasa oe?	Do you want a smack?
Fa'alavelave	A ceremony to mark events that involves the exchange of money and fine mats to be given and received by those attending celebrations.
Fa'aaloalo	To show respect, courtesy.
Fa'asamoa	In the Samoan way, according to Samoan customs, with decorum.
Fa'avae ile Atua Samoa	Samoa is founded on God
Fasi	Often alludes to a 'hiding or beating'.
Fesoasoani	Support, helpful, giving assistance
Fia Ese	An overt action to display indifference, either in behaviour, attitude and response to a particular situation or person.
Fia Palagi	Adopting a behaviour that is considered European or non-Samoan.
ie ofi	V-shaped tong used for underground cooking.

Lotomaulalo	To show humility
Mataga`	Behaviour that is considered shameful.
Matai	General term describe both an Ali'i (High Chief) and Tulafale (Orator/Talking Chief).
MP	Member of Parliament
Mu`	To burn yourself
O le ita o le tiapolo	This is the devil's wrath
O le tiapolo lea?	Is this the devil?
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development
Pakeha	Maori translation of white person.
Palagi	One of European descent.
Salu	Samoan broom used to swipe the floor of a house.
Sasa	To smack
Tautalaititi	To speak out loud and out of line beyond your age appropriate years.
Tulafale	Role of an orator/talking chief
UNCROC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child.
Tu manu ae le tu logologo	Samoan proverb: 'birds come and go in search of food, but parent's duties to their offspring continue until they are no more'.

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# INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION

New Zealand has been described as the 'Polynesian Capital' of the world with Samoans making up the largest Pacific People contingency in this nation. The Samoan population is one of seven Pacific Peoples profiles in Aotearoa. According to the 2001 Census Population and Dwellings the Samoan population made up of Samoans born in New Zealand and overseas comprising 115,000 or 50% of New Zealand's Pacific population of 231, 800. (*Statistics New Zealand Census, 2001*)

The Samoan population is significantly large in comparison to neighbouring Pacific peoples in New Zealand. Samoans have been described as extremely proud people, proud of their heritage, cultural traditions, language, spirituality, customs, lineage, families and children. As early as the 1940s Samoans began the migration journey to Aotearoa New Zealand. There was a particular increase in migration between the early 1950s and the 1970s.

Samoan people have translated their Samoan pride to their environment in New Zealand and practiced this in their homes influencing and affecting how they parent and raise their children in a Western context. New Zealand has become a place of residence for the future generation of Samoans born and raised here. The Samoan community will contribute and impact the face of New Zealand's tomorrow in the social, economic and political arena. For the above reason this research is pertinent to the current and future development of Samoan communities and their families in this nation.

The focus of the research draws upon literature that looks into physical discipline for New Zealand and Samoan families. It also looks at the structure of Samoan families as an important functional unit in the Samoan culture. Followed through with separate chapters on physical discipline in Samoan families and contributing factors and influences that impact the Samoan migrant family. Lastly, the thesis

addresses legislation in New Zealand regarding the topical issue of Section 59 of the 1961 Crimes Act if and when it is repealed. It explores how the Samoan community should prepare for the change of legislation and how it will affect the way Samoan family's parent and rear their children. Furthermore, it examines a Samoan community's response to Government and how they would address this within their own community. This has been drawn from the personal and professional experiences of the twelve participants in their places of employment and community.

This research is specifically Samoan and only Samoan participants were requested to participate, as it is not appropriate for one of another ethnic group to speak on issues concerning Samoans when they are detached and disassociated from personal and professional experiences belonging to one that is of Samoan heritage. Furthermore, given that the research addresses Samoan parenting and childrearing regarding physical discipline, it is only right that the participants are of Samoan ethnicity. What needs to be stipulated from the start of this research is that although it specifically looks at explaining and understanding physical discipline in Samoan families, it is clearly not an issue that is exclusive to Samoans.

As a Samoan this research is very personal and pertinent to me on the basis that I am Samoan and I belong to a Samoan family. I admit that this has been a very poignant and difficult topic to capture and present in the most appropriate and humble manner, but in saying this I believe that it is a topic that needs to be spoken about and not avoided. This is reinforced by Linda Smith (1999, p.139) who states that,

*“insider research has to be as ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research. It also needs to be humble. It needs to be humble because the researcher belongs to the community as a*

*member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and position”.*

I do not claim to be the authority on discussing physical discipline among our families. Although I am Samoan there are many similarities with, as much as there are differences from, Samoans given our life experiences that formulate our belief and value systems. Smith (1999, p.139) echoes this in saying,

*“the role of an ‘official insider voice’ is also problematic. The comment, ‘She or he lives in it therefore they know’ certainly validates experience but for a researcher to assume that their own experience is all that is required is arrogant. One of the difficult risks insider researchers take is to ‘test’ their own taken-for-granted views about their community. It is a risk because it can unsettle beliefs, values, relationships and the knowledge of different histories”.*

This research has challenged my beliefs and values regarding parenting and childrearing in my own cultural context. As a result of completing this research I have come to the conclusion that physical punishment is existent in Samoan families and for many parents it is deemed the most appropriate and preferred method of discipline to curb unacceptable behaviour. Samoan parents have been found to be harsh in their administration of physical punishment and been known to use implements, for reasons ranging from lateness from school or lying to offending and bring shame on the family.

Being raised in a Samoan home I have experienced physical punishment as a form of discipline and have learnt to accept and understand that for my parents this was the only method of discipline that had been role modelled in their childhood. I can recollect situations in which I deserved to be disciplined but the method of discipline administered was unjust at the time and even in retrospect.

In my own experiences as a social worker in the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services for five years and then working in the community thereafter, I have worked with a majority of reported intakes from Samoan families that have been largely physical abuse. I can understand why the parent would discipline but I question the harsh physical punishment that has been handed down to our Samoan children and young people. I am an advocate of discipline as I believe children need appropriate boundaries and guidelines to keep them safe and to socialise them into society with appropriate life-skills. Although I advocate alternatives to physical punishment, I believe that the smack can be administered when accompanied with love and nurturing. I define the smack with an open hand on a child's legs, bottom or hand. However, I do not condone any form of violence by way of beating such as the use of implements, torturing or throwing a child against the wall and whacking a child on the head.

Over the years what has changed for me personally is the relationship with my parents, which has gone from strength to strength largely because of the changes we have experienced and collectively made as a family. There is open dialogue and communication that is founded on mutual respect and love that has changed their views on parenting and childrearing in a Western context. We have both taken the time to understand our own point of reference that has not forsaken our Samoan values of love, respect and humility. I believe that change is possible and that Samoan parents can still retain their Samoan values as well as establish a positive, respectful and an open dialogue relationship with their children. I am not saying to Samoan parents that they should do away with discipline of their children. However, what I am saying is that Samoan parents can still discipline their children to bring about an effective response to unacceptable behaviour without having to beat them. I believe this because I have observed my parents change their method of discipline with my younger sister. They have been exposed to an alternative method through education, learning from past and shared experiences and have come to the realisation of how life in New Zealand is very different for their children as oppose to their

upbringing. My parents have been able to achieve an effective means of discipline and still maintain a positive relationship with my sister.

May our Samoan families advance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the generations to come equipped with alternatives to physical punishment, without the compromise of their Samoan values, at the same time most importantly nurturing and retaining a relationship with their children. I believe that the time and energy invested in this research has been fruitful and will be beneficial to any individual who may read this piece of work but especially to my Samoan community.

## CHAPTER ONE:

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

### ***Introduction***

The focus of this chapter illustrates New Zealand's current status on discipline that has been administered physically by parents. It locates the position of Samoans in the New Zealand context and describes incidents of physical punishment administered by the Samoan community.

This chapter attempts to provide a holistic view on physical punishment in a New Zealand and Samoan social context. To present this, literature has been obtained by Pacific and non-Pacific people in New Zealand and overseas.

### ***Physical discipline and abuse in New Zealand***

Discipline can mean different things to different people, so what may be seen as discipline in one cultural context can be deemed abusive in another. This interpretation is dependent on one's world view and fundamental beliefs and values originate from their own personal upbringing and life experiences.

Discipline in the context of raising children usually carries a negative connotation from the child's end because it involves the parent chastising unwanted or bad behaviour. The child is deprived of privileges, given timeout, scolded or the other extreme, beaten severely to inflict serious pain. Daeg De Mott (1998, para. 2) describes discipline as,

*“a system of actions or interactions intended to create orderly behaviour. There are a variety of disciplinary systems which show varying degrees of success. Some disciplinary systems use punishment as a tool; others shun punishment, believing it is at best ineffective, at worst destructive (or counterproductive)”.*

New Zealand as a nation ratified the:

*“United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child in 1993. There was expressed concern from the United Nations Committee at the provision by section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961, to use physical force against children as punishment within the family, provided that the force was reasonable”. (MSD; 2001, p.4).*

In an article in the New Zealand Herald, Prime Minister Helen Clark proposed a smacking ban as a result of Coral Burrow’s death by her step-father. She states,

*“there are no clear definitions as to what is reasonable but factors previously identified by the courts include the age, maturity and health of the child, the type of misbehaviour and the type of punishment. New Zealand is one of the signatories of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, and has been advised by the UN that section 59 of the 1961 Crimes Act is inconsistent”. (Young, 2003).*

New Zealand Truth article on ‘Planned law change smacks of nonsense’ believes that it is only appropriate that *“Prime Minister Helen Clark should firmly address the level of child abuse deaths in this nation. ‘But she is ludicrously wrong in trying to link those deaths to smacking.’* (“Planned Law,” 2003). This same view was also echoed by the Minister of Youth Justice at the time, John Tamihere saying *“the Prime Minister’s efforts to put a ban to smacking was interpreted as an offensive link to the death of six year old Coral Burrows to the controversial political issue.”* (Young, 2003).

If Section 59 of the 1961 Crimes Act is repealed it would mean that parents could be prosecuted for assaulting their children. There is an underlying belief presented by the Prime Minister that the removal of Section 59 of the 1961 Crimes Act will identify the abuses that use this part of the Act as a mechanism

of defence. On the other hand it will not be her expectation that the Police would charge parent's who would smack their child. This does not include other reported incidences of physical abuse that are predominantly dealt through the nation's government and welfare body, the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

Child, Youth and Family Services ensure the care and protection of children in New Zealand. They define child abuse as the harming (whether physically, emotionally and sexually), ill treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person (*Section 2, Children and Young Persons Amendment Act, 1994*). They also have a 'no-hitting' policy that forms the work ethos of all social workers who are employed. There is a strong emphasis on promoting alternative methods of smacking to families. The Department adopts a very firm stance against any form of child abuse and strongly advocates that the use of any physical punishment, including corporal punishment, is unacceptable.

Child, Youth and Family Services have initiated campaigns that address the abuse of children. In 1994, the 'Breaking the Cycle' campaign implemented a child abuse prevention programme to raise awareness to the effects of all forms of abuse on children and young people. The following year, this campaign was used as a platform to commission other communicative campaigns focusing on child abuse and neglect. In September 1998, the 'Alternatives to Smacking' campaign was launched. It was intended to *"raise awareness about non-physical methods of discipline as alternatives to smacking....comprised television commercials, and radio commercials for Maori and Pacific People run on iwi and Pacific Island stations."* (Department of Child, Youth and Family, 2000, p.2).

The interagency guide to "Breaking the Cycle – 'lets stop child abuse together", defines physical abuse as follows: *"Any act or acts that result in inflicted injury to a child or young person. It may include, but is not restricted to:*

- *bruises and welts*
- *cuts and abrasions*
- *fractures and sprains*
- *abdominal injuries*
- *head injuries*
- *injuries to internal organs*
- *strangulation or suffocations*
- *poisoning*
- *burns or scalds”*

*“Such injuries or injury may be deliberately inflicted or the unintentional result of rage. Regardless of motivation, the result for the child is physical abuse”.* (Department of Child, Youth and Family, Breaking the Cycle Campaign 2001, revised from 1998 version).

This definition of physical abuse is clearly laid down for social workers employed by Child, Youth and Family Services. The injuries stated above do not happen unless it is physically administered by parents or caregivers who may believe that they are disciplining. But when their discipline falls in line with the above definition it clearly becomes abusive according to the Department.

Child, Youth and Family Services have taken the ‘no smacking’ position. However as mentioned earlier, Section 59 of the 1961 Crimes Act of New Zealand law allows parents to use the defence of reasonable force to physically discipline their children. The judge then has the responsibility of determining whether the parents’ use of reasonable force is justified in the circumstances or incidences of physical punishment. However, the dilemma is ‘what is reasonable force’ for what may be considered reasonable to one parent is abusive to another. There have been various suggestions in defining “reasonable” and what is clearly “not reasonable”. There was clear public support, as high as fifteen per cent, that were against the use of objects and ninety nine per cent against hitting

around the head. In his article 'Modify family discipline by finding the middle ground', Dr Shane Reti (2003) a researcher and a medical practitioner *"clearly showed 88 per cent against hitting with objects and 93 per cent against hitting around the head"*.

"Reasonable" has not been clearly outlined in the 1961 Crimes Act but instead is given to the discretion of the parent. Dr Shane Reti argues that what may be realistic for New Zealand as a society at this point is the position of banning hitting with objects around the head if there is to be an inroad in this area of changing the face of discipline for parenting in the 21 century. Reti (2003) concludes,

*"Every stakeholder will need to give a little to meet in this middle ground. For those wanting a ban on smacking, there is victory in making a small step towards that goal. For those wanting some rights to physically discipline children, these are retained with only the excesses stripped away"*.

Judith Thompson presents that in New Zealand law, children are protected in school where corporal punishment is no longer a method of discipline to be used. Employers cannot chastise their employees if they do not perform at an acceptable standard. Adults are not to use physical violence to resolve a difference. The 1995 Domestic Violence Act provides for protection from violence within close personal relationships in particularly women. Foster parents, caregivers and health and welfare workers who have responsibilities in respect of caring for children are not permitted to use any form of physical punishment in carrying out their duties.

Living in a society that preaches one message but actually promotes another through legislation is a reflection of today's current environment on people's

attitudes and behaviour towards parenting and child rearing when addressing physical discipline. Thompson (2000, p.40) further states that,

*“while the legal sanctioning of a parent’s right to use physical punishment is supported by many, others argue that the ambiguous legal situation undermines the promotion of non-violent child-rearing practices. It sends a clear message that the protection of children’s rights and dignity is accorded lower status than that of the adult members of our society”.*

New Zealand as a society and culture condones the usage of physical discipline as an option for parents and caregivers. Reti (2003) explains that a *“ban on smacking has never been supported by the general public of this nation”*.

#### ***The views of the New Zealand Government and the Nation***

In an article by ‘The Press’ the Government has been *“accused of political inertia and ‘pussy-footing’ around the smacking debate”*. (Claridge, 2003). The Government’s stance is that smacking will not be outlawed until two years’ time, regardless of pressure from children’s rights and child advocate groups. This is largely influenced by a result of polls that indicate that parents in this nation are very resistant towards any law change that will ban the smack as a form of discipline.

A Digi-Poll by the New Zealand Herald indicated that 69.5 per cent think that the current law on smacking is adequate, 27.2 per cent said no and 3.3 per cent did not know. Of those answering “yes” they were asked if they considered it reasonable in some circumstances to smack a child lightly. The results showed 98.8 per cent said “yes”, 0.06 per cent said “no” and 0.6 per cent “did not know”. (Masters, 2003).

In 2004 funding of \$10.8 million from Government was given to the Department of Child, Youth and Family to launch a multimedia education campaign focusing on the alternatives to physical discipline and the provision of parenting courses. The aim of this campaign being to lower staggering statistics presented by the above digi-poll and to change attitudes of parents in New Zealand opting to use the smack in some circumstances as a form of discipline. A formal review of this took place in 2005, election year, by which time the education campaign may have softened public resistance to repeal.

Regardless of this campaign championed through Child, Youth and Family Services, the Government itself seems to have an obvious division among Members of Parliament (MP) in relation to repealing Section 59 of the 1961 Crimes Act. The Minister of Social Services, Steve Maharey, welcomed the law change of using reasonable force as a legal defence in courts. That is reinforced by Green Party MP, Sue Bradford, who was drafting legislation to repeal Section 59 to stop parents from hitting their children, she believes that smacking adds to the culture of abuse that is rampant in New Zealand society. That is separate from the Private Members Bill written by New Zealand First MP Brian Donnelly that bans hitting a child around the head or using implements to punish them. The Youth Minister at the time, John Tamihere, *“supported the right of parents to give their kids a slap”*. (“MP Wants,” 2003).

Judith Collins, the National MP for Clevedon, does not believe that the law for smacking should be changed. Instead she argues, *“the current law, which permits parents to use ‘reasonable force’ in disciplining their children, should not be altered”*. (“MP Wants,” 2003). She attributes any break in the current law as an indication of a severely dysfunctional family, not an anomaly in the law. She believes that the law should only be changed on the grounds of improving its current status and it is her view that *“parents need the ability to discipline their child to prevent a dangerous behaviour developing. That doesn’t condone physical abuse or excessive force”*. (“MP Wants,” 2003).

The newly appointed Commissioner of Children, Cindy Kiro, clashes with the views of her predecessors Ian Hassal and Roger McClay who were advocates of outlawing all smacking; *"She defends parents who discipline their kids – when necessary – by tapping their bottoms. Parents should not be treated as criminals"*. ("Planned Law," 2003). However, in the Dominion Post, Ms Kiro was reported saying that *"Section 59 should be repealed both to stop adults getting off serious assault charges by citing reasonable force and to encourage parents to use other forms of discipline."* (Haines, 2003)

The resistance to repealing Section 59 is not a new concept to New Zealand society; a survey of 1000 people conducted by Sue Carswell (2001, p.31) for the Ministry of Justice in 2001 that found *"80 per cent of New Zealanders who told Government at the last poll that they wished to retain the right to discipline their own children..."*

Thompson (2000, p.40) cites Judith Karp saying, that New Zealand research indicates that, *"attitudes supporting smacking, and the actual occurrence of smacking, are both extremely common. Research undertaken by Ritchie and Ritchie (1981) found high levels of endorsement for the use of physical force in child-rearing practices, with nearly 89 per cent of parents approving of hitting children, and 11 per cent endorsing the right of parents to thrash a child."*

Gabrielle Maxwell, *"for the office of the Commissioner for Children, found a similar eighty per cent still in favour of smacking in 1993. Child Youth and Family evaluating the Alternatives to Smacking campaign from 1995 to 2000 found a reduction to fifty six per cent, and Sue Carswell, for the Ministry of Justice, showed the figure had increased again to eighty per cent in 2001"*. (Masters, 2003)

Bruce Logan (2003), Director of Maxim Institute, is not convinced,

*“that the repealing of Section 59 will address the issue and although the \$10 million multimedia education programme on alternatives to physical discipline might help a little but the focus is in the wrong place. The only way to solve the problem of child abuse in New Zealand is to face up to the nature of the environment that causes it. Youth Affairs Minister John Tamihere says, ‘What we have to do is build cultural and societal defences such that friends, family and others intervene very quickly to find any action of abuse and violence abhorrent’.*

Samoan minister of religion, Mua Strickson-Pua (cited in Mulu, 2001, pp.20-21) reinforces that saying *“no one sets out to kill a child but social and economic circumstances do, inevitably, affect families and can create an environment which results in physical violence”.*

It is obvious from the above readings that the majority of New Zealand parents believe that smacking remains an appropriate form of discipline in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Thompson (2000, p.40) comments that, *“in general, parents use smacking because they believe it is their duty to discipline their children, and that smacking is an effective form of discipline. They believe it works to stop undesirable behaviour immediately, and teaches right from wrong in the long term”.* As much as there are arguments to retain parental right to physically discipline their children there are equally debates in opposition.

Statistically there have been many incidences of children dying at the hands of their own parents. Details on homicide involving children under fourteen killed between 1990-1999 were presented to Parliament by Police Minister, George Hawkins. The statistics indicated that *“Fathers killed a quarter of all child homicide victims since 1990; mothers killed nearly a fifth of the children. Eighty-*

*seven children under 14 were killed between 1990-1999". Eighty-seven children under 14 were killed between 1990 and 1999. They were stabbed, suffocated, beaten, poisoned and shot. Most were killed by family, extended family or caregivers..."* ("Minister Presents", 2001). These statistics are not inclusive of the recent killing of primary aged sisters Saliel Aplin and Olympia Jetson; Coral Burrows by her step-father and two year-old Ngatuaine Shannen Vaevae.

Thompson (2000, p.40) believes, *"smacking does not achieve positive behaviour change, the effects are that children learn aggression from smacking, it is harmful to the child's sense of self worth and research indicates that physical punishment escalates to physical abuse and harm of children"*.

Patricia Brooks (2003) argues that, *'it is no coincidence that violent criminals invariably come from homes where physical punishment was the only form of discipline and violence the currency of control'*.

This opinion is reinforced by Prime Minister Helen Clark who believes that the move to take the defence of reasonable force out of the law sends a clear message that physical discipline is unacceptable, which in extreme cases can lead to the death and disability of children.

Beth Wood, an advocate for putting a ban on smacking, in an article 'Smacking Children – Does it Do Them Any Harm?', illustrates her point from a column presented by the Herald of 28 October 2000 called, "100 Years Ago – From Herald Files" explaining that there has been no progressive move forward from 100 years ago till today if assaults on children presented to the court are dismissed for lack of strong evidence to make a conviction. In this column a judge gave a lenient conviction and sentence to an employer for *"striking his servant on the head and body with a broom, scratching her on the forehead and stuffing her mouth with salt; striking her repeatedly on the body with a strap and then throwing boiling water over her arm"*. (Wood, 2002). Of the above charges

the judge perceived the charge of assault with the broom as punishable saying that *“he did not consider any person justified under any circumstances in striking a servant with a broom handle. The defendant was fined \$2 or, in default, 48 hours imprisonment”*. (Wood, 2002). More recently, a jury in a case in Hawkes, Bay *“found a father not guilty of assault following a beating with a stick that left bruising on the child’s bottom several days later...”* (ibid: 2002).

The issue Wood highlights is not whether smacking does any harm, but rather the personal and physical integrity and protection from risk of harm. However, that does not negate research that undoubtedly presents physical punishment as damaging. For example, Beth Wood cites Penelope Leach’s research into physical punishment in which her findings state that:

- *“Physical punishment increases aggression in punished children and the adults they become.*
- *The probability of physical punishments leading to aggressive behaviour, always high, is highest of all when they are administered in an attempt to prevent or control it.*
- *Physical punishment, particularly its unique juxtaposition of love with pain, and submission with anger, is associated with a wide range of emotional and mental health problems in later life.*
- *There are clearly established links between physical punishment in childhood and later juvenile delinquency.*
- *The more that small children are hit, the more likely it is that they will fail to fulfil the intellectual potential predicated for them by earlier cogitative testing”*. (ibid: 2002).

### **The Samoan Community**

How does all this relate to the Samoan Community? The statistics presented earlier in relation to child abuse deaths in New Zealand between 1990-1999, indicated that two were Samoan children. In 1997 a baby boy of ten months died

of multiple wounds and in 1999 a male Samoan youth of thirteen years died as a result of neglect. That did not include the death of five-year-old Liotta Leuta in 2000, who died from a prolonged beating from his mother.

Although these death statistics may present as minimal in comparison to the forty-one Maori and thirty-five Pakeha (Maori translation of white person) over this time frame, it is still significantly large when it is viewed in context of the percentage of Samoans in New Zealand.

