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Contesting Development: The Experience of Female-headed Households in Samoa

A dissertation presented in fulfilment of the requirements
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Abstract

There is a plethora of development literature, both academic and policy oriented, that problematises female-headed households in normative ways, positioning them as socially isolated, stigmatised, lacking in agency and poor, equated with the ‘feminisation of poverty’. Through positioning female-headed households as ‘other’ there is also a notable lack of regard for the diverse socio-political and cultural context which within female-headed households reside. By situating this research within a feminist post-development framework, and through the use of participatory methodologies and the articulation of individual biographies of the development experience, this dissertation seeks to re-position our understanding of the development experience of female-headed households.

Drawing on the case of Samoa, this study demonstrates how *fa’asamoa* (the Samoan way), inclusive of *fa’amatai* (customary system of governance), the *feagaiga* (brother/sister relationship) and the practice of *fa’alavelave* (demonstrating love and concern), all support the welfare and wellbeing of female-headed households, including any children born of these households. They also afford women in female-headed households a certain level of voice and agency. The thesis further highlights that the category of female-headed households was not well understood within Samoa because neither villagers nor policy makers labelled women in this way. Rather, women were recognised in relation to the cultural framework of *fa’asamoa* which situates them in terms of their position within their family, their natal village and the wider community. This illustrates the importance of culture when attempting to frame the development experiences of female-headed households in any part of the world.

Development researchers and practitioners need to seriously question just how useful the practice of categorising and labelling is to Development Studies. In highlighting the problematic nature of universal labels and categories, this thesis concludes that the starting point of analysis for female-headed households needs to begin with the socio-political-cultural context, as opposed to the category of female-headed households. Shifting beyond a desire to uncritically categorise and label will provide a space for envisioning new approaches to development thinking and practice, and for truly seeing the ways that people struggle, often successfully, to create and pursue opportunities.

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“Remember always, who has offered you *kaha*” (Materoa Mar 2002, Pers. Comm.).

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List of Acronyms

ADB - Asian Development Bank

ANZAC - Australian and New Zealand Army Corp

AusAID - Australian Agency for International Development

BRIDGE - Briefings on development and gender

CBOs - Community Based Organisations

CDP - Committee for Development Policy

CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination

CEO - Chief Executive Officer

DAWN - Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era

DIFD - British government's Department of International Development

FAO - Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations

FHHs - Female-headed households

G8 - Group of Eight: (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States)

GAD - Gender and Development

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

GNI - Gross National Income

GNP - Gross National Product

GoS - Government of Samoa

GoWS - Government of Western Samoa

HDI - Human Development Index

H/H - Household

HIV/AIDs - Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

HPI - Human Poverty Index

IDA - International Development Association

IDS - Institute of Development Studies

IFAD - International Fund for Agricultural Development

IMF - International Monetary Fund

INSTRAW - United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

ILO - International Labour Organisation

LDC - Least Developed Country

MDGs - United Nations Millennium Development Goals

MHHs - Male-headed households

MIRAB - Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy economy

MoWA - Ministry of Women's Affairs

NGOs - Non-Government Organisations

NZAID - New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency

ODA - Overseas Development Assistance

OUNHCHR - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

PGNs - Practical gender needs

PPA - Pacific Platform for Action

PPSEAWA - Women for Peace, Understanding and Advancement

PRSPs - Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

RPPA - Revised Pacific Platform for Action

SGNs - Strategic gender needs

SIDS - Small Island Developing State

SOEs - State Owned Enterprises

SPBD - South Pacific Business Development

TV - Television

UNCTAD - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNDAW - United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women

UNDP - United Nations Development Programmes

UNESCO - United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF - United Nation Children's Fund

UNIFEM - United Nations Development Fund for Women

USD - American Dollars (currency)

WAD - Women and Development

WFP - United Nations World Food Programme

WID - Women in Development

WIBF - Women in Business Foundation

WTO - World Trade Organisation

Glossary of Samoan Terms and Sayings

‘āiga - nuclear, immediate or extended family/kin group – descent group

‘āiga potopoto - large extended family or kin group

aitu - human gods or ghosts

ali’i - a chief title (any chief but not orator)

alofa - compassion, love, concern

amio kerisiano - Christian behaviour

amio tamali’i - diplomacy

Apia - capital of Samoa

atua - non-human gods

anualuma - daughters or single women and widows

anualuma o tama’ita’i - daughters of the village which includes sisters and widows

‘aumaga - untitled men of the village

ava - respect

‘ava - a ceremonial drink made from the root of the *piper methysticum* plant

avā a taulele’a - wives of the untitled men

e au le ina’ilau a tama’ita’i - the legacy of women is one of total achievement

e pala le ma’a ‘ae le pala le ‘upu - stones may be reduced to sand, but words never decay

e sola le fai, ‘ae tu’u le foto - the stingray escapes, but leaves behind its barb

e tāua le tagata i totonu o lona ‘āiga - everybody is important within their own family

e tele a’a o le tagata i lō le lā’au. Ole tagata ma lona ‘āiga o le tagata ma lona fa’asinomaga - our language is full of expression denoting the cultural aspects of our links to one another, our relationships and our connections

fa’aaloalo - respect, politeness, courtesy, reverence

fa’afailelegā tama - nurturing the offspring

fa’afaletui - the critical process of weaving together information

fa’afetai - thank-you (*fa’afetai lava* - thank-you very much)

fa’aילו ga tama - to distinguish a child or young one

fa’akerisiano - Christianity

fa’alavelave - refers either to a problem, a difficulty, a small disturbance in routine, or a domestic crisis, or it makes reference to the larger, formal, traditional ceremonies or occasions of exchange. In this second context, *fa’alavelave* is therefore the practice of showing thankfulness and appreciation, love and concern

fa’aleleiga - reconciliation

fa'amagalo - forgiveness

fa'amatai - customary system of governance

fa'asamoa - the manner of the Samoans; according to Samoan customs and tradition

fa'asinomaga - connections or relationships

fa'atoesega - process of formal apology

fa'ato'ilalo le 'aiga - causing the family to sink

Fa 'avae i le Atua Samoa - Samoa is founded on God

fafine - woman or women

faiā - the links one has to another

fale - house

faletua ma tausi - wives of the titled men (chief's wife - *faletua*; talking chief or orator's wife - *tausī*)

feagaiga - agreement, contract or covenant, the relationship between brother and sister is a *feagaiga* relationship. Also the respect shown towards Samoan women

fealofani - getting on well with each other

fesoasoani i le 'aiga - helping the family

fiapalagi - to behave like a European, often used in a critical way

fono - the governing council of the village, which is comprised of *matai*, the head of the various 'aiga. There is also the a national *fono* of *pulenu'u*

fono a Matai - council of chiefs

gagana - language

ia gata ai i totonu o fale nei le mea ua tula'i mai - what has happened or has arisen must be kept and restricted within this house

'ie toga - very finely woven mats, known as fine mats

ifoga - performing a public act of apology and penance

Komiti Tumamā - women's (health delivery) committee

lauga - oratory

lavalava - length of cloth, which is wrapped around one's waste and worn like a skirt

le tantua - lacking of service, not serving

lomi - gentle massage

loto mauālalo - being humble

loto nu'u - having a sense of community

lotonu'u - maintaining/restoring pride

lotu - religion

māasiasi - guilty for having brought the family into disrepute

malō - government

malosi o le nu'u - the strength of the village

mamalu - dignity, honour

matai - chief or orator (*ali'i* or *tulafale*) a political representative of an *'āiga*, custodian of *'āiga* land, sometimes viewed as the head of the extended family (*matai* is both singular and plural)

mativa - poverty

Mau a le Pule or *Mau* - a non-violent resistance movement to European rule

mea alofa – gift or the practice of giving, receiving and sharing of gifts (literally means 'thing of love')

momoli - provide assistance/express solidarity

Nafanua - the Samoan pre-Christian war Goddess

nofotane - wife married into the family

nu'u - village

o ē 'uma e tau ile suafa ma le fanua - all those who are bound to the title and the land

o le ala i le pule o le tantua - the way to authority is through service

o le nu'u o ali'i - Village of the Gentlemen

o le nu'u o tama'ita' i - Village of the Ladies

o le teine o le 'i'omata o lona tuagane - a girl is the inner corner of her brother's eye.

o Samoa o le atunu'u ua 'uma ona tofi - Samoa is an already defined society

osi 'āiga - proactive in support of the family

pa'ia - sacredness

palagi - European person

pōlua - night dances

pule - formal political authority, in particular refers to that of the *matai* over the allocation and use of family held resources, such as land. Also refers to informal notions (which are just understood) of authority, leadership and standing

pulenu'u - the village mayor, chairman of the *fono*. Liaison between village and national government

sa - taboo, forbidden or sacred

Samoa mo Samoa - Samoa for Samoa

Savai'i - the larger but less populated island of the two main islands that make up Samoa

sene - Samoan currency as in cents

si'i - the tradition of donating and presenting goods, money or food

tafamamao - vision

tālā - Samoan currency as in dollars

tamāiti - children

tapu - sacred, sacred bonds

tapua'iga - waiting for a chance for success

Taupou - ceremonial virgin princess

tautua - obligations, duty or service

tautuanā ma 'oe le atunuu - bear in mind the land of our fathers

teine - girl or girls

teine o le town - town girls

tofi - status/position

to'ona'i - Sunday lunch

toso i lalo le 'aiga - to bring the family name down

tu ma aga - respectful behaviour

tu ma aga mamalu a Samoa - dignified customs and practices of Samoa relating to custom, tradition, personal dignity and etiquette

tui - weaving

tulāfale - a talking chief/orator title

umu - a customary way of cooking food with heated stones

Upolu - the most populated island of Samoa where the capital Apia is situated

va feāloalo'ai or *ava fatafata* - the face to face relationship

(Sources: Aiono 1986, Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991, 1996, Lui 2003, Macpherson and Macpherson 1987, Maiava 2001, Meleisea and Schoeffel Meleisea 1987a, Milner 1966, Mulitalo-Lauta 2000, Ngan-Woo 1985, O'Meara 1990, Tamasese *et al.* 1997).

Chapter One: Introducing the Study

Woven Worlds

yesterday
i watched
your hands
weave a dream
across my memory
bringing order and texture
to that pile of *voivoi*¹
still there
filling the *fale*²
that once was home

today
i watch
your hands
move across the page
across the canvas
across the room
releasing energy
arranging tapestries
symphonies of touch
and colour

each day
we come
together to weave
feelings experiences images
to sing the songs
of our mothers and grandmothers
long continuous lines connecting
east and west
north and south
and re-create
the world (Thaman 1999:17).

In light of the poem above by Konai Helu Thaman, renowned Pacific scholar and poet, this thesis attempts to weave together the experiences and navigated journeys of Samoan women who head households, so as to contest normative female-headed household (FHH) thinking. Situated within a feminist post-development framework, and through the use of participatory research methodologies and the articulation of individual biographies of the development experience, this thesis aims to re-position our understanding of the development experience of FHHs.

¹ *Voivoi* - the dry pandanus leaf (Tonga).

² *Fale* - house.

The thesis problem outlined

The background to the thesis problem is a coalescing of three concerns: the application of FHHs as a normative development category, rendered to the position of poor, socially isolated, disempowered and lacking in agency and arguably victims of their own economic, social and cultural circumstances; the prioritising of poverty alleviation and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Southern countries by Northern development institutions and governments³; and the lack of meaningful engagement between culture, indigenous knowledge(s) and development. Each concern will be overviewed independently before I draw them together to stipulate the overall research aim and questions.

Female-headed households as a normative development category

FHHs are well entrenched as a development category in conventional development thinking and planning. During the 1970s and 1980s, in using a household based approach to consider poverty, female headship emerged as an initial “indicator of women’s poverty” (United Nations 1995a:32; also see Chant 2003a)⁴. Inquiry into women’s development status began to place great importance on the disadvantages suffered by FHHs vis-à-vis male-headed households (MHHs) and “women were linked definitively with the concept of a global feminisation of poverty and assumed virtually categorical status as the ‘poorest of the poor’” (Chant 2003b:5; also see Kabeer 2003:14-15).

The idea of the feminisation of poverty went on to inform one of the key policy goals of the ‘Beijing Platform for Action’ of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in 1995, which was aptly entitled ‘Women and Poverty’, with most of the strategy aiming to alleviate poverty through economic development at the local, regional or national level. The idea of FHHs as vulnerable and disadvantaged was consistently reinforced through statements such as ‘poverty has a woman’s face’

³ For the most part this thesis uses the terms Third World or West. At times the terms North and South are also utilised. The interchanging of North or West and South or Third World occurs because I am making reference to certain ideas and authors, and I have selected to use the terms favoured by them in their writing.

⁴ This was probably because it was a convenient gender transparent indicator, rather than the fact there was any real truth to the matter (United Nations 1995a:32).

(Chant 2004:3, Moghadam 2005:3, Whitehead 2003:8)⁵, women constitute “70% of the world’s poor” (Chant 2006:2; also see Kabeer 2003:26-27, UNDP 1995:iii), or the “the strongest link between gender and poverty is found in female-headed households” (United Nations 1995a:32; also see World Bank 1989:vi). The idea that FHHs are all women, and women are poor, therefore FHHs are categorically poor, was easily and swiftly propagated. This was further entrenched by the idea that various global development processes had led “to what is widely regarded as a ubiquitous rise in women-headed units among the poor in the so-called ‘Third World’” (Chant 1997a:2; also see Moghadam 2005:1, Momsen 1991:26-27, Townsend and Momsen 1987:53, Vecchio and Roy 1998:1-3, World Bank 1989:vi).

Consequently, there emerged a school of thought which argued FHHs were not only the ‘poorest of the poor’ but that as a household type the category was growing. “Women tend to be disproportionately represented among the poor... the poorer the family the more likely it is to be headed by a woman” (World Bank 1989:vi; also see Bullock 1994:17-18, Buvinic 1990a:Chapter 21, Buvinic *et al.* 1978:5, Finne 2001:8, United Nations 2005a:12, UNDAW 1991:30-52)⁶, with Kumari (1989) stating FHHs “form the last of the chains in the process of the feminisation of poverty” (p.3). These repeated ‘statements of fact’ in the academic and policy literature and the endorsement of rising FHHs numbers and their degree of poverty by the development industry influenced the construction of the mantra ‘FHHs as the poorest of the poor’. Female headship and the feminisation of poverty have become intrinsically linked to the point of orthodoxy (Chant 2003a).

While there may be a certain relationship between FHHs and poverty, this relationship is not universal and neither is it uniform within countries (Chant 1997b:27-28, Datta and McIlwaine 2000:41, Jackson 1998:44, Loi 2003:4,

⁵ The idea that poverty has a woman’s face still remains, see Aita (2006) for references to the speech given by Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, on International Woman’s Day 2006 at <http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/Archive/2006/Mar/09-748411.html>

⁶ Also see various instances where authors cite those who make this claim (Amin *et al.* 1999:1, Arroba 1996:12, Levy 1992:96, Ministry of Labour, Guyana 2003, Momsen 1991:26, Moser 1992b:79-80, Peters 1983:100, Sen 1991a:1, Whitehead and Bloom 1992:51). For case examples, see Davies and Anderson (1987) or Safa and Antrobus (1992) for studies on FHHs and poverty in Jamaica. See Akinsola and Popovich (2002) for examples on FHHs, and poverty in Botswana. See De Graff and Bilsborrow (1993) for illustrations of FHHs and family disadvantage in Rural Ecuador. See Ministry of Labour, Guyana (2003) for statements surrounding FHHs and poverty in Guyana. White and Masset (2003) provide an illustration of poverty and FHHs in Vietnam, and Tuoane *et al.* (2001) focus on FHHs and poverty in Lesotho.

Moghadam 2005:27). Momsen (1991:26) identifies that there are some circumstances that may make FHHs more vulnerable to poverty, for example, they may contain fewer working adults and women earn substantially lower wages than men, however these ideas need to be understood as generalisations rather than givens (Chant 1999, Datta and McIlwaine 2000:41).

FHHs can certainly be disadvantaged with respect to entitlements such as access to education and assets, or productive resources such as land, capital and technology. Cultural, legal and labour market barriers can also place constraints around FHHs' ability to mobilise upwardly (Buvinic and Gupta 1997:264-265). However, women's risk of impoverishment is greater than that of men's, not because of male absence, but because of the economic gap related to gender divisions that may contribute to vulnerability (Moghadam 2005:30).

