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**Organisation and Dynamics of Family Relations
and Implications for the Wellbeing of Sāmoan
Youth in Aotearoa, New Zealand**

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology
at Massey University, New Zealand

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Abstract

Family plays a fundamental role in the wellbeing of Sāmoan young people. The ways in which families are structured and organised influences the levels of wellbeing for Sāmoan young people. In New Zealand and migrant enclaves, Sāmoan families have experienced major transformations that affect family structure and organisation due to social and economic influences. These transformations can have both positive and negative effects on the wellbeing of Sāmoan families.

This thesis presents the voices of 45 Sāmoan young people attending secondary school in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. The young people shared their experiences on how various elements of their family relationships influenced their wellbeing. It uses a mixed method approach, using qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the connection between wellbeing and family from a variety of sources. The methodology, *o le tele o sulu e māua ai figota*, literally translated as “the more torches used the more shellfish found” refers to the different perspectives, methods and theoretical frameworks used in this study to gain more knowledge and understanding of the connection between wellbeing and family.

The findings from this research emphasise that there are both positive and negative connections between wellbeing and family. European theorists proposed that positive relationships are protective factors for the wellbeing of young people. This study extends this notion by stating that positive collective, balanced relationships which consist of mutual understanding, respect, trust and support in families are protective factors for Sāmoan young people. The findings from this research suggest important areas warrant further investigation and future consideration for Sāmoan people.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to members of my family who have passed on:

- My late beloved father, Mr Iliai'a Fa'alau Ese, who did not live to see the result of his hard labour as a provider.
- My late maternal grandmother, Mrs Lina Aunese, who taught me the value of family and helped me with my spiritual wellbeing.
- And my dearest oldest brother, Mr I'aovaea Fa'afiu Fa'alau, who did not live to see his children grow up and share this happy time with us.

You are forever in my heart and will be remembered always.

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**Lou agaga e, ia e fa'amanu atu i le Alii, o mea uma foi o i totonu ia te a'u ia
fa'amanu i lona suafa paia.**

**Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His Holy Name!
Psalm 103:1**

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Soifua

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