The Samoan community since their migration to New Zealand in large numbers from the 1970s have had an impact in this nation's political, economic and social arena. Issues pertaining to this nation on these fronts will undoubtedly impact the face of Samoan families as they challenge the fundamental principles of Fa'asamoa, which is simply defined as the 'Samoan Way'. To further expand on this definition, Field (1991, p.20) cites Tupuola Efi, a leading Samoan politician definition of Fa'asamoa as:

*"... a body of custom and usage. It is a mental attitude to God, to fellow men and to his surroundings. It is a distinctive lifestyle. It is not the physical make-up, the mood or passion of one man. It is a collection of spiritual and cultural values that motivates people....It is the heritage of people. Fa'asamoa provides individuals, the Aiga (extended family) and the nu'u (village) with an identity and a place in the society with carefully defined, but unwritten roles and rules."*

The Fa'asamoa is very important to Samoan people and has been described as the *"umbilical cord that attaches Samoans to their culture."* (Mulitalo; 2000, p.21). It encompasses values of love, respect, humility and support. These fundamental principles are universally shared with other Pacific People cultural groups and is the microscope for how they see their world regardless of cultural context; this also translates to their way of parenting and child rearing.

The way that Samoan parents instruct and raise their children is not always easily understood in the realm of discipline especially when there are reported incidences of physical abuse from a Western perspective but are regarded as appropriate discipline by a Samoan parent. Regardless of geographical context for Samoan and Pacific people, physical punishment is a common practice and is frowned upon by those who do not understand why Samoan parents administer it especially when it is harsh. Fitiseanu, D., Green, K., Hall, D., Wright, D.H., Mackenzie, B., Nautu, D., (1994, p.33) in their research among American Pacific Islanders reinforces the contextual issue saying,

*“From the perspective of middle-class, White Americans, Pacific Islander disciplinary practices seem harsh. Almost always, in the families of people interviewed, discipline involved forthright physical punishment.”*

Dr Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop (2001, p.61), explains in her ‘Tetee Atu’ programme in Samoa in that, *“hitting children is still regarded by many Samoan parents and grandparents as a natural part of child rearing that is supported by the biblical text that to ‘spare the rod’ is to ‘spoil the child’”.*

This school of thought was also reinforced in a discussion with a group of Samoan social workers from American Samoa in 2003, who indicated that harsh physical discipline has also been a concern in their work with Samoan families. They found the older generation hit their children before a child has been told what they have done wrong. One social worker stated that in her experiences, physical discipline is behaviour that has been based on upbringing and parents can only behave according to what they have been taught. She continued to relay that it is not the intention of Samoan parents to abuse their children. She believes these parents have not been shown other ways to administer discipline. As a collective group of Samoan social workers in American Samoa they expressed that they understand the practice but believe that there is a limit to what a child can learn through physical punishment.

Physical punishment as a form of discipline in Samoan families is normal for many Samoans and have been viewed positively by those who have experienced it. For example, two Samoan participants interviewed viewed their punishment as character building and expressed that it made them better people. They elaborated by saying;

- *“If somebody were to ask if I was abused when I was a child I would say no”.*
- *“I think I learned more being disciplined – being hit, rather than not being hit. I think I learned more from my father through discipline. If it wasn’t for him, I wouldn’t be here today”.* (Fitisemanu et al., 1994, p.33)

These statements may not sit well for child rights advocates such as Beth Wood and Judith Thompson but they are common in the Samoan community. Fitisemanu et al. (ibid, p.33) cites Gray and Cosgrove 1985, in defence saying,

*“If people involved do not experience physical punishment as tyranny and abuse – if, to the contrary, they see the punishment as centrally important to the development of their own positive character qualities and to the maintenance of family stability – by what right may someone with another theory of childrearing impose a negative value judgement?”*

That may be so and not challenged in a Samoan social context of Western Samoa and American Samoa, but when the context is other than your backyard then one needs to look at the social context that their children are being raised in and exposed to. For example, the reality for Samoans residing in New Zealand is that they are no longer in the social comforts of their villages and country of origin. New Zealand is the home of their children born and raised in this nation. Therefore the policies of this nation and any change of legislation will affect and challenge the Samoan values in relation to child rearing and parenting.

The Samoan community were thrust into the limelight in 1995 over the Ioana Fuimaono incident, in which a fifteen-year-old youth was beaten publicly whilst in her care. That not only horrified the community in New Zealand but equally the Samoan community who were left with the responsibility and aftertaste of answering the actions of this renowned Samoan leader who took into her care youth offenders. Ioana claimed and justified her actions as simply the 'Samoan Way'. Ben Taufua (as cited in Heal, 1995, p.137) saying,

*“there is no denying that physical discipline is a common practice in the Samoan culture and that the belt, sticks and slaps are used. However, commenting on the Ioana Fuimaono case Taufua among other key Samoan leaders strongly condemns the physical discipline Ioana carried out on a youth in the care of her community service.”*

Samoan Council Chairman Fa'amatuinu Tino Pereira (as cited in Mulu, 2001, pp.20-21) spoke out, *“in an effort to separate the issues of culture from abusive practice. Doing harm and injuring children has nothing to do with culture”* For Ioana the Samoan Way in which she claimed to have physically disciplined the youth might have been appropriate in her own context, but it was clearly not appropriate for one of her status serving in the community as the director for South Auckland's Samoa Fa'a Fouina Trust.

Liotta Leuta, a five-year-old from Otara in South Auckland, who died in 2000 after a prolonged beating from her thirty-year-old mother Sipea Leuta, was a simple reminder to the Samoan community of the Ioana Fuimaono incident and the ripple effects of four-year-old James Whakaruruhau and two-year-old Delcelia Witika. The Samoan Community were once again the centre of attention of child abuse through harsh physical discipline, and claims of it being a part of Samoan cultural practice. Fa'amatuinu Tino Pereira (as cited in Magnall, 1993, p.24), in a campaign launched in Wellington to combat child abuse, publicly declared a challenge to the Samoan community saying;

*'We have got to wake up and see this has gone too far. We shouldn't ever use culture as an excuse for any abuse – physical, sexual or emotional.'* Furthermore he states, *"Samoa parents' harsher approach to discipline puts them in a dilemma. Samoans believe they have to discipline the kids to become upstanding citizens...People in the Samoan community here have argued it is part of their culture that if a kid misbehaves you bang him on the head, whether or not that causes significant harm, because that is how they were raised in Samoa".*

For Samoan parents there is a strong sense of obligation and priority to teach their children a sense of respect for an adult. They are expected to teach their children at a very early age the right way of behaving. Therefore as a caring parent the use of discipline is to ensure that these lessons are learnt at an early age and it is not intended to harm the child. Unfortunately, *"excessive uses of force are administered by the parents and harmful as there is a belief that this is the most effective method"*. (Stringer & Clapp; 1998, p.267).

Fitisemanu et al. (1994, p.33) identified in their findings that *"discipline among Pacific Islanders is intimately connected with caring and also with respect."*

The discipline of children is very important in the Samoan culture and this can be administered physically to the point that this is deemed the most appropriate method in chastising misbehaviour. To not practice this method for inappropriate behaviour is to imply that the parents do not love their child and therefore relinquishing an important aspect of their role. Where does this belief come from? As mentioned earlier by Fa'amatuainu Tino Pereira some Samoans have argued that this is part of the Samoan culture. Dr Pita Taouma (as cited in Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998, p.139) says,

*“the ideas Pacific Islanders have about raising and disciplining children have the same roots as the ideas of palagi [European] New Zealanders. The roots are the Victorian religious teaching that was brought to us by palagi missionaries over 160 years ago. Palagi New Zealanders believed the same things until recently – we are just a bit behind the times that’s all”.*

Fa’amatua’inu Tino Pereira (as cited in Mulu, 2001, pp20-21) later in an interview with Women’s Weekly explained,

*“there is a need to separate the issues of culture from that of abusive practice, as there is no relationship between culture and doing harm and injuring children.”* He continues to say, *“while the practice of corporal punishment has its roots in old Biblical teachings introduced by Europeans who settled in the islands in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, it has continued to evolve down the generations and, as a result, become very much a part of the Samoan way”.*

The way Samoan parents in New Zealand administer discipline today is related to their social context and upbringing when they were living in Western Samoa. The issue of violence towards children in Western Samoa has not changed from the time of migration of Samoans to New Zealand.

In 1999, Chief Justice, Tiavaasue Falefatu Sapolu, of Samoa addressed the issue of violence inflicted on children in Samoa by launching seminars in the country to appropriately address this concern. The idea was birthed from a violent incident that occurred in early May 1999 when a thirty six-year-old man beat his seven-year-old step-daughter to death. The President of the National Council of Women at the time, Mele Mataafa (as cited in Ah Mu, 1999, p.41) said,

*“when we talk about hitting children first, the members kept saying this is the Samoan way. I hit them because I love them. Mele continued to say, “We are hoping that people will think before they hit. We are hoping too that mothers will help teach husbands and sons not to hit and so on. We have to see what training is needed.”*

It is not surprising that Samoans have brought with them their child rearing and parenting methods based on what they have been exposed to and experienced in their own environment to New Zealand. As presented, discipline is very important to Samoan parents and at times physical punishment is deemed the most appropriate method. But in a New Zealand social context this appropriate method comes under scrutiny when children are severely harmed.

### **Summary**

The literature is an illustration of New Zealand and Samoan's position on physical discipline for the purposes of parenting and child rearing. The majority of the nation indicated in research carried out by the Department of Child, Youth and Family, the Ministry of Justice and digi-polls, that as parents they did not want Section 59 of the Crimes Act, 1961, to be repealed. The members in Government are at logger heads on the issue, some supporting the smack as a parental option while the Prime Minister Helen Clark wanted it to be repealed as she saw this as a solution to address the issue of child abuse in New Zealand.

There are clearly for and against arguments and justification for smacking. There are suggestions it may be suitable at this time in the New Zealand parental climate to define “reasonable” in Section 59, of the Crimes Act that will work towards eventually having this section repealed in the future.

In relation to Samoan parenting and child rearing, Section 59 can be seen as coinciding with Samoan disciplinary practices. However in saying this, Samoan and Pacific authors have presented a glimpse of Samoan parenting and child

rearing disciplinary methods that can result in abuse. There are arguments within the Samoan community presented later in the research that physical discipline is Samoan cultural practice, while others explained it as generational learnt behaviour. However, regardless of these arguments, it is clear that physical punishment is commonly used as a method of discipline in Samoan families. It becomes a greater concern when this method is excessively used and harmful to the child.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

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## **A HISTORY OF THE STRUCTURE OF SAMOAN FAMILIES IN SAMOAN SOCIETY AND NEW ZEALAND**

### ***Introduction***

The current chapter captures the notion of contextualising Samoan children in their collective families and presents the role of parents, children and their families in a Samoan household.

The Aiga social structure as identified by the participants is a functional and living unit in the Samoan culture. It describes the journey of Samoans to New Zealand bringing with them their cultural heritage, beliefs and values that is encompassed in the Fa'asamoa. The data has been drawn from literature on Samoan families and raw data collated through the interviews with the twelve participants. These leaders have shared their personal experiences of being raised in Samoan homes and how their family environment has affected and informed their professional practice in the community when working with Samoan families.

### ***Journey of Migration – “O Le Malaga”***

There are two Samoas, one in the Eastern part which is known as American Samoa and the other that is commonly known in New Zealand given the migration of Samoans to this nation is Western Samoa which is now officially known as the 'Independent State of Samoa' as of 1997.

Samoans first came in contact with Europeans in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and since this time American Samoa and Western Samoa have found, *“themselves economically dependent on outside financial aid and migrant remittances, facing challenges to their social organisation and customs...”* (Hughes, 1997, p.342). American Samoa was ceded to the Americans in 1900 by a group of High Chiefs and to date continues to be an American territory. Western Samoa was under the administration of the New Zealand Government from 1914 of the Germans until Independence was gained on 01 June 1962. Western Samoa became the

first Polynesian country to gain independence. That is an event that is celebrated not only in Samoa but also within Samoan communities of New Zealand.

*“Emigration began during the post-war colonial period when very small numbers of Samoans, mainly those of mixed ancestry, began to settle in New Zealand. Significant emigration did not commence until after Samoan independence when a quota system was introduced under a Treaty of Friendship.”* (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998, p.166)

A new way of life was not a foreign concept for Samoans given the impact and influence that the Germans and New Zealand administration had over them before they became an independent country. The colonisation of Samoa under the Germans but more so by New Zealand had left a bitter taste of Western rule over her people. This resulted in a ‘Mau Movement’, ‘*mau*’ connoting ‘*Samoan opinion*’ (Meleisea; 2004, p.169) that was established by the people in resistance to New Zealand administration. Samoans are a proud people and their way of life is protected because it has worked for their community prior to Western influence and rule.

*“Since the 1940s Samoans have always comprised more than half of the population segment which New Zealanders refer to as ‘Pacific Islanders’.* (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998, p.165). That continues to remain and is reflected in the New Zealand 2001 Census statistics. The Samoan population is one of seven Pacific People groups in New Zealand. These groups are Cook Island, Tonga, Niue, Fiji, Tokelau and Tuvalu. Auckland, New Zealand is identified as the ‘Polynesian Capital’ of the world with Samoans making up the largest Pacific Island contingency in this nation. According to the *“2001 Census Population and Dwellings”, the Samoan population made up of Samoans born in New Zealand and overseas comprised of 115,000 or 50% of New Zealand’s Pacific population of 231,800*” (Statistics New Zealand Census, 2001).

Samoans gradually started arriving to New Zealand in small pockets in the 1950s and 1960s but increased in the 1970s when the New Zealand labour market was in need of unskilled and semi-skilled labourers. *“New Zealand did not think of itself as a migrant-taking country. The growth of emigration in the 1970s was a kind of extension of the country’s colonial relationship with the Pacific”*. (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998, p.166). For Samoans in Western Samoa that was perceived as an opportunity to better their lifestyle but specifically viewed in the context of the family. New Zealand was the land of milk and honey and an opening to advance their families back home and also their own families in their new place of residence. The vision was to give their off-spring the opportunities in a new country that they did not have themselves when growing up as children. The early migrant Samoans saw education as the key to opening doors of prosperity and success that they observed the Palagi had advanced for their own children.

As pioneers for the future generation of Samoans born and raised in New Zealand and Samoans migrating through the quota system, they set a precedence of hard work to follow and they succeeded in their work places with limited skills, education and language. The vision was clear and there was no compromise. Many Samoans worked in factories or did service work and therefore any opportunity of over-time offered was seized. *“Their goal was to maximise their income in order to meet their obligations, to send money home, to contribute to their new church congregations and lastly to provide for their own needs (food, clothing and shelter)”*. (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998, p.166). The key to this survival was to remember the purpose of their journey and remain connected to their homeland and especially their families in Samoa who supported them. However hard and trying the days were for them, they took with pride and privilege the hope, dreams and visions of their families back home in order to sustain them.

This first wave of Samoans to New Zealand saw the journey greater than themselves. The bigger picture was always collective and to this day it has not changed. The benefits that are now reaped by the generation of Samoans in New Zealand are due to the hard toil of the first wave of Samoan migrants. As New Zealand born Samoans, part of our identity is to understand the sacrifice that was made by this first wave who settled successfully in a foreign country whose language, way of life and culture was in contrast to their own. Nevertheless they saw it as an opportunity that was worth seizing, especially when it could benefit their collective families and community.

### ***Beliefs and Values***

Each person has his or her own set of beliefs and values as it has an effect on how people interact with each other. That can be influence through their families, association with a cultural group, gender group, a person's sexuality, religious affiliation, political party and much more. A person's belief and values is a paradigm of truth that he or she has chosen to live by and believes in, given the person's own biography, history, and life experiences. This guides how people see themselves, how they relate to others and how they understand and perceive the world that they live in and around them. Belief as defined in Collins Dictionary (1995, p.97) is *"a principle accepted as true especially without proof or an opinion; conviction or religious faith"*.

There are a number of definitions for 'value' but in the context of Samoan people, *"they are shared beliefs among people of the same culture about what is the right way to behave. Often conflict between groups occurs because the cultures are based on different values"*. (Meleisea, 2004, p.183). A person's values can influence his or her attitudes, choices and decisions; but equally can change over time depending on what you allow to be of value to you as a person.

There is no set of definitive beliefs and values that is specific to the human race as it is something that develops over time for an individual. However, there are

shared beliefs and values that can connect one person to another and therefore create an atmosphere of relationship through association, familiarity and commonality. People of different cultural backgrounds often have some values in common; for example respect for authority, religious values, cultural principles, honesty, hard work and much more.

In the Western world dominant values regarding people and society can be traced to four different sources:

- *“Judeo-Christian doctrine with its concept of the integral worth of the individual and one’s responsibility for one’s neighbour.*
- *Democratic ideals that emphasize the equality of all and their rights.*
- *The Puritan ethics that says that character is all, circumstance is nothing, that the moral person is the one who works and is independent and that pleasure is sinful.*
- *The tenets of Social Darwinism emphasize that the fittest survive and the weak person in a natural evolutionary process produces the strong individual and society”.*

(Brill, 1990, pp.25-26)

The Western society dominant values are not inclusive of Polynesian cultural values that are pertinent to Pacific people or Indigenous cultures and their way of life. These beliefs and values give a rationale and explanation of their worldview within their own cultural constructs. For example, Samoan people have a set of beliefs and values that are influenced by Fa’asamoa, their concept of family and Christian faith. These belief systems give an insight to the fabric of Samoan society and explain how people feel, think and behave and to this day it continues to be embedded in the people.

The most prominent system of beliefs for Samoans today is the influence of Christianity. Christianity was introduced by two missionaries, John Williams and Charles Barf from the London Missionary Society. They arrived in Samoa in 1830 at the village Sapapali'i on the island of Savaii. The message was welcomed on Samoan soil by the mere fact that Christianity and old Samoan beliefs were very similar but more importantly through a prophecy from the Samoan demi-god Nafanua who predicted a new religion that would end the rule of old gods. Christianity is an excellent example of how belief systems affected the daily life of Samoan people and the role it played in giving significance to people's actions. Once a people who believed in polytheism were now embracing the one True God. ("A Brief History", 2004).

A person's value base very often grows out of belief systems. As indicated in the Literature Review Chapter, these values are *love, respect, humility and support* that have become fundamental guiding principles of Fa'asamoa. Additional to these values as described by Mulitalo (2000, p.39) in the context of social service and social work are "*osi Aiga (proactive in support of the family), Fa'akerisiano (Christian behaviour), Matai (chief or chiefly status) and gender*". These principles are parallel to the Christian belief system and are often inclusive in the Fa'asamoa and seen as synonymous.

The twelve Samoan participants who were interviewed come from an eclectic background of social and community work practice and development not only in their Samoan communities and families but also in collaboration with other Pacific people groups. As Samoan professionals a lot of who they are as individuals in their collective upbringing as well as their current experiences has informed their practice today. In social work and community practice there is an emphasis on the personal and professional and the ability of a practitioner to manoeuvre between the two realms without compromise and impose their own values on another. Hepworth and Larsen (1993, p.110) explained,

*“values of a profession refer to strongly held beliefs about people, preferred goals for people, preferred means of achieving those goals, and preferred conditions of life. Stated simply, values represent selected ideals as to how the world should be and how people should normally act. Furthermore, all professions have value preferences that give purpose, meaning, and direction to people who practice within them. Indeed, the purpose and objectives of social workers and other professionals emanate from their respective value systems”.*

As Samoans in social work and community practice they have come with their own personal experiences. For example they described how they were raised in their families, whether it was through birth parents, grandparents or the combination of both including the extended family, whether the Samoan culture, Christianity and education influenced this up-bringing and family unit; and lastly the impact of migration on families to New Zealand and where they settled. From these personal experiences and much more come the beliefs and values of not only the participants but people in general. These internal and external factors influence the way we see ourselves, how we choose our partners and how we presently raise our children or children in our care, how we engage with our own families, community groups and government and also how we work with families in our professions and relate to each other. All these contributing and influencing factors have an impact on how the participants interviewed work with Samoan families.

As identified by a group of Pacific Island Community and Social Workers in Auckland they collectively imply that there are four main value areas that are important to them as Pacific people in their professions, these are, *“culture, family, community and the processes of learning and change”*. (“Good Social”, p.6).

When working with Samoan families there is an importance in understanding the culture that you are working with because there is a clear distinction of what is Fa'asamoa as opposed to what is European. For Samoan practitioners in the community and Government an understanding and appreciation of Samoan values is vital in order to be effective agents of change and influence with Samoan families. The values described earlier are intrinsic and expected of social and community work practitioners, as that will define a working relationship that would go forward and bring to the surface conducive and realistic solutions for the family. The cultural competence and extensive background of the participants have informed their practice with Samoan families. It is the awareness that Samoan families work from a collective model of practice as opposed to an individualistic model most common in European families that has brought about a positive working relationship with their clients. Coming from a premise that is in isolation of Samoan values in the context of family can be very difficult when trying to engage Samoan families in a European societal context. The greatest challenge for the practitioners is that they too should be role-modelling the recommended changes that they address with their Samoan clients in their own lives or families.

All of the participants interviewed in this research come with their Samoan culture, family, community, village, an extensive genealogy and they each represent respective places and positions in this collective model. The participants shared their stories of what life was like for them when growing up in Samoa and New Zealand, the impact that their parents and caregivers had on their lives, the relationships they had with their immediate and extended families, the influence of the church and education, what they understood and applied as Fa'asamoa, the prejudices, discrimination and racism that they received as the first flow of Samoan migrants to New Zealand, the nostalgia for Samoa upon migration, their love for their families in Samoa and New Zealand, the relationships they have with their partners and children or children in their care and inevitably how all this and working in the community and Government in their

respective places of employment has impacted the way they work with Samoan families which is implicit of their children and young people.

### ***Aiga Structure***

Aiga means “family” in English, and unlike the European definition of family, “*a social group consisting of parents and their offspring*”, Collins Dictionary (1997, p.270). Aiga for Samoans consists of immediate and extended families through birth and marriage. Mulitalo (1998, p.38) describes the Samoan Aiga as “*group of people who are members of both the nuclear and the extended family. It is used in the Samoan sense to include not only the immediate family, but also the whole union of families of a clan and even those who, although not related, are subject to family control*”. It is clearly not just biological and it even encompasses those who may have a political affiliation to the Aiga.

In the family structure the parental role in Samoa is very important and largely administered by the birth parents. However, they have the option to call upon the support of other family members in the village when necessary. As the child gets older the care still remains with the primary caregivers but is also administered by family in a village setting. This is also mirrored with families in New Zealand when there are other family members living in the same household. The New Zealand culture and its standards of living do not allow the luxury of primary caregivers of children to spend a lot of time with them and so for many Samoan families the caregiver becomes a grandparent or another relative. It is not a foreign concept for Samoans to have their children in the care of their parents or other family members, but seen in context of supporting the parents who cannot afford to stay home given the financial pressures of their current environment and supporting family in Samoa. This is not viewed as neglectful nor does it create detachment from or disassociation with the parents because the child remains in their parent’s home whilst the care is administered by family members.

A Samoan child's socialisation regarding roles and responsibility begins in the home with their collective family. As reinforced by Afeaki (2001, pp.35-37),

*"...collectivity gives insight to the way which a Pacific young person achieves holistic development (mind, spirit, body and family relationship) as they grow towards adulthood."*

A Samoan child learns this is through observing appropriate Samoan behaviour and etiquette from their parents, caregivers, older siblings and other significant Aiga members who have an active part of their upbringing. The Fa'asamoa is not necessarily explained but lives in the home and family environment. Samoan children at a young age are expected to learn through observation and role modelling. This is also reinforced in their extended families and churches who commonly share the same beliefs and values regarding parenting and child rearing. For example, the scripture injunction *"Honour thy father and thy mother: that they days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee"* (The Holy Bible, Exodus 20:12), is what Samoan parents would relay to their children to reinforce the respectful and obedient roles that they are to accord to their parents. However the sustainability of this by Samoan migrant parents in a Western context can be very difficult to maintain as their children are exposed to an eclectic pool of behaviour, influence and lifestyle that is contrary to their collective cultural upbringing. That inevitably creates conflict in the child especially if the parents do not have an awareness or minimal understanding of how life is very different for a child raised in New Zealand as opposed to their upbringing in Samoa.