For the most part, various development agencies have been less than critical in their application of the term FHH, assuming this vulnerability to be certain. The 'problem' has been institutionalised in an unproblematic and universal way. Instead they argue that the composition of FHHs constitutes 'a poverty trap', with children hindered because they have to leave school early to generate income or take over the running of the household (Buvinic 1997:46). Coupled with maternal neglect and poor boundaries, truancy and problem behaviours can flourish (Moore 1994, Stuart 1996:30). This is seen as posing a risk to development.

In viewing all FHHs as poor, lone mothers therefore become the problem, leaving the causes and nature of poverty unexplained (Chant 1997b:42-43, Moore 1996:74). This scape-goating also perpetuates the notion that motherhood is only acceptable in the context of a MHH (Moore 1996:61). But "the inference that wellbeing is always enhanced in two parent – that is, male-headed – families is wrong" (Grinspun 2004:2). However, what ultimately occurs is that FHHs are understood to be poor and the targeted solution that is offered is micro-credit. Micro-credit does nothing to challenge the wider socio-political and economic structures which may create inequities for Third World women, and men.

As noted above, this mantra that FHHs are the 'poorest of poor', rendering them to victim status, has become "a virtual orthodoxy" (Chant 2003a:1), and in stigmatising FHHs, universal claims have been made about how they are discriminated against

and marginalised within their social and cultural surroundings. By being represented as poor, marginalised, isolated, oppressed and powerless, FHHs have also been stereotyped as lacking agency. While it is true that some FHHs may be disadvantaged “the important dimension of agency that allows women heads to offset gender discrimination as well as the foregone income from a male partner” cannot be ignored (Grinspun 2004:2). Thus, an alternative viewpoint, but one that is not given nearly as much attention in the conventional development literature, is the idea that FHHs should not be seen in such a negative light, or as victims trapped in a lifetime of poverty (Appleton 1996:1823, Chant 1997b:50, Kennedy and Peters 1992:1083, Kibreab 2003:329, Lara 2005:9, Varley 1996:514-15), but that FHHs do actually have agency. As evident in the following quote:

Not all women are helpless or internalize the subordinate views of themselves. Many fight back, are powerful and have taken control of their lives. The life experiences of these women [FHHs] show that they are powerful individuals and are constantly at work for change within their boundaries and limitations (Motie 2000:5)[my insert].

Chant (2006) contends FHHs as victims in a cycle of poverty is a stereotypical viewpoint, and just because incomes coming into the household may be markedly reduced, this does not necessarily mean that these households are deprived (also see Lara 2005:10). As Lewis (cited in Chant 1997a) states, “‘lack of male’ should not necessarily indicate ‘poor’ or ‘weak’” (p.274). In fact, many women find that withdrawing from their male-headed family situation actually improves wellbeing for themselves and their children (Chant 1997b:29-36, Masika *et al.* 1997:6). This can be particularly true in the case of a husband who spends large sums of the household income on alcohol, drugs or gambling, or in the instance of physical violence or sexual abuse. Having a husband present who does not earn income, or pitch in with maintaining the household, because of illness or unwillingness, adds very little to household resources. Rather they may drain resources. In these situations becoming a FHH often means major improvements in the wellbeing of women and children. In addition, even if a husband does work this does not necessarily mean he will be contributing his earnings to the household.

The problem is that great priority is placed on quantitative data and physiological indicators of privation (Chant 2003a:61, Grinspun 2004:2). Poverty is understood as having a low level of economics, as opposed to an increase in autonomy. Poverty needs to be appreciated as having social, physical, cultural, psychological and

economic dimensions, which supports the need for qualitative analysis of not only poverty but also FHHs (Lara 2005:15). A narrow focus on economics ignores other aspects of disadvantage in women's lives, for example, inequity in terms of gender roles and relations (Chant 2003a:64, Cornwall 2000:25). In support of this, Motie (2000:4) reports that social and economic characteristics, like education of the mother, occupation, level of income, number of dependents, familial relationships and lifestyle may be more relevant indicators when attempting to gain insight into the reality of a household.

Moreover, while a woman may not be empowered economically she may feel so in terms of her ability to make decisions about herself, her children and their resources (Masika *et al.* 1997:6). This idea of interpreting a woman's household as either empowered or disempowered based on headship status, is limiting. Whether a shift in headship status can be understood in relation to levels of empowerment is very context dependent (Mohanty 1988:76), and empowerment interpretations appear to be somewhat dependent on who is analysing the situation. For example, the growth of teenage lone mothers in the West or poor widowed women with dependent children in the Third World are generally not understood in the same way as the growth of Western tertiary-educated female divorcees. Rather the former are categorised as disempowered whilst the latter are categorised as emancipated. Whether a woman is emancipated or disempowered is very context specific and the situation can only be determined in relation to her qualitative, subjective experiences or opinion. Overall though, it appears that many FHHs function fairly successfully in the practical, social and economic sense (Chant 2003a, Momsen 1991:27). Rather than focusing on FHHs per se, of much greater importance are the wider structures of gender inequality which can disempower women and restrict their abilities to exercise agency.

While certain critical feminist writings, such as those from Chant (1997a, 2003a, 2006), Momsen (2002) and Varley (1996) provide a holistic and critical perspective of FHHs, in much of the conventional development literature and in certain quarters of the international development community FHHs are not considered analytically at all. In focusing on the economic aspects of FHHs, in particular their relationship with economic poverty and disadvantage, FHHs as a worthy target for development are deeply embedded in development policy and planning. Development initiatives are now uncritically argued for on the basis of this victim status and this assumed

relationship with poverty⁷. This belief of ‘poor women as household heads in need of targeting’ also aligns itself nicely with the new poverty agenda, to be explained below, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The new poverty agenda and the Millennium Development Goals

Prior to 1998 many countries had accepted the neo-liberal paradigm, meaning they had opened up their economies to foreign investment and trade, whilst limiting the role they had had to play in their national economies. In the wake of the 1998 Asian economic crisis, this paradigm received major critique from both the core and the periphery of the development industry. This dominant economic approach, rather than reducing poverty and promoting growth, was associated with deepening inequality in most parts of the developing world. Given the failure of reforms in the 1980s and 1990s, especially in relation to the social sphere, it was clear to many, including a number of lead economists from the international financial institutions, that a policy shift was required (Molyneux and Razavi 2005:991-94). Storey *et al.* (2005:32-33) in outlining the trajectory of poverty and development policy documents, make particular reference to the ‘United Nations Development Programme: Human Development Report’ (1990) and the ‘World Bank: World Development Report’ (1990) as having impetus in the evolution of, and consensus on, poverty alleviation. Both reports also subscribed to the idea that a ‘feminisation of poverty’ was occurring connected to a perceived increase in FHHs (also see Kabeer 2003:14-15).

A policy shift took place in the late 1990s which saw many of the international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and World Trade Organisation (WTO) (also known as the Bretton Woods institutions), focusing on the idea of social development and poverty alleviation (Willis 2005:208), referred to as the ‘post-Washington consensus’. Compared to the overly simplistic neo-liberal approach, the post-Washington consensus argued development needed to be understood in a more refined way, purporting an approach to development that saw a relationship between the market and the state (Molyneux and Razavi 2005:994). It was strongly advocated that the state had a

⁷ (See Akinsola and Popovich 2002:761, Amin *et al.* 1999:1, Bullock 1994:17-18, Buvinic 1995:3, Buvinic and Gupta 1997, Fawzi El-Solh 2001:97, INSTRAW 1992:237, Kossoudji and Mueller 1983:831, Moser 1992a:80, Paolisso and Gammage 1996:23-25, Tuoane *et al.* 2001:7).

major role to play in overcoming market failures, in promoting an open market and the provision of a more liberal policy environment; it was also argued that the state had a responsibility to avoid failure, relying on “institutional innovation and democratic governance” (Öniş and Şenses 2005:286). Rather than concentrating on simply “economic growth and efficacy” there was a shift in focus so as to incorporate:

a more nuanced understanding of development that emphasizes the importance of additional policies to deal with key social problems such as pervasive unemployment, poverty and inequality (Öniş and Şenses 2005:277).

The need to tackle poverty and provide poverty relief became objectives in their own right (Bell 2002:507).

In 2000, 189 United Nations Member States formed a consensus and signed the Millennium Declaration which conveyed a new strategy for making progress towards global development. This agenda was articulated as 8 goals known as the MDGs, specifically:

1. Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achievement of universal primary education
3. Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women
4. Reduction of child mortality
5. Improvement in maternal health
6. Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensuring environmental sustainability
8. Developing a global partnership for development (UNDP 2000a).

A list of 18 targets and 48 indicators with deadlines for 2015 were also identified, meaning progress towards the goals could be quantifiably tracked, measured and verified (UNDP 2003a:1). Hence the MDGs and all their trappings were to provide momentum for the implementation of the poverty agenda (Molyneux and Razavi 2005:995).

There is now an international consensus or new agenda on how to reduce poverty (Maxwell 2003:5-6; also see Storey *et al.* 2005), which includes:

- The MDGs with poverty reduction at the very core;
- The World Bank World Development Report (2000/1) aptly entitled ‘Attacking Poverty’;
- Various country level poverty reduction papers;
- Technologies for aid delivery⁸, which support Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)⁹; and,
- A commitment to result-based management.

As such, programmes driven by Northern institutions which have an anti-poverty focus and seek to meet the MDGs, have proliferated in many Southern countries¹⁰.

The new poverty agenda in accentuating the need “for safety nets and targeted social welfare - especially in relation to the household”, reiterated the importance of FHHs as a target group, as it would allow “resources to be concentrated on the needy” (Jackson 1998:47):

Governments that wish to implement anti-poverty programs with constrained budgets should seriously consider targeting female maintained families (Buvinic and Gupta cited in BRIDGE 1995:2).

Formulate and implement, when necessary, specific economic, social, agricultural and related policies in support of female-headed households (United Nations cited in Moghadam 2005:5).

The targeting of FHHs became a cure-all for global poverty, as well as reinforcing the idea that all FHHs are poor.

The targeting of FHHs so as to achieve the MDGs is now argued for by a number of development institutions. This can be seen in the UNDP (2003a) document

⁸ Technologies refers to approaches or frameworks “put in place to help improve the management of public expenditure and aid flows” (Maxwell 2003:10), such as Sector-Wide Approaches or Poverty Reduction Support Credits (Maxwell 2003:6).

⁹ In 1999, the IMF adopted in favour of Structural Adjustment Programmes, PRSPs as the new pre-conditions for loans and debt relief. While offering some improvement over Structural Adjustment Programmes as they are supposedly more participatory, PRSPs have also received much criticism for being anti-poor and further perpetuating poverty (Power 2003:175-79, Storey *et al.* 2005:34). Women and gender are very much secondary to the formulation of PRSPs. Gender is not mainstreamed or integrated. There is often little evidence of consultation with women at all levels meaning gender issues appear adhoc. There is no clear direction from the International Financial Institutions on how and which women should be integrated in the policy development process, and there are examples where PRSPs that pay no attention to gender have been permitted (Bradshaw and Linneker cited in Chant 2003a:42; also see Whitehead 2003).

¹⁰ Samoa’s position in relation to the new poverty agenda and MDGs will be presented in detail in *Chapter Six*.

‘Millennium Development Goals National Reports: A Look Through a Gender Lens’, where it is highlighted that in attempting to achieve ‘Goal 1: To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger’, a number of countries saw the feminisation of poverty to be an issue, surmising FHHs to be the poorest, although no data was given to support these statements (UNDP 2003a:8). Along similar lines, FAO, IFAD and WFP (2005) suggest that while certain strategies for reaching the MDGs must be tailored to individual countries, there are some generalisations that can be assumed. One such generalisation is the need to ‘intervene directly to enable the neediest’, in particular FHHs; this is seen as fundamental if countries really hope to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (MDG 1), and be successful in reaching the MDG targets by 2015 (p.5).

Questioning the new poverty agenda

There is an urgent need to challenge the entire notion of poverty and the current poverty/MDGs agenda, which not only keeps this orthodoxy about FHHs alive (along with various others) but it helps keep the Third World as it is. By linking FHHs so explicitly with poverty, micro-solutions such as targeted projects are seen to be the answer, yet these projects do not address the reasons why people may be poor to begin with (Chant 2003c:21). While on the surface the poverty consensus appears to be about promoting poverty alleviation, the agenda is at times anti-poor because it does not do enough to challenge the broader global, political and economic structures that perpetuate poverty (Global South 2003). Without addressing the unequal power relations that actually cause poverty “international aid agencies will find it difficult to achieve the goals they have set themselves” (Eyben 2005:1). There remains a division about what causes poverty and what can be done to address it. This means that,

the rhetoric of policy statements has rarely been translated into coherent practices in aid delivery programmes or formed an effective new basis for donor/recipient relationships (Storey *et al.* 2005:31).

While the targeting of FHHs may have helped some FHHs, it has not provided the necessary conditions for reducing gender inequity:

In the ‘New Agenda for Poverty’ promoted by various multilateral organisations, programmes concerned with women-headed households are supposedly part of a trend to improve gender justice and equity for women. The theme of gender equity has been institutionalised and has survived in these programmes because it has been easier to contain it within the argument

of the feminisation of poverty and as a dimension of poverty than as a part of a feminist vision of disadvantages (Jackson cited in Pineda 2000:75).

Rather than accepting the ‘pathologising’ or ‘problematizing’ of FHHs by development discourse, the position of privation accorded to FHHs which has now been firmly cemented within the poverty consensus paradigm and contained within the MDGs, needs to be continually brought into question, certainly in relation to the Pacific. There is a real danger that in accepting uncritically the new poverty agenda in the Pacific generally and in Samoa in particular, certain categories, labels and other such accompanying orthodoxies may also gain acceptance and become embedded, regardless of cultural relevance¹¹. Such is the power of hegemonic development discourse which uncritically applies concepts such as governance, poverty, social capital, democracy or FHHs. In terms of FHHs, the global rhetoric is beginning to surface in government and regional documents in Samoa and the Pacific.

The Pacific Women’s Bureau (2005) state in the Revised Pacific Platform for Action (RPPA) with reference to the Pacific:

One of the indicators for monitoring poverty is to ‘identify the proportion of female-headed households’: because female headed households are assumed to be more vulnerable to poverty because they lack an adult male-breadwinner, or co-breadwinner, and because women are less likely than men to own assets such as land or the family home, and therefore are more economically insecure (Pacific Women’s Bureau 2005:69-70).

They go on to suggest that information about FHH “is normally derived from census data and/or surveys” (Pacific Women’s Bureau 2005:70). These are clear examples of how rhetoric gets uncritically transferred and applied into policy and practice, regardless of the socio-political and cultural context. The arbitrary nature of the census will also be shown within this thesis, meaning the usefulness of census data is limited.

According to the Samoa National Human Development Report¹² (2006) the most materially disadvantaged households in Samoa are those households that have the

¹¹ Just as the ‘relevance’ of FHH policy in Samoa will be brought into question in this study, Storey *et al.* (2005) question the ‘relevance’ of poverty policy for places such as Samoa.

¹² No reference is made to The Pacific Human Development Report as it has only been released in draft form for comment. As this publication is currently at the stage of copyediting the document is not in a version where it can be cited (Graham Hassall, University of the South Pacific, Pers. Comm. 24.01.2007).

least access to a main source of income, such as a pension, a salary, remittances, or income from a plantation. It is suggested that households headed by women are more than likely amongst the most vulnerable (Muagututi'a 2006:62). Taking a more critical perspective, it is noted that a number of other groups, such as the elderly, the disabled, young people with little formal education and rural households with restricted ability to earn cash, are also potentially very vulnerable (Muagututi'a 2006:62).

The need for more meaningful engagement between culture, indigenous knowledge(s) and development

Some argue “culture is the forgotten dimension in development” (Verhelst cited in Jolly 2002:2), whilst others suggest culture and cultural knowledge has never been absent from development, but where it has been included and how, has varied geographically, culturally and historically (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006:236). Over recent years though, there has been a significant cultural turn in development thinking (which will be discussed in detail in *Chapter Three*), whereby development has sought to focus on diversity, specifics, complexities and local ideas. With the United Nations Decade for Culture and Development, 1988-1997, there was also a shift towards a mainstreaming of culture in development and a growing discourse whereby culturally appropriate development was supported.