Children are treasured and seen as a gift from God in Samoan families. It is because of this belief that their care is protected by their parents and family members. There is not one Samoan child who is not seen in the context of his or her families or is left to fend for themselves as everyone has a vested interest and responsibility for children whom they regard as part of their family. Therefore

an event or issue concerning a Samoan child belongs to his or her family, from a graduation or wedding celebration to a family group conference to care and protection concerns. The family will come together.

The development of the Samoan child in his or her formative years is centred in the family environment and church unless the parent decides for the child to attend a mainstream kindergarten or preschool in preparation for primary school education. Today in New Zealand there is the Samoan equivalent of preschool called 'Aoga Amata', where Samoan values and language is a large part of the educational curriculum. Not only is Fa'asamoa modelled in the home but it is reinforced at Aoga Amata. A lot of a Samoan child's socialisation is within his or her family context or children from church and their parent's community.

Like any parent, there is an ingrained desire among Samoan parents for their children to succeed in a foreign context; as this was part of their journey to New Zealand. When a Samoan child succeeds this is not only a celebration for his or her parents but the whole family. This success conjures family pride because one of their own has advanced and perceived as a good evaluation and reflection of their successful care and upbringing of their child. This relationship is reciprocal, because the success does not belong to the individual but to the collective. Equally if the child is in trouble the family will share in the disappointment and hurt and will provide counsel to the parents or caregivers who are affected the most and will also discuss a solution for the problem.

Samoans centre their lives around their families, village, community and church; and these are rarely seen in isolation from each other. The Samoan family and their cultural traditions, values, beliefs and customs in the Fa'asamoa are what solidify this structure. The Aiga structure at times may have been shaken but never relinquished; it is an irreplaceable way of life for Samoans that has worked for them for many years prior to the initial contact of the Western world. As mentioned earlier, the context of raising children for a Samoan family and their

practices of Fa'asamoa is irrelevant to a Samoan migrant; their way of life is permeated in the lives of their children and is the basis for the way they parent and discipline.

### ***Participants Definition of Aiga***

In the lives of the twelve participants interviewed each of Samoan descent collectively agreed that their understanding and meaning of family was much more than the mainstream nuclear definition of family which is seen as only the father, mother and their children. Not all were raised by their birth parents for varying reasons but raised by extended family members such as grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles, adopted parents who are related to either birth parent.

All twelve participants recognised their mainstream nuclear family but this was inclusive of the extended family including their parents, their parents' brothers and sisters and their families, grandparents, their own siblings' partners and children, cousins and their families. One of the twelve participants who I will call participant 'E' identified the genealogical reference of Samoan families to Matai (High Chief) title names as this connects one to the family land and village of that particular district. Family for this individual in Samoa means you are connected through the title name or blood; you were recognised as family as soon as one could make this connection. Participant 'E' further described Samoan families consisting of many contours in the nuclear household meaning traditional versus modern family. For example he was the eldest of a large immediate family of eleven siblings; the youngest sibling in his family was raised differently because of the age difference. She had the privilege of attending private school as opposed to public school that her older siblings attended. Therefore her life and worldview were different from the realities that her older siblings had experienced.

It was also interesting that a couple of participants gave two separate definitions of family and Aiga; separating the two languages clearly portrayed this difference. They described that family for them in the English language is primarily limited to the mainstream nuclear family, whereas 'Aiga' does not differentiate between mainstream nuclear family and the extended family. In fact it sees both units as one. For example one of the two, participant 'K' broke his family down, by describing the mainstream nuclear family as himself and his children, the extended family included himself and his siblings and then outside of this extended family he brought both the mainstream nuclear family, the extended family and included his uncles, aunties, nephews, nieces, his parents and grandparents. He described his family in layers but once again his definition of family obviously encapsulated the whole. Participant 'H' described family as mainstream nuclear when she first arrived to New Zealand as opposed to the collective up-bringing that she had back in Samoa, but was clear not to negate her recognition of her extended family and assistance to them when they are in need. This was also spoken of by participant 'D' who stated that although there is a large concept of family when looking through the eyes of a Samoan individual, there is a strong recognition of the concept of a smaller family which is the mainstream nuclear family.

It is clear from the definitions above that Samoan families are large when simply and loosely defined but when one looks into the definition of a Samoan family there is a deeper and all encompassing meaning to the concept of this term. When family is defined in the English term, it does not at all capture the Samoan concept of Aiga that is inclusive of the whole of many parts. It is not a concept that is lightly taken by any Samoan because they represent his or her heritage, culture, language, tradition, custom, land, title names of their Aiga.

When working with Samoan families one needs to have an awareness, if not a knowledge, of the Samoan child or young person in recognition of his or her Aiga

if there is to be a successful inroad, especially when addressing sensitive issues pertaining to child abuse.

The understanding of a child and young person is very different to a Samoan definition of child and young person. A child and young person according to the 'Children's Young Persons and their Families Act' is one who is between the ages of zero to seventeen-years-old. But in Samoan families a child is deemed a child or your child even into their adulthood. Even this definition in itself does not fully describe the concept of a Samoan child to his or her parents.

It was very clear in my dialogue with the participants that Aiga is very important to them as it is the epitome of their identity and what makes them who they are today. The adage *"It takes a village to raise a child"* is an absolute truth for Samoans within the context of Samoan families in Samoa and to an extent in New Zealand because everyone in the Aiga and the village contributes to the child's upbringing and welfare.

### ***Aiga in Samoa***

In Samoa the families belongs to a village that *"is divided into several families with each family being subject to an elder Matai"*. (Mulitalo, 2000, p.39). The Matai is generally divided into Ali'i (noblemen/titular high chief) and Tulafale (orators or talking chief) and are elected by consensus. They are the head of the family and are responsible for the family, their lands, chiefly titles, resources and status in the village. The Matai ensures that the family's best interest is served in village affairs.

The families are subject to village lore which is governed by village council comprising each family's Matai. These Matai's are regarded as authority in the village and ensure that peace is maintained among the families. They participate in village decision making and collectively agree on appropriate village etiquette and behaviours which are deemed punishable if not adhered to. Many debates

and speeches on all subjects are conducted in this formal setting and at all times it is consensus-based and everyone must agree on the decision or no decision is made. However, some deliberations are in isolation of issues pertaining to the immediate family, these are solely discussed within their own immediate settings.

There is no one set lore for all the villages in Samoa. Each village has its own lore and chiefly titled names. The villages in Samoa are self-sufficient and are largely supported by family members residing overseas.

Upon migration to New Zealand the church became a mirror image of village life in Samoa, but the difference was that all debates, issues of importance and decisions were discussed with a group of Samoans who represented different villages and Aiga both from the Independent State of Samoa and American Samoa. The minister in this setting asserted an additional role and became the arbitrator of issues and conflicts.

An equally important function of Aiga is the 'Fa'asamoa' and in the context of Aiga it is *"the sociological setting in Samoa centered around family and church it was a way of life that shaped the values and attitudes of the great majority of Samoan who have migrated to New Zealand."* (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998, p.183).

The collective family structure through Fa'asamoa was an environment supported and upheld by the basic Samoan foundation of village life. Therefore, Samoans through migration transplanted this concept to their families in New Zealand because for them it is a way of life that works.

### ***Impact of Migration on the Aiga Structure***

The 'Treaty of Friendship' that was signed between New Zealand and Samoa in 1962 upon Samoa's independence guaranteed a high degree of cooperation and association with New Zealand. Inclusive in this 'Treaty of Friendship' was a

quota of 1,100 Samoans to enter New Zealand each year under immigration scrutiny.

The impact of migration and the dominance of the Western culture has brought an inevitable change in the basic premises of family life for Samoans living in New Zealand as oppose to living in Samoa. There is no longer the close proximity of family living nearby whose support was easily accessible on a daily basis. But now Samoan families from different villages are scattered around New Zealand and if clustered together it does not have the immediacy of your own family.

Although the European influence on the structure of families, parenting and child rearing was introduced into Samoa through the missionaries and later with intermarriage, there still remained a strong Samoan element of parenting and child rearing the Samoan way because the environment was Samoan. Migrating to New Zealand not only meant demographic separation for families but it also created a new way of life which inevitably influenced and challenged Fa'asamoa. It was now being slowly replaced by an autonomous individualistic way of life, which is the basic premise of the European nations. However, what seemed to sustain the Fa'asamoa was the establishment of churches in New Zealand where many Samoans congregated to support each other and connect as Samoans as opposed to villages in Samoa. The Samoan way of life was continually reinforced and nurtured in an environment that gave them permission to be Samoan in a different context.

Today, in New Zealand the Samoan community continues to remain intact not only through the churches, but through the establishment of Samoan community groups. Samoan leaders are working and being represented in community organisations and government. The Samoan language and Fa'asamoa is taught to children as young as preschoolers at Samoan preschool to high school and tertiary levels. The Samoan community continues to be a people group that

exudes collectivism regardless of Western influence and the impact of migration to New Zealand.

Taule'ale'ausumai (as cited in Alefaio 1999, p.166) vividly illustrates the importance of collectivism through a description of the Samoan family structure:

*“Unlike the nuclear family of Western society, Samoa’s social existence is collective and corporate. Family life extends out beyond the nuclear family, incorporating uncles, aunties, both sets of grandparents and many cousins. Therefore children are thought of as belonging not only to their parents but also to the wider kin group and, in the case of Samoans, to the village community, inclusive of the church”.*

### **Summary**

The journey of Samoans to New Zealand was supported by family members which remained in Samoa. As Samoans migrated to New Zealand they brought with them their beliefs and values which inevitably guide how they live, how they connect with other Samoans, how they see themselves, establish their own families and raise their children.

The reinforcement of the Samoan way was established in the churches, as it was a reflection of village life in Samoa. They realised that in order to survive on foreign soil they needed to connect with other Samoans and the churches brought the community of Samoans together.

The foundations of the majority of Samoans are collectively based with connections to their extended family members, village and church. The participants come from collective families and they identified this unit as an important institution.

The data retrieved through the experiences of the participants not only identifies the Samoan family unit as an important functional and active institution but reinforces the fact that Samoan children and young people will always be viewed through the telescope of their families. Not only are they gifts from God, their care and protection are the responsibilities of the family. A Samoan child's collective lifestyle is reinforced by remaining connected to his or her Aiga, church and community. It is in these environments that children are exposed and expected to model appropriate Samoan etiquette through observation.

As a vital background to set the context for the following chapters, the journey of Samoans to New Zealand and the role of the Samoan family unit and their children needed to be presented. The following chapter will describe the methods used in the research that inevitably provided the data on physical discipline in Samoan families.

## CHAPTER THREE

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## METHODS CHAPTER

### *Introduction*

As a Samoan researcher the decision to employ a qualitative approach was clearly without question. The thesis addressed physical discipline in Samoan families and therefore to justifiably obtain the information from my community interviewing my participants individually was important. However long the interview would take for me to hear and receive the shared stories, time was not a factor for I did not want to rush the process of obtaining detailed accounts on an issue that is sensitive to my Samoan community.

I did not assume that my Samoan upbringing would give me all the answers to the questions that I had posed to my twelve participants nor did I assume that I was the authority on physical discipline in Samoan families. The aim was to enter into an open dialogue with the participants and allow them to share their personal and professional experiences with minimal interference by myself.

The desire to research 'physical discipline in Samoan families' was birthed from the frustration of listening and hearing people say that physical discipline is part of the Samoan culture. I would hear this from non-Samoan people but I was more horrified to hear it among my Samoan community who would normalize the beating of a Samoan child or young person as cultural practice. As a Samoan and to this day I would take offence to such statements and would patriotically defend the honour of my Samoan heritage and the values that we stand to practice. Over the years I have observed, heard, read and witnessed the administration of physical discipline on Samoan children and young people. As a result, I decided to set out and ask the Samoan community what their views were regarding physical discipline in Samoan families and get them to provide insight and understanding on whether this is an issue of concern that we need to collectively address. Being an insider Samoan researcher it has made me more aware of the task that lays ahead for me to present this in a culturally appropriate

manner. The method to do this has been assisted in consulting with a cultural panel and supervisors in which one was of Samoan ethnicity.

There is countless research presented on indigenous cultures, usually viewed through the lens of a Western microscope. The methodologies used in the past and to this present day have been largely if not solely Western, which does not present an accurate picture of what is true for that particular indigenous group. Tupuola (1993, p.175) a Samoan researcher in New Zealand spoke of this in a research paper on 'Raising Research Consciousness the Fa'asamoa Way' explaining,

*“for too long non-Western indigenous researchers have been limited in their research because of the ‘scholarship’ attached to ethnocentric and culturally insensitive methodological frameworks. There is a need for the ‘world of Western academia to acknowledge ‘other’ cultures perception of scholarship and knowledge”.*

Tolich (as cited in Cram, 2001, p.37) states that,

*“... research that is done by non-indigenous people, researching ‘down’ about indigenous peoples all too often results in judgments being made that are based on the cultural standpoint of the researcher rather than the lived reality of the indigenous population. And all too often the products of these research endeavours benefit the researcher and not the community of study”.*

Examples of such researchers in the Samoan context are Margaret Mead and Derek Freeman, who within their own cultural constructs researched Samoan adolescents.

Tupuola (1993, p.175) *“highlights issues concerning research on Samoan peoples and emphasizes the necessity for educationalists to minimize exploitation with cross-cultural research, by designing and implementing theoretical and methodological frameworks culturally sensitive to other cultures’ world views and communication styles”*.

The theoretical postulate of a Samoan cultural perspective is embraced to guide the process of this research method. To fully address the research method in entirety, it is necessary to understand the cultural values of ‘Fa’asamoa’ in the context of New Zealand.

- *Love (Alofa)*
- *Respect (Fa’aaloalo)*
- *Humility (Lotomaulalo)*
- *Support (Fesoasoani)*

Mulitalo (1998, p.128) stipulates that *‘theory provides the framework that guides the way the participants are to be approached, and shapes the design of the questions as well as the content of the interviews.’*

In relation to the theoretical framework described by Mulitalo, it is imperative that the researcher has an understanding of what is fundamentally Samoan. That will ensure that an appropriate address is given to the sensitivity of this research from start to end. This is done by discussing and reviewing with some of the individuals on my cultural panel and Samoan supervisor the questions in the research and various approaches. I was also able to discuss with family members and friends their views on physical punishment and discipline as a means of support for me as it reaffirmed the topic I was researching. As mentioned earlier there is consultation between myself with my two supervisors and cultural panel who are available to me at my disposal when necessary.

The remainder of this chapter will discuss: the design of the research questions; the selection of participants; research methods that have been utilised; the justification of sample size; the process involved in recruiting the selected participants; and the presentation of and utilisation of results.

Finally, I will look at the issue of ethics and power for me as a New Zealand-born Samoan carrying out a research of this nature and explaining the journey and challenges that I have endeavoured.

### ***The Research Questions***

The main question in this research is the rationale and philosophy behind, 'Why do Samoans physically discipline their children?' The research looks at this question in the context of Fa'asamoa in Samoa and New Zealand as it provides an explanation and insight to Samoan parenting and child rearing.

In consultation with my supervisors and cultural panel, an invitation was sent out to recommended and suggested Samoan leaders and professionals from varying cross-sectors of employment who have worked with Samoan families. Of the group of Samoans who were extended an invitation, sixteen responded. Further dialogue through telephone and face to face correspondence was arranged and as time progressed twelve followed through. This does not include a group discussion with social workers from American Samoa who assisted for the purposes of looking at the social context of physical abuse cases in their nation, in comparison to the Independent State of Samoa and New Zealand. There were ten participants from New Zealand and two from the Independent State of Samoa.

The heart of the research was examined from the following four objectives and the set of questions directed to the participants were designed around these objectives to:

- a) Examine the types of discipline used by Samoan families in New Zealand. (It cannot be assumed that all Samoan families physically discipline their children/young people).
- b) Examine the rationale for the use of physical punishment by Samoan families in New Zealand. Looking into belief and value systems of Samoans in the context of Fa'asamoa.
- c) Address how the Samoan community of New Zealand can appropriately look at 'physical discipline' in the context of this nation. A Samoan answer of address.
- d) Develop research that will illustrate and inform families of the implications and consequences of physical discipline for Samoan families according to New Zealand law and policy in regards to Section 59, of the Crimes Act 1961 and the commitment that New Zealand has to the Convention on the Rights of a Child.

The first part of the information collated from the participants was demographic. There were four sections that consisted of a number of questions and the third section of the interview was fashioned to the profession that each participant represented and the role and influence they have in their community environment.

When the questions were thought through and finalised it was necessary to take a holistic approach because of the collective families that each Samoan participant represented and also the Samoan families that they worked with.

The first stage of the questions was drawn from each participant's family that they were raised in as children and then looked at their own families but more

specifically the parenting roles in each context. It took the participants back to their childhood as they gave accounts of how they were raised as children which inevitably influence and impact the way they raise their own children or children they have had or have in their current care. From these accounts came their definition of what a Samoan family means to them.

The second stage looked at discipline during their childhood and then discipline in their own homes as parents or caregivers. It looked specifically at the parenting role, the desired outcome of the method of discipline sanctioned, whether it was effective or not and the emotion of the disciplinarians. It also addressed what influenced the desired method of discipline sanctioned in the home. An overall definition of discipline by the participants was gathered from these findings.

As a result of the information gathered from stages one and two the participants were asked to bring these experiences together as well as their current experiences and explain how they have influenced and impacted their role as practitioners with Samoan families, their children and young people in the community. The personal experiences, a key part of how the participants were raised, are very important because these experiences form people's values and beliefs. In the context of the participants, it is the personal, past and current experiences that influence the way they see themselves and how they presently raise children and work with families in their professions.

The third stage of the research looked at the forms of discipline that were brought to the attention of each practitioner for Samoan families in the community, specifically incidences of reported physical abuse. The same questions that were posed to the participants about their experiences of discipline as children were also asked when looking at the Samoan families. It is important to gauge the role of the parent or caregiver in these situations, the desired outcome, the

emotion that the disciplinarian experienced and what influenced the parent or caregiver in their method of discipline.

The fourth stage of the interview drew from the above information and the participants were asked for a Samoan answer of address specifically looking at Section 59, of the Crimes Act 1961. As indicated in the literature chapter the New Zealand Government, as a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, have received pressure to repeal Section 59, which allows any parent or caregiver to physically discipline a child in their care, if the circumstances are reasonable. The United Nations had advised New Zealand that this is not aligned with its principles on the protection and rights of children. The New Zealand Government was looking at Section 59 as it would be a topic of discussion and debate in 2005. The questions that were posed to the twelve participants were in line with addressing legislation, looking particularly at a Samoan response.

The selection and discussion of appropriate questions was discussed with my supervisors and selected individuals in my cultural panel. These individuals were selected for the purpose of accountability and subsequently to advise throughout the research process. As a researcher it was pertinent to me that the questions were not too over-whelming and nebulous that they would lose their flow and become unmanageable to proceed.

(see appendix 1 & 2)

### ***The Sample***

The participants targeted in this research are key Samoan leaders who are considered as having a position of influence, authority and experience in this nation and also in the Samoan community in the nature of their profession. Each participant has addressed physical discipline in the context of Samoan parents and worked extensively with Samoan families, young people and children. These Samoan leaders have been referred to me upon high recommendations

through informal consultation with my cultural panel and formal meetings with my supervisors. Their commitment to and work with the community and government precedes them, whether it is on a local, national or international level.

The role that they play in their respective communities and their own families is one of significance and authority. All have extensive experience in social work, community practice and health education. Some are cultural advisors, church leaders, youth workers, refuge workers, policemen, court and tertiary educator in non-government and Government organisations. Each individual represents an eclectic background of experience that will provide the holism of this research topic. One common factor that runs through their working profession and personal lives is their passion for and experience in working with Samoan families in New Zealand and Samoa.

The sample was selected in a way that it only included Samoan participants and not other Pacific people communities, Maori and European. Given the nature of the research pertaining to physical discipline in Samoan families, it would not be considered appropriate to direct such a question to those of non-Samoan ethnicity whose life experiences and background may display some similarities but it will not give an accurate portrayal of the research. Furthermore, they were not considered appropriate because of the focus of the research.

The contribution the participants have to this study is the shared knowledge of their own personal experiences that only they can accurately portray through their stories. These stories, although personal to the participant, can be shared by a generation of Samoans and will benefit not only Samoan families in New Zealand but Samoans internationally. It is a piece of research for Samoans to give an informed and collective response regarding physical discipline and its reality for Samoan families. This information creates an atmosphere of empowerment and ownership when their views are considered relevant

concerning the heart of their families, their children and young people. Tupuola (1993, p.183) supports this saying,

*“although much literature has been written about Samoan people, very few (if any) seem to present the truths of Samoan people within a culturally sensitive textual framework. To avoid such tokenism, Samoan peoples’ experiences need to be expressed and written within a context that complements the oral and dialogic nature of our communication style”.*

Inevitably the knowledge obtained through this research can be used to advise policy when working with Samoan families, their children and young people in this nation.

Parents and their children are also viewed as experts having the same ability to contribute to this research. However they were not accessed, as this was not an option for me. At the time I was working as a social worker for a statutory Government Department, ‘Child, Youth and Family Services’. For example, if a disclosure was made by a Samoan parent, young person or child I would then be obligated in my role as a social worker for a statutory Government to make a notification. That obviously created a gap in the research given that Samoan young people, children and their parents have an important contribution to make in a research of this nature. However, insight in this area was provided by the participants who are parents and/or caregivers for children who have been or are currently in their care. The above was discussed and supported by my supervisors for the purposes of ensuring that all areas of safety for the participants, the university and myself were addressed.

### ***Participants***

There were twelve Samoan participants in total who chose to be involved in the research and it worked out that there were six females and six males interviewed

in the research. Therefore a balance of general gender views was obtained. Of the twelve participants interviewed two resided in Samoa. Both used to live and work in New Zealand but now have extended their practice to Samoa. These two participants are exposed and entrenched in the reality of Fa'asamoa and social issues for Samoans in Samoa and are working closely at a political, economic and social level with Samoan families.

Demographic data collated in the beginning of the interview identified the participants being between the ages of forty – seventy years old. The majority of the participants are Samoan-born, one was born in American Samoa but later migrated to and was raised in New Zealand. The remainder participants are New Zealanders of Samoan descent. Each has been raised and immersed in the Samoan way of up-bringing. Samoan is the first language for the majority of the participants while the others expressed that although English was their first language they could understand Samoan very well.

The participants who were born in Samoa and American Samoa have spent more than half their lives in New Zealand more than they have in their respective birth places and were all educated up to High School level. Upon migrating to New Zealand some of the participants chose to further their education at a tertiary level. The participants are either married, divorced, separated from their partners or single, defined as living currently on their own, but all are parents and or have been caregivers to children within their families.

### ***Data Gathering***

For the purposes of this research there were two sources of information where knowledge was obtained. Firstly, from the participants who provided the greatest pool of knowledge through qualitative personal and individual interviewing. Secondly, literature was gleaned from New Zealand, Samoa, American Samoa and other countries.

The data and information presented in this thesis would not have been obtainable if I had chosen to collate my data through direct observations or from written documents. The complexity and sensitivity of information discussed with the participants is in relation to knowledge pertaining to the heart of Samoan families, that is, their way of life regarding parenting and child rearing in the realm of discipline, regardless of context. Although documented and written literature are valid sources of information, this was seen to be limiting, as peoples' personal experiences are often not captured in this type of genre.

There was dialogue with my supervisors, Samoan colleagues and cultural panel as we scoped the number of recommended Samoans in the community that could be a part of this research. It was important that there was a good gender balance of views, thoughts and opinions as well as occupations both in the community and Government sectors, if possible. A meeting with my supervisor prompted the first point of contact with selected and recommended participants, which required an introduction of myself and the topic being researched. There was a lengthy discussion about appropriate approach but given that the participants were all professionals in their own right, their email addresses were obtained as this would bring about expedient responses. I then sent out an email invitation to a substantial selected number of participants inviting their involvement in this research. A two week time-frame was given for each participant to make contact with me. There were favourable responses of interest in the research and with these individuals I responded personally on email, or telephone if they left a number. I gave them the option of sending out my information sheet and consent form through mail or arranging for a personal meeting to discuss the research in detail if they required. If I had not heard from the respondents then I would reassess my first point of contact and for some a follow-up email was appropriate, given their busy schedules. However, for some participants it required me using my personal networks in my family, colleagues and cultural panel to make an extra effort to correspond with them. This time the responses were favourable.

The method of approach for each participant differed one from another. It was through consultation with my cultural panel, supervisors and relationship with these participants that defined my next step of approach and delivery. A personal meeting was arranged as this allowed for further dialogue and provided an opportunity for each participant to ask me questions that might have been of concern or out of curiosity. This method of consultation was imperative for some participants as this was the defining point of their contribution or decision to be part of this research. I was prepared for my selected participants to change their mind and as a personal point of reference I wanted to be truthful and transparent about the research and was willing to answer their questions. Whenever necessary or required I consulted considerably with selected participants to provide them with an understanding on the basis of this research so that they would feel confident in sharing their knowledge. I allowed for any type of correspondence as long as it was at my participants convenience.

When a Samoan meets with another Samoan you do not go into the business of the day or your agenda immediately. Samoan introductions are as lengthy as one's main course meal. Growing up in a Samoan family, I have always been aware of this and was prepared to talk about who I am, my parents, my villages in Samoa, church and much more. As simple and irrelevant as these questions may present to a Western person, it is far from being simple and irrelevant when you engage with a Samoan. These types of introductions tell you a lot about the person and they determine the success and outcome of the meeting. It is the most important meeting of the day as you are connecting culturally, genealogically and spiritually. Such meetings should never be discarded because they set the platform of your research. Whether you get an interview or not is irrelevant. At least you leave the meeting respecting and recognising the process that is necessary when you meet another Samoan, because there is a possibility that your paths would cross again in future. No meeting is a meeting

in vain for Samoan people and their communities, as you will always be remembered for that first encounter and so appropriate Samoan etiquette should be displayed.

I did meet and correspond with some participants who initially agreed to be part of the research but then decided not to for personal reasons that both the participants and I communicated and understood. Given the nature of their professions it was evident in our discussions that their status in the community would be compromised. This was communicated clearly and received in good faith. There were others who reneged on interview time schedules, as well as those who agreed but did not follow through. After a number of attempts to make contact I later decided to put a halt on my attempts, given my own time-frames. I did not interpret this as an obstacle or rejection to the research conducted but as a given understanding that our schedules did not synchronise and so I chose no longer to pursue these individuals and eliminated them from the participants' list.

Prior to the information sheet and consent forms being distributed, they were discussed with my supervisors before distribution. The information sheets and consent forms were all given to the participants who showed an interest and indicated a desire to contribute to the research. The information sheets were also given to my cultural panel and other Samoans in the community who were recommended to me by my cultural panel and in consultation with my supervisors. They were recognized as individuals who I could call upon when necessary to advise me on issues regarding the Samoan culture. I also arranged a time to meet with these individuals and discussed with them the heart of the research, in which they demonstrated a willingness to assist.

The consent form was an important attachment to the information sheet as it confirmed participation of the participants and that they understood the nature of

the research. Some of the participants returned their consent form in the returned envelope provided whilst others signed on the day of the interview. The consent form also gave permission for the participants to withdraw from the interview if they did not wish to go any further or have the tape-recorder stopped if they did not want to record a part of their interview or the whole interview. Only one of the twelve participants said that she would use the option of not recording part of her interview. However, during the process of the interview this option was not used. All twelve interviews were recorded and not one participant changed his or her mind in the interview or asked for the tape-recorder to be turned off. Both the information sheet and the consent form were discussed upon the interview appointment to further clarify questions the participants had before proceeding with the interview.

*(see appendix 3 & 4)*

### ***Interviewing***

The methodology chosen was a deliberate choice given its sensitive nature and secondly this was the only way I saw appropriate to ask the participants their views and experiences on physical discipline. Lee (1993, p.119) says that it is commonly known *"that field research, based on qualitative methods such as participant observation or depth interviewing, has often seemed like the method of choice in studying sensitive topics"*.

The qualitative approach is commonly used for data collection, which works with smaller numbers of research participants and gathers more detailed data. It seeks to understand the complexities and uniqueness of individual research participant, as well as looks to understand commonalities in the group. It reveals the complexity of the topic, throwing up issues which you could not have imagined before you began the research. (Rountree & Laing, 1996, p.99)

The method of data collection through personal interviews was of a semi-structured approach, as this allowed me to write my questions in full as a guideline for the interview process. The semi-structured flow provided room for spontaneous questions and responses that may come across as open-ended. *“Qualitative interviews are distinguished from survey interviews in being less structured in their approach and in allowing individuals to expand on their responses to questions”.* (Allan & Skinner, 1991, p.203)

The advantages pointed out by (Judd, C. M., Smith, E., Kidder, L., 1991, p.218) regarding personal interviews are as follows:

*“...is the ability of the interviewer to notice and elaborate further to the respondents misunderstandings; to probe inadequate or vague responses; to answer questions and allay concerns that are important in obtaining complete and meaningful data; the interviewer can control the order in which the respondent receives the questions; in general the interviewer can control the context of the interview including the possible biasing presence of other people. However the most important advantage is data collection. There is also the ability of the interviewer to best establish rapport and motivate the respondent to answer fully and accurately again improving the quality of data”.*

A known disadvantage related to the potential rapport between interviewer and respondent is the possibility of large interviewer effects. Although this may be the case, it must be understood that oral traditions is a strength for Samoans when relaying their stories through their experiences. Therefore the *“interviewer is sensitive and aware that large interviews may be deemed necessary in order to get the quality of data”.* (Patton, 1990, p.10)

I continually had the questions before me as a check-list since this was used as a guide to ensure that all four objectives of the research were thoroughly covered.

It also helped to keep the interview focused and that the participant understood the information that was required. However, I did not discourage the participant from sharing their knowledge however lengthy this process may be.

Although the Samoan language was an option to use, the interview was conducted in the English language. However from time to time, the questioning and responses would revert to the Samoan language. The participant was not restricted to just the English language only, but the opportunity to respond in Samoan was welcomed. The questions were shaped in a way that did not allow for me to influence the responses but gave free-reign to the participant to invoke in themselves responses that they already had or responses they would not have thought of. For example, the participants were asked questions which took them back to their past, present and also their future experiences.

It has been noted that the interviewers' expectations or personal characteristics such as race or sex can influence responses. However, it needs to be understood that being Samoan the responses from the participants will greatly influence the knowledge that each will be sharing with me. But the influence is not of a negative nature nor will it distort or contaminate the research in fact this influence is conducive to the interviewer because the interviewees would feel safe to share their knowledge and experiences with another Samoan who can understand and relate at a cultural and professional level. (Rountree & Laing; 1996, p.109)

The venue for the interview was discussed with the participant prior to meeting. It was important for me to allow the participant to choose a venue that was convenient for them, as I wanted them to feel comfortable in their chosen surroundings and environment. The only time that I arranged a venue was when the participant communicated that they would come and see me. The majority of the interviews conducted were taken at a place of their personal preference.

### ***Data Collection***

The fieldwork was both challenging and exciting for me. I was aware that Samoan protocol needed to be up-held when I met these individuals. Each participant was extended gratitude for being part of this research and their work in their respected professions, community and families was acknowledged. This was further reinforced at the conclusion of the interview and the opportunity was given to each participant to make additional comments that they may have felt was not covered in the interview questions.

Prior to the interview, the atmosphere was important and one does not go into this cold turkey. If I had not personally met the participants prior to the arranged interview, I would take time to set the scene and a rapport was established through a shared meal. This was no different for the participants who I met in advance. As Samoan people it is part of our cultural etiquette to share a meal before we engage in any business of the day and this was not any different from a community and church setting. This does not at all influence the direction of the interview and given that they are leaders of high calibre in the Samoan community, each participant is very competent in responding and communicating his or her own views. These views they strongly feel passionate about are free of bias and influence by myself.

As the interviewer I was well aware of the formatting of my questions which consisted of personal and professional issues and the level of intensity that they could evoke. As mentioned earlier, I reminded the participants that if they did not want to answer a particular question it was their prerogative and that the audio-tape could be turned off at any point of the interview. The questions and the content asked of the participants meant that we would meet for one and a half to two hours and therefore a relaxed environment and atmosphere was needed as this assisted in opening up the lines of communication. Throughout the whole interview process, there was free dialogue between myself and the participants

that created conversation to issues that arose for them but at all times they spoke confidently and communicated clearly what they wanted documented. A break in the duration of the interview was also an option for the participants which some of them seized before proceeding to the final part of the interview.

For the interviews which were conducted in Samoa this was arranged through my Samoan correspondent who was currently in Samoa on research. To protect the privacy of the participants, a confidentiality consent form was signed between the correspondent and myself. She liaised with the participants prior to my arrival in Samoa and delivered the information sheet and consent forms detailing the purpose of the research. Although emailing might have been the most expedient way to contact the participants, the preferred method for Samoans was personal contact through my correspondent who is aware of their work and in the past has had a working relationship with these individuals. I met with my Samoan correspondent on my first week in Samoa and then arranged to meet with all three participants the same week. The initial point of contact was introductions and to confirm interview times for my second week. Like the participants in New Zealand, this initial meeting provided an opportunity for each individual to ask questions that they might want to receive answers to before the interview took place. At this initial meeting they were also reminded of the information sheet and consent form that were given to them through my Samoan correspondent. It was an outline and basis of the research for them to go through before we met for the interview. The choice of venue was given to the participants and for them their work-place was the most convenient. Of the three whom I intended to interview only two made their appointment. The third participant did not meet at the arranged appointment time, although she came to my home personally to change the date and time.

### ***Processing of Data***

The transcribing of the tapes I chose to do myself. That allowed me to hear the questions I had asked each participant and process their responses.

That assisted the analysis section as it helped me to differentiate each response and see the gaps and similarities communicated by each participant. I was looking for common themes and even major or slight differences to their views on physical discipline in their families and also with Samoan families which have come to their attention.

Before the data was used for the formulation of the thesis, I allowed the participants to have as much control as possible over the information they gave me in his or her interview and its interpretation by forwarding the transcript to each participant upon completion. That was for the purpose of review and accuracy as there were parts of the interview that I did not capture in the transcribing that they had completed. They were also given a final option to make additions or alterations as they saw appropriate. For some participants I was part of this process when we discussed their alterations and additional comments. The final interview transcript utilised was subject to their approval and thorough checking. I have taken that as their consent to present their data in the most appropriate method in the analysis.

Of all twelve participants only one participant did not give me any feedback. It was agreed in discussion with my supervisors that a two-week time frame would be given to this participant upon receiving her transcript to glean through her interview. If after two weeks there was no contact or correspondence then it was assumed that this individual was satisfied with the interview and transcript. I used this copy for the final analysis given my time frame to have all my data completed.

For the purposes of analysis I divided all the participants' responses under the headings of the questions that each was asked in accordance to the four objectives of the research. I then coded the twelve participants using the letters of the alphabet from 'A to L'. This method assisted in the process of analysis

when it came to comparing and contrasting their responses with one another and other literature.

Out of courtesy and respect for each participant's involvement in this research I have attempted to keep in correspondence through email to inform them on how the research is progressing in terms of time-frames and when the final research will be submitted. I will also make a copy of this research available for each participant upon request.

### ***Power and Ethical Issues***

For the participants who were involved in the research, the level of risks for them was their positions of influence in their places of employment and also in their respective Samoan communities. There was also a risk at a personal level as each was presenting a view that is representative of their families and villages.

This level of personal exposure was also translated at a political level because of the transparency that was required of them. That may result in a risk of stigmatisation of stereotypes that may be placed on them and also their relationships with the Samoan community, government agencies, their places of employment and their own families regarding their involvement and contribution to this research. This above risk would only affect the validity of the research if the participants chose to gate-keep information that may endanger themselves in the spheres they move in. Lee (1993, p.119) reinforces that,

*“gatekeepers often allow researchers into a setting but use formal agreements and procedures in order to control their activities. Data collection, for example, can be limited by placing restrictions on the kind of material which is made available to the researcher. It is not uncommon in organisations for certain kinds of documentary information to be placed off-limits”.*

At all times I assured each participant of confidentiality by removing obvious indicators such as their Christian names, family names and villages in Samoa. However it was commented that anonymity could not be guaranteed, as I could not ensure that any individual reading this research could not identify them through my analysis although it would be generally presented and alphabetically coded. There were participants who did not mind being mentioned in the research, and therefore it is my privilege to acknowledge their contribution and identify them by name.

It has been questionable since the 1980's in social sciences the validity of one's ethnicity to conduct research of a cultural group that is other than their own. An example of this in the Samoan community was the highly controversial research conducted by Derek Freeman and Margaret Mead. According to the Samoan community these two individuals did not portray an accurate account of Samoan adolescents and Samoan society. Their ethnicity and Western lens of research approach detached them from actually understanding life in Samoa at the time. Therefore, according to the Samoan community their findings have no validity or truth but serve as an example of Western exploitation through academic imperialism.

As a young Samoan researcher, born and raised in New Zealand, I had questions around my own validity to write a thesis on 'Physical Discipline in Samoan families'. This surfaced at two levels. However the problem for me was not my ethnicity. The first internal question for me was whether it was appropriate for me to expose my community at a level that would address and challenge their parenting and child rearing methods. Not being a parent myself, therefore what authority do I have to talk on physical discipline in my community? What do I know about the pressures of being a parent? Am I allowed to talk about the methods of discipline Samoan parents administer? All were valid questions that I needed to ask myself and would encounter with my own family and community, if approached.

Given my collective upbringing I sought to speak to my parents about my research topic and my thoughts on Samoan discipline in the realm of physical punishment. It was important for me to talk to my parents about my journey and experiences in my upbringing in their care, the exposure I had experienced in my Samoan community as a social worker and what I have witnessed with Samoan families in Samoa and in New Zealand. The transparency in my relationship with my parents and the discussions was a platform to begin the research. I needed to understand my parent's position on parenting and child rearing which had impacted my life and to receive their blessing before I could progress. I then ventured into my extended family, discussed with my friends and colleagues who are actively working in the Pacific community to see if there was a need to do a research of this nature. I was aware of reports on incidences in the media regarding physical abuse in Samoan families, but my discussions with my parents, family, colleagues and further networking in my community gave me the permission I needed.

The second internal question was my inability to fully grasp the Samoan language. There was continual monologue questioning my own "Samoan-ness" as a result of being exposed to Samoan environments both in New Zealand and Samoa. That would remind Samoans born and raised away from Samoa their lack of being Samoan if they could not speak Samoan fluently, eloquently nor understand or practice Fa'asamoa. One's "Samoan-ness" is defined on the basis of their grasp of the Samoan language, especially for those who are born and raised outside of Samoa. I recall a social work conference held in Wellington in 2000 when a Samoan guest speaker stood up in the auditorium and said in part of her presentation that, 'if you cannot speak Samoan, you are not Samoan'.

Melani Anae in her research "Papalagi Redefined: Towards a New Zealand-born Samoan identity" (1995) illustrates in the following the monologue I was going

through and the discussions that I would have with friends and cousins who were in the same position.

***I AM – A Samoan...but not a Samoan***  
***I AM – A New Zealander...but not a New Zealander***  
***I AM – To my Aiga in Samoa...a “Palagi”***  
***I AM – To New Zealanders...a bloody coconut, at worst, or a Pacific***  
***Islander, at best***  
***I AM – To my Samoan parents...their child.***

There have been many discussions generated from Anae's above assertion as it is not a foreign concept among Pacific people born and raised away from their parent's homeland who may not speak the language. Meleisea (2004, p.172) states that the *“Samoa language had – and still has – three forms, the colloquial form used between people of equal status, the polite form used between people of different statuses, and the aristocratic form used between chiefs”*. It was not until I felt confident and comfortable not speaking the language in the polite or the aristocratic form fluently as described by Meleisea that I began to embrace the thesis topic, because for me part of being answerable to my community was the ability to respond in respectful language. I knew that being raised in a Samoan family, having an excellent grasp and understanding of Samoan protocol through our traditions and customs and practicing it in my home environment and extended family, understanding the Samoan language fluently and responding in Samoan when appropriate, are things that make me Samoan. However, not being able to speak polite or aristocratic Samoan fluently does not make me less Samoan in a New Zealand context.

The struggles that New Zealand born Samoans go through as researchers in a Western context are as real as some of the questions that non-Pacific or non-Maori researchers go through when researching Pacific peoples and Maori

cultures. They have been criticised for reinforcing existing negative stereotypes and frequently misinterpreting a Pacific or Maori person's social life. For a New Zealand born Samoan as myself, there is that level of risk and criticism that you take because your community may accuse you for being 'too Palagi' or 'tautalaititi, which in the English means, to speak above one's rank, order of age, experience, understanding or beyond your years. This type of thinking is generated from your collective upbringing, where the roles and responsibility of men, women, young people and children are clearly defined.

In light of this research I believe that there will be support and equally those who may disagree with the findings. However, as a Samoan researcher with a Samoan heart, this research will contribute to the future development of Samoan families in New Zealand and also Samoans overseas. I have deliberately chosen a Samoan process to begin the research, collate the data and communicate the findings within Western academia. My hope is that my community would see beyond my inability from their lens as a Samoan and embrace the findings that have been discovered so we can collectively go forward.

In stating my position as a Samoan researcher, I was then able to enter into the discussion of 'physical discipline' in Samoa families. I asked the participants to present their definitions of physical discipline, their experiences of growing up in a Samoan home and how that impacted their families and the work that they do in the community. This finding will be discussed in the following chapter on 'physical discipline' in Samoan families.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

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## **PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE IN SAMOAN FAMILIES**

### ***Introduction***

Physical discipline among Pacific people and their families is considered normal and a part of every day life for a child. At least, that is the message that has been portrayed in a show performed by the 'Naked Samoans', a group of incredibly talented and gifted Pacific men who touch on serious issues of domestic abuse pertaining to Pacific people and their families through entertainment. However comical and amusing as it is, there is disturbing truth that every Samoan and Pacific person in the audience could identify with the message of physical discipline in their homes. That was indicated by the roar of laughter that came from the audience.

The Literature Review chapter outlines that, it is no secret physical discipline in Samoan families is a common practice. The data collated from the twelve participants undeniably presents this as the primary method of choice used by Samoan parents on their children. Therefore it is not alarming when Samoans go down memory lane and recount stories of hidings or beatings with cousins at family events or social gatherings with other Samoans. Moreover it is a generally common experience shared with other Pacific people groups. Regardless of geographical context as highlighted in Chapter One - Samoans in America, American Samoa and Samoa use physical punishment as a method of disciplining on their children. The hidings and beatings as performed by the 'Naked Samoans' may be quite amusing stories to share today, but the unrelenting truth is that they were not funny at the time especially if you were on the receiving end.

It is difficult for a Samoan to read or hear reports on media of physical abuse in Samoan families or being labelled as abusers. However the harsh reality is the Samoan method and extent of discipline through physical application has been

reported as abuse to governmental departments, namely the Department of Child, Youth and Family, the Police or other community organisations that the participants of this research have worked with or are currently working with. It is a growing concern if Samoan parents see and believe that physical discipline is their only option for unacceptable behaviour.

The literature review showed that the New Zealand government is moving towards repealing Section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961. There is increasing pressure from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child for New Zealand to repeal Section 59, to ensure that children in this nation live without violence. The Department of Child, Youth and Family have been given 10.8 million to provide educational programmes to prepare families for when the change of legislation finally comes into effect. This will affect Samoan parenting and child rearing for the mere fact that Samoan parents believe it is an effective deterrent for unacceptable behaviour. Ngan-Woo (1985, p.16) reinforces, *“there is a general belief among Samoans that it is necessary to physically punish children to ensure proper behaviour”*.

### ***Discipline in New Zealand and Samoa***

Samoan disciplinary methods were first brought to the attention of the New Zealand public eye when Ioana Fuimaono in 1995 beat a teenager placed under her care, on national television. As alluded to in the Literature Review Chapter, the Samoan leaders in the community were outraged and denied suggestions that this was the ‘Samoan Way’. Six years later in 2001, *“Sipea Leuta pleaded guilty for manslaughter of her five-year-old son, Liotta...he was whipped with a fan belt and aerial wire.”* (Mulu; 2001)

In New Zealand the discipline of children and young people is a very sensitive issue for Samoan parents whose method of discipline has been challenged by those whom they see do not have an authority over the care of their own

children. For example when a Samoan parent is investigated for a reported incident of physical abuse through the Department of Child, Youth and Family, he or she would question what right the case worker, whom they see as a stranger, has to assess their method of discipline, and if substantiated label it abusive. Samoan parents find it highly intrusive when their disciplining strategies of a physical nature are challenged, as the care and nurture of their children is their responsibility and does not lie with a government or community worker.

In Samoa discipline is not only in the home but it is reinforced at school, church and village life. Samoan parents growing up in this type of society do not see it out of the ordinary if adults in these realms of authority physically discipline their children. For example in the village, the parents' choice to physically discipline their child in a way that suits them would not be questionable. The severity and extent of discipline would be left to the discretion of the disciplinarian and there would be very little or no intervention by the police if reported. However, if the discipline was severe, bordering on abuse, there would be intervention by members of the family or people in the village. The child seeks haven with this individual while the disciplinarian is spoken to and given time to calm down. For example, participant 'K' shared that as soon as he was hit by his father he would run either to the neighbours, his mother, his grandfather who lived up the road or to the neighbouring Matai.

This type of intervention highlights the collectivity of Samoan families, as the child's community will get involved if necessary. Participant 'K' called this intervention 'o le ava fatafata' in English it means, the level of respect that is accorded to an individual seen with status. For example, when he wanted to seek safety from a beating by his father, he would run and sit next to the paramount chief who would say to his father, 'That's enough'. Although his father might still be very angry and upset, it was because of his respect for the Matai that he would not proceed any further. Another option was to run to his grandfather's place and stay there for up to two or three days, which was enough

time for his father to calm down and then he would return home. This time his father would sit him down and explain what had made him angry and what was expected of him in future. He further stated that discipline was part of the Samoan community, but within this setting there were safety mechanisms in place for everyone to access.

In New Zealand Samoan parents continue to maintain their parenting and child rearing methods in the realm of physical discipline when necessary. Fa'amatuainu Tino Pereira (as cited in Mulu, 2001, pp.20-21) explains,

*"I think there is a general tendency in some sections of the Samoan community to condone corporal punishment as a form of discipline. It tends to be condoned more by the older Samoan community who were brought up back home, where corporal punishment was a part of everyday life".*

The difference now is that Samoan parents no longer have the support of the collective family village setting that reinforces the lifestyle and safety that they are accustomed to. Therefore disciplinary methods are not supervised or monitored by their community and a tendency to go beyond discipline to abuse becomes highly susceptible.