More than ever, development is now understood to be a set of culturally embedded practices and meanings (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006:245). In certain quarters of the development community, culture is therefore seen as a significant and acknowledged facet of development thinking (also see Valdés 2002). Pacific people, and for that matter many indigenous peoples, have also seen value in attempting to understand the relationship between culture and development. This intersection is something that this thesis is interested in exploring.

The rhetoric of even the most powerful development institutions suggests that they too view culture as a key factor in development. The current World Bank President James Wolfensohn has said there is a “need for greater sensitivity to and investment in national and local culture in the Bank’s new development agenda” (cited in Radcliffe and Laurie 2006:235). There is a reason to be sceptical about such claims however. While there is certainly some support within mainstream development for acknowledging cultural frameworks, at times this role has been interpreted to mean the contribution of technical knowledge or artefacts rather than anything conceptual

(Briggs *et al.* 1999). Thus, technical solutions such as indigenous soil management or medicinal plants are acceptable, as long as they are in keeping with the dominant scientific/development worldview (Briggs and Sharp 2004). This quote from the World Bank's 'Indigenous Knowledge for Development: A Framework for Action' (1998) reiterates this point:

[Indigenous Knowledge] should complement rather than compete with global knowledge systems in the implementation of projects (World Bank cited in Briggs and Sharp 2004:667).

There is still a lack of regard for ideas, values, beliefs or epistemologies that are embedded deeply in a wider worldview. Rather, an instrumentalist approach to 'how can we benefit' from incorporating facets of indigenous knowledge is utilised.

The World Bank report cited above also discusses what constitutes valuable, valid and reliable indigenous knowledge, thus it is still the dominant world order which decides which indigenous knowledge is worthy of use and which cultural frameworks are useful to development. Alternatively, indigenous knowledge use and the inclusion of cultural frameworks can be development goals in themselves (Briggs and Sharp 2004:667).

Culture needs to be viewed flexibly, as something multi-dimensional and creative (Radcliffe 2006a, Radcliffe and Laurie 2006). In doing so the varying and often surprising choices that people make when determining their own development may be seen. In understanding culture as creativity, one has the potential for seeing "how culture acts as a toolbox for lateral thinking and empowering action" (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006:245). To focus on the idea that culture holds various potentials for problem solving and responding creatively to situations is not to ignore the issues of social injustice, economic inequity or exclusion that foster and perpetrate outcomes of uneven development in the Third World, rather it acknowledges that all aspects of culture need to be dealt with simultaneously (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006:245). In understanding culture to be a source of creativity, one therefore has an understanding of culture:

which relies not on instrumentalist understandings but on local bricolages of modernity and tradition to construct culturally embedded and empowered solutions to development problems (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006:246).

The aim of the thesis and research questions

Drawing together these three areas of discussion, rather than seeing FHHs as an objective category of households in which their subjective position and opinion vanishes (Davids and Driel 2001:166), this thesis argues for the importance of understanding the shifting situations and identities of FHHs by actively engaging with the socio-political-cultural context in which they navigate their lives. In support of Jolly (2002:2) it is not the intention of this thesis to romanticise the culture and development relationship, because cultural frameworks can also produce divisions and inequities, rather what I am seeking to discover is what is the importance of culture in framing the development experience of FHHs in Samoa.

The overall intention of this thesis is to create a discursive space for understanding the development experience of FHHs, and contesting development rhetoric. To do this, I specifically look at the case of Samoa and I seek to answer the following questions:

- *How are FHHs constructed and represented by development theory and practice?*
- *What are some of the challenges to essentialist conceptions of FHHs?*
- *What are the development experiences of FHHs in Samoa, and what is the importance of culture in framing these development experiences?*

Before I begin to answer these questions, I will firstly establish how this inquiry intends to add to the existing FHH literature and therefore the gender and development literature, as well as the contributions that will be made to Pacific development knowledge. It is also the intention of this study to contribute to the development policy and planning literature.

Contributions to new knowledge

The female-headed household literature

By explicitly engaging with feminist post-development thinking, this thesis seeks to consider theories of discourse, deconstruction and difference in order to interrogate and contest the ways in which the category of FHH is constructed and represented. The act of contesting denotes an intellectual space in which certainty, rigid

boundaries and fixed categories are collapsed. Thus, this thesis seeks to challenge universal stereotypes of FHHs that have rendered them to the position of problematic 'other' and in doing so it will add to the counter-hegemonic arguments proposed by critical feminist scholars such as Chant (1997a, 1997b, 2003a, 2003b), Momsen (2002), Peters (1995) and Varley (1996) who have argued against seeing FHHs in essentialist terms. It is only when counter-hegemonic discourses challenge the false power of hegemonic discourse that multiple realities will really be known (Foucault 1972, 1980).

In examining the specific situation and experience of FHHs in the Samoan context and rendering visible various realities, this thesis argues for a development approach where the nexus between FHHs and their socio-political, economic and cultural context will be established before any assumptions are made and conclusions are drawn. This is a substantive contribution to the literature because while enquiries into female headship generally attempt to locate the category of FHH within a socio-political cultural context, the importance of placing the socio-political context and culture over and above the category of FHH rarely occurs. To date, FHHs have not been considered so explicitly in relation to cultural frameworks and indigenous knowledge. Thus, seeking to understand the importance of culture in framing the development experiences of FHHs holds considerable significance.

While much has been written about female headship in Latin America, Asia, India and Africa, in the Pacific region very little has been written about this. In development policy and planning, Asia and the Pacific are often lumped together (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2005). When references to the Pacific and FHHs are considered at all, the point of reference then becomes Asia. Hooper (2000) argues that to utilise Asia as a point of reference for the Pacific is hugely problematic. It is especially important to distinguish the Pacific region from the larger Asia Pacific conglomerate in which it is often submerged because:

Culture plays a much more significant role in national economies and national life of Pacific countries than it does in most other regions of the world (Hooper 2000:3).

It is argued time and time again that Pacific peoples generally hold culture and family in high regard, understanding them to be intrinsically linked to development (Barcham 2005, Fairbairn-Dunlop 2005, Pacific Women's Bureau 2005:24-25).

Therefore to have a Pacific study on FHHs which has culture and family at its core is very important. In providing a Pacific example, this study contributes substantively to the FHH literature.

Pacific development knowledge

In understanding development as a set of culturally embedded practices and meanings (Radcliffe 2006a, 2006b, Radcliffe and Laurie 2006), and in intersecting FHHs with culture, understood to be a flexible, multi-dimensional and creative phenomenon, the importance of indigenous knowledge and cultural frameworks to development planning in the Pacific and possibly elsewhere is also raised. As I noted previously, Pacific people and many indigenous peoples have understood the integral relationship between culture and development for many years, arguing this to be the way forth for development thinking and practice. The coalescing of development, indigenous knowledge(s) and culture will again provide a space for envisioning new approaches to development thinking and practice, and for seeing the ways that people themselves successfully create and pursue opportunities. This study adds to current development debates which call for a more nuanced understanding between culture, indigenous knowledge(s) and development.

Because the new poverty agenda and the MDGs are becoming more explicit in the Pacific, so too are all the trappings that come with these agendas, such as the various development labels and calls for targeting. This was evident in reviewing the Revised Pacific Platform of Action (2005) and has also been noted in the recently released 'Samoa National Human Development Report' (2006). It is therefore fundamental that the category of FHH is deconstructed and critiqued in relation to a Pacific framework. Consideration needs to be given to whether the category is of any value to Samoa and indeed the Pacific. The relevance of FHH policy in Samoa will be brought into question. This deconstruction and critique is a major contribution to Pacific development knowledge. While focusing specifically on Samoa, this study may also offer relevant information for other areas in the Pacific. A Pacific example may assist in halting some of the uncritical transference of FHH rhetoric. Finally, in applying a Pacific lens to FHHs, this study will also make a discernible contribution to the wider development and planning literature. This will now be discussed.

The development policy and planning literature

In highlighting how problematic universal labels and categories are, this study questions just how useful the desire to categorise and label really is to Development Studies. External labelling and categorisation has become routine in Development Studies and aid practice even though the purpose of either is rarely examined. The processes whereby labelling and categorisation occurs and the consequences of these processes are also not brought into question (Eyben 2005:2). This study seeks to do this, stressing the problem is not just with the category or label per se, it is also the process whereby people are labelled or categorised. This study suggests that shifting beyond a desire to uncritically categorise and label will provide a space for envisioning new approaches to development thinking and practice, and for seeing the ways that people engage with and in development.

Now that the various ways in which this study intends to contribute to new knowledge have been made clear, the thesis chapters will be outlined.

Thesis chapters outlined

Chapter One has introduced the study. The background to the thesis problem, the aim of the thesis and subsequent research questions are made explicit, in addition to how the thesis intends to contribute new knowledge.

Chapter Two explores the discursive field of Third World women's development by tracing how Third World women have been situated by, and within, Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) theory, policy and practice. In particular, attention is paid to how and why stereotypical representations of Third World women became embedded throughout WID and GAD praxis. Attention will also be given to the alternative critiques that arose during this period, some of which argued that too little attention had been given to the idea that 'culture as the lived experience' has something positive to offer our understanding of development.

Chapter Three has two aims. Firstly, it will impart certain arguments which sought to uncover various inadequacies in development scholarship and practice and expose the power of normative development discourse. In exploring these critiques of development, *Chapter Three* also presents the ways in which knowledge about the

Third World and its people especially women, has been created and perpetuated, rendering them to the position of problematically 'other'. Discursive critiques also seek to reveal how and why development as discourse has created labels and categories, such as the category of FHH and why this is problematic. Attention is paid to why certain groups such as FHHs have become targets of poverty alleviation as development. Secondly, *Chapter Three* explains the feminist post-development framework within which this thesis is situated, and the reasons for selecting this framework will be made clear.

In critically reviewing the FHH and development planning literature, *Chapter Four* looks to trace FHHs as a development category. In unpacking the FHH literature concepts such as household, headship and FHHs are presented as critical constructs and therefore contestable. Moreover, a review of the FHH and development planning literature illustrates not only the extent of the orthodoxies that surround FHHs, but it reaffirms the point made in *Chapter Three* about the hegemonic power of development discourse.

Collectively, *Chapters Two, Three and Four* illustrate how FHHs are constructed and represented by development theory and practice and why; thus partially addressing the first research question. These chapters also, in particular *Chapter Four*, introduce some of the challenges to essentialist conceptions of FHHs, which speaks to the second research question.

In *Chapter Five*, the methodological aspects of the research and the fieldwork experiences are presented. Qualitative research methods, primarily in-depth interviews, were considered to be the most effective means for making obvious the multiples voices of the research participants and making known their multiple realities. Qualitative research methods were also the most effective means for encapsulating Samoan voices. This chapter gives in-depth detail surrounding what occurred in preparing to enter the field, whilst in the field, with three periods of fieldwork occurring in 2001/2002, 2004 and 2006, and on leaving the field.

Chapter Six turns to Samoa, seeking to understand the cultural and socio-economic context of Samoa in relation to FHHs. Comprehension of this context is necessary in view of the third research question, that is, what are the development experiences of FHHs in Samoa and what is the importance of culture in framing the

development experiences of FHHs? Key factors that will be discussed are *fa'asamoa* (the Samoan way), the *'aiga* (family), and *fa'amatai* (the social and political structure of the village) because firstly, *fa'asamoa* and *fa'amatai* are where the household and the family are located and secondly, the village and family are where women's status and development experience, including that of FHHs, is determined. Other relevant aspects that make up the current socio-political cultural context of Samoa are the integration of *fa'akerisiano* (Christianity) into *fa'asamoa*, the importance of migration and remittances, poverty and responses to poverty. These will also be discussed.

Chapter Seven articulates the changing pace of life for Samoan women and women's development experiences. The Samoan government's development approach to women, inclusive of Pacific women's visions for development, will be presented. This discussion not only provides a space for locating the development experiences of FHH, but provides a platform for considering how FHHs are currently represented in development policy and planning in Samoa.

Chapter Eight and *Chapter Nine* present the fieldwork findings which are analysed in terms of the feminist post-development framework that was presented in *Chapter Three*. *Chapter Eight* conceptualises household and household headship in Samoa and identifies who makes up the category FHH, whilst *Chapter Nine*, articulates the development experience of FHHs in Samoa. Both chapters are also located in relation to the specific cultural framework of *fa'asamoa* and in doing so the development experiences of FHHs in Samoa and the importance of culture in framing these development experiences will be understood.

Chapter Ten concludes the study by stating explicitly what the main findings of the research are, as linked to the research questions, the literature and the theoretical framework. The chapter will also discuss the findings in terms of their wider application to development theory, practice and research.

Chapter Two: The Discursive Field of Third World Women's Development

Teaching women better techniques... would have been like treating cancer with bandaids (Benería and Sen 1981:287).

Introduction

Development theory and practice are intrinsically linked: “All development programmes are situated within specific theoretical and political frameworks” (Rathgeber 1990:489). The purpose of this chapter is to explore some of these frameworks so as to trace the theoretical background to this thesis and to provide the context out of which constructions and representations of FHHs have emerged and been located. The chapter commences by illustrating how women and gender initially became part of the orthodox development agenda. The chapter then goes on to discuss the United Nations Decade for Women, WID discourse and the Women and Development (WAD) critique, GAD discourse, an alternative development perspective of ‘Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era’ (DAWN), and critiques of GAD. In presenting the development trajectory of Third World women as they have been situated by WID and GAD theory, policy and practice, the course of women’s development will be outlined. Stereotypical representations of Third World women and prevailing ideas about development, poverty alleviation and culture will also be made obvious.

Bringing women and gender into development theory and practice

There have been two major influencing currents that have contributed to and influenced the integration and direction of approaches to women’s development. These were the modernisation paradigm and Western feminism (Saunders 2002:1). These two influences will now be discussed consecutively.

*The beginnings**Modernisation and development*

In 1949, United States' President Truman qualified a need to address Third World poverty through a programme of development¹³. This was especially significant, as many Third World countries were becoming self-governing nations:

we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. More than half of the world is living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat to both them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of these people... It is pertinent that we implement a democratic approach that supports fair dealing (Point Four, from Truman's address in 1949 cited in Rist 1997:71).

Having learnt from the Great Depression, Truman and his agents professed the need for a "planned, managerial and interventionist approach to growth and development" as opposed to a market place that was considered self-regulating or laissez-faire (Saunders 2002:2)¹⁴. Drawing on the successful reconstruction of post-war Europe, the same planned, managerial and interventionists approach to growth and development was proposed (Brohman 1996:10, Saunders 2002:2)¹⁵. Rather than any real altruistic motive, Truman's desire to pull the Third World out of its so-called misery was undoubtedly about ensuing allegiance from the Third World to the West or the United States, instead of the Second or Communist World (Black 1991:48, Rist 1997:249-50, Saunders 2002:1).

¹³ It is often assumed that development, or the development project commenced in 1944 (McMichael 1996, Rist 1997). This is owing to the establishment of the World Bank and other Bretton Woods institutions at this time. In presenting development history, accounts also usually occur chronologically commencing with economic growth and modernisation theories, shifting to underdevelopment theories, neo-liberalism and the Washington Consensus, with a focus on mapping particular events and processes (Kothari 2005a:1). While this chapter commences and follows in a similar chronological style, support for Blaikie (2000:1035) and Kothari (2005a:2) is given, in that this chapter also acknowledges that "bounded classifications and epochal historicizations not only obscure a longer genealogy of development but also undermines attempts to demonstrate historical continuities and divergences in the theory and practice of development, compounding the concealment of on-going critiques" (Kothari 2005a:2).

¹⁴ While more than Keynesianism economics or growth theory was argued for, modernisation theory was really just a "deepening and extension of the basic conceptual apparatus of growth theory" (Brohman 1996:15).

¹⁵ During 1945-1950 Truman's 'Marshall Plan' had handed out \$19 million (USD) (American dollars) for reconstruction in post-war Europe (Craig and Porter 2006:47).

A large number of development-related agencies soon emerged, for example, the IMF, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, now known as the World Bank, and various other United Nations agencies and programmes (Saunders 2002:2). This period became known as the ‘first development decade’ (1961-1970), and it must be noted that any real reference to women was seriously lacking. The poor were seen as composed entirely of men or else women’s needs and interests were assumed to be identical to, and hence subsumable under, those of male household heads (Kabeer 1997:1). If women were mentioned they were generally represented as tradition bound and culturally static and therefore an obstacle to progress (Braidotti *et al.* 1994, Jacquette 1982, Kabeer 1994:1, Scott 1996:25).