### ***Samoan Children and Discipline***

Samoan children first hear and understand the concept of discipline as early as two years old when their parents say "E sasa oe?" – "Do you want a smack?" That is usually used as a threat to deter a child of this age from behaviour that would put them at risk. Samoan parents usually do not administer the *sasa* at such a young age. The word *sasa* is commonly used as a deterrent and then the behaviour of risk is explained and shown to the child. For example, if the child went towards a boiling kettle, the parent would say 'mu' which means "burn" and then 'aua' (don't) or 'sasa'. The child immediately knows that is a restrictive area

or something that he or she cannot touch. Therefore at a young age the child becomes aware of the term 'sasa' and associates it with behaviour that could compromise their safety, when explained to them in a way that they would understand. At the same time the child is able to distinguish through the tone of their parents and previous threats whether the "sasa" will be administered or not.

The Fa'asamoa milestones of child development follow an age-appropriate pathway. The child reaches primary school age, through to intermediate, and on to high school, there is much expectation placed on the child to follow and understand instructions, and to be more aware of what is appropriate behaviour. If not, the sasa or fasi would have a high probability of being administered, given the age and expected maturity of the child or young person according to a Samoan parent's understanding.

In Samoan parenting there is a firm belief that physically disciplining their child is part and parcel of their genuine care and protective love for their own. *"Samoans have considerable fondness and affection for their children, but they are also very strict with them"*. (Ngan-Woo, 1985, p.16). Samoans believe that physical punishment ensures appropriate behaviour when children misbehave. However, this has brought conflict in a Samoan home because their child's socialisation is not exclusive to a Samoan way in a Samoan society that reinforces their belief about physical discipline in the family. Their parenting and child rearing function in the home is being challenged by a Western dominated society whose ideals promote the autonomy and independence of a child that is contrary to their collective way of life and understanding. Samoan children come home with influences from school, their peers and the media which inevitably challenge the fabric of a Samoan family.

### ***Definition of Discipline***

The participants were asked to give a definition of discipline. Their definition was retrieved in two stages; the first was gauged from their personal experiences

when growing up as children. Secondly, it was from their personal experiences as parents and caregivers.

Eleven of the twelve participants explained that when they were children they were disciplined. Only participant 'D' was not disciplined, and that this largely had to do with the fact that his parents were deceased and his primary caregivers were his older siblings. His upbringing consisted of fond memories of his parents and the love and nurture received from his siblings in their relationship.

The disciplinary methods experienced by ten of the twelve participants were both physical and verbal, but they expressed that physical punishment was the preferred method. Verbal discipline is defined as scolding or being given a lecture and on occasion both methods of discipline were used and experienced by ten participants.

The verbal scolding and lecture were a primary method of discipline experienced by participant 'B' who was the other participant who was not physically disciplined, aside from participant 'D'. Participant 'B' explained that she responded more positively to the lecture spoken in love rather than the scolding. Some described that when verbally disciplined, their lectures were more frustrating as they were made to sit down and think about what they had done wrong and why their behaviour were inappropriate. Of the ten participants, five explained that being physically disciplined would have been their preference since the lectures got to the heart of the real issue for them as children. Furthermore, they were made accountable to accept responsibility for their actions. For example, participant 'G' explained that it was painful to see her father cry when he spoke to her about the consequences of her misbehaviour, as a result this gave her incentive to change.

When the ten participants were asked to recount incidences of being physically punished, they described their experiences varied from being a minor smack to

severe beatings by either parent. For example, a minor smack was a cuff or clip around the ears or being hit around the legs with a salu (Samoan broom used to swipe the floor of a house). This was not seen as severe as being punched or slapped in the face, chased with implements such as a machete, or struck with a belt or stick. Eight of the ten participants gave examples of being severely beaten. Four of the eight alluded to these hidings being common for them and the other four explained that a severe hiding for them was very rare or a one-off experience. The other two participants explained their smacks were minor and never severe. The reasons they gave for being physically punished were: outright disobedience, not adhering to instructions the first time, not attending enough to the care of younger siblings, lying or presumed to be telling lies, lack of respect to parents and other adults and not meeting their parent's expectation of their roles in home and family.

The majority of the participants highlighted their mothers as the main disciplinary figure in the home, because she was the parent who spent the most time with them as children, their father's working long hours. The participants found it was no different for the Samoan families they worked with in the community. The mother's responsibility was to ensure the family environment in the home was in order and that the children were well behaved and cared for. Participant 'A' explained that in her family, her mother's intention was to not disrupt her father unnecessarily with minor issues concerning her and her siblings. However, if they were clearly unmanageable, regardless of her mother's efforts to administer discipline, it would be in frustration that her mother would bring their behaviour to their father's attention. For example, participant 'L' explained that when his mother threatened to report his misbehaviour to his father, he knew he was in trouble. Fitisemanu et al, (1994, p.34) described in their research with American Pacific Islanders that *"almost always, it was the fathers who did the heavy hitting, and boys especially were their targets."*

The ten participants who were physically disciplined were asked what common emotions their parents or caregivers would go through when the children were being punished. The common response was that it was anger when they were not listened to; frustration when the children did not get the message right the first time and then been told repeatedly; tiredness particularly for their mothers as a result of a long day at work and then expected to manage misbehaving children, household chores and meals for the family; shock at being spoken to disrespectfully, shame, disappointment and depression. If their parents or caregivers were in a bad mood, then it becomes a combination of all the above emotions.

The participants were further asked if their parents' or caregivers' disciplinary methods were effective in changing behaviour. Six of the eleven participants expressed that if they had any effects, it was only temporary but at the time it did not change their behaviour. Instead, it instilled fear and anger towards the disciplinarians. Participant 'F', explained how she would go out of her way to upset her mother because of the injustice of her punishment. She recalled incidences of her mother slapping her face and using implements to beat her. This view was also shared by participant 'L', who explained his behaviour did not change when he was physically disciplined but his attitude towards his mother did when she would not believe him about an incident he was accused of and had no part in. Three of the eleven participants believed that for them, the discipline whether it was physical or a lecture, was effective for reasons such as, not wanting to be further punished and understanding the intent of the disciplinarian.

Participant 'B' explained that in her situation, being verbally scolded was not effective in changing her behaviour. Instead, it made her deliberately rebel and not adhere to instructions. Lastly, only one of the eleven participants expressed uncertainty whether the discipline she had received was effective for reasons she could not explain.

### ***As Parents and Caregivers***

It was clear through discussions with the participants that their methods of discipline changed when they raised their own children. For eleven of the participants who were disciplined, the meaning of discipline changed over time for them as they were now exposed to positive alternatives and options to discipline that their parents and caregivers did not have when they were growing up as children. This was greatly influenced through education, their professions, their partners and living in a Western society that offered a different perspective on parenting and child rearing.

However, that did not happen initially for ten of the twelve participants who admitted to smacking their children when they were young parents. They explained that it was attributed to their lack of understanding regarding parenting and child rearing except for what they saw and experienced in their own upbringing.

It eventually became obvious in my discussions with the participants that they had made remarkable changes in their disciplinary practices in comparison to what they had experienced from their parents and caregivers. Participant 'F' explained that the meaning of discipline changed over time as one grows; it is a function of age and what you learn in the world. With age and experience comes maturity; at a younger age discipline meant 'sasa' (smack) and was viewed negatively.

It was interesting to notice that although participant 'B' was not physically disciplined as a child; this was the method of choice for her children. As opposed to participant 'D' who was not physically disciplined and followed through with this understanding when he raised his own children. The difference between participants 'B' and 'D' was the simple fact that 'B's discipline was replaced with

verbal scolding and 'D' was raised in a loving and nurturing environment by family members who contributed to his upbringing.

Five of the twelve participants still have younger children and admitted that they used the smack to discipline as a last resort. They were clear to communicate that the knowledge they know today has helped them to be a lot more controlled and has enabled them to administer the smack appropriately, instead of the beatings that they had experienced as children. The smack was only used when earlier warning systems put in place were not adhered to. They communicated that their children would be well aware of the consequences of their actions if they continually ignored prior warnings. However they found to their advantage that because of this strategic method, the smack was less, or not administered at all because their children adhered to the warnings. Given this understanding their disciplinary methods were effective and resulted in positive desirable outcomes for the children and the parents. Participant 'K' reinforces that when he grew up as a child, his parents did not have the benefits of understanding the concept of staging, but as a parent himself he has found this successful with his children.

### ***Collective Definition of Discipline***

As collated from the personal experiences of the participants with their parents and caregivers and as parents and caregivers themselves. It was illustrated that when they grew up as children, discipline was synonymous with hitting and verbal scolding or lectures. The administration of discipline by their parents and caregivers did not mean the removal of privileges, timeout, additional chores or no sleepovers at their friends' place. It meant for ten of the twelve participants, that if they did something wrong the discipline was physical and for some it was between minor and severe discipline.

To further extrapolate on what is minor and what is severe, participant 'F' gave a clear illustration. She explained that physical discipline fell in two categories of

hitting, the first being 'sasa', and the second being 'fasi' (often alludes to a hiding or beating). The terms fasi and sasa in Samoan both mean to hit, but the level of severity distinguishes the difference. Participant 'F' understood 'sasa' as being smacked lightly and fasi was a heavier way of hitting a child. On a scale from zero to ten, zero being lightly hit and ten being severe beating, the 'sasa' was assessed between zero and three and fasi was between seven and ten. When measured in terms of physical application sasa was getting a smack on the hands and legs and fasi would be a child being hit in a way that could cause severe harm, hospitalisation and, at the extreme, death.

The collective meaning of discipline and its application for the participants are through accessing strategies that are alternatives to smacking. The common themes drawn from their discussions were: communication, mentoring, boundary setting for the parent and children and recognising personal strength.

Communication was about engaging a child's misbehaviour through discussion and the ability to sit down, talk to the child and allow him or her to respond. As referred to earlier, verbal discipline through lecturing has the same elements of communication, but the difference is that communication allows for a two-way dialogue. Lecturing was an effective deterrent with five of the ten participants who were physically disciplined in their family context, because they were made to look at themselves and assess what they had done wrong. However, in New Zealand where Samoan children are exposed to an eclectic pool of Western views that are predominantly individualistic and independent, the belief that "Samoan children are seen and not heard" does not fit in this context. Therefore, a two-way dialogue of communication is important in order to retain the relationship with your children.

For example, participant 'C' explained that communication was about discussing the issue at hand with her children and showing them what they did wrong in the hope that it would not occur again. Participant 'I' added that the parent must also

provide the child with the right options, and the right way of doing things so there would not be a repeat of the same mistakes. He believed that discipline through communication was the principle of correction and should be coupled with an element of love and care.

That was also supported by participant 'D' who took communication a step further and believed that parents should ensure their children understand why they were being disciplined. He did not physically discipline his own children, but used communication as a method of correction so that his children understood the wrong behaviour. For him this was administered out of an act of love and was an effective deterrent for unacceptable behaviour.

Furthermore, participant 'F' explained that she used contracts with her children. Prior to the contract being written they discussed the misbehaviour and then in the contract the child was to write down what he or she believed was an appropriate punishment for their wrongdoing. The contractual agreement stipulated the misbehaviour, time frame and the punishment.

Mentoring or role-modelling appropriate behaviour was important for children to see in the lives of their parents. Parents must not ask of a child what they are unable to practise or deliver in the home. Participant 'E' described that discipline was about mentoring through motivation, recognition or supporting abilities, directions and giving opportunities to people to do what they have to do that is not based on performance. By doing this with parents and caregivers it provides the feedback to point out behaviour that is not appropriate, instead of hitting first and asking questions later. He strongly advocated that attempts should be made to use other alternatives to physical discipline and that smacking should be the last resort. Participants 'I' 'J' and 'C' emphasised that there was no point in instructing a child to behave in a certain way if the parents did not model or reflect the appropriate behaviour in their own lives. They believed it was all about learning respect, love, receiving and giving as parents.

The description of using boundaries had three elements. Firstly, it was the parental boundary as described by 'G' in which parents should be able to read what type of space that they're in before reacting to their children. Participant 'L' added boundary-setting as a code of ethics that parents should live by and ascribe to. For him it was about setting boundaries as a parent and then trying his best to live within those boundaries.

Secondly, it is the parent's responsibility to understand the space their children is in as it would give them the ability to assess the situation and administer the appropriate method of discipline for their children when they misbehave. For example, find out and be aware of the typical and complex transitions that children and teenagers go through that are impacting their lives. Participant 'D' believed that as a parent there are clear stages for disciplining but it is the responsibility of parents to assess the level of discipline that is aimed for the children as well as their personal strength. When parents realise this they are able to decipher what is typical children or teenage behaviour from what may be interpreted as a direct rebellion to their roles as parents. Participant 'D' added that children were entitled to be children and therefore their development according to their ages needed to be explored.

Lastly, boundary setting needed to be explained to the child or young person clearly, so the parent and child have a mutual understanding that leaves no room for confusion. For example, participant 'K' expressed that as a child there were boundaries that he understood very clearly, such as what he could do and what he could not do. However, there were also undefined boundaries which were not explained but he was expected to know. If they were not adhered to he would be physically disciplined and that was the only time he discovered what the undefined boundaries were. Therefore as a point of reference, he enforces that all boundaries must be clearly defined and it cannot be assumed that children would immediately know or understand a parent's boundary for them.

### ***Categories of Physical Discipline***

There were different categories of physical discipline experienced by the participants and their clients. These were communal, reactive, premeditated and verbal discipline.

Communal discipline as described by participant 'H' is when family members in a child's environment are also seen as a disciplinarian figure. For example in her environment her grandparents, aunties and uncles were her disciplinarians. She explained that in Samoa there could be fifty or sixty people around a child but as long as they were adults they were there to discipline the child when deemed necessary. It was not unusual for a Samoan child to be physically disciplined by other adult family members. If a child stepped out of line and his or her parent was not there, someone from the family would ensure that discipline was administered. That was not seen as out of the ordinary for children growing up in Samoa, especially in a village setting. This type of discipline is taken in the context of the care and protection of the child in their collective family and was not intrusive or overstepping family relational boundaries.

Reactive discipline came in two streams, the first being the parents immediate or impulsive reaction to a child's misbehaviour and without thinking of an appropriate response. Therefore, parents may physically harm the children more than they had intended. Secondly, the children would not fully understand what sanctioned the discipline by their parents but because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time they would be at the receiving end of their parents or caregivers' wrath. For example, there may be a disagreement between the parents and because one parent is not in a good space and the issue has not been resolved, that will have an effect on their mood. A child may innocently say or ask for something and because the parent may still be upset or angry with his or her partner, he or she will take out on their child and harm him or her. The

child would not challenge this for fear of being further disciplined in the same manner, when it was clear that he or she had done nothing wrong.

Premeditated discipline is when the parents have already decided in their minds prior to seeing the child or young person that physical punishment is the only discipline appropriate for his or her crime. For example, their son has taken off in the family car and smashed the vehicle or their teenaged daughter has lied to them about her whereabouts and the parents find out she had gone out for the evening with friends to the clubs. Participant 'L' explained that the problem with this was that the parent would be in such a rage, working themselves up by planning and plotting what they would do to their child when they got their hands on her. When the child returned home or when it was very unlikely that the parents had calmed down. Therefore the time and energy conserved in working themselves up would be exerted in the severity and extent of the punishment.

Aside from physical discipline was verbal discipline as referred to earlier but rather than the lecture it was the verbal scolding that six of the twelve participants emphasised in the findings. They identified the use of harsh and harmful words that would go hand in hand with a Samoan parent's physical discipline. Freeman (1983, p.210) reinforces that *"the physical infliction of punishment is also commonly accompanied by scolding and verbal threats"*. This type of discipline described by participant 'E' is generational behaviour and for him it had the power to do more damage. Many Samoans say 'e sasa i upu' which means 'discipline using words' believing that this method is harmless.

### ***Samoan rationale for physical discipline***

The following are common statements from the participants that any community and government worker will come across when addressing the rationale of physical discipline with Samoan parents. These belief statements have been reinforced in their own upbringing and the context that they were raised in as children in Samoa. It is a practice that may not be challenged and understood in

Samoa for the mere fact that *“physical punishment of children is traditionally an acceptable way of disciplining.”* (Ngan-Woo; 1985, p.18)

*“I am hitting out of love”*

*“The bible tells me that if I ‘spare the rod, I spoil the child”*

*“If I do not hit my child, he would keep doing it again. I will keep hitting until he stops.”*

*“This was how I was raised and it helped me to be a better person today”*

*“My child has brought shame to the family, by hitting him he will not do it again”*

All the participants interviewed have worked with families where physical discipline and its severity has been an increasing concern. Furthermore, they identified that in their experiences, physical discipline still remains a large practice among Samoans in New Zealand.

The Samoan families they worked with physically disciplined their children for reasons such as lying, offending, bringing embarrassment to the family because of their offence or behaviour, disobedience, not fulfilling parental expectations in school and home, disrespectful to parents. Then there were the environmental factors which are unrelated to the children, such as unemployment and lack of finances, which will be explained in Chapter Five. The following are detailed explanations relayed to the participants by their clients to further extend Samoan parents' rationale.

Samoan parents believe that physical discipline would change their children's behaviour and make them better, not worse. It is an act of love that is meant to prevent children from heading in the wrong direction and inevitably changing their behaviours because it is expected that the children could see the wrong. Participant 'L' stated the parents genuinely believed that hitting a child would bring an immediate change to their child's behaviour as they would say to themselves, 'If I don't hit him he'll do it again'.

Interestingly enough as described by participant 'G', Samoan parents want their children to be responsible, to be achievers and to get good jobs when they grow up. They do not want their children to embarrass their families and therefore good behaviour is required at all times. Participant 'C' described that Samoan parents also want their children to be good-upstanding citizens in New Zealand and any success is reflective of their parenting and extended families. These expectations are universally shared by many parents for their children but unfortunately, as explained by participants 'G' and 'C', a lot of Samoan parents whom they have worked with believe that beating their children is a means of achieving this desired outcome and considered appropriate when necessary.

Samoan parents do not intentionally discipline their children for the sake of inflicting pain for enjoyment, as explained by participant 'K'. There is always a reason as presented above that may not be clearly understood through the eyes of Western philosophies. Participant 'K' further explained that it is not the intent of the parents to be cruel and abusive to their children. He found that when further explored, the parents heart-felt intent is the best for their child, but they do not know how to appropriate a suitable method of discipline for the misbehaviour.

### ***Physical Discipline: A 'Samoan Way?'***

The concept of corporal punishment being the 'Samoan Way' as described by Dr Pita Taouma in the Literature Review Chapter, has been derived from biblical teaching, introduced through Victorian religious teaching by European missionaries that settled in the islands. Fa'amatuainu Tino Pereira (as cited in Mulu, 2001, pp.20-21) reiterates, "*corporal punishment becoming the 'Samoan Way' as a result of biblical teaching filtered down the generations and therefore Samoans have made it a part of the Samoan Way*". That was challenged by participant 'B' who explained that Samoan families do not see 'spare the rod, spoil the child' as belonging to the church. In her experience, they suggested that it was a part of Samoan culture within the constructs of Fa'asamoa.

However, she could see where this belief came from as a result of the influence of the missionaries to Samoa and the values of Fa'asamoa being similar to Christianity. But when looking at the cultural context of Fa'asamoa she explained to Samoan families that 'spare the rod, spoil the child' has been related to church teaching. She believed Samoans have brought their culture into the church context and then turned this around and made it a part of Fa'asamoa.

Participant 'F' did not accept it when Samoan families said their disciplinarian methods were a part of Fa'asamoa. She believed that Fa'asamoa is used as a scapegoat by the parents to not accept the responsibility for their actions. This view was also shared by participant 'E', who clarified that Fa'asamoa in the context of discipline, is a'oa'i, which means to "to reprove, to correct, to rebuke". For him it was through appropriate lessons and explanations of the consequences of his own misbehaviour by his grandfather.

Fa'asamoa values and principles do not promote, and are translated into, corporal punishment. However, the real concern that Samoan parents have is losing their children to an independent lifestyle as opposed to the collective. Samoan parents believe that the problem with New Zealand society and their children is the lack of discipline in the home to address a child's undesirable and inappropriate behaviour. Samoan parents believe that "Palagi" parents give their children too much independent freedom at home and in the community. As a result they have little or no respect for them as parents. This is the behaviour that Samoan parents do not want their children to role model and because Samoan children are part of the family, any unacceptable behaviour is a reflection on the parent/s. Therefore, when a Samoan child steps out of line, their parents will be quick to deal with the child's behaviour. For example, participant 'G' explained that although the Samoan families appreciated her help they would observe the Samoan way of managing their children's behaviour as the better option which is, to administer physical discipline. Samoan parents are

concerned that their children would follow in the same path as “Palagi” children and relinquish their collective way of living to an autonomous lifestyle.

***Physical Discipline: An Effective Deterrent for unacceptable behaviour?***

The participants explained that their clients’ application of physical discipline was not effective in changing their children’s behaviours. But they believed it was an effective deterrent for them growing up in Samoa and so undoubtedly it should work for their children in New Zealand. It was a practice that was not only administered to them by their parents, but their parents also received that in their own upbringing. They also believed that what their children was receiving was somewhat of a lesser degree of severity than what they would receive in Samoa. For example, they were not using an “ie ofi” (v-shaped tong used for underground cooking in Samoa) to hit their children but instead it was replaced with a belt. Clearly for them that was an alternative and seen less severe. Participants ‘F’ and ‘J’ explained that when confronted with belief statements such as the above, they would ask the parents to recall a time when they were physically disciplined by their own parents and where they had felt it was successful in changing their own behaviours. In retrospect and after some reflection the parents admitted that it did not change their behaviour in the short or long term. Therefore, for the participants it was conjuring up these incidences and making the parents the recipients of the hidings that help the parents re-evaluate their disciplinary methods.

A further validation of a Samoan parent believing their disciplinary method was effective was measured when the misbehaviour did not resurface. Participant ‘L’ explained that he found that children would change their behaviour not necessarily because they recognised and understood that their behaviours were wrong but usually out of fear. Participant ‘G’ reiterated that the children became fearful of telling the truth; they became defiant to their parents and started hiding things from them. As a cascading result children become more aware and craftier of what they could now do in the presence of their parents in the hope

that they did not get caught out again. Therefore instead of changing the behaviours because the children recognise them to be wrong, they learn to live a double life, one at home with their parents and the other outside the home with their peers.

Although there was no concept of physical discipline being ineffective among some Samoan parents, participant 'A' suggested that it was perhaps not to change the behaviour but more to stop it at the point of contact. However there was no guidance followed through by the parent. Additionally, Participant 'J' enforced that he had not seen much evidence of hitting children as an effective method of discipline. Instead he was exposed to consequences of it being ineffective and he supported that by saying that it damaged the child's confidence and self-esteem. The child either ran away from home or became physically aggressive towards other children.

### ***Emotion***

Anger was the most frequent emotion that was evident in the parenting strategies of the families who came to the notice of the participants. Using the example of a Samoan child coming to the attention of the Police and then brought home to their parents. Participant 'L' explained that in his experience the parents' physical punishment of their child would be equivalent to the embarrassment and frustration that their child has brought to them. The public embarrassment of the neighbourhood and extended family possibly finding out was more of a concern than actually addressing the behaviour of their child appropriately. He further stated, that the stigma of shame became the measuring stick for the method and force of discipline administered by the parent. There was an underlying attempt to restore honour but instead it created fear in the child. At this stage the parents run the risk of over-stepping the mark by using the smack as the only alternative. As a result and unbeknown to the parents, they risk losing a relationship with their children because it was never shown to them in the relationship they had had with their parents. Participant "L" believed that discipline should never be

administered in anger or out of spite but should be part and parcel of the child's development and nurturing. That is achieved when Samoan parents in the community are given the assistance to look at positive alternatives to physical discipline.

### ***Summary***

In asking the participants to recount their personal experiences of being disciplined by their parents and caregivers, they equally gave examples of when there was a lot of love in the home in isolation of physical hitting. That reassured them of their parents' and caregivers' love. That was manifested through ensuring that their basic needs were met and that they were supported in their education and celebrated achievements when they did well.

The twelve participants conclusively agreed that beating children or young people was not effective in bringing about change, although it was a debatable issue with the families they worked with. They advocated for and promoted the usage of alternative methods to physical discipline as options that Samoan families needed to access and further explore within their own community. Furthermore they expressed that Samoan families needed to understand the effects that harsh physical beating or punishment could have on a child's development and relationship with their parents. The high regard held by Samoan parents to maintain the values, beliefs and principles of Fa'asamoa often reflected in the justification for using physical force to discipline children, the heart of Samoan parents being to ensure a better future for their children.

## CHAPTER FIVE

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## **CONTRIBUTING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PARENTING IN SAMOAN FAMILIES**

### ***Introduction***

The following chapter identifies contributing factors which impact on Samoan parenting and child rearing in a New Zealand context. It does not excuse the harsh beating that Samoan children may experience in their homes, but gives insight and understanding to the realities that Samoan parents experience in a Western context both internally and externally. This needs to be taken into consideration and seen in context. These views are once again shared by the participants and the feed-back they received from Samoan parents who have come to their attention for physical abuse.

### ***Ecological Multi-Level Analysis Model***

Physical discipline is a growing issue in New Zealand, especially for Samoan families who seem to present a high level of tolerance for this method of punishment, for undesirable behaviour in a child, as illustrated in the data gathered from the participants and literature review. There is more to why a Samoan parents or caregivers would physically discipline their child or children as previously presented in the discipline chapter. For example for Samoan migrant families there are internal and external factors in the Samoan culture and in Western society that inevitably impact on the parents in their environment which contribute to the method of discipline. Reverend Mua Strickson-Pua (as cited in Mulu, 2001, pp.20-21) reinforces this saying, *"No one sets out to kill a child but social and economic circumstances do, inevitably, affect families and can create an environment which results in physical violence"*.

The contributing factors that influence parenting in Samoan families are demonstrated in Bronfenbrenner's multi-level analysis which looks at a system of relationships described as complex layers of environment, each having an effect

on a person's development. Pardeck and Garbarino (as cited in Worrall 1996, p.55) stated that the,

*“ecological theory enables practitioners to gain a comprehensive view of people and their socio-cultural-physical milieu.” Furthermore, Garbarino is cited saying that “it brings to light connections and influences, both positive and negative, that otherwise might go unnoticed”.*

In using the multi-level analysis in the context of Samoan migrant families and their children it allows for a holistic assessment within an ecological framework of ontogenic, microsystem, exosystem, macrosystem and mesosystem influences.

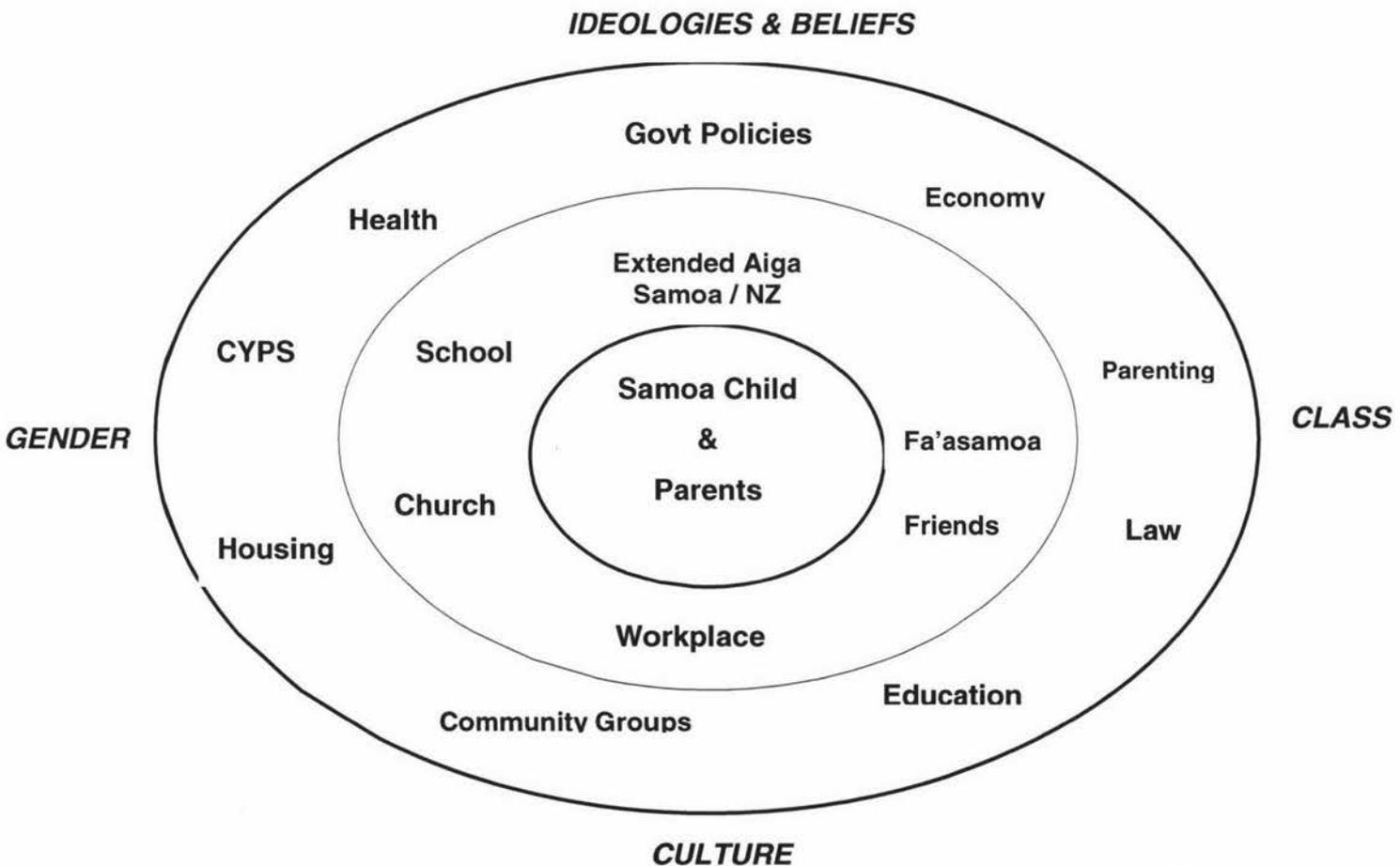
*The “ecological theory engenders a deeper understanding of the complexities of any setting, bringing to light multiple contributing influences within any client system. It provides an adaptive, evolutionary view of human beings in constant interchange and reciprocity with all elements of their environment”. (Bronfenbrenner cited in Worrall 1996, p.56)*

The socialisation of a Samoan child always begins in his or her home and then permeates every area of activity and interpersonal relationship that he or she engages in and experience as individuals.

*“The preservation of family unity, integrity and credibility is of paramount importance....The prevailing belief of Pacific Island people is that individual achievements are directly related to the nurturing and support of the family. In almost every case the individual edifies and attributes the source of their success to their family.” (Pilato, Su'a & Crichton-Hill; 1994, p.5).*

This is also in reverse. If the child behaved in a way that is unruly it would also have adverse effects on the family, since they would have to take responsibility.

Given that Samoan children have been repeatedly referred to as a product of their families and therefore viewed in this context, I have presented the Bronfenbrenner ecological framework by placing the Samoan child and his or her parents together in the multi-level analysis of ontogenic influences. For a Samoan family this is how an ecological multi-level analysis of impacting influences presents:



**Diagram 1: Samoa Ecological Multi-Analysis Model**

### ***Ontogenic Influences***

The ontogenic influences are those *“concepts and ideas that each parent brings to their family, that they have internalised from their own families of origin. Many of these concepts exist across extended family structures”*. (Worrall, 1996, p.59). When the participants were asked to explain what they thought influenced and contributed to their parents and clients method of discipline, a common theme which kept reoccurring in the data was that it was generational behaviours. Ten of the twelve participants who were physically disciplined explained that for their parents and caregivers this was the method of discipline that they had observed and experienced as children. Participant ‘G’ reinforced that to her mother a hiding was the best way and with no explanation. Participant ‘I’ explained that it was a cycle of generational behaviours that has been learnt. People only behaved according to what they had observed through role modelling and experience, especially when an alternative had not been shown. That was the same explanation received from Samoan families which they worked with, who viewed discipline as a successful means of achieving the desired outcome. Data presented showed that it was not only generational, but also other factors had impacted them as parents in a New Zealand context, such as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem ecological framework.

### ***Mircosystem Influences***

The microsystem in relation to Samoan parents and their children refers to the layers that are closest to them as an immediate unit. As presented in the ecological model these layers are the extended family, Fa’asamoa, church, workplace, school and friends. These structures have an impact on the roles of the parents and their children in their home and in society. For example the role of the church is an important aspect in a Samoan person’s life and so active participation in church activities, such as choir practice, youth group meetings, Sunday school and regular church attendance, monetary gifts to the minister and the upkeep of church expenses, and also biblical teachings reinforce Fa’asamoa and the discipline of children. Additionally, Bronfenbrenner describes that at the

microsystem level, the relationships between the parents and child is bi-directional. That means that both have the capacity to have an effect on each other's beliefs and behaviours whether they be positive or negative. They occur at all levels of environment. The interaction of structures within a layer and between layers is the key to this theory. However, interactions at outer levels can still impact the inner structures. For example, Government policies that promotes the autonomy and rights of children, clearly come in conflict with principles of Fa'asamoa and the Aiga social structure that looks at the care of children as their collective responsibility. This therefore impacts the family when children come home and attempt to live out the perspectives influenced through their peer groups and education while their parents are enforcing the principles of collectivity.

### ***The Samoan Church***

The participant's professional experiences illustrated church as a major part of a Samoan family and child's life in the microsystem. "Fa'avae ile Atua Samoa" translated in English means "Samoa is founded on God". There is a plaque in Samoa central Apia which is a reminder to Samoans that they are a God-fearing nation. All major trading stores are closed on Sunday in Samoa and the local shops will not open until later in the evening. Sunday Sabbath is religiously adhered to as this is an opportunity for Samoans to give reverence and worship to their God. Their faith did not take a back seat when they migrated to New Zealand, but instead had a major role in uniting Samoans.

This is reflected in the 2001 census figures indicating "*90 percent of Samoan people reported an affiliation with a Christian religion.... Samoans that were born overseas were more likely to report a religious affiliation.*" (Statistics New Zealand). The Samoan community have a tremendous faith in God and this is evident particularly in the first wave of Samoans to arrive in New Zealand.

The Samoan church for the community has a dual role: to practise their commitment and faith in God and secondly, a place where their heritage as

Samoans could be retained and reinforced. New Zealand-born Samoans were born into this environment and church attendance became a way of life growing up as children. However this is slowly changing as there is an exodus of first and second generation Samoans in New Zealand moving away from their traditional churches, much to the disapproval and disappointment of some of their parents. They either moved to another affiliation or have disengaged from church altogether. Nevertheless church attendance is still held in high regard among the older generation who continue to actively participate in and religiously attend church. It is this older generation and continued flow of Samoan migrants arriving in New Zealand that hold on to the traditional beliefs of physical discipline as a means of addressing a child's misbehaviour, as referred to in chapters one and four.

The teaching of the church on the relationship between children and their parents can be first found in one of the 10 Commandments that instruct children to honour their parents. The scripture injunction from the book of Genesis chapter 20 verse 12 says, "*Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*". (The Holy Bible: King James Version, 1982). For Samoan parents it is imperative that their children honour their relationship by showing respect and obedience. The majority of Samoan children raised in a Samoan context will be reminded of this commandment if and when there is an element of disrespect and misbehaviour that the children have towards his or her parents. Very rarely will you hear Samoan children raised in traditional upbringing disrespect his or her parents in their presence or challenge them on their understanding of honouring. However, it is not saying that a Samoan child or a young person disagrees with his or her parent, or the punishment handed down to him or her but the child's silence is interpreted as a sign of respect and obedience.

Participant 'J' explained that in his personal experience the Samoan church as a denomination does not say much about raising children as there are no guidelines, besides scriptural references made in selected passages in the Bible,

as presented above. Therefore the interpretation is left to the parents according to what they have been raised to understand and believe. In his experience of Pacific Island churches there are youth groups that discuss the Matai system, Fa'asamoa and what it means to the family in New Zealand and in Samoa. But there is no set programme on disciplining children nor does he know of any other Samoan denomination having that.

The responsibility of the Samoan Church as a collective in the Samoan context could not be avoided as Biblical teachings and beliefs referred to in chapter four reinforce Samoan parents preferred method of physical discipline. The majority of participants pointed out the churches teaching on the familiar scripture injunction of *'spare the rod and spoil the child'* found in Proverbs 13:24 *"He who spares his rod hates his son. But he who loves him disciplines him promptly"*, (New King James Version, 1982) being a legitimate seed used by Samoan parents to physically discipline their children, as indicated by participant 'A'.

Samoan parents hold the church Ministers and their teachings as "gospel" and their messages are seen as indisputable and infallible given that they are God's servants called to do His work. To challenge the teaching if they had an element of disagreement would be frowned upon, but it also means that they are challenging God's authority and the minister who is a representative of God. Participant 'I' said that was a result of misled reverence of their understanding of God through their Minister. Additionally, Samoans believe that they need to be qualified to speak, challenge or teach on such matters.

The families which the participants have worked with have justified their physical disciplines by quoting, "To spare the rod is to spoil the child", believing that that is an act of love to deter their children from bad behaviour. As referred to in chapter four, Samoan parents believed this was a part of Fa'asamoa. But it was clarified that it was not Fa'asamoa but misinterpreted Biblical teaching that has been passed through the generations, which Samoans have made a part of

Samoan culture. Participant 'J' added that being involved in a community programme on parenting, he had come across many parents who said and believed that. In response, he presented to the parents a hypothetical example of a severe physical abuse case that was taken to court and the judge questioned the parents' concept of love after viewing the photographs of the beaten child. The judge asked, "Is this the face of love?" The response by parents in his experience is usually, "O le ita ole tiapolo" (it is the devil's hatred in me). Once again they were asked "o le tiapolo lea?" (Is this the devil's doing?).

When Samoan parents do not take responsibility for their harsh disciplinary actions towards their children and blames them on the devil, this is the scapegoat that participant 'F' referred to in Chapter Four. Samoan parents need to take a look at their disciplinary methods which have resulted in abuse and take responsibility, instead of looking to the Fa'asamoa or deflecting blame that does not make the parent look at himself or herself as the problem. Participant 'J' further stated, that he challenged the parents' foundational belief system on this teaching and purported that interpretation of this scriptural reference is incorrect. Participants 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'E' also responded to the inferences made by Samoan culture to scriptural reference by referring to the 'rod' used by Shepherds as a staff, to hook the sheep back onto the right track and to guide them, it was never used to beat the sheep. Therefore that suggests Samoans are using the rod incorrectly, and at the detriment of their relationship with their children.

The majority of the participants explained that there has been a gross misinterpretation of, 'Spare the rod, spoil the child' by Samoan parents. That is reinforced by participants 'E' and 'K' who explained, that church teaching had a lot to do with the way Samoan parents discipline today. It is a belief that has been ingrained in their upbringing as children in Samoa which has been translated to their families in New Zealand.

When the participants pointed out to their Samoan families that the Bible contextually does not sanction a parent to beat bad behaviour out of a child, it was difficult for them to grasp and equally understand this explanation, as their understanding of this scripture reference and upbringing presented otherwise. The parents believed it was their God ordained duty to instruct and guide their children and if it had to be administered physically this would be an option that they use.

The participants believe it is the responsibility of the church through the minister to correct and present an accurate understanding of, 'Spare the rod, spoil the child' and also to address discipline in the confines of love and care. If that is not addressed, participant 'E' believed that this type of belief and teaching would continue to perpetuate violence in the home.

### ***Fa'alavelave and Financial Contributions to Samoan Churches***

Fa'alavelave and church contributions are interconnected because they both involve financial contributions by Samoan parents. When Samoans make financial contributions to fa'alavelave and the church for the minister's wages and church maintenance, it is connected to their concept of collectivity in the family and Fa'asamoa social structure. These structures are support systems that reinforce the Samoan way of life operated in Samoa with their families. That has not changed when Samoans migrated to New Zealand as referred to in Chapter Two. Although the geographical context is different, Samoans will not disconnect from existing structures that have worked and supported their families in Samoa. However the demanding financial contributions have impacted Samoan families and the way they discipline their children as explained in the following.

### ***Church***

The establishment of Samoan churches in New Zealand came with their joys, challenges and burdens. The new church buildings meant enormous financial

contributions required of each family in the congregation to begin the church building project and to sustain its function.

The participants expressed the stress of financial contributions to local churches and the pressure that their clients' families had experienced as a result of giving too much money to the church instead of looking at what was financially able within their means.

In most cases the giving came to the detriment of their families. Participants 'D', 'E', 'I' and 'J' described how children had been left to go without their basic needs being met at home and school, needs such as food and clothing, because their parents had given the majority of their earnings to the church. This pressure facing parents is unbeknown to the children, who in their normal daily events can ask one slight question about school fees, shoes, clothing and food, and that would trigger from parents an adverse response with physical force unnecessarily.

As a result of Samoan families' fulfilling financial contributions to the church, this has meant that payment on some bills come secondary to giving to the church. The participants' clients have experienced stress and anger which inadvertently has turned into family feuds and violence for some families. Participant 'I' believed that Samoan parents came under the spiritual misconception that were giving to the churches because it is a favour to God. He was aware that Samoan families would not speak against God, but the fact that they could not challenge church teaching and the minister on financial offerings, he believed it was a cruel lie and an imposition on Samoan people.

The participants expressed that the Samoan church needed to be accountable for the financial assistance that was expected of Samoan families to maintain the congregation and the minister. The function of the church will always be very important and will continually remain through the loyalty of Samoan-migrant

families. However, the answer is not doing away with the Samoan church, but rather, Samoan families need to be encouraged, comforted and freed of guilt to give within their means and not over and beyond their capacity. Participant 'B' explained that as part of her work she had approached the ministers and talked to them about these pressing issues on behalf of her clients. The response received thus far had not been favourable.

### ***Fa'alavelave***

As a result of the financial imbalance that Samoan families practise in the context of giving too much money to the church, six of the twelve participants identified that this had overlapped with financial obligations to meet family fa'alavelave.

An aspect of Fa'asamoa is fa'alavelave, *"a ceremony to mark events such as weddings, funerals, the bestowal of Matai titles in which food, money and fine mats are given and received by those attending the celebrations. The literal meaning of the term is 'troubles'".* (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998, p.175). But it is not 'troubles' in the context of how a Western person would define it. To a Samoan it is the expression of fa'asamoa protocol that unites family members to help and support each other in these ceremonies, such as coming together and sharing the burden of putting the ceremony together, not only financially but customarily.

These ceremonies have increased in scale since Samoans migrated to New Zealand, with additional ceremonies for graduations and celebrating the significant coming of age of a 21<sup>st</sup> or 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. *"The function of fa'alavelave is to demonstrate and reinforce kinship ties, but there are also elements of status rivalry and keeping up with the Joneses".* (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998, p.169). The financial contributions towards fa'alavelave are resourced within the family and have been found to be of large amounts. The contributions not only go to payment, *"for the hiring of halls and feeding the guests, but also for a large scale of gift exchanges".* (ibid: p.169).

Fa'alavelave was an issue of concern that was identified by the families which the participants worked with. The fa'alavelave included contributions to extended family events in New Zealand and in Samoa. The pressure to meet the large amounts expected of each family superseded the needs of their own immediate families. Participant 'E' expressed that for many Samoan families it was a conscious choice to save face at the time and not to be seen as giving less or nothing. Therefore, the pressure to maintain family status and pride took precedence. He went on to say that Samoan families had a tendency to overextend themselves so that they were seen as doing what was right in the Fa'asamoa but it had meant being in debt for many. Once again, that had resulted in children not having their basic needs met in the home, which inevitably was transferred to their relationship with peers at school and to their academic performance. The relationship in the home between the parents was also affected as the stress, frustration and disagreements begin to multiply and at times resulted in violence and abuse.

Participant 'A' suggested that a way to combat fa'alavelave would mean for a Samoan family to separate themselves from these family obligations. However, she believed that it would require a strong individual to put his or her family ahead of the extended Aiga and to closely look at their own relationships with their children. This would mean putting their needs ahead of the safety and security of a whole community. For many Samoans, the disconnection has its pros and cons and therefore a degree of planning needs to take place. She assumed that for some Samoans who had made this disconnection, the thinking was for the survival of their children in a western context, and what they saw as a better future for them. The flipside to this school of thought is the cultural marginalisation that occurs, leaving the children of these families in cultural isolation, often devoid of the collective experiences of Fa'asamoa.

Samoans cannot see themselves in isolation of the collective. It is believed that if they contribute to family fa'alavelave's this will be reciprocated when they need

financial support. For example, their daughter's wedding, a death of an immediate parent or a new church building. Therefore, Samoan parents will invest all their time, resources and money in fa'alavelave's. However, for a Samoan not to do this would be viewed as being 'fia-Palagi' (trying to be European), fia-ese (to be different) and mataga` (shame) and a disgrace to the family. To come away from the collective becomes too great of a compromise for many Samoans and so they contribute to fa'alavelave regardless of financial incapacity. That is when fa'alavelave becomes a burden and obligation and to an extent Samoans will try to out do each other financially.

How does fa'alavelave and church contributions impact the discipline of children? As referred to earlier, when all financial resources have gone to these areas there is little or no finance to pay bills and that can possibly lead to eviction. When a child cries because he or she is hungry and there is nothing to give, the parent under these stress factors responds in duress, in most instances with the use of physical force.

There is a latent psychological fear among Samoans that if they try to go out on their own independently, no one will come to their aid when they need the support. But unknowingly for Samoan parents, it is at the cost of their children as they are at the receiving end of being left to go without, in the name of Fa'asamoa through "fa'alavelave" and church donations.

### ***Unemployment***

What needs to be noted at this point is that employment status has no face when it comes to contributing to fa'alavelave's. Participant 'D' said that Samoan people always had fa'alavelave, whether it was to give to a funeral of a relative or a wedding. Samoans felt that they needed to make a financial contribution. As a result they give what they do not have or cannot afford, as it is better to be giving something than nothing. Participant 'A' reinforced that when a Samoan practiced that, it had a lot more to do with preserving the family status and pride.

Statistics New Zealand Census figures showed that there was a total of 7,200 Samoan adults, or 16 percent of the Samoan labour force as unemployed at the time of the 2001 Census.

*“The unemployment rate for the Pacific population was also 16 percent more than double that for the New Zealand population; in 2001 that was 7 percent. The unemployment rate among the Samoan population is higher than the New Zealand population across all age groups. The disparities tend to be greatest among the younger age groups, which have highest unemployment rates – particularly the 15–19 and 20–24 year age groups”. (Statistics New Zealand, 2001)*

Although Samoan families may be unemployed and receiving the Work and Income benefit this is irrespective of an internal obligation to meet the financial needs of their extended families, as the pressure still remains to contribute to fa’alavelave. Participant ‘I’ explained that there were those among the Samoan community who were genuinely unable to find a job. In his experience, he found that with fathers who felt disempowered as they were unable to contribute to the upkeep of their family. The reasons could be illness, inability to have a good command of the English language, lack of or no education. He did not qualify for a benefit because his wife earned too much money according to Work and Income New Zealand, and lastly because of his age he was unable to find another job. Therefore as a result they began to hurt the people they loved the most.