The approach to development was twofold. Firstly, modernisation theorists put forward a framework for the ending of Third World underdevelopment and secondly, a liberal humanitarian approach was promoted. These two points will now be elaborated on successively.

Underpinned by neo-classical economic thinking and classical sociology, and embedded with anti-communist, patriarchal, Western ideology, modernisation theorists condemned Third World populations and called for an economic, social, cultural and political mindset shift, believing that all societies had to pass along a progressive, linear staged process to become developed, with the pinnacle being the modern capitalist society (Rostow 1956; also see Koczberski 1998). Modernisation thought was embedded in enlightenment thinking, where man (not woman), was considered able to “apply rationale scientific analysis to the problems of life”¹⁶ (Parpart 1995a:222; also see Brohman 1995:122, Reddock 2000:2-4, Willis 2005:3).

Rostow (1956), and those who were like-minded, advocated heavily for the taking on board of modern cultural traits by developing nations and a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to fixing the so-called problems of the Third World. This came in the guise of Westernisation and industrialisation; in other words, they argued the Third World which was ‘under-developed’ needed to lose its ‘traditional’ ways to become

¹⁶ Enlightenment thinking rose out of the 17th century scientific revolution. A central tenet of enlightenment thought is that “all aspects of nature, including human nature and society, are regulated by universal natural laws that can be uncovered through the application of scientific methods of observation and deduction” (Cheek 2000:15). The individual person is seen to be rational and self-interested.

part of a 'modern' society (Brohman 1996:15, Radcliffe and Laurie 2006:233, Willis 2005:128). It was argued that these changes would bring economic fulfilment for all by trickling down, and this end state was labelled developed and the process to get there was labelled development. Men and women would be affected by development in the same ways (Momsen 1991:3).

However, to continue to subscribe to traditional ways or cultural characteristics such as kinship systems, Third World people would remain under-developed. Traditional ways were seen to hinder progress. Development was therefore the means for removing what were perceived as cultural barriers to progress (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006:233). Thus, there was a very clear modern/traditional dichotomy with modern meaning Western, industrialised, dynamic, progressive and democratic and therefore superior, and traditional meaning non-Western, subsistence based, static, backward, communal and family based, all of which was considered inferior.

Even in the case of Samoa there were clear examples where culture was seriously seen to be a constraint to development. As far back as 1884, Reverend Doctor George Alexander Turner, a medical missionary in Samoa from 1868 to 1879, had argued that *fa'asamoa* (Samoan culture) was:

A sad hindrance to the industrious, and eats like a canker-worm at the roots of individual and national progress. No matter how hard a young man be disposed to work, he can not keep his earnings: all soon passes out of his hands into the common circulating currency of the clan to which all have latent right (Turner cited in Maiava 2001:57).

In 1907, the German Governor Wilhelm Soff proclaimed:

The customs, usages and legal institutions of the Samoans will have to be further studied in more detail. Whatever is good, will be retained and gradually transferred and amalgamated into our forms and concepts. Whatever is bad, barbaric and stupid will be stamped out... the natives are ignorant... they have to be instructed; they are lazy and have to learn to work... (Meleisea 1987:3).

Further descriptions reported Samoans as being conservative, resistant to change, unable or unwilling to recognise skill and diligence on the land, or too caught up in time-consuming communal activities (Farrell and Ward 1962). Samoans were also described as 'not progressive', 'not able to plan for the future', and as having 'no aspirations'. Overall, the Samoans it was suggested, had little interest in development (Lockwood 1971, Pirie and Barrett 1962).

Modernisation theorists seemed incapable of understanding that under-development was not a pre-condition to development, and nor was it a fixed state. Under-development and development could not be separated from historical and cultural meaning (Todaro 1997:70). It was wrongly believed that once the initial difficult phase of development occurred, the rest would follow suit and benefits would flow to all. Lewis's (1950) famous quote epitomises this:

Once the snowball starts to move downhill, it will move of its own momentum, and will get bigger and bigger as it goes along...You have, as it were, to begin by rolling your snowball up the mountain. Once you get there, the rest is easy, but you cannot get there without first making an initial effort (p.36).

Targeting women's welfare

The second approach to development that was promoted was a liberal humanitarian philosophy. Similarly, but to a far lesser degree than what had been offered to post-war Europe, advocates campaigned for the provision of food aid and disaster relief. Particular attention was also paid to women. There was concern about meeting the practical needs of women especially in relation to their reproductive roles (Moser 1989:1808). Thus, the 1960s saw the introduction of basic health education programmes for women and nutritional supplements, explicitly targeting pregnant women. The 1960s also saw the rise of the mother-child health care mandate, with a direct focus on family planning and population control (Jackson 1977:10)¹⁷. In essence, the approach was resolute on improving "women's primary role as mothers" (Porter 1999:10; also see Moser 1989, 1993).

Welfarism focused on and reinforced women's reproductive role, placing them in the private sphere (Bulbeck 1998:174, Chowdhry 1995). The underlining assumption was that Third World women were too ignorant to manage their own fertility, or care for the overall wellbeing of their children. Little consideration was given to the overarching structures and systems that placed women and their families in this position to begin with, or the fact that women had been managing their own wellbeing and that of their families for centuries. Parpart (1995b) argues that ideas of representation trapped deep within colonial discourse had followed effortlessly into post-World War II development discourse. "Where women were

¹⁷ This saw the handing out and administration of contraceptives and accompanying education, and failed to see that these would have little impact on women's fertility if the reasons for requiring a large family remained unchanged (Kabeer 1994, Mamdani 1972).

‘seen’ at all, they were simply one more obstacle to modernization and progress” (Parpart 1995b:257).

Subsequently, this welfare phase and approach to Third World women received much criticism (Buvinic 1983:23-24, Moser 1989:1808)¹⁸. It was argued that welfarism perpetuated paternalism and existing gender roles. Anti-welfare advocates also discredited the approach as fostering dependency on the state and the family, rather than seeking to develop individual autonomy (Buvinic 1983, Moser 1989, Saunders 2002:4, Townsend 1993:171). While critics argued welfarism represented Third World women as ‘victims’ and ‘passive beneficiaries’ (Kabeer 1994:6, Moser 1989:1807-09, Rathgeber 1990:492, Tinker 1997:38), they also failed to understand their argument for the development of individual autonomy was also misguided. They had just assumed individual autonomy to be a universally applicable concept. However, because the welfare approach was non-threatening it was widely accepted by governments and by traditional non-government organisations (NGOs) (Moser 1989), and it did achieve some benefits. Some welfare organisations have been credited with performing valuable functions in the areas of education and health, as well as providing a means for women to come together collectively, forge solidarity, share information and develop networks (Sen and Grown 1987:90).

Western feminism and Development Studies

Any focus on gender issues in development was initially alleged to be a feminist distraction from the “real issue of poverty and modernisation which preoccupied development thinking and planning” (Pearson 2005:157). The 1970s and early 1980s was an era of political unrest and awakening for many marginalised groups. Amongst the debates about the Vietnam War and the black civil rights movement, feminism found an atmosphere to challenge male domination and oppression and to challenge patriarchy. French philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir heavily influenced the feminist movement. Her seminal work ‘The Second Sex’ (1949) became the foundation for feminism in the West (Thornham 2000:34-36). de Beauvoir argued that men had created and defined women as ‘other’ (Parpart and Marchand 1995:6). Feminism focused on this notion of ‘otherness’, meaning lesser, and claimed that society, which was divided along the lines of gender, was significant for women because it

¹⁸ The welfare approach while very prevalent between the 1950s and 1970s was noted as being widely utilised in the 1980s (Moser 1989:1808) and the same can still be said today.

generally meant inequality and discrimination (Doyal 1995, Moore 1988, Papanek 1990). de Beauvoir called for women to “define themselves outside of this male/female dyad. Women, she urged, must be the subject rather than the object (other) of analysis” (Parpart and Marchand 1995:6).

Over time, a number of differing feminist opinions and frameworks were offered including liberal feminism and Marxist feminism. Liberal feminism as an approach to women’s liberation argued primarily for social reform and legislative change, believing that sexual inequality could be overcome if women were incorporated into the public realm as equals to men. Liberal feminists tended to draw attention to gender stereotypes, how girls and women were not considered equal or given equal opportunity in the workplace, the education system or society. Liberal feminism was very interested in gender divisions of labour and the devaluation of women’s work, the lack of progressive opportunity for women in the workforce, and the lack of systems, processes or services available to support women whilst they were working, such as paid maternity leave or affordable childcare. Equity with men was seen to be the answer to freeing women from oppression, that is, they argued for the redistribution of power within the current system. Liberal feminists also paid particular attention to women’s rights to make decisions surrounding their own bodies, such as the right to abortion, choices in relation to birth control, or the decriminalisation of prostitution. Overall, men as a group was not challenged or brought into question (Kabeer 1994:Chapter 2).

In contrast, Marxist feminists did not position gender over class; rather they argued that gender oppression (and other forms of oppression such as racial oppression) were the consequence of class oppression. They argued that working class men also suffered oppression. Patriarchy was seen to be a division of capitalism, because male privilege over women was embedded in a capitalist system. Therefore, women’s subjugation had to be understood in terms of modes of production and women’s role in the family. Hence, Marxist feminism argued that capitalism was the cause of women’s oppression and that gender equity would only be achieved through dismantling and replacing the capitalist system (Humm 1995).

While having notable differences, liberal and Marxist feminism are similar as they are both embedded in enlightenment thinking. Their frameworks claim universal validity and therefore attempted to explain global realities in a wide range of situations and

contexts (Parpart *et al.* 2000:206). Their overriding concern was about ‘woman’ as ‘other’ meaning they tended to ignore the fact that ‘woman’ is not a homogenous category. Concepts such as reproduction, the family, divisions of labour, women’s rights, the household and patriarchy were utilised without being located in their specific cultural and historical contexts. Feminism tended to utilise these concepts to explain women’s subordination worldwide (Mohanty 1988:75-76, Parpart and Marchand 1995:7). Concern with female ‘otherness’ left little room for the recognition of difference amongst women (Bulbeck 1993, Chowdhry 1995, Gilligan 1982, Mohanty 1988, Parpart and Marchand 1995, Spelman 1990), least of all the acknowledgement that “beyond sisterhood there was still racism, colonialism and imperialism” (Mohanty 1988:77).

Western feminists claimed women in the Third World were even more disadvantaged than women elsewhere because of gender divisions. Western feminism created a picture of Third World women that depicted them as benign, helpless and overburdened (Crush 1995a:21). While liberal feminists spoke of policy formulation and the need to improve women’s status through inclusion which can be seen in the WID approach to development, and Marxists feminists focused on international capital and class structures¹⁹, neither school of thought ever questioned whether development really was synonymous with modernity (Parpart and Marchand 1995:11).

In 1970, Ester Boserup published her influential study on the situation and position of women in the Third World (Kabeer 1994:2, Rathgeber 1990:490). Using the case situation of Africa, Boserup (1970) reported women were heavily involved in agricultural production noting that many of the subsistence activities women were engaged in were not acknowledged. Women, Boserup argued, had been misrepresented as not working because of stereotypical ideas surrounding gender roles. This severely undermined the value and importance of women’s work. In using gender in her analysis, Boserup (1970) not only identified gender divisions of labour, but she placed scholarly attention on the “differential impact by gender of

¹⁹ The emergence and trajectory of WID and WAD will be discussed in some detail shortly.

development” (Rathgeber 1990:490)²⁰. In keeping with liberal feminism, it was believed that this inequality could be overcome if women were incorporated into the development realm as equals to men. Therefore Boserup’s (1970) work was readily received in the hope that Third World women would be brought up to the same level of development that their Western sisters presumably enjoyed (Parpart and Marchand 1995:4).

The United Nations Decade for Women

With impetus from WID, much pressure was placed on the United Nations and its various agencies over women having a voice and being represented in national and international forums. Owing to the growing strength of the women’s movement both women in the West and the Third World, elite women in particular, were able to powerfully articulate the need for these institutions to be inclusive of women. In 1975, the ‘First United Nations International Conference on Women’ was held in Mexico City. This groundbreaking forum provided the forward motion for a ‘World Plan of Action’ and inaugurated the Decade for Women. Women’s conferences in Nairobi and Copenhagen followed suit, with Beijing (1995) providing a landmark in policy terms, out of which a global policy framework to advance gender equity was set (Molyneux and Razavi 2005:983). Attendance by women increased substantially with each gathering, and the conferences are considered to have been “key monuments in the founding of women and development... they played a crucial role in mobilising women internationally” (Saunders 2002:5).

The Decade for Women conferences were successful in terms of networking and securing resources for development. They were also very influential in terms of the direction that development planning for women was to take (Swantz 1992:106). Tinker and Jacquette (1987:423) observed that the conferences produced a number

²⁰ While on one hand Boserup’s work has drawn heavy criticism over the years because she represented women’s work and their roles very generally (see Bandarage 1984, Benería and Sen 1981, Rathgeber 1990, Visvanathan 1997:23, Willis 2005:128 for accounts and critiques of Boserup’s work), on the other hand, her work has also been credited with bringing to the forefront women’s invisibility and exclusion from development, as well as women’s deteriorating position (Braidotti *et al.* 1994:77, Townsend 1993:171). (For further discussions around modernisation not improving the condition and position of women also see Rathgeber 1990, Tinker and Bramson 1976). Boserup’s work has also been described as a “fundamental text for the United Nations Decade for Women” (Tinker 1990:8), and credited with setting in motion the WID momentum (Moser 1989, Moser 1993, Pearson 2005:158). Although, it has also been argued that the publication ‘Of Marriage and the Market’ by Young *et al.* (1981) played a more significant role in bringing gender into mainstream development thinking and practice, as were later works by Elson (1991) (Harriss 2005:35).

of policy documents, such as the 'Forward Looking Strategies' document, which identified and attempted to deal with the fundamental issues of legal equity, economic status, recognition of economic contributions, control over their own bodies, and ending violence against women. The decade was also useful in making obvious at a government level women's concerns (Tinker 1990:13), securing their commitment and producing working surveys with sex disaggregation of data (Saunders 2002:5). In response many countries set up women's offices and developed policy and strategy for the direction they intended to take to improve things for women (Connelly *et al.* 2000:6). The conferences also facilitated the ratification of various declarations and conventions, for example, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979).

While many Western participants of the United Nations conferences argued from a feminist perspective, what they were primarily talking about was Western feminism, and sought to promote a very Westernised agenda. When core Western countries spoke about women's issues, what they were ultimately talking about were issues as determined by themselves as white, middle-class, women with Christian heritages (Apffel-Marglin and Sanchez 2002:176, McEwan 2001:96, Minh-ha 1987, Mohanty 1988, Ong 1988, Pearson and Jackson 1998, Saunders 2002:6-7). To elaborate, paid employment might not necessarily be the number one priority that women struggle for. With regard to the Pacific, Bulbeck (1993) argues:

Women... might instead think about all of the contributions women make to the welfare of their communities and country and argue that informal labour as much as formal labour be included in national accounts, so that women get proper recognition for their work (p.10).

They also measured the situation of developing countries in relation to their own countries. Responsively, many Third World women spoke out specifically rejecting a Western feminist agenda. The marked and competing differences between Northern, Eastern and Southern women was very evident. Saadawi *et al.* cited in (Mohanty 1988:83) has argued that the conferences were "American planned and organised", consistently they situated Third World participants as a passive audience, with many assumptions about international sisterhood being made and little regard for ideas about imperialism and racism. 'Feminism' was imitating the very oppressive behaviour they were attempting to renounce (Bulbeck 1998, Chowdhry 1995, Kabeer 1994).

It has been suggested that far from being revolutionary the United Nation's Decade for Women continued to espouse the importance of integrating women into a development model which was still "wedded to the existing mainstream development framework", whereby development was a linear cumulative trajectory and Western experts held the answers (Koczberski 1998:400). Reliance on modernisation theoretical ideology also meant social evolutionary ideas about gender and culture prevailed, justifying the argument that with the "right inputs and incentives, the 'traditional' Third World woman could be transformed into a 'modern' woman...Western woman" (Koczberski 1998:400). The possible contributions that culture or indigenous knowledge could make to women's advancement continued to be ignored (Connelly *et al.* 2000:6).

A number of authors also believe that the decade made very little progress with respect to concrete achievements (Elson 1991, Kabeer 1994, Staudt 1990a). Bulbeck (1993) observes:

More women had become poorer than had become richer since the 1984 survey.

There was an increase in female-headed households (due to factors such as male migration and family breakdown).

Although women continued to enter the labour force and improve their educational levels growth had slowed since the 1970s.

Increases in maternal and infant mortality were recorded for the first time in some developing countries (pp.9-10).

Nothing had really changed in terms of resource distribution towards women or with the balance of power (Elson 1991, Staudt 1990b:3). In terms of this research, it was cemented again and again that FHHs could be equated with poverty, and in Jahan's (1995:5) text, where she summarises the key concerns for women that arose out of the decade, number five on her list under the heading of 'poverty' is the bullet point of FHHs. Female headship rapidly became the accepted discourse about gender and poverty with international aid agendas and programmes (Chant 2003b, Kabeer 2003).

Women in Development discourse

WID discourse portrayed Third World women in some very stereotypical ways, some of which are made obvious when Moser's (1989) policy approaches to

women's development and gender planning are considered. The five approaches Moser (1989) identified were welfare, equity, antipoverty, efficiency and empowerment. As mentioned above, Third World women were represented as passive victims according to welfarism. The equity approach, more strongly related to liberal feminism, represented Third World women as being disadvantaged by various obstacles, but as having the capacity to advance in the public sphere as long as these obstacles were eradicated. Primarily it was about changing legislation and opening up opportunities for education, training and employment. Women were represented by equity approach advocates as being universally subordinate to men (see Bandarage 1984, Jacquette 1982, Moser 1989, Porter 1999:10, Townsend 1993:171). Antipoverty approach advocates also saw women as having low status but they attributed this to not having an income. Advocates of this approach represented women as only having productive needs, seeking to focus on women's participation in income generation activities, often targeting FHHs (Kabeer 2003:13). There was little understanding or challenging of patriarchal structures and systems of oppression. This approach was politically safe, so very popular with governments (Jacquette 1990:62-63, Townsend 1993:172). Finally, also very popular with governments and various development agencies, out of the dissatisfaction that development agencies felt with past experiences of development failure, the efficiency approach emerged (Cleves Mosse 1993:159). The idea was to integrate women more fully into the current system and utilise women as a resource more efficiently. At a time when Structural Adjustment Programmes were eroding social services, the efficiency approach stereotyped women for their caring roles and assumed women to have freely available time, making them the new providers of redundant government social services. This increased women's burden. The efficiency approach while recognising women had a number of roles and skills, placed an emphasis on what women could do for the development agenda rather than what the development agenda could do for women (Moser 1989:1813-14). "...women must work for aid, rather than aid work for women" (Eyben 2004:79).

Regardless of approach – welfare, equity, anti-poverty or efficiency, in its entirety WID discourse started problematically from the premise of helping women, instead of analysing gendered power relations (Kabeer 1992, Kabeer 1994:65, Moser 1989, Ostegaard 1992:6). WID reinforced the idea that Southern women needed technical assistance from Northern experts (Parpart 1995a:229, Parpart and Marchand 1995:13, Rathgeber 1990, Tinker 1990, 1997, Townsend 1993:177), and tended to

reaffirm the authority and power of the WID development agent who was/is all knowing, and as such, becomes the 'saviour' of the vulnerable (Parpart 1995a:229). This demonstrates again this powerful/powerless, knowing/unknowing, correct/incorrect dichotomy.

WID discourse also encouraged development agents to undervalue local or cultural knowledge that came from the lived experience of being a poor woman. Instead of representing women as agents in their own journeys, or making provisions for women to become skilfully self-directed (Brydon and Chant 1989), local knowledge, ways of being and doing in their world and cultural frameworks were viewed as barriers to development. The fact that Southern women had previously found their own solutions (Moser 1992a:113) and had surmounted various difficulties for hundreds of years (Brydon and Chant 1989, Parpart 1995a:229) was rarely considered. Culture was very much seen to be the source of women's oppression (Bhavnani *et al.* 2003, Chua *et al.* 2000:823). These ideas aligned well with modernisation thinking as purported by Truman (see Rist 1997:71), and Rostow (1956).

In starting from the premise that existing social structures were sufficient, WID whole-heartedly focused on how to better integrate women into "existing development practices under orthodox notions of development" (Koczberski 1998:396). Questions were rarely asked about why men had proceeded above women (Rathgeber 1990:491). As an ahistorical trend, WID discourse ignored the impact and influence of class or race (Saunders 2002:7, Young 1992:52). For many Third World women, class and national hierarchy, over and above gender, played a major role in determining access to resources, power and decision-making (Saunders 2002:7). WID discourse never brought into question the very notion of development, rather it perpetuated it.

Critiques of Women in Development by Women and Development

From the outset of WID, even as early as the mid 1970s, scholars had begun to question the WID paradigm (Rathgeber 1990:492). Drawing on Marxist-feminism and dependency theory, WAD (Women and Development) argued against the reliance of Third World countries on the West and suggested that over and above the idea that women had been left out of the development equation, the critical issue

for deliberation was, “why had Third World women been excluded?” (Bhavnani *et al.* 2003:5). WAD focused on women’s relationship with/to development, as opposed to just seeking to incorporate them. WAD represented women as economic players, and they sought to represent women in terms of the informal and unaccounted for work that they did in the household and outside of the formal economic sector (Porter 1999:10). Women were also represented as having the ability to self-organise and as a result many women’s NGOs and community based organisation (CBOs) emerged with their programmes and policies reflecting women’s autonomy and ability for self-determination (Bhavnani *et al.* 2003:5, Parpart 1989, Parpart and Marchand 1995:14, Rathgeber 1990).

While WAD did attempt to offer a more critical view of women’s position in relation to development, Rathgeber (1990) argues WAD still failed to understand “the relationship between patriarchy, differing modes of production, women’s subordination and oppression” (p.493), (also see Hartmann 1981 for discussions about Marxism and feminism). In practice the WAD agenda was not taken on board as it was too political. However, WAD critiques did prompt WID practitioners to review their approaches to development and it is widely accepted that Marxist critique of WID moved development thinking towards Gender and Development (GAD) (Kabeer 1994, Moser 1989)²¹.

Gender and Development

The GAD approach emerged in the 1980s. In using the word gender as opposed to women and by focusing on the role of patriarchy in women’s underdevelopment in the Third World, GAD discourse potentially offered new hope beyond the narrow focus of WID and WAD (Cornwall 2000:18, Leslie 1999:27). With its roots in socialist feminism, GAD sought to address women’s subordination by laying bare historically and socially constructed relations between men and women (Cornwall 2000, Kabeer 1994, Moser 1993, Rathgeber 1990, Young *et al.* 1981). GAD saw themselves as an approach to women’s development which sought to understand the social relationships and power relations between men and women which maintained women’s subordinate position (Moser 1989:1800, Young 1997:51). Therefore,

²¹ To date a number of authors have documented the shift from WID to GAD (see Kabeer 1994, Rathgeber 1990, Townsend 1993).

GADs' primary focus is the study of power relations, that is, how gender roles and patterns of exploitation are constructed (Kabeer 1994).

GAD was purported as being distinctly different to WID for a number of reasons. To begin with, GAD was bottom-up and people-centred, as opposed to top-down. Women were no longer represented as passive beneficiaries of development; rather they were portrayed as active agents of change (Young 1992:51). Ultimately, GAD represented women in a way that acknowledged their capacity for identifying their own needs and priorities (Bulbeck 1993:8). Because GAD represented women as having more than economic needs or playing more than just an economic role, for the first time, women were seen for their triple roles²², referring to their productive (income-generating), reproductive (unpaid domestic) and community management roles. Women's strategic and practical gender interests/needs were accorded priority, and the public/private dichotomy that had previously been applied to women's work was rejected (Rathgeber 1990:494).

To elaborate, building on Molyneux's (1985) work about practical and strategic gender interests, Moser (1989) sought to provide a guide for gender planning which would meet women's practical and strategic gender needs (Pearson 2005:162). 'Practical gender needs' (PGNs) were defined as a response to an immediate need that women identify within their socially defined roles, which did not challenge the status quo. This includes for example, water supplies, health care, or the need to generate income, as noted in WID discourse. 'Strategic gender needs' (SGNs), by contrast were defined as an attempted to challenge the status quo because they focused on the needs that women identified related to their subordinate position in society. SGNs attempted to address issues of power, control, and decision-making; including the issues of legal and human rights or domestic violence (Moser 1993:230). GAD believed women would indirectly meet their SGNs in terms of their triple role, through bottom-up mobilisation while meeting their PGNs (Kabeer 1994).

GAD advocates thought that women would achieve greater equality by challenging and changing their engendered positions; women would be emancipated and

²² The concept of triple workload originated with the work of Moser (1989) who argued that women had three roles: reproductive, productive and community, (for further discussions surrounding women's triple role see Moser 1989, 1991:159, 1992a:89).

become 'empowered'. Under GAD, collective organisation was encouraged with GAD stating "the need for women to organise themselves for a more effective political voice" (Rathgeber 1990:494). Because GAD sought to position development in social transformation (Porter and Vesghese 1999:131), from a theoretical perspective women were represented in way that suggested they had or could develop agency. In practical terms, there was a focus on the implementation of projects that would:

Bring into question traditional views of gender roles and responsibilities and point toward a more equitable definition of the very concept of development and of contributions made by women and men to the attainment of societal goals (Rathgeber 1990:499).

Just as WID and WAD did, initial models of GAD have also drawn a number of critiques. Major critiques came from Southern feminists who drew on post-modern, post-structural and post-colonial thinking and argued for the need to understand and accept difference, as well as the need to expose various power relations that rendered Third World women to the position of 'other'. The concept of development was also brought into question²³. Arising from these critiques the empowerment approach came to the fore, deriving primarily from grassroots development and writings from Third World feminists (Moser 1993:74).

An empowerment approach to women's development

From the South, 'Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era' (DAWN), a group of politically *savoir-faire* activists, academics, researchers, and planners, disputed that a gendered approach was the answer. They argued that Third World women were oppressed by a number of agents, for example, colonialism and neo-colonialism, not just men. Therefore oppressive structures and situations needed to be challenged simultaneously, at differing levels (Sen and Grown 1987). DAWN also disputed the idea that feminism belonged to the West. They claimed that Southern feminism, similar to black feminism, had its own independent and unique history (see also Jayawardena 1986, Mohanty 1988, Moser 1989:1815 for discussions around

²³ One of the most significant challenges to white feminism has come from women of colour, that is Third World women, black women and indigenous women (Tuhiwai Smith 1999:166). Moreover, post-modern feminist critique offered similar insights into the women in development enterprise: "Criticism levelled against Western feminists' representations of Third World peoples (especially women) also apply to Women in Development practitioners" (Parpart 1995b:254).

feminism and the Third World). With their own identity, they therefore had the answers to their self-determined issues.

DAWN proposed an empowerment approach, which brought into question the top-down policy approach to women's development, arguing that women could, through bottom-up collective organisation, seek to address various power imbalances²⁴. It was argued that while meeting PGNs through collective organisation, a space for consciousness-raising would be provided, thus growing the ability of women to challenge their subordinate positions (Moser 1989:1816). The empowerment approach intended to emancipate women through building greater self-reliance (Sen and Grown 1987).

While at one level the empowerment approach appeared similar to the equity approach because it attempted to address SGNs, empowerment advocates argued the two came from different philosophical backgrounds, especially as the empowerment approach had its origins in grass-roots Third World feminism, which the equity approach did not²⁵. Because the dynamics or structures of women's oppression were understood differently, the strategies or solutions taken to change this oppression would differ markedly from those on the equity bandwagon (Moser 1989:1815).

Similar to equity though, the empowerment approach was initially unpopular with governments and mainstream development agencies. Many argued that to empower women through the challenging of oppressive systems would wrongly interfere with and change culture, as opposed to understanding culture to be a dynamic entity which evolves anyway. Indeed, many opposed the empowerment approach arguing that women were happy with the status quo (Scheyvens 1998:236).

For empowerment to work the challenging of oppression and exploitation between all realms of society was needed, that is, between gender, class, race and nations

²⁴ While welfarism also talked about women's groups as being important, welfarism only recognised these groups as a vehicle for delivering top-down services aimed at women's reproductive role. Welfarism certainly did not seek to raise consciousness or challenge women's subordinate position, whereas the empowerment approach recognised women's triple role and sought to emancipate women via collectivity (Moser 1989:1816).

²⁵ Chua *et al.* (2000:837) see Moser's ideas around empowerment and WAD to correspond.

(Lycklama à Nijeholt 1991:155). It also required development agencies to challenge and transform their own power structures and elitism.

In 1990, the United Nations declared the need to 'empower' women for development, if high returns were to be achieved (Kabeer 1994:2). Rather than improving women's wellbeing, empowerment was linked to economic development assuming that this would make women's lives better. The concept of empowerment was applied in varying ways in GAD practice, dependent on how the power component in empowerment was interpreted.

Empowerment evolves from the notion of power (Kabeer 1994:224, Rowlands 1997:9-27, 1998:11-15). Rowlands (1997) has asserted there are four types of power. These are:

1. Power over, which is defined as having power over another, that is, having power to dominate or subjugate another;
2. Power to, which is defined as productive or generative power, which raises the possibility of new action;
3. Power with, which is seen as group power and as having the ability to address problems together; 'being one'; and,
4. Power from within, which is defined as the power in an individual person. This is articulated as 'self-respect', 'self-worth' or a 'sense of hope', which transpires into being respectful, seeing others as equally valuable or being hopeful about or towards others (p.13).

Rowlands (1997:11) goes on to say that power is generally understood to mean power over. That is, upon marriage a woman may become the property of her husband meaning he has power over her ability to access and utilise resources, her movements outside of the village, whether she can utilise contraception, or whether she can refuse to have sex with him. Mohanty (1991:6, 14) talked about the way that these frozen embodiments of power become the point of analysis. Social indicators of women's status, such as, income generation, access to micro-credit schemes or levels of literacy become the determinants of women's empowerment (Mohanty 1991:14), meaning that women's level of emancipation comes down to a set of indicators. Using the case of Samoa, the numbers of women who are *matai* (chiefs) then becomes the figure for analysis when determining whether women are

empowered or not. However, women may not be the public face of power, but this does not mean they are powerless. Seeing power in this way becomes counterproductive when attempting to understand the various power relations relevant to Third World women or FHHs for that matter.

If power is fixed, it implies that power is limited and to get power one needs to take power away from elsewhere, or from someone else. Hence a wife would need to take power away from her husband. Whereas power to, power with, and power from within, do not imply that the power process occurs at the expense of another, rather, it occurs in a way that enables individuals or groups to meet their goals (Rowlands 1997:14). Power to and power with imply an approach to empowerment which constitutes a process “by which people become aware of their own interests and how to relate to the interests of others” enabling them to better influence decisions (Rowlands 1997:14; also see Kabeer 1994:253-61). In drawing on feminist interpretations of power, power within is understood as power that is self-generated, and involves the “experiential recognition and analysis” of issues (Kabeer 1994:229). Therefore it means more than just participating in decision-making, it must also encompass a process whereby people see themselves as capable and permitted to make decisions. “It involves giving scope to the full range of human abilities and potential” (Rowlands 1997:14).

In appreciating the various power relations relevant to Third World women and FHHs, as Mohanty (1991) has argued, one needs to be cognisant of the “multiple and fluid structures of domination which intersect to locate women differently at particular historical conjectures” (p.13), while also noting the “dynamic oppositional agency of individuals and collectives and their engagement in daily life” (Mohanty 1991:13). Acknowledging the multiple differential networks where women are located and where agency may be evident is fundamental to understanding how strategies for counteracting oppression can be developed. Thus Mohanty (1991) called for the ability to explore “questions of consciousness and agency without making any assumptions or naturalising individuals or structures” (p.13)²⁶.

²⁶ In recounting the publication of ‘Under Western Eyes’ and its contribution to development scholarship in *Chapter Three*, further discussions regarding Mohanty’s ideas will ensue.

When ideas about who has power in the Third World and who does not are considered, many misconceptions have occurred. Bulbeck (1998:22) reports that power in Euro-American terms is more often than not seen as having economic control or coercive force, meaning if an individual has these then they are powerful and if they do not then they are powerless. While in developing countries or indigenous communities, power may be defined in terms of spirituality, and be something that is revered (see Bulbeck 1998 for culturally specific historical examples of power).