### ***Mesosystem Influences***

The mesosystem is the layer that connects the structures in the parent and child microsystem setting. *“Families either participate in several microsystem settings, either as individuals, or as a collective.”* (Worrall, 1996, p.62). The families that the participants worked with explained how their understanding of their microsystem setting impacted and informed their roles and responsibilities as a Samoan parent and how they parent all their children. The findings illustrate that

the microsystem of Aiga, church and Fa'asamoa contributed and influenced the parent's method of discipline. These functions reinforce each other and have a powerful influence on the development of Samoan families in a New Zealand context. These structures are viewed as pillars of a Samoan person's identity and it is about retaining a way of life that has worked for Samoans prior to Western influences.

The Samoan belief for a family is to do everything collectively based on reciprocity and not mutually exclusive of each other. It is the hope of Samoan parents and caregivers that their children raised in a New Zealand context will not relinquish their collective way of life. It is meant to overflow into their children's own structures with their peers and school environment. However, as discovered in the exosystem framework there are societal influences that directly and indirectly impact both the Samoan parents and their children.

### ***Exosystem Influences***

The exosystem are, "*Societal connections directly impacting families, these are determined by complex interrelationship of economic, political and social determinants, over which they have little influence*". (Worrall, 1996, p.63). This is a larger social system that the children do not function in, but there is a degree of impact on the children's development by interacting with some structure of their microsystem whether it is negative or positive.

The exosystem influences for Samoan families would be the impact of migration, government policies, the involvement of community organisations, such as Child, Youth and Family Services, with the family and education.

### ***Samoan Migrant Families***

It was believed among the participants that one of the major influences as to why Samoan parents disciplined their children was a result of being migrant parents who were unaware of some of the realities of their new environment with

compounding social and economic difficulties that have affected relationships in the home for couples and children.

The migration stories for Samoan families are very similar in experiences with their conflicts, challenges and successes. Samoans who arrived in the first wave of migration provided the opportunity and aid for further family members from Samoa to settle in an environment that they might or might not have succeeded in. The support extended to finding employment for their family members in their work places or networks in the community or church. This support continues until the family members have settled in their new environment, but even then support is not totally relinquished as families continue to come together for family events including celebrations and ceremonies that require their assistance.

In Chapter Two, it explains how the driving force behind migration for Samoans was the perceived lifestyle and opportunity the western culture presented in education and occupations for their families and future generations. However, the New Zealand that many of the Samoans remembered in the 1960s and 1970s is very different from the New Zealand that many of the Samoans are arriving to today given, the remarkable changes in the economic, social and political climate.

What has not changed for Samoan families is the strong desire and importance to remain connected to their cultural heritage, traditions, language and beliefs. That has posed difficulties in the relationships of parents with their children who are trying to understand the world that their parents have come from and the dominance of the Western culture that has now become their place of residence. New Zealand-born Samoans, together with other New Zealand-born Pacific Islanders, are expected to perform a dual role, one is, *“to have an understanding of the values of both Pacific Island and European cultures”*, and the other *“to appropriately demonstrate certain behaviour and conduct”*. (Pilato et al., 1994, p.7).

The worldview of a Samoan child born and raised in New Zealand or a child born in Samoa but raised in New Zealand for most of their childhood and adult life, is remarkably different to their parents reality. Samoan children are reminded of how fortunate they are to be living in New Zealand with the abundance and opportunities that surrounds them, as their parents recount the struggles experienced with large families and minimal income and resources to meet their needs. These stories are not to conjure guilt but intended to give the children a glimpse of what life was like for their parents in Samoa. However it is not always successfully understood and conveyed in a way that the children understand.

Samoan parents raise their children to embrace their cultural values through the family and community life and restrict Western influences on their children.

*“Many feared that Samoan cultural values, such as obedience to parents and elders, and conformity to religious and cultural values concerning the proper and behaviour of children, would be undermined. The strategies that Samoan parents employ to try to impact their values to their children include admonishing them about undesired behaviour and disapproved-of attitudes, and appealing to them indirectly through prayer. Most also use physical punishment to teach their children desired standards of behaviour”. (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998, p.169).*

In Samoa, socialisation for a child is always community and collectively based and limited to their relatives in the village and community as this is where their cultural values are nurtured and reinforced. This type of socialisation is projected into their homes in New Zealand but simultaneously there is a greater force of influence that their children are exposed to, in the media, with their peers and at school. For instance, in the school environment, Samoan children are taught to express themselves vocally, to think and work independently and to have an opinion of their own with personal freedom and choice which they inevitably bring

into their home. That is contrary to a Samoan upbringing where children are seen and not heard and in Samoa they are the,

*“lowest status group in the household and their labour contribution to the household was something they learned to perceive as service (tautua) to higher-ranking status groups. This relationship between persons of different generations was maintained between adults and their parents in adult life”. (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998, p.164)*

Although Samoan children are seen as gifts from God as expressed in Chapter Two, this relationship is very different to social rank in the family and village community, which is earned through servitude to your family. As reinforced by participant ‘H’, children have feelings and often in Samoa, children are perceived as not having any feelings nor are they encouraged to express them when they do. When a child is told what to do whether they agree or disagree is irrelevant; the instruction must be immediately adhered to and to challenge it is to speak beyond one’s age. To challenge would be frowned upon and can result in physical discipline. A further example described by participant ‘H’ that she has commonly found in Samoan families is a child’s misbehaviour at school being brought to the attention of his or her parents through a phone call or letter. The parents will interpret this as a reflection of bad parenting and so they discipline their child prior to meeting the school without finding out in detail what the issue of concern is and then looking at a joint solution with the school to address the misbehaviour. A Samoan parent would usually think of a worse scenario and in most cases interrogate the child at home and administer the discipline before contacting the school. Participant ‘H’ calls this ‘losing face’ of parents rather than them looking at the heart of the matter that can possibly imply that their child’s misbehaviour can be a reflection of where they have failed.

**Education**

The education aspect fell in two streams, the first, as previously mentioned, is the Samoan migrant parent's lack of understanding of the two worlds that their children are living in. The second, as explained by participant 'H', is the parents lack of comprehension of children's developmental needs in a Western context. Furthermore, how life had been for them in Samoa has minimal relevance or comparison to the pressures and confusion that their children are experiencing as first generation Samoans in New Zealand.

For example, participant 'K' commented that in his experience when working with Samoan migrant parents there was a tendency of the parents to expect their children to attend to chores that are not age-appropriate. He explained, in Samoa that it was not unusual to see a nine year old cooking a meal for the rest of the family or gathering coconuts for the preparation of meals or transaction of currency. However, when one moves from Samoa to New Zealand the roles of children are dramatically altered. He further stated that unfortunately nobody had talked to the norms experienced and lived in Samoa that have been influenced by the parent's environment as the need to change. Therefore, what may be relevant, acceptable and practical in Samoa is irrelevant and impractical in New Zealand. Samoan parents are not given the skills to make this transitional change from one to the other in order to survive and to make relevant in New Zealand.

Children's performances at school are very important for Samoan parents as children in Samoa are always ranked in their different grades. When they move to New Zealand, Samoan parents saw education as an inroad to opportunities that they did not have when they were growing up in Samoa. Therefore there is an expectation of their children is to excel academically because that will be a good reflection on the parents. However, in the extreme, participant 'D' said that parents usually thought more of themselves than they did of their children in those situations, and if the children did not meet the parental expectation of

success, they became a great disappointment. Therefore, because of the parents' lack of education of their children's inability or their failure to recognize alternative abilities, participant 'D' described that rather than supporting their children they would resort to discipline.

Participant 'C' said that Samoan parents needed the education to help them see these gaps as it will assist them in understanding their position in New Zealand. More importantly it will help them to relate more successfully with their children in their environment.

### ***Macrosystem Influences***

Lastly macrosystem is the *"furthest from the children's environment and macrosystem is the shared assumptions held about society, the blue-print upon which our society is constructed and social policy formed"*. (Prasad, 1984, p.38).

This layer comprises cultural values, customs, ideologies and beliefs, class and gender.

It is the principles of this larger layer defined in the macrosystem that have a cascading influence throughout the interaction with the layers of microsystem, mesosystem and exosystem. For example, if it is the belief of the culture at large that parents should be solely responsible for raising their children, then that culture becomes less likely to provide resources to support parents. This, in turn affects the structures in which the parents function. The parents' ability or inability to carry out their responsibilities toward their children within the context of the children's microsystem is likewise affected.

The macrosystem for Samoan families is illustrated by the impact of legislation regarding Section 59, of the Crimes Act, 1961 and the role of Government not only to Samoan parents but to all parents in New Zealand who will be affected by this legislation if it changed. Further discussion of this will be presented in the following chapter which takes a closer look at Section 59 and the arguments

presented for and against the repealing of this Section, the responsibility that New Zealand has as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of children and parents of this nation, and the response of the twelve participants to their Samoan community and Government.

### ***Summary***

The transition to life in New Zealand is not always easy for Samoan migrant families. As time progresses, some families find the lack of support, financial struggles, the demands of their children, immediate and extended families compounded at once, to be too much to cope and manage. When things become too overwhelming for the Samoan parents, even the slightest nudge from their children can be all it takes to reach boiling point. As a result the most vulnerable persons are affected and in more cases than one, they will be the children.

Samoans are a product of their environment. This environment is reflected in the previous chapters is their Aiga, Fa'asamoa, church and now the New Zealand culture in their work places, through their children and what is presented by the media. Evidently the data presents an overlap of contributing and influencing factors that inform discipline through the experiences of the participant's with their clients.

Samoans have long possessed cultural traditions in the Fa'asamoa that reflect an inherent value of roles and responsibilities in their family and how they operate and live in the New Zealand context. These cultural traditions are what Samoans have inherently brought with them from Samoa to the Western world and for the participants it has inevitably been translated into the culture of their professional practice.

It is from the participant's personal experiences in their families, practice and the experience of Fa'asamoa in their lives, exposure to a different life in New

Zealand and further education that widen the point of reference that each participant operates in. When working with Samoan families they have been able to clearly identify and articulate the contributing factors and influences that have impinged on Samoan parenting and child rearing in a Western world. This awareness has informed their approach and practice and equally assisted them to successfully work with their people. As collective people, Samoans are empowered through sharing each others journey but more importantly it is the transparency of the working relationship that brings about solutions for a better future for Samoans in New Zealand and the success the participants have with the families that have been referred to their service.

The findings in this chapter presented by the participants mention not only internal but external factors that inform the way that Samoan parents discipline their children. The effects of migration for Samoan families, education, the role of the church and the interpretation of 'spare the rod, spoil the child' by Samoan parents, financial obligations to the church and fa'alavelave within the Fa'asamoa context, all unavoidably affect relationships in the family. These are common themes that arise in the findings which impact the family and the discipline of children in the home.

## CHAPTER SIX

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## LEGISLATION IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

### *Introduction*

Samoa is governed by two types of law - Western law and village lore. The latter is village based and operated through the village council that consist of Matai's. The village lore acts as a basis for protecting the interest of the community and ensuring safety for all. Therefore families in the village are required to adhere to rules and guidelines that have been stipulated through the village council. As with western law, if village lore is broken there are consequences that are decided by the council of Matai's.

Samoans arriving in New Zealand upon migration realise that there is only one law that governs the nation. The law does not necessarily take into account a Samoan person's village, genealogy, Matai title status, let alone their ethnicity, when deciding on legislative policies. The New Zealand Government has a responsibility to all people-groups in this nation from different walks of life. There are policies established and legislation passed in parliament which may come in conflict with people's beliefs and values, but the democratic process speaks the collective voice of the nation. Aside from conscience votes which are left to members of parliament, the overall law and policy does not necessarily take into account the ethnic interests of peoples.

As previously mentioned in the Literature Review Chapter, Section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961 allows parents to use physical discipline on their children if the circumstances are reasonable. This falls in line with Samoan parenting and child rearing practices as there is a belief among Samoan families that physical punishment is an effective deterrent to inappropriate behaviour.

However, New Zealand as a signatory to the United Nations is committed to the principles of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child (UNCROC)

and therefore Section 59 of the 1961 Crimes Act is a contradiction to their commitment. (see appendix 5 & 6)

For this reason, it is recognised that UNCROC and Section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961 is an important aspect that needs addressing when one is looking at physical discipline, this chapter looks at UNCROC and Section 59, the arguments for and against the repealing of Section 59, the role of the New Zealand Government and a Samoan response as presented by the twelve participants.

### ***United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child***

The ban of physical punishment is an agenda item that has been pursued by the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child.

*“The Convention incorporates general rights, rights requiring protective measures, rights concerning the civil status of children, rights concerned with development and welfare, and rights concerning children in special circumstances.”* (St John, S., Dale, C., O’Brien, M., Blaiklock, A., & Milne, S., 2001, p.44)

New Zealand, being a signatory since 1993, is obligated to ensure that legislation is implemented to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence. Coy (2001, p.23) reinforces that *“no matter what process a state uses for implementation of a convention, once a state has ratified UNCROC, it may not invoke the provisions of its internal law as justification for its failure to abide by the provisions of the convention”*.

New Zealand, given their ratification is obligated to report every five years on the country’s progress in implementing UNCROC principles. A matter of grave concern for UNCROC is Section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961. They have indicated very strongly the repealing of this part of the Act, to ensure the physical safety

and welfare of children in this nation. There has been collaborative work between the Ministries of Social Development, Youth Affairs, Justice and the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services through various educational campaigns to precede legislative change.

The United Nations Convention on the rights of a child has recommended very strongly that New Zealand, being a signatory, should remove this part of the Act. According to UNCROC, New Zealand children are not free of violence from their parents and caregivers and therefore remain vulnerable to abuse in their homes when corporal punishment is allowed to be a means of discipline. The United Nations Committee's Report to New Zealand says:

- “Ban all corporal punishment against children
- Act to address the rise in alcohol drinking by adolescents
- Take measures to reduce the rate of teenage pregnancies
- Raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility, now 10 years
- Set a minimum age for young workers
- Expand services for child victims of abuse
- Improve youth suicide prevention”

(“The United”, 2003)

UNCROC listed New Zealand as having the third highest rate of child abuse deaths out of 26 Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development countries (OECD). This rate is not a good representation of New Zealand whose population is only a meagre 4 million in contrast to their counterparts in the OECD countries. In this context it should be an issue of concern for New Zealand but the issue is much larger than just repealing Section 59 and UNCROC telling this nation what she should or should not do.

As referred to in the Literature Review Chapter, Logan (2003) of Maxim Institute argues, “the only way to solve the problem of child abuse in New Zealand is to face up to the nature of the environment that causes it”.

A solution presented by Logan (2003) is to *“build up and support the mediating institutions of civil society – particularly the family and marriage”*.

The effects of Section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961 being repealed for Samoan families as expressed by all twelve participants would be viewed negatively. For reasons that Samoan parents would feel that their parental rights to choose an option of physical discipline is stripped from them.

Furthermore, among Samoan families in New Zealand there is a growing concern for children’s rights being advocated through UNCROC and the repealing of Section 59. That would come in direct conflict to Samoan cultural traditions regarding parental authority. Chapter Two explains that Samoan children and young people are cherished and considered as a gift from God. Therefore it is the parental duty to ensure their children are protected and that their basic needs are met. A group of Pacific People in their report ‘The Second Non-Governmental Organizations’ from Aotearoa New Zealand to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child’ 2003 emphasises this point, citing Masinalupe, Samuelu & Sualii-Sauni (2002, p.63) in reference to the Samoan family saying,

*“In Samoan discourse the rights of the ‘Aiga’ or extended family group subsume the rights of the individual...Individual identity is ‘part of’ rather than ‘separate to’ the identity of the Aiga or group, as is the case for mainstream New Zealand society.”*

The issue of children’s rights is a difficult agenda for Samoan parents to accept as it denotes equality between parents and children, whereas in Samoan

protocol, the collective family hold the rights and it is never individually-based. Samoan parents believe their children should be protected and their rights are nurtured in the constructs of Fa'asamoa and for the New Zealand Government or UNCROC to take the role that rightfully belongs to them is sacrilege. The message that it presents to Samoan parents is that they are incapable of providing the protection and the principles outlined and advocated by UNCROC.

### ***Section 59, of the Crimes Act 1961***

The 'reasonable' aspect of Section 59 of the Crimes Act, 1961 is not clearly defined. (see appendix The definition has been left to the parent's interpretation of 'reasonable' and 'discretion'. Thompson (2000, p. 40) stated that it has been argued that,

*“the ambiguous legal situation undermines the promotion of non-violent child-rearing practices. It sends a clear message that the protection of children's rights and dignity is accorded lower status than that of the adult members of our society.”*

The problem that arises from no clear definition of what is 'reasonable' is that each parent according to his or her own belief and value system will sanction physical punishment within his or her own cultural construct. Therefore, what may be reasonable to a parent of one culture is not necessarily reasonable to another parent of another cultural background or at large the cultural context of this nation. This concern was expressed by a number of participants saying that the grey area of legislation should clearly stipulate what is “reasonable” and what is “not reasonable”, for example, the use of implements could not be used to discipline but an open hand smack on the child's hand or bottom would be acceptable.

Given that New Zealand is a multi-cultural society, it would not be surprising for each ethnic group to define 'reasonable' within their own cultural parameters.

The flip side to the area of 'reasonable' not being clearly defined to the parent, is that the state as an arm of society can overrule before the court of law a parent's definition of 'reasonable'. This decision to overrule is measured according to factors indicated in the Literature Review Chapter, such as the age, maturity and health of the child, the type of misbehaviour and punishment. Additionally, a judge is likely to look at previous cases that have been presented before the court addressing the nature of physical punishment to assist in making a final decision.

St John, et. al supports Te Puni Kokiri, the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, the Commissioner for Children, and Women's Refuge in their campaign to bring awareness and attention to the increasing violence in the New Zealand home. Their aim is to ensure children's lives are worth protecting and nurturing, therefore a ban on physical punishment of children is advocated urgently.

The model nation that has been commonly referred to by child advocates of children's rights in international countries is Sweden which first enacted a ban to physical punishment of children in 1975. St John et al., (2001, p.44) explains that:

*"it provides an example of a dramatically reduced risk to children as a result of this approach. With a population of 8.5 million compared to our 3.8 million, there were 4 recorded deaths in Sweden from child abuse in the 20 years from 1975 to 1995, compared to over 240 here during the 25 year period from 1975."*

### **A Samoan Response to Government**

The twelve participants were asked what the Samoan community should say to the Government regarding Section 59 of the Crimes Act, 1961. Each responded from the view that the Government was moving towards repealing Section 59, as an answer to address child abuse in New Zealand.

It was evident in the analysis among the majority of the participants that consultation was important. To present the change of legislation to the Samoan community and for the message to be effectively delivered, consultation was of utmost priority for this Government. Participant 'H' explained in her experiences the lack of, or inadequate consultation of, Government initiatives for Pacific people driven by national office representatives. In an issue as serious as repealing Section 59 and providing educational programmes to inform Samoan families on this intention, she does not want the Government to negate the valued input of Samoan community leaders in this process. Samoan leaders need to be informed, consulted and allowed to contribute towards a methodology that is culturally specific to their people, as they will be responsible for delivering it to their community.

The process of consultation also identifies among Samoan leaders in the community other Samoans who are proactive in the community and churches to present the message and educational programmes to Samoan families.

Additionally, consultation empowers Samoan leaders and their community to take ownership and responsibility for the violence in Samoan families. Consultation further validates Samoan leaders and their initiatives to work with their own people. That simply means that the Government is committed and is willing to trust the Samoan community to do what is best and appropriate for their people. Participant 'E' believed that consultation is part of the Government's role in taking responsibility as a contributor to the perpetuation of violence through stereotypes, racism and unemployment among Pacific people. For him it is a multi-faceted issue and everybody is responsible and needs to take ownership of the violence in the nation.

Educational programmes, initiatives and alternatives to physical discipline need to be resourced. As it is a Government initiative to move towards changing

legislation, part of their responsibility was also to ensure funding for parenting and child rearing initiatives recommended and facilitated by Samoan leaders. Funding education initiatives would enable training and a consistency of delivering the same message throughout the Samoan communities of this nation. Participant 'I' reinforced that unless the Samoan people were given equal resources, equal opportunities to communicate the message properly and to support them through change, it would have minimal affect.

Furthermore, there was also an element of cynicism by participant 'I' about the role of the Government. He questioned whether Government would listen and if the change of legislation would change the attitudes of the people. This participant believed that unless the issues of the Treaty of Waitangi were dealt with properly then he could not see how the Government could deal and respect a people group of another culture. If this carelessness is presented in the relationship with the Maori, he has little faith that government will look at the Samoan community and what we have to say about what is best for our people.

Aside from the issues of consultation and funding, the response that 'G' and 'L' shared in regards to the Government was that the change of legislation was not a way forward for New Zealand. Participant 'G' came from the angle that the Government's focus should be diverted to the removal of violence in the media in New Zealand homes and society. This view is also supported by participant 'L' who believes that the Government should take a closer look at society as a whole. For example the problems and accessibility of alcohol in society that has given birth to battered wives, neglected children, lost jobs and road carnage. In his experience it is alcohol that kills a lot more children then the smack because it causes more emotional stress and break-down in relationships. The Government, from his perspective, cannot present a "one size fits all" for people. He believes the change of legislation will punish every parent by removing a fairly effective deterrent.

***The effects on the change of legislation on Samoan families and the participants' recommended strategies.***

The views of the Government and the nation of New Zealand presented in the Literature Review Chapter gives a glimpse of the people's perspectives on Section 59 being repealed. It was clear from the findings in the Discipline Chapter that physical punishment was the preferred method for Samoan parents to use when attempting to curb inappropriate and bad behaviour from children. A view contrary to that is foreign to Samoan parents who have been raised to believe physical punishment is an effective deterrent to address unacceptable behaviour.

Participant 'K' expressed that from his experience in working with Samoan parents he was aware of their resistance to the repealing of Section 59 of the Crimes Act, 1961. He believed that for the message to be filtered to the Samoan community, a strategy is important. He explained the strategy of raising awareness to parents needed to be informative and linked to their values as parents and Samoans, so that there would be a response to change. In addition, he believed raising awareness could be modelled on a present day strategy and awareness programme that would empower Samoan families, appease their sense of ownership relating to their strong linkage to family, parents and communities instead of fragmenting the role of the family.

The participants highlighted and expressed their concern of Samoan parents being disempowered through the change of legislation if not communicated and packaged appropriately. Participant 'F' stated that as much as Samoan parents wanted to protect their children, disempowering them was equally wrong. There is a need to give parents a lot of positive power because if parents feel psychologically disempowered there will be a generation of Pacific children who will be just as unmanageable. If the message of empowerment is not delivered correctly, she believed that Samoan parents would go from one extreme to another, to completely letting go as they would be scared of their children. She

reinforced that disempowerment is not needed in Samoan parenting as their children needed to be empowered to keep their culture. Therefore an alternative replacement must be positive and conducive towards Samoan families. This was also echoed by participant 'K' who claimed that the greatest risk of the change in legislation would be to the Samoan parent's authority being challenged and left feeling disempowered. He suggested an alternative to address section 59 is through developing mechanisms to engage Samoan parents to have a sense of transferred authority, as opposed to the dissemination of authority so that they will come on board and work collectively towards change.