Power also needs to be understood as operating in three spheres, as in the personal, the relational and the collective sphere (Rowlands 1997:14). Yet, too often power is defined in terms of the individual, meaning if a person has individual voice, rights and agency then they are powerful. In the West, feminism has at times focused on securing individual rights and freedoms, whereas in the Third World setting or in indigenous communities it may be about the collective as the family, extended kin and the village. Where Western feminisms have spoken about the oppressive nature of the family or household, women of colour have seen the family as a site of resistance, especially in relation to imperialist oppression (Bulbeck 1993:8). Rather than seeing FHHs as having varying types of power, FHHs are often purported to be powerless because they may not have 'power over'. If power is understood to be context dependent, have multiple levels, and is recognised as multifaceted and fluid (Leslie 1999:47), then FHHs are not so powerless.

When power is not understood to be fluid, context specific, layered and multifaceted, then empowerment is also misunderstood. Rowlands (1997) and Leslie (1999) both argue that how power is defined will determine how empowerment in the development process is understood, and therefore facilitated or implemented. As pointed out above, it is a common misconception to believe that in empowering one person you are taking power from another, that is, power is finite. It is also a misconception to believe that the empowerment process is about radical change. If empowerment is only seen as radical change then women's less radical attempts are made light of, are undervalued or are not counted as being significant (Scheyvens 1998).

In using a case study of the Solomon Islands, Scheyvens (1998) presents the varying ways that women as individuals or as a group might empower themselves, arguing

these too need to be understood as valid. Women may use “subtle strategies for empowerment” rather than those that are overtly confrontational²⁷ (Scheyvens 1998:237). Strategies for empowerment do not need to stir up “wide scale dissent” (Scheyvens 1998:237). Women should not have their efforts judged as conservative or politically immature because they do not accord with Western notions of ‘feminist action’, rather they need to be seen for their effectiveness (Scheyvens 1998:240). Thus to be useful, the term empowerment needs to be understood to mean “a process by which people acquire the ability to act in ways to control their lives” (Staudt cited in Scheyvens 1998:235), or as Leslie (1999:33-47) suggests, empowerment as an approach to gender and development needs to be about enabling “women to struggle for context specific forms of power at different levels and in ways that are culturally appropriate” (Leslie 1999:47).

Critiques of Gender and Development

Gendered approaches to development have been left wide open to interpretation. This is notable in the way in which gender training and gender planning frameworks have been dished out to “eager development professionals, who instantly declared themselves gender-sensitized” (Porter and Vesghese 1999:131). Words such as ‘gender’, ‘empowerment’ and ‘participation’ became catch phrases that governments, bi/multi-lateral development agencies and various NGOs became exceedingly happy to use. However, in many instances the only change was in the terminology, not the philosophy. In relation to GAD, gender merely replaced woman (Rathgeber 1990:495), and despite proclamations of being gender and class focused the approach remained gynocentric. GAD was still very concerned with women’s positioning vis-à-vis men (Bhavnani *et al.* 2003:11), rather than seeing women as the actual measure or as needing to define their own measures.

Moreover, various GAD scholars and practitioners tended to also homogenise Third World women in a particular way (Bhavnani *et al.* 2003:6). Rarely did the gender approach to development challenge the idea that development equated with modernisation and was therefore the answer (Parpart and Marchand 1995:14). The GAD approach also never sought to unpack or challenge how colonial discourse

²⁷ Subtle strategies refers to attempts to “achieve profound, positive changes” and are “defined more by the process by which they are implemented and their outcomes than by their content” (Scheyvens 1998:237).

had impacted on Third World women (Chua *et al.* 2000:822-23). With their feminist focus on patriarchy it did not go unnoticed that both feminism and patriarchy are Western concepts which may not be applicable in a non-Western cultural context. GAD distracted from the fact that relationships between men and women were much more complex than this (Cleaver 2002, Cornwall 2000).

GAD is still the current development approach used by most scholars, policy planners, and bi/multi-lateral agencies to articulate the relationship between women's inequity and the development process (Bhavnani *et al.* 2003:5), however, scholarly debates have recognised the above-mentioned drawbacks with the earlier GAD approaches. Feminist post-development critiques have been of great value to GAD thinking and practice and women's empowerment, because in accepting and understanding difference and the power of discourse, they have sought to foster:

open consultative dialogue which can empower women in the South to articulate their own needs and agendas. Instead of simply seeing women as a disempowered, vulnerable group in need of salvation by Western expertise (Parpart and Marchand 1995:19).

Critique from the feminist post-development corner required the GAD expert to rethink their approach to development (Parpart and Marchand 1995:19). This critique has been a necessary part to the re-conceptualising, reframing and shifting of GAD along the development trajectory.

Critiques also came from scholars writing about masculinities. Within the GAD literature, they argued, there hadn't been a critical enough focus on men (Chant and Gutmann 2000, Sweetman 1997, 2001). Attention was drawn to the fact that men had generally been portrayed in a certain way. Explicitly, men had been rendered to the category of powerful oppressor (Cleaver 2002, Kandirikirira 2002). WID and GAD development discourse had constructed Third World men as homogenously problematic. Because Western thoughts, beliefs and values are hugely evident in development thinking:

Differences are presupposed and indeed actively created through practices that define two static and oppositional categories: 'women and men'. Differences within or between these categories, or indeed the intersection of gender with differences that make more of a difference to the strategies and tactics particular men and women adopt, tend to be disregarded in the process (Cornwall 2000:20).

Until recently, men have remained missing or have been viewed as the problem in gender discourse (Cornwall 2000; also see Chant and Gutmann 2000, Cleaver 2002, (2001) *Development* 44(3), (2000) *IDS Bulletin* 31(2), Sweetman 2001). GAD literature, and therefore GAD practice, still made/makes ethnocentric assumptions about the content of the relations between men and women in various societies. More often than not, only exploitation, subordination and conflict have been exposed (see Kabeer's 1994:51-53 critiques of Mies 1980, 1982 and 1988), while the importance of familial bonds can be overlooked or the importance of working together gets underplayed (Gardner and Lewis 1996:124). Men, as sons, fathers, brothers or husbands, with whom women have healthy, mindful, caring, and supportive relationships can be glossed over (Cornwall 2000:18). As will be demonstrated later in this thesis, the importance of 'familial bonds' and 'co-operation' are active concepts that are fundamental to many women, therefore any 'taken-for-granted' assumptions about men and women, gender relations and indeed the very concept of gender, need to be explored and deconstructed so as to move "beyond the static stereotypes that continue to evade the field" of development and GAD (Cornwall 2000:18).

The gender relations approach had not looked critically enough at the varying, complex and multiple relationships that women have with men or each other that change over space, time and context. Rather "western gender constructs and binaries are often simply imported into contexts where they have little place in the ways that people think about or organise themselves" (Cornwall 2000:20). Women, under the umbrella of gender were often lumped together, regardless of whether they have a common voice or common interests. The GAD approach in presupposing female solidarity (Cornwall 2000:20), presupposed dissonance with men.

GAD in practice also neglected the experience of men in terms of their own powerless positions, inequalities, dependency, or blocked opportunities (Cleaver 2002:1). The categories of 'women' and 'men' become generalised and are then utilised "to make blanket assumptions about needs, interests, rights and responsibilities" (Cornwall 2000:20). Anything that falls outside these neatly bounded categories of what it is to be a man or a woman in the Third World, for example, same sex relationships, or what it might mean to be a woman in a position of power with a man in the Third World, are swept aside. Third World women were regularly understood to be victims in need of saving from their illiterate, pregnant,

tradition-bound selves, or they are the deserving poor, especially if they have been abandoned by a 'useless' husband (Mohanty 1988). In opposition, but still just as reinforcing, Third World women have also been typecast as heroic survivors (Cornwall *et al.* 2004:1). If they have not been abandoned by their husbands, they are now empowered enough to leave them, and this new found empowering self was generally seen to be because of some GAD intervention (Cornwall 2000:20).

Finally, critique within the GAD literature also noted that there hadn't been a critical enough focus on 'culture as the lived experience'. For the most part the issue of culture is applied in two opposing, yet just as debilitating, ways. Firstly, as already noted, it is seen to be a millstone to development because cultural practices hinder the development process or they are not in keeping with ideas about what constitutes being developed, and secondly, culture is used as a rationale for maintaining the status quo. Either way, culture is crudely used to substantiate the trajectory and shape of development. Concerns for maintaining cultural ways have been argued for only when it suits the development project or practitioners. The importance of understanding and applying culture holistically in the development process had not been fully recognised

Building on the work of Braidotti *et al.* (1994), Marchand (1995), Mohanty (1988), (1991), Sen and Grown (1987), and a number of other Third World feminists and Southern scholars, Bhavnani *et al.* (2003) have offered a more critical vantage point calling for a new framework for analysis "that puts women at the centre, culture on par with political economy and keeps an eye on critical practices, pedagogies and movements for social justice" (p.2). They argue that simply attending to gender is not enough. Engaging with gender also requires an unconditional engagement with culture, as the two cannot be separated. In this instance culture is understood to be not just about traditions and practices, but a way:

to comprehend how people actually live their lives – a 'structure of feelings'... culture as the lived experience insists on agentic notion of human beings and is thus understood as a dynamic set of relationships through which inequality is created and challenged, rather than as singular property that resides within an individual, groups or nation (Williams cited in Bhavnani *et al.* 2003:4).

They go on to argue that culture needs to be viewed as the relationship between production and reproduction in women's lives, which centres women's agency and struggles. As I have discussed earlier, all too often culture has been seen to be an

obstacle to development, or the reason that women are disadvantaged. Instead culture needs to be incorporated with gender and seen as a source of information or as a vehicle for change, thus cultural aspects of women's lives need to be taken seriously when analysing women's position. Instead of automatically seeing culture as a deficit, consideration needs to be given to the idea that culture may actually be an asset. The possibility that cultural frameworks in action may be models of development in their own right needs to be given due consideration. Adding culture to the women/gender and development question seeks to retain economics, however that might be defined, but not privilege it above other aspects of peoples' everyday lives; their cultures (Chua *et al.* 2000:825). Economic issues need to be seen as cultural also, indeed all elements need to be view simultaneously, that is culture, women, men, and economics. It is only then that a more succinct understanding of how inequalities are created, reproduced and challenged will be gained. Adding culture to the debate means that:

the relationship among all categories of inequality can be seen to be locally specific, historically contingent, shifting, enmeshed, rather than mutually inclusive or in competition with each other (Chua *et al.* 2000:836).

In drawing on culture in this way, a more nuanced understanding of the everyday lives of women in the developing context is likely, including FHHs. The intersection of culture and development may also reveal differing ways of understanding development and open up a whole new world of development options and possibilities.

Conclusions

Three main conclusions can be drawn from this chapter. Firstly, by tracing the WID to GAD trajectory, this chapter has unpacked how much of the conventional development thinking and practice as discourse has, irrespective of alternative ideas and visions, tended to portray Third World women in narrow and stereotypical ways. For the most part, throughout development discourse Third World women have been articulated as homogenously poor, and powerless, regardless of the diverse ways that power can and should be understood; of lacking in agency; and as victims of their own social, economic and cultural circumstances. It would be fair to suggest that not all Third World women are poor and the poor are not always women. Men too need to figure in the development equation as well as any

solutions. Yet, it is out of this context that FHH have emerged and continue to be positioned.

Secondly, this chapter has shown that culture is generally understood in a way that situates it and labels it as universally problematic, rather than seeing culture as part of the solution to the current position and condition of Third World women and men. Viewing culture with some optimism may actually prove to contest some of the essentialist constructions and representation of various Third World peoples. Limited consideration has also been given to the idea that cultural frameworks in action may actually be models of development in their own right.

Thirdly, this chapter has introduced the idea that power lies within hegemonic development discourse. The following chapter seeks to not only look at the exact nature of this power but to also consider some of the responses, ideas and challenges that have come from feminist, post-modern, post-structural, post-colonial and post-development writers that have influenced the ways in which development thinking and practice has evolved and in some part been revolutionised. It is through this evolution that a means for challenging essentialist conceptions of FHHs will be provided.

Chapter Three: Critiquing ‘Development’ Discourse

What we do in the world reflects what we know about it, and what we know depends on how we go about knowing, or in other words when thinking about change we should start by thinking about thinking (Bawden and Macadam cited in Kabeer 1994:264).

Introduction

A discursive analysis of development emerged in the 1980s (Blaikie 2000:1033, Kothari 2005b:48). In a desire to make the self-evident problematic and through unpacking the power relations and hidden agendas embedded in language and discourse, various scholars sought to offer valuable alternative insights into development scholarship and authority (Blaikie 2000:1033, Crush 1995a:3, Sylvester 1999). The pursuit of this desire has been influenced by:

The textual turn in the social sciences and humanities which has drawn attention to the conventions of writing and representation by which Western disciplines and institutions make sense of the world;

The convergence of post-modern, postcolonial and feminist thought as they bring into question truth claims of modernism, and demonstrate how the production of Western knowledge is inseparable from the exercise of Western power, and;

The growing struggle within post-colonial thought to loosen the power of Western knowledge and reassert the value of alternative experiences and ways of knowing (Crush 1995a:3-4)²⁸.

It has been argued that the 1980s saw an impasse in development thinking (see Schuurman 1993, Simon 2006:10). David Booth, a lead impasse theorist, claimed that both modernisation theory and dependency theory had made little progress in explaining the issues in ... “the complex diversity of the real world of development” (Booth 1993:49; also see Blaikie 2000). This period has also been labelled the ‘Lost Decade of Development’ (McMichael 1996:preface, Thomas *et al.* 1994:11).

²⁸ Also see Bell (2002:507-08), Briggs and Sharp (2004), Brohman (1996), Cowen and Shenton (1995, 1996), Escobar (1995a, 1995b), Hart (2001:654-55), Kothari (2005a:1), McFarlane (2006), McKinnon (2006, Nederveen Pieterse (1995), Parpart (1995b), Rahnema and Bawtree (1997), Sachs (1992a), Schuurman (1993, 2000:7-8), Shrestha (1995), Sharp and Briggs (2006), Simon (2006:11), Spivak (1987) and Townsend (1993:170).

There was also much discontent about the development industry, with many scholars and practitioners arguing that development so far had failed (Sachs 1992b:1, Watts 1995:45)²⁹. Development, “appears as a blunder of planetary proportions...” (Sachs 1992b:1), a creation which is showing “cracks and is starting to crumble” (Sachs 1992b:3). While the business of development was flourishing the process of development in developing societies was failing (Blaikie 2000:1033, Dubois 1991:2). Many people in developing countries found they were no ‘better off’, indeed many were poorer (Sharp and Briggs 2006:6). Esteva (1987) proclaimed “You must be either very dumb or very rich if you fail to notice that development stinks” (p.135), while Sachs (1992b) stated: “The last 40 years can be called the age of development. This epoch is coming to an end. The time is ripe to write its obituary”(p.1).

In a most understated fashion there was a sense of melancholy, “a crisis of development practice and an impasse in development theory”(Watts 1995:45). At its most radical sense various Third World scholars spoke of rejecting the paradigm of development and there was a strong call to get rid of Western universalism as development, (Briggs and Sharp 2004:662, Escobar 1995a, 1995b, Rahnema 1997, Sachs 1992a, Watts 1995:46), with some arguing development to be dead (Hart 2001:649). There was a demand for other worldviews and instead of searching for development alternatives; alternatives to development were purported to be the way forward in the new millennium (Briggs and Sharp 2004:662, Escobar 1995a:Chapter 6, Maiava 2001, 2002, Watts 1995:46)³⁰.

With the above in mind, the purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, this chapter looks at some of the critiques and challenges to normative developing thinking and practice that emerged during the 1980s. In doing so an appreciation for the power that lies within hegemonic development discourse and categories that emanate from this will be gained. How conventional development thinking and practice problematises certain individuals, groups and nations and creates development labels

²⁹ Regardless of the debates occurring in policy and academic circles, or claims that development had reached an impasse (Booth 1985), development projects still continued. Small-scale, people-centred, alternative development evolved, providing practical alternatives to grand scale development projects, with many of the ideas being articulated seen in the earlier works of Paulo Freire’s (1972) ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ or Ernest Fritz Schumacher’s (1973) ‘Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered’.