Participant 'G' expressed that she had witnessed in her work the disempowerment of Samoan families in their involvement with Child, Youth and Family social workers who had taken their children to court. The parents were left and made to feel powerless in a statutory Government process while their children continued to behave as they wished. She felt that this nation was fostering children who were going to be spirit-free while their parents were left to bear the consequences. She identified that there were a lot of good aspects of Samoan parenting and child rearing that needed to be accessed and drawn out, such as their collective concept of support, responsibility in the context of family, safety and security, to name a few. At the end of the day, Samoan parents are driven by desiring the best for their children.

The analysis further presented that if the legislative change is not introduced carefully to the Samoan community, one may find a group of Samoans who will abide by the law because there is a generic understanding that they are not to physically punish their children. However, it is suggested that physical punishment will be practiced with a lack of understanding of the culture of this country and therefore Samoan parents will operate under an element of fear. Participant 'A' imagined that this could result in Samoan parents still smacking their children, but less visibly given their lack of understanding for the change of legislation and the effects of hitting on their children. She suggested that the

change of legislation should be detailed in a way that would be fully comprehensible for Samoan families.

Participant 'E' expressed that Samoan parents should be presented with a view to agree that it was time to parent differently. He believed there will be Samoan parents who would go along with the change of legislation but there would also be those who would openly and knowingly choose to do otherwise. For example he presented an analogy of using three groups of parents. The first group would be parents who would be committed to changing their behaviour regarding the use of physical discipline and for them minimal or no intervention was necessary as they would run with the alternatives to smacking through educational programmes. The second group of parents would first observe the first group and then eventually follow through with the educational programmes when the appropriate support was put in place. Finally, the third group would consist of parents who blatantly refuse to run with the educational programmes. He believed, the majority of parents would fit into the first two groups but only a small percentage would be categorised in the third group. He implied that no matter how much the third group was motivated for change, it would be slow or non-existent. It is this group of parents in his experience that Child, Youth and Family and other community groups focus on by investing all their financial resources and education. As a result they negate the second group of parents who are willing to make changes to their parenting that could be permanent. However given the lack of support and resources, these parents would return to their familiar disciplinary methods, which could possibly place them in the third group of parents. He recommended that the concentration of resources and educational programmes should go to the first two groups, particularly the second group who would back track if not supported. The only option for the third group was to be given the hard line about the law in New Zealand regarding the change of legislation and for them he believed the message needed to be a lot more forceful.

Participant 'A' was uncertain if Section 59 of the Crimes Act, 1961 should be repealed, however she believed that if this was the New Zealand Government's intention than awareness-raising should be the priority. For example, if the Government is intending for this to be repealed in 5 years than this time-frame should be communicated but should work in conjunction with an awareness raising educational programme. She did not believe a cut-throat method was effective although it might work in another situation.

***A Samoan response for Samoan families: Where does the work begin?***

There is always a Samoan way of responding to issues pertaining to a sensitive nature, through the constructs of Fa'asamoa. Participant E referred to Samoans as a group of highly dignified people and when the message of legislative change affected their parenting and child rearing strategies regarding discipline, the delivery needed to be thought through carefully. The success of the message getting through to Samoan families is based upon an approach that recognises and respects appropriate Samoan protocol. Therefore it begins at a point of reference that is familiar to them.

The participants have identified that strategies to address physical discipline should be centred on educational awareness programmes which embrace the empowerment of Samoan families, their communities and culture which are inclusive of their children. The three common areas the participants recognised as a place to begin educational programmes with Samoan families were:

- Samoan churches
- Samoan Aiga
- Fa'asamoa

It was not surprising that the participants identified those areas given their constant references throughout this thesis. The participants explained in the

following examples why they believed the above to be target areas where they would begin working with Samoan families.

The Samoan church, Aiga and Fa'asamoa have a cascading effect because they have an impact on one another. *"The church is seen as the vehicle which sanctifies the Samoan culture as it is a safe place where Samoan parents and families congregate, to practice, retain and reinforce their beliefs and values among each other and with their children.* (Ngan-Woo, 1985, p.31). The Samoan church as expressed by eight of the twelve participants is an appropriate place to address the beliefs of Samoan parents on discipline. The cascading effect means access to Samoan families and the opportunity to look at Fa'asamoa. But first, a working relationship with ministers is important in order to access families in their churches. The public education awareness means the support of ministers to come on board with their programmes. It is an opportunity to also discuss with ministers the gross misinterpretation of 'Spare the rod, spoil the child' which has not been interpreted and equated as an act of love and then looking at a way to correctly define this to Samoan parents. Additionally, in this environment participant 'H' saw an intrinsic role of the minister's wife, who in her experience are great advocates for non-violence in the home. This is due to their exposure to educational programmes and child development through their involvement in church-based preschools. As a result of their openness to alternatives to smacking, they are able to train and role model parenting strategies to staff and the children's parents.

When there is a working relationship with ministers and their wives, the ability to access families in their congregation will not be a difficult task. The Samoan family unit as initially referred to in Chapter Two is an active and living function that Samoan people embrace. Participant 'F' said that Samoan families needed to stop being in denial and take responsibility for disciplinary practices that have resulted in abuse. She believes if Samoans do not acknowledge a problem in their disciplinary methods, then as a people group they cannot go forward,

regardless of educational programmes presented. Working with Samoan families in this environment is an opportunity to address the denial that participant 'F' spoke of. Also it is an avenue to discuss solutions which will bring positive changes.

Part of engaging with Samoan parents is the prospect of connecting with their children. Participant 'K' reinforced the need for parents and children to come together so they understand the change of legislation when it took effect. The message will be communicated in a way that it does not do away with parental authority, but instead it is an opportunity for parents to work with their children to discuss solutions and an alternative approach to discipline. He believed this working relationship ensured that love became the deterrent and that children would change out of a motivation of love for their parents.

The important function of Fa'asamoa as described in Chapter Two can also be addressed with Samoan families. As noted in Chapter Five, there have been references made by Samoan parents that physical discipline is a part of Fa'asamoa. Additional to providing educational programmes which look into Samoan churches and families, the definition of Fa'asamoa can also be a topic of discussion with Samoan church ministers, parents and their children. When there are references made that hitting is a part of Fa'asamoa or the Samoan culture, then there is a need to revisit beliefs and values of parents who have this view, especially when values of Fa'asamoa engender love, respect, humility and support.

### **Summary**

The pressure from UNCROC for Section 59, of the Crimes Act, 1961 to be repealed is a move that the New Zealand Government is likely to take. As indicated in Chapter One, there is a recognition that New Zealand as a nation is not prepared to have this part of the Act removed, as New Zealanders and Samoans in New Zealand believe it is an impingement on their parental authority.

This view is also shared by Samoan parents but in addition to this is the belief that the care and protection of their children is their responsibility and that physical discipline is an effective deterrent to unacceptable behaviour.

The resistance of Samoan families to the change of legislation does not mean that the Government will change its mind. Therefore, the participants illustrated how they would package and deliver a culturally specific message to their Samoan community through the cultural confines of their churches, family and concept of Fa'asamoa. In saying that, the participants were clear that the Government is responsible for ensuring appropriate consultation with Samoan leaders, as well as funding their recommended educational programmes and strategies.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This research set out to achieve objectives. As a result these objectives have highlighted recommendations for the Samoan communities at large and other Pacific Island communities, to Government social service agencies dealing with cases associated with family violence and physical abuse cases within Samoan families, to churches and to the Samoan youth population.

### ***Samoan Communities***

The Samoan community cannot go forward as a people group when they do not take responsibility for disciplinary actions that have resulted in the severe physical harm of their children. It should not take another Liotta Leuta and Ioana Fuimaono case before Samoan people wake up to the reality of physical and emotional harm inflicted on Samoan children when they are physically beaten by their parents or caregivers. The fact many Samoan people promote the collectivity of the family unit through the Fa'asamoa way, highlights the serious need for a collective response and acknowledgement that "enough is enough" and that physical discipline in a harmful manner is not acceptable based on the New Zealand standards child discipline. Samoan leaders and communities need to re-examine the Samoan beliefs and values system associated with the acceptance of physical discipline amongst families to find alternative means to excessive physical discipline. Such a response and acknowledgement must be done so in a community consultative approach with the Fa'asamoa principles and values that will not jeopardise the relationship between parents and their children.

### ***Samoan Churches Ministers***

Samoan church ministers or pastoral care need to accurately and correctly define the Biblical passage, 'Spare the rod, spoil the child' (King James Version, Proverbs 13 verse 24) in context of disciplinary approaches for raising children. Instead of using this text as a God given duty for parents to physically discipline or beat their children in the name of love and showing the children the right way

to go, Samoan church ministers need to take responsibility for the misinterpretation of the Bible verse that causes Samoan parents to use the verse for their own purpose. Furthermore, the concept of love needs to be explored by looking at alternative Biblical principles which address a reciprocal relationship between parents and children based on mutual love, respect, guidance, encouragement and teaching. If Samoans really believe children are truly gifts from God as referred to in Chapter Two, then a God of love, mercy, grace, forgiveness and family does not promote excessive physical beating of children.

### ***Samoan Young People***

Although many Samoan young people, in particular New Zealand-born Samoans, are raised in a Western context, they are equally exposed to appreciate the concept of collective family, sharing, giving and love. This concept can be communicated in a collaborative working relationship between Samoan parents and the young people so that it becomes an effective deterrent to unacceptable behaviour. It is starting from a point of reference that Samoan parents and their children understand. There is a need to develop family programmes that revisit these collective cultural values in order for children to appreciate the views of their parents and have a greater understanding of their intention. This will also give the opportunity for parents to understand the views of their children in a New Zealand context.

### ***Education***

Child development educational programmes, basic parenting skills and alternatives to physical discipline must be ethnic specific to Samoan parents for them to understand age appropriate discipline in a culturally relevant environment. A reciprocal working relationship between the schools and families to assist parents to better understand their children's development and what happens to their children within their school context should be paramount, so that

all parties (parents, children and teachers) are able to work together to minimise the use of physical discipline. Parent-support is paramount so that parents are able to better understand that physical discipline is not always the answer.

### ***New Zealand Government***

The Government needs to consult, listen and allow for key Samoan leaders to develop and deliver to their communities, families and churches alternatives to physical discipline through educational programmes and initiatives that are community owned. Additionally, it is the role of the Government to ensure adequate funding and resources for culturally appropriate educational programmes and initiatives recommended and facilitated by Samoan leaders. There must be equal resources and opportunities to communicate an effective message that will support Samoan families through change.

### ***New Zealand Legislation***

There must be relevant educational programmes within the New Zealand legislation in regards to Section 59, of the Crimes Act 1961 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a child, for the Samoan parents and their children. It is providing the same information that addresses the well-being and quality of life of Samoan families grounded in economic, social, cultural and spiritual contexts.

### ***A Working Relationship between New Zealand Government and Samoa***

New Zealand is not Samoa and harsh physical disciplinary methods used in Samoa do not belong here. Though both countries have close ties economically and politically, each country has its own approach to disciplining it's own children within the family unit. Both governments need to work together and look at a transition-parenting programme for Samoan parents who migrate yearly through

the 'Treaty of Friendship' quota to New Zealand in order for Samoan families to better prepare themselves for the societal differences between the two nations.

### ***Social Service Agencies***

Existing Samoan community groups need to work in collaboration to discuss and deliver the same message on alternatives to harsh physical discipline to their community. The initiatives must be thoroughly developed and shared among each other as leaders and role models to their families. Samoan parents are to be presented with a view to parent effectively in a New Zealand context, as the extremity of their disciplinary methods is not changing the unacceptable behaviour of their children. Also, non Pacific Island social workers need to take into consideration that if a child is physically disciplined by his or her Pacific Island parent, the answer is not always to shout "Physical Abuse" immediately. Education of the cultural differences in disciplining children needs to be addressed and facilitated workshops in the community and churches need to engage Samoan parents and their children.

### **LIMITATIONS OF STUDY: Future Research**

#### ***Comparative Cross Culture Research***

Comparative research allows for cross-national analysis between New Zealand-born Samoans and Samoan-born Samoans to address the beliefs and values of disciplinary methods. A result of this type of research analysis can provide insight to attitudes and behaviours that will inform educational programmes and initiatives to develop alternatives to physical discipline. The comparative study can also be a platform for developing culturally appropriate parenting programmes and strategies for Samoans in Australia, America and American Samoan.

### ***Family Unit Relationship Research***

Interviewing Samoan parents and their children on alternatives to physical discipline is a pool of untapped knowledge that resides in the home. Samoan parents and their children will tell you what it means to be disciplined, what parents concept of love is, what pressures they're experiencing as families, what parents do not understand about their children and what the children do not understand of their parents, and much more. A collective cultural research to identify the needs of each group will ensure that social service delivery programmes provided to Samoan families and their children are informed and updated.

### ***Implication of Research***

New Zealand is increasingly becoming a multi-cultural country with different ethnic groups migrating from the Pacific, Asia and European countries. This research can be a platform to develop further ethnic specific research that addresses issues of parenting and child rearing various cultures.

### ***Pacific People and Multi-Cultural Research***

New Zealand is increasingly becoming a multi-cultural country with different ethnic groups migrating from the Pacific, Asian and European countries. This research can be a platform to develop further ethnic-specific research that addresses issues of parenting and child rearing in the various cultures.

## CONCLUSION

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## **CONCLUSION**

I started this research because I became increasingly frustrated with comments and feedback from Palagi people associating the Samoan culture as a major attributing factor to physical discipline. I became even more concerned to hear Samoan people say, "It was the Fa'asamoa way" and that Samoan parents physically disciplined their children as an act of love. As a result of these ideologies that have been constantly highlighted in the media and generally spoken of in the wider community, I decided to further investigate the rationale that underpins Samoan parents' decision to use physical discipline on their children.

The heart of this research has examined the following four objectives:

- The types of discipline used by Samoan families in New Zealand.
- The rationale for the use of physical punishment by Samoan families that additionally looks into their beliefs and value systems in the context of Fa'asamoa.
- A Samoan community's response which addresses physical discipline in the context of New Zealand.
- The implications and consequences of physical discipline for Samoan families according to New Zealand law and policy in regards to Section 59, of the Crimes Act, 1961 and the commitment that New Zealand has to the Convention on the Rights of a Child.

At the conclusion of this research, findings have indicated across the four objectives that:

- Samoan parents believe physical discipline is a preferred option of disciplinary action.
- Samoan parents do not physically discipline their children for the enjoyment of seeing their children suffer or with the intention of being cruel and abusive.
- Samoan parental reasons for physical discipline being actioned as referred to in Chapter Four varied from a child lying, offending, bringing embarrassment to the family because of his or her offence or behaviour, disobedience, not fulfilling parental expectations in school and home, and disrespecting parents.
- The desired outcome for Samoan parents for their children well being is to be responsible, successful in a chosen profession and be overall achievers in education, becoming good-upstanding citizens in New Zealand whilst at the same time having the ability to provide for their own families and remain respectful to their parents and other adults.

### **Final Word**

#### ***“Tu manu ae le tu logologo”***

*‘Birds come and go in search for food, but parents’ duties to their off-springs continue until they are no more’.*

This thesis is not at all here to condone harsh physical discipline used by Samoan parents that severely harm our children or leads to the death of a child. It is my hope at the end of this research that Samoan parents and families will challenge and revisit beliefs that inform harsh disciplinary practices which have been to the detriment of relationships with their children. There is a need to recognize and acknowledge that the days of old in relation to harsh physical discipline is no longer acceptable and an effective deterrent to misbehaviour.

The above Samoan proverb highlights and encapsulates the heart of the Samoan parents' responsibilities to their children. As referred to earlier, Samoan parents do not intend to harm their children through their administration of physical discipline. The concepts of Fa'asamoa and collective family view children in the protective care of their parents. If Samoan children are additionally viewed and accepted as gifts from God, it then becomes our collective responsibility as Samoans to ensure that our children are raised in an environment in isolation of violence.

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## **APPENDICES**

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## APPENDIX ONE

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- Introduction
- Name
- Gender
- Occupation: who are you employed by?
- Which age group do you fit into?
  - 30 – 35 years old
  - 35 – 40
  - 40 – 45
  - 45 – 50
  - 50 – 55
  - 55 – 60
  - 60 +
- Where were you born?
- If you were not born in Samoa: at what age did you come to New Zealand?
- Where were you educated?
- Have you done any further studies in New Zealand?
- What is the make up of your family?
- What is the ethnicity of your partner?
- How many children do you have? What are the ages of your children?
- Are you, or have you been, a caregiver for any of the children in your family?

#### Questions 1 & 2

##### ***Family***

- What is your definition of family?
- What was the role of your father in this family context?
- As a parent yourself what is your role in your family?
- What is the role of your partner in this context?

##### ***Part 2***

##### ***Discipline***

- What is your definition of discipline?
- As a child, when you were growing up in your family context, when were you disciplined? Why? How?
- What were the roles of Mother and Father in this context?
- As a parent/caregiver today what forms of discipline do/did you use with your children or those in your care?
- What was the desired outcome? Emotion of the parent/caregiver.
- How effective was the chosen form of discipline?
- How effective was that in changing behaviour?
- What kind of impact does this form of discipline have?

- For participants and their parents and caregivers, what kind of things influenced the chosen method of discipline?
- What has influenced the way you discipline?

### ***Subsection 2***

- Given the experiences of how you were raised, how does this impact the work you do with families in the community?
- How does your experiences impact the way you work with families where discipline is a concern?
- What approach do you take when working with families?
- How do you deal/manage cases, where physical discipline is a concern?

### **Question 3**

#### ***Contributing Factors***

- For the families which you have worked with what kind of things influenced the way parents disciplined their children?
- In the context of the Samoan families which you have worked with what are the forms of discipline which have been brought to your attention?
- What was the role of the father or mother in some of these situations that you have been brought up?
- What was the desired outcome? What was the emotion of the parent?
- How effective was that in changing the young person or child's behaviour?

### **Question 4**

#### ***Section 59 of the 1961, Crimes Act***

- How is this going to affect the way Samoan families' parent and raise their children in New Zealand?
- If/When this part of the Act is repealed, how do we Samoan leaders prepare or families for change?
- What should we be saying as a Samoan community to the Government?
- How can the Samoan community appropriately address this law change?
- What are your recommendations?
- Is there a Samoan answer of address for Samoans in New Zealand and in Samoa?

## APPENDIX 2

### RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

This research is being carried out by Faye Hunt-Ioane, as part of the Master of Social Work Degree.

#### **RESEARCH “Child Maltreatment in Samoan Families of Aotearoa New Zealand”**

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 School of Cultural Studies  
 Massey University Albany

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Regional Human Ethics Committee, Albany Campus, Protocol MUAHEC 03/ 006.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate-Professor Kerry Chamberlain, Chair, Massey University Regional Human Ethics Committee, Albany, telephone 09 443 9799, email [K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz](mailto:K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz)

#### **The Research**

The projects investigates child maltreatment in regards to physical discipline in Samoan families of Aotearoa New Zealand, with the view of looking into how the fundamentals of child rearing and parenting have evolved from Samoa and the impact it has on Samoan families in this nation. It is apparent that each cultural group has their own child rearing methods. For Samoans of Aotearoa, their child rearing practices have been brought under scrutiny. This has created an environment of challenge in the media and assumed cultural practice not only from non-Samoans but also the Samoan community regarding physical discipline in the Samoan home. The research hopes to provide an explanation of child rearing and parenting from a Samoan perspective regarding physical discipline.

The greatest significance of this project will be to those of Samoan ethnicity as such research embraces the heart of their cultural values and beliefs – “their collective families”. A research project that addresses physical discipline goes to the heart of

Samoan households because it targets their children and youth. Samoan children and youth do not come in isolation of their families; clearly a child needs to be examined and understood in the context of this unit.

The thesis seeks to use consultation with the participants in the project and apply the appropriate process and protocol of addressing Samoan Community leaders.

*Among the questions I wish to examine are:*

- a) The types of discipline used by Samoan families in Aotearoa. (It cannot be assumed that all Samoan families physically discipline their children/young people).
- b) The rationale for the use or non-use of physical discipline by Samoan families in Aotearoa - looking into beliefs and value systems in the context of 'fa'asamoa'.
- c) How the Samoan community of Aotearoa can appropriately look at 'physical discipline' in the context of this nation. A Samoan answer of address.
- d) Develop research that will illustrate and inform families of the implications and consequences of physical discipline for Samoan families according to New Zealand law and policy. This also addresses the commitment that New Zealand has to the Convention on the Rights of a Child.

I would also be interested in hearing of any persons currently working in child protection whether it is government and/or community.

I anticipate that this would involve an interview of one or two hours at a location to be decided by the person being interviewed. If you are willing, I would like to audio tape record our conversations and you have the right to ask for the machine to be switched off at any time, but either way, I would need to take notes while you are talking. When it is transcribed a copy will be sent to you for your acceptance.

I would like to assure you of the utmost integrity of this work. All of our conversations will remain confidential, and information and tapes are kept under lock and key. If you do not wish to be named in any publications from the research, I would respect this, but the information given may not make it possible to guarantee absolute anonymity because other people may be able to identify you. The interview would be governed by protocols laid down by Massey University's Human Ethics Committee. This means that prospective participants in the research would have the right:

- to decline to participate;
- to withdraw from the study at any time
- to refuse to answer any particular questions

- to ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- to provide information on the understanding that their name would not be used unless permission were given to me, as the researcher, to do this
- to be given access to a summary of the findings of the study when it is concluded (though this is a long-term study which will take at least 3 years to be concluded)

Please read, sign the attached and return it to me.

I would like to thank you for reading this letter and please feel free to contact me at any time.

Ia Manuia La'asaga o le vaiaso  
Faye Hunt-Ioane

**APPENDIX 3****CONSENT FORM**

I have read the Information Sheet and had details of the study explained to me. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.

I agree/ do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I understand that I have the right to ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

At the end of the research I would like the tape of the interview to be:

- retained by the researcher
- returned to me
- considered for deposit in an archive (if of appropriate quality)
- destroyed

Please circle the preferred option(s)

Signed: .....

Name (please print): .....

Date: .....

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

#### **Introduction**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989. It entered into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49.

#### **Preamble**

Considering that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Bearing in mind that the peoples of the United Nations have, in the Charter, reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Recognizing that the United Nations has, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights, proclaimed and agreed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Recalling that, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance,

Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community,

Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding,

Considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity,

Bearing in mind that the need to extend particular care to the child has been stated in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 and in the

Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1959 and recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (in particular in articles 23 and 24), in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in particular in article 10) and in the statutes and relevant instruments of specialized agencies and international organizations concerned with the welfare of children,

Bearing in mind that, as indicated in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, "the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth",

Recalling the provisions of the Declaration on Social and Legal Principles relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children, with Special Reference to Foster Placement and Adoption Nationally and Internationally; the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules) ; and the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict,

Recognizing that, in all countries in the world, there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions and that such children need special consideration,

Taking due account of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each people for the protection and harmonious development of the child,

Recognizing the importance of international co-operation for improving the living conditions of children in every country, in particular in the developing countries,

*Reference copy of full text cited from: website: [www.cyf.govt.nz](http://www.cyf.govt.nz), The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.*

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **SECTION 59 OF THE CRIMES ACT 1961**

#### **59. Domestic discipline**

(1) Every parent of a child and, subject to subsection (3) of this section, every person in the place of the parent of a child is justified in using force by way of correction towards the child, if the force used is reasonable in the circumstances.

(2) The reasonableness of the force used is a question of fact.

(3) Nothing in subsection (1) of this section justifies the use of force towards a child in contravention of section 139A of the Education Act 1989.

*Reference: Auckland District Law Society, Issue No.40: Public Issues Paper on Disciplining by Parents.*