³⁰ Terms such as ‘reflexive development’, ‘post-development’ or ‘critical development’ emerged (Schuurman 2000:7-8).

and categories, such as FHHs, will be explored. A means for contesting development categories will also be offered. Secondly, as this thesis subscribes to feminist post-development thinking, which draws on the intersects between post-modern, post-structural, post-colonial thought and critical feminism, the second part of the chapter continues with an explanation of what feminist post-development thinking is. It is through application of this framework that the development experiences of FHHs in Samoa and the importance of culture in framing these development experiences will be made known.

Power/knowledge and discourse

In analysing power, knowledge and the discourse of development it was shown that “the extension to the third world of western disciplinary and normalising mechanisms... and the production of discourses by western countries about the third world” is a means of effecting domination over it (Escobar 1984/85:377; also see Crush 1995b:xiii, Peet 1997:75). To elaborate, certain critiques of development drew on ideas explored by Foucault whereby he illustrated how the state exerts power through the process of normalisation (Foucault 1980). Normalisation is the process through which groups or individuals are ordered and labelled in keeping with “bureaucratically imposed categories that privilege or punish according to certain standards and rationale” (Connelly *et al.* 2000:23). The subjective nature of these standards is hidden so that they appear ‘normal’ and self-evident. Thus, for example, once a group, people or a nation is labelled ‘traditional’ everything about them appears to be less rational and less relevant compared to that of the so-called ‘modern’ group, people or nation (Connelly *et al.* 2000:23).

Development had become “a tool of western hegemony... a system of domination imposing western thinking and discourses about how the world should be” (Maiava 2002:1; also see Bell 2002:507-08, McEwan 2001, Sangari and Vaid 1989, Simon 2006, Willis 2005:29). While development projects were being carried out in specific locations, Escobar argued the “vision of development to be international and universalising” (cited in Pigg 1992:492). In many instances colonial hierarchies were perpetuated rather than changed (Parpart 1995b:253). “Orientalism is, in other

words, inscribed in development history and development practice” (Watts 1995:53; Briggs and Sharp 2004:663, Escobar 1995b:213)³¹.

It was shown that “Knowledge is power, but power is also knowledge” because power determines what is knowledge and what is not (Alvares 1992:230; also see Gardner and Lewis 1996, 2000). An example of this was noted in *Chapter One*, when the World Bank (cited in Briggs and Sharp 2004:667) talks of determining what indigenous knowledge will be useful to them and argues that indigenous knowledge must be seen as complementary to the development process, rather than leading the way and perhaps transforming this process. The powerful discourse of normative development decides what is and is not ‘useful’ and places indigenous knowledges in opposition to Western knowledges. Development agencies and so-called ‘experts’ who impose Western categories and technical knowledge can displace local knowledge and expertise (Connelly *et al.* 2000:23), notably, because of the way that they attempt to order the world.

Foucault (1970:xviii) argued language maintains order in the world. This occurs because of the ways in which “syntax causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to hold together” (Foucault 1970:xviii). By this Foucault (1970) means how people in seeking to make sense of the world look to how things in the world are related or not related. Thus things get categorised according to similarities and differences, the world becomes divided by a system of binaries. In particular, and as mentioned above, the binary of normal (self-evident) and not normal (other) occurs.

³¹ Influenced by the works of Derrida and Foucault, Edward Said’s (1978) book on ‘Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient’ is an early example of post-colonial analyses which can be applied to development. Said, in illustrating how the Orient was constructed by the West, not as geographical region but as an area of the imagination, explored how the West constructs the peoples of the East as backward and uncivilised, justifying political and economic intervention, such as colonial rule: “Orientalism is a systematic discourse by which Europe was able to manage – even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” (Said 1978:3). While Said argued the Orient to be a creation of the West, based on a combination of images formed through scholarly and imaginative works (Tuhiwai Smith 1999:25), he also claimed that these constructions which rendered people of the East as ‘other’ and different, not only gave them a particular identity but also influenced the identity of those in the West (Said 1978). Post-colonialism also draws on dependency theories with their focus on uneven power relations and its aims also tend to overlap with populist and participatory approaches such as those discussed by Chambers (1983) (McEwan 2001:94).

Western philosophy has habitually placed huge weight on oppositional binaries, for example, inside/outside, pure/impure, good/bad, presence/absence, true/false, unity/diversity, or man/woman (Parpart and Marchand 1995:3). Rather than seeing these pairs as being a natural and normal process, Derrida argued they are constructed, and whilst presenting these pairs as neutral and descriptive, Western thinking had in fact placed “one of these terms as primary or privileged, and the other as secondary, or deprived or inferior or parasitic with respect to it” (Outhwaite and Bottommore 1993:140). In the case of this thesis some examples are, Western/Third World, modern/traditional, developed/underdeveloped, Western women/Third World women or MHHs/FHHs, and of particular concern is the way in which the ‘lesser’ of the pair is seen to be frozen in a static past. Thus, oppositional binaries generally imply a neatly bounded coalescing of identities, meaning that identities are not recognised as having the ability to be fluid, in that they can shift and change as determined by space and time (Malam 2005).

However, it is not possible for things to be so black and white, to be either/or: “We shall never succeed in defining a stable relation of contained to container between each of these categories and which includes them all” (Foucault 1970:xvii). It is therefore fundamental that attention is paid to what is in between, what is present in the “empty space, the interstitial blanks”(Foucault 1970:xvi), meaning it is important that consideration is given to not only what is stated but what is not stated, that is, what is inside and outside of language (Foucault 1970).

In light of the discussion above, Western nations have utilised a variety of practices to impose modernisation and exert control over the Third World (Connelly *et al.* 2000:23). Research agendas and methodological approaches are primarily determined by Western institutions, development is dictated from the outside (Gegeo 1998:289) – terms, labels, ideas and perspectives are produced (Chant 1997a:5). As mentioned above, imposed Western categories can displace local knowledge and expertise.

Language is what justifies development, language is fundamental to the way we prescribe, understand, intervene and defend interventions of development, with writings about development producing and reproducing misrepresentation which are

acted upon (McEwan 2001:96; see also Escobar 1984/85, 1988, 1995a, 1995b, Saunders 2002)³².

Crush (1995a) and Escobar (1984/85) have argued that as an area of study and practice, one of the basic impulses of those who write and practice development is a desire to bring order to a heterogeneous and constantly multiplying field. There is a preference for the way in which categories of things can be counted. Mainstream development:

favours views of society as an aggregate of autonomous rational individuals. This has led to an understanding of inequality as primarily about measurable differences or disparity between these categories of individuals as measured by the observer, rather than as experienced by the actor (Eyben 2005:1).

This quote from my field research exemplifies this point:

The powerful apparatus of development and its spin-doctors have turned us into categories...made us part of some grand plan or dream. We are things to be identified and quantified. It is fairly clear that one man's dream has become another woman's nightmare (Maria: Business woman, Nov 2001).

Conventional understandings and practices of development have not only produced multiple categories and labels, but they have also taken on board all of the opinions and beliefs that come with many of those labels, notwithstanding the fact that development for the most part creates most of these opinions and beliefs (Shrestha 1995, Simon 2006:11). Chant (2003c) discusses this as constructions having 'gone global', noting that many scholars, especially feminists from the South, have acknowledged the inherent problems that lie with this "extrapolation of terminology and concepts across space and time" (p.9). Regardless, these assumptions become stereotypes; they become orthodoxy. Labels thus reflect power relations, as will now be discussed in more detail.

The politics of labelling

Discourse, language, and labels are political because they have the potential to benefit or harm certain groups (Connelly *et al.* 2000:27). Labels are restrictive, in that

³² "The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing define itself by seizing the language of the centre and replacing it within a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place" (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989:38).

they emerge as fixed or closed – static presentations, and for the most part even as descriptors they are inadequately descriptive. Human beings are multifaceted, multidimensional and very complex, as are their circumstances. When we apply labels to people, we put on blinkers and see only a narrow view of a magnanimous and complicated human being (Gallozzi 2006). The following analogy sums up the issue clearly:

Did you ever buy a container or bottle of food from the supermarket with a huge label on the lid and sides that prevented you from seeing the contents? That's what the labels we use to 'describe' people do, they obscure the contents of the individual (Gallozzi 2006: http://contextualmusings.blogspot.com/2006_03_01_archive.html).

Through the process of labelling and normalisation the identity of individuals, groups and even nations are “redefined according to one-dimensional labels that simplify and belie their complex histories and motivations” (Connelly *et al.* 2000:23).

While some may argue ‘labels as descriptors’ to be fine, it is the analytical jumps that are made that are problematic (Foucault 1970; also see Mohanty 1988, 1991). In the case of FHHs while this label may appear merely to be a descriptor of a household type, noting also the point that the construct household is problematic, there is generally an analytical leap to poor, powerless and isolated. FHHs as a category of analysis becomes the same across class and culture, they are seen to be a homogenous group. The identity of FHHs becomes bounded together in the notion of ‘sameness’ of their circumstances, of their poverty and their oppression. Yet, “Identity is never fixed, monolithic and bound” (Natter and Jones 1997:142).

Development has problematised certain groups and created abnormalities or subnormal categories. ‘The poor’, ‘the malnourished’, ‘the vulnerable’ ‘the illiterate’, ‘pregnant women’, ‘small farmers’, ‘peasants’, ‘the landless’ and FHHs, all of which are categories that suggest in some way, shape or form that they do not somehow fit with ideals about what it means to be developed (Escobar 1995b:214), and therefore require reforming, treating or fixing. They are “portrayed as passive victims, participants, target group members or cases in programs intended for their benefit” (Connelly *et al.* 2000:23; also see Escobar 1988:435-36).

It is like the label provides “the diagnosis of a problem and a proposed solution: no further investigation is needed” (Connelly *et al.* 2000:23). In reference to the label FHHs:

it appears to name a category of households with a similar ‘problem’ – no man present - when actually the experiences, resources and the cultural context of these households imply diverse predicaments” (Connelly *et al.* 2000:23).

Or, potentially there may be no predicament at all. The lack of male may not be the key characteristic of these household types (Connelly *et al.* 2000:23).

Labelling works in such a way that the individual is segregated out and forced to identify with a principle label, such as FHH. Their situation becomes over determined. Weight is applied to the elements that differentiated them (Connelly *et al.* 2000:29). “Problems requiring attention and policy are constructed and defined in this way, leading to one label or element representing the entire situation of an individual or a family” (Connelly *et al.* 2000:29). In relation to the category FHH, there is an assumption that FHH is a universally applicable label and in instances where some level of critical analysis is given to the category, the label still appears to override all else, that is, the socio-cultural context, and the position of FHHs within their given societies as grandmothers, mothers, daughters, sisters, nieces or aunts or their situations as shopkeepers, homeowners, teachers, whatever the case may be. People do not just experience life according to a principle label that holds the most weight.

Categories are generally only defined by similarities (Foucault 1970) meaning within a category there may be much diversity but the voice of the individual gets subsumed by the experience of the collective. It is important to understand that labels and categories may have something to offer in terms of helping us form our identities but that this label or category can never speak for what may be experienced individually. As Foucault (1970) argues it is important to look to the empty space that surrounds a category if the experiences of the individual are to be truly understood. In looking to the empty space an appreciation of diversity and difference will be gained and new possibilities will also be rendered visible.

So how useful to development are labels really? While they help us arrange things, make sense of the world and may be a starting point of reference, as noted before

this desire to label and categorise can give us ‘analytical blinkers’, and stop us seeing the diverse and meaningful ways in which people engage with development. Removal of these analytical blinkers is required so as to open our eyes to differing ways of understanding development and therefore, a multitude of development possibilities.

Such is the power of normative development discourse that many Third World people also start to believe what they are told. Like in the Emperor’s new clothes, they start to believe in the labels of development and what others say they see, that they are ignorant and incapable (Simon 2006:11). This grammar of development ends up stereotyping and undermining Third World people who as a consequence come to understand themselves, their situation, and their country as inferior. Having been labelled in this way, Third World people and especially women, like ‘second-class’ people everywhere, think about how they can change themselves rather than thinking that a system or a setting is the source of the problem and therefore needs to change (Crush 1995a:21, Shrestha 1995).

There is now a powerful orthodoxy which suggests FHHs are problematic. FHHs are not the only such category to be defined in this way. As identified in *Chapter Two*, the ways that Third World women have been represented in publications stemming out of the ‘United Nations Decade for Women’ and the various conferences, and subsequently acted upon, illustrates the validity of this point:

...women are often presented as profoundly Other. As such, they are served up as objects of pity: downtrodden victims, abused by men, needy of our attentions, worthy of being empowered by GAD...The gender myths surrounding [development] issues are so sacred that they have their own, very potent, authority: silencing dissent, containing dissonance, maintaining orthodoxies (Cornwall 2000:19).

By presenting the prevailing attitudes evident in development policy and the academic literature that surround female headship, this point will be reiterated in the chapter to follow.

This focus on FHHs tends to understand FHHs in static ways, in that they are not seen to have shifting identities. However, these women are much more than the label or category of FHHs. When they are understood in terms of their shifting and multiple identities, this seemingly poor and marginalised group of women, as they

are portrayed in the literature, can be seen to exert considerable agency in the context of their everyday lives.

In critiquing mainstream development discourse as ‘truth’ there was a call for local autonomy, culture and knowledge; and provisions of support for “localised, pluralistic grass-roots movements” (Escobar 1995a:215; also see Simon 2006:11). The need to recognise the presence of multiple voices, multiple views, and multiple methods when analysing any aspect of ‘reality’ (with reality itself understood to be a contested term) in the Third World, was advocated. It was argued that who and what is absent from certain representations is just as important as who or what is present. An attempt to understand the conditions by which some voices are heard and others are not, also occurred (Blaikie 2000:1037, Bulbeck 1995:18).

A space for the recognition of grass-roots explanation and directions, a space to hear mini-narratives or stories that explained small practices and local happenings was opened up. The idea that indigenous or local systems of equity, reciprocity and communalism may have more to offer poor Third World peoples than Western ‘development’ was also raised (Escobar 1995b, McEwan 2001:95).

These analyses of normative Development Studies also drew a number of criticisms. Schuurman (2000:13-15) has claimed while these critiques have been and remain important, there has been an impractical swing in the pendulum towards the safe notion of diversity, so much so, that a real sense of vagueness has enveloped Development Studies. To avoid being accused of ethnocentrism or essentialism, scholars no longer spoke of inequality in the Third World, tending to focus on diversity instead. In steering clear of essentialism, ahistoricity and false generalisations, many had also fallen into the trap of false differences: “To affirm the existence of nothing but difference” is just as dangerous (Martin cited Schuurman 2000:13). Answers will not be found by “burying ourselves in the trap of non-essentialism...studying the endless diversities that exist within the South contributes very little to alleviating the poverty which is experienced (and voiced for that matter) by so many people in the Third World” (Schuurman 2000:14).

Being obsessed with ‘development’ as discourse or the language of development, does not deal with the day to day realities that the world’s poor face (San Juan 1998, Simon 1998, Sylvester 1999; also see points made by Blaikie 2000:1033, Parpart and

Marchand 1995:19, Robins 2003:270, Simon 1997:184). As Sylvester (1999:703) argued, while there was great concern with the voices of the subaltern there seemed to be little concern about whether the subaltern was eating (also see Bell 2002:508). This analysis did not recognise that in many instances the poor have just got on with it. In support of this, Rigg (2003) argued that while development has not brought all that it promised, for some populations there have been definite improvements in relation to maternal health and life expectancy, and in education. Regardless of these debates the development project continued, and the discursive criticism did little to change the North/South equity divide.

Questions were raised about whether the post-modern approaches as a First World preoccupation, were merely esoteric, and were therefore unable to make any real contribution to development in practice (Lazreg 2002, Parpart and Marchand 1995:1, Simon 1997:184). Concerns were expressed about the danger of just reversing the binaries and saying all that is 'Western is bad' and all that is 'non-Western is good' (Willis 2005:207-08). It was suggested that those who favour post-development ideas, for example, Esteva and Prakash (1998) also had a tendency to stereotype or homogenise, when discussing the notion of development (Nederveen Pieterse 2000, Schuurman 2000, Simon 2006:12). It is conceded instead, that development in being contested is resisted and reshaped throughout the entire process, and is therefore far from the homogenous enterprise that is used to be (Willis 2005:207). The development that was so criticised by post-development scholars was in fact "a caricature of the diversity of development approaches today" (Simon cited in Willis 2005:207; also see Rigg 2003).

Moreover, there was little acknowledgment with regard to the various cultural turns in development thinking (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006:235). Post-development approaches were accused of commentating on the ills of development, whilst having very little to offer in terms of solutions (Willis 2005:208). This idea that post-modern analyses of development were "long on critique and short on what to do" was shared by a number of people (Blaikie 2000:1035).

Finally, a number of claims also emerged related to the language used to critique 'development' as discourse (San Juan 1998, Simon 1998). Parpart and Marchand (1995) stated:

The impenetrable jargon of much postmodern writings is an issue as well. Daunting even for the educated, postmodern language is often an insurmountable obstacle for people mired in widespread illiteracy and economic crisis (p.19).

Thus the cautionary note that argues against this fixation with development discourse also needs to be heeded. There is an overriding need to also be pragmatic. The focus on diversity is not meant to bring with it a stalemate, nor should the focus on diversity undermine collective action by enforcing the idea of difference as opposed to trying to overcome this (Parpart and Marchand 1995:19).

A feminist post-development framework

Post-modern, post-structural and post-colonial inquiry intersects with contemporary feminist critique (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989:156). Generally speaking, the evolution of feminism and post-modernism, post-structuralism and post-colonialism have occurred as concurrent and comparable discourses which are increasingly being drawn together (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989:177; also see McEwan 2001). In many societies women have been rendered to the position of 'other', placed at the margins and, in a figurative sense, colonised (Spivak 1987). In many societies women had in common with the colonised:

an intimate experience of the politics of oppression and repression, and like them they have been forced to articulate their experiences in the language of their oppressors. Women, like post-colonial peoples, have had to construct a language of their own when their only 'tools' are those of the 'colonizer' (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989:175).

In critical gender studies, Third World scholars, such as Minh-ha (1987), Mohanty (1988) and Ong (1988) engaged in a critical analysis of development discourse. In her groundbreaking article 'Under Western Eyes', Mohanty (1988:80) criticised the ways in which many writers, many of whom were from First World countries, utilised the term 'Third World women' to denote powerlessness. Using Foucauldian insights into discourse, power and knowledge, Mohanty's analysis of various development texts illustrates postcolonial orientalist tendencies in development, especially in relation to women. Mohanty firmly rejected the way that 'Third World women' were generally presented to be uniformly poor, ignorant and underdeveloped, with the benchmark being 'modern Western women' (Mohanty 1988). Certain Western feminist writings and analysis (see those mentioned in

Mohanty 1988), and writing by some Third World women, many of whom had been schooled and versed in Western institutions, had created a hegemony which defined Third World feminism as ‘other’, and Third World women as exotic and rooted in culture. Undeniably, stereotypes of ‘other’ women are integral to how white Western women have constructed themselves (Bulbeck 1998:1). As Foucault (1970) suggests ‘other’ is a necessary part of the order whereby in constructing Third World women as lacking in agency and as victims, white Western women can then be constructed as emancipated (Chua *et al.* 2000:821).

Ideas constructed by particular groups during particular periods have reflected dominant power relations: that is, the West as powerful and the East or Third World as powerless, or the controller and the controlled (Mercer *et al.* cited in Willis 2005:121, Waylen 1996). Many past and present writings, in academia and popular literature, have tended to exoticise and eroticise Pacific women. Schmidt (2001) argues that in the case of Samoa this started with the voyages of Captain Cook and was further cemented by Mead (1928) (see also Jolly 1997 and Suaalii 2000 for commentary around the ways in which Pacific women have been constructed as exotic/erotic). As mentioned previously, Northern women (in particular those involved in the ‘Decade for Women’) tended to define themselves as strong, radical in their thinking, and as social transformers (McEwan 2001:99, Porter and Vesghese 1999:132-33, Udayagiri 1995:160-161).

Mohanty argued that this way of thinking not only “denies the experience of millions of women” (Willis 2005:121), but keeps the power and control within the hands of the West. Western feminism needed to seriously come to “terms with the vexed question of difference and the Third World ‘Other’” (Munck 2000:10), thereby acknowledging that monolithic, universal categories, especially in relation to Third World women, theorised power in limited ways (as noted in *Chapter Two*). In support of Foucault’s ideas which recognised the multiple structures of power, varied in its forms and multiplicity (Escobar 1984/85:381), it was argued rather than being powerless, Third World women had agency, could form counterattacks and show resistance (Chua *et al.* 2000, Mohanty 1988). Oppressed peoples have various modes of resistance that they use to counteract the process of normalisation and contest the imposed labels, programs and practices which may seek to disadvantage them (Connelly *et al.* 2000:24).

While discourse transmits, reproduces and reinforces power, conversely discourse can also undermine and expose power, rendering it fragile. As such, discourse also makes it possible to thwart power (Foucault 1980:101, Marcus 1990:13). That is, meaning is never fully referential, therefore it is contestable (Purvis and Hunt 1993), and discourse is where meaning can also be contested and power relations can be recognised (Foucault 1980). The reinstatement of “unheard voices and subjugated knowledge(s), as an act of critical scholarship”, would work to undermine the power of development (Crush 1995a:21). Overall, critical feminism and post-colonialism presented powerful critiques of development, with McEwan (2001) arguing that post-colonial feminist approaches offered “significant advancement in rethinking development” (p.94).

A number of parallels can be drawn between post-colonialism and critical feminism, and it is these intersects that are of particular interest to this thesis. Firstly, all are pluralistic epistemologies that are dedicated to disrupting universal patterns of thought, arguing against ‘truth’, and seeking to contest meaning within the dominant discourses. Secondly, all are concerned with representation, and parallels can be drawn in terms of critical feminism which is also overtly concerned with the politics of ‘othering’. Thirdly, post-colonialism is committed to uncovering power relations, as is critical feminism, so they all start from the premise that knowledge and power are intrinsically linked. Fourthly, language is also central to the concerns of the post-colonialism and critical feminism. Finally, post-colonialism and critical feminism both call for the rethinking of margins and borders and the de-centring of certain normative perspectives, such as patriarchy, modernisation or Western development (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989:31).

The theoretical underpinnings of this thesis draw on the intersections that arise out of post-modernism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, post-development and critical feminist thinking, which can be understood loosely as feminist post-development thinking. Feminist post-development thinking offers a framework for understanding women’s diversity in a variety of settings. The four basic tenets underlying this framework are:

1. The intersections of class, ethnicity, gender, age, religion and culture with systems of oppression and privilege are fundamental to the construction of self;

2. There are multiple accounts of truth and reality based on the personal and the cultural collective;
3. Binary opposites and categories need to be questioned; and,
4. Identities are fluid and shift within different social/cultural/political/economic structures.

Feminist post-development thinking will therefore provide the framework for understanding how FHHs have been conceptualised by development discourse. By drawing on ideas of difference, identity and deconstruction, this thesis will interrogate the ways in which FHHs have been discursively represented, and the category of FHHs has been constructed.

This thesis is concerned with some of the taken-for-granted realities about FHHs in the context of development praxis and seeks to contest these. Utilisation of a post-development feminist framework will also provide a means for critically analysing the various solutions and strategies which have been offered to abate the under-development of FHHs. This line of thinking opens up a space whereby a counter-argument, or counter-solutions and strategies may be considered. This thesis by identifying with feminist post-development thinking, calls for local, specific and historically informed analysis of FHHs, which is grounded in both spatial and cultural contexts, so that difference and capacity are also rendered visible (Parpart and Marchand 1995:4).

While there are obviously issues that will unite women, even cross-culturally, generalisations and stereotypes should be problematised (Bulbeck 1998, Chant 2003a, 2003b, McEwan 2001, Mohanty 1988). Post-colonial critiques in seeking to remove some of the negative stereotypical labels about Third World people, especially women, provide a space to not only think inside and outside various categories but to also rethink various categories. They also challenge us to “understand how location, economic role, social dimensions of identity and the global political economy differentiate between groups and their opportunities for development” (McEwan 2001:96).

Conclusions

Rather than asking what development is, is not, or how it can be more precisely defined, better hypothesised or sustainably carried out, various development scholars have argued for a shift in:

the way in which development is written, narrated and spoken; on the vocabularies deployed in development texts to construct the world as an unruly terrain requiring management and intervention; on their stylized and repetitive form and content, their spatial imaginary and symbolism, their use (and abuse) of history, their modes of establishing expertise and authority and silencing alternative voices; on the forms of knowledge that development produces and assumes; and on the power relations it underwrites and reproduces (Crush 1995a:3).

With the above in mind the purpose of this chapter was twofold. Firstly, it has introduced the various discursive critiques which arose and sought to expose the ways in which knowledge about the Third World and its peoples has been created and sustained through development discourse, along with why and how this knowledge has then influenced and been integrated into development policy, planning and practice. Thus it is shown that knowledge is power. It is also shown that various values, ideas, traits, practices and knowledge forms of many Third World countries and peoples have been positioned as problematically 'other' and as such were considered to be of little value to the 'development' process. This supports the point that 'culture' too can be categorised or labelled as useful or not useful to the development process.

This chapter also illustrates how development categories emerged, why they are favoured by development discourse and how certain categories get problematised. Essentialist conceptions of the category and essentialist theories of identity are thus explicitly linked (Natter and Jones 1997:142). With respect to this, because of the way that normative development ideology creates categories, FHHs not only get conceptualised in essentialist terms and placed as 'other' against MHHs, but the literature has had a tendency to pathologise FHHs. In representing the identity of FHHs in limited ways their multiple realities have not been taken into account; they have gone unnoticed. Yet, in introducing discourse as reproducing and transmitting power it is also shown that discourse can undermine, expose and thwart power. It is hence suggested that many concepts such as women, the household, and headship are in fact not natural terms, they are contestable.

Secondly, in light of the discussion above and by drawing on critical feminism, post-modern, post-structural and post-colonial critiques of normative development discourse, this chapter has made clear that a feminist post-development framework will be utilised to question essentialist conceptions of FHH which render them poor and fragile. It is also this framework that informs the analysis and practice of this thesis in its entirety and in particular the material that is to be presented in the following chapter, the literature review of FHHs.

Chapter Four: Problematising Female-headed Households

One continuing concern of both developing and advanced capitalist economies is the increasing amount of women's poverty worldwide, associated with the rise of female-headed households (Acosta-Belén and Bose 1995:25).

Introduction

As was identified in *Chapter Two*, Third World women have commonly been ignored or misrepresented by development discourse and integrated into development policy and practice in a homogenous or erroneous way. It is within this context that FHHs are also located. As was identified in *Chapter Three*, various counter-hegemonic arguments have sought to expose the power of development knowledge as discourse, exposing how and why development labels and categories such as FHH are created and why this is problematic. Accordingly, in unpacking the FHH literature this chapter seeks to trace FHHs as discourse and as a development category, with a particular focus on the way that FHHs have been rendered to the position of 'other' and 'pathologised' or 'problematised' by the discursive practice of development; cementing the position of FHHs firmly within the poverty alleviation paradigm. In doing so various challenges to essentialist understandings that surround FHH will also be made.

The chapter commences by outlining briefly the origins of the term FHHs, and then demonstrates how conventional constructions of the concepts household and headship have had a role in positioning FHHs as 'other'. This chapter goes on to then reject the idea that household and headship are appropriate units for suitably analysing women's poverty or for identifying the poverty of FHHs. As introduced at the beginning on this thesis, the belief that FHHs are the 'poorest of the poor' is now deeply embedded in global development policy; this idea that FHHs are poor is discussed in more detail. There is also a widespread belief that the so-called 'feminisation of poverty' is closely associated with the growing number of FHHs. This growth and the surrounding statistics will be brought into question, as will the belief that FHHs must be targeted by the various development agencies who are working to alleviate poverty in the Third World. One of the main challenges to the FHHs and feminisation of poverty debate has been to demonstrate the heterogeneity of FHHs. The heterogeneity of FHH is illustrated by discussing the

various types of FHHs and reasons why FHHs emerge, as well as the diverse issues that FHH may be confronted with. In noting the pervasiveness of the ‘FHH as poor’ argument this literature review concludes by considering the reasons why the status quo has continued to be maintained, noting also what some of the ramifications for challenging these stereotypes might be.

The origins of the term female-headed household

Scholarly ideas surrounding females as head of the family unit or the household can be traced back to various anthropological studies such as that by Boyer (1964) who investigated the Mescalero Apache, Gough (1954) who presented a study of female headship amongst the traditional Nayar from the Malabar Coast of South India, and Smith (1956) who talked about woman-headed families in British Guiana. This type of headship arrangement was labelled by some as the ‘matrifocal family’, ‘consanguineal household’ or consanguine/matrifocal family (Kunstadter 1963), and in generalist terms was interpreted to mean:

a co-residential kinship group which included no regularly present male in the role of a husband-father. Rather, the effective and enduring relationships within the group are those existing between consanguineal [blood related] kin” (Solien 1965:1541; also see Solien 1959:abstract)³³.

A number of reasons were given for the formation of these family/household types. Frazier (1939) suggested that slavery resulted in matrifocal families for black Americas, whilst Herskovits (1941, 1943) stressed the idea that the matrifocal family is related to the historical descent of African polygynous families. Greenfield (1959) and Smith (1956) considered that the matrifocal family formed when males were unable to fulfil their economic duties to their families. Solien (1959) identified reasons such as male migration to earn cash income, or an imbalance in the sex ratio

³³ Solien (1965:1541) has gone on to say that a number of authors have misquoted her by using the terms consanguineal household and matrifocal family interchangeably, and that Solien’s (1959:abstract) definition, which I refer to above, was meant to only refer to the consanguineal household, thus her discussions are about the consanguineal household and matrifocality. She goes on to explain that “a consanguineal household may or may not be matrifocal as well - probably in most cases it is - and conversely, a matrifocal family may quite well include a regularly present person in the role of husband- father” (Solien 1965:1541). While it is not my intention to delve into the whys and wherefores of this historical debate, the purpose of mentioning it is to illustrate households headed by women, regardless of the labels attached to them, have been around for a number of years, and in many cultural settings households without a co-existing male were considered the norm. This discussion is also important for introducing the point that ideas surrounding household and family types have been heavily debated, and as such, are contestable terms; as have the ways in which these definitions or labels have been arbitrarily or categorically understood and applied.

which resulted in more childbearing females, and finally Kunstadter (1963) who purported that matrifocal families develop as a result of divisions of labour separating adult males and females in a community.

While some have argued these formations to be an indication of social disorganisation (Frazier (1939) and Herskovits (1941,1943)), others such as Nieves (1979) have viewed this arrangement as an adaptive coping figuration in times of turmoil (also see Solien 1959). Using the case of San Salvador shantytowns, Nieves (1979) argued survival capacity was dependent on the type of household in which a person lived. By investigating the consanguineal household group, which she understood to mean a household where a co-resident kinship group existed with no regularly present male in the role of a husband-father, Nieves purported the consanguineal household was more successful than other types of households for managing and adapting to the hostility and insecurity of urban life, and as having more to contribute to the wellbeing of its members. Nieves (1979) observed that this type of arrangement works because it can modify its composition in accordance to the “changing economic circumstances of a wide network of kin-related individuals” (p.135). Thus, the household has the capacity to absorb immigrant relatives because the boundaries of consanguineal household group are often unmarked; household composition is loosely defined and its limits less bounded.

This means the household can change or new ones can emerge in response to childcare needs. The household can also reduce its members during periods of economic hardship when income coming into the house may be less, and expand during times of prosperity, removing the burden from other households that are in hardship. Having other adult members around also meant members who were working, often more than one job, could be more flexible with work schedules and be physically more mobile, because they were able to delegate childcare obligations or domestic responsibilities whilst they worked. Domestic chores can be divided up, as opposed to relying on one adult woman-wife or mother (Nieves 1979). This account would suggest that far from being problematic, this arrangement was an adaptive coping strategy.

Nieves (1979) also observed the complexity of the consanguineal arrangement, suggesting that in some cases males may actually be present, as sons, brothers, uncles or nephews, or even as a partner who may not contribute. She also noted it was

common that two or more adult sisters and their children lived with elderly parents, or with their mother and her spouse. As opposed to sitting outside the norm, this pattern she argued was identifiable around many areas in Latin America and the Caribbean:

The consanguineal household group is an established prototype of social organization ...Studies carried out in Costa Rica report that the consanguineal household prevails in urban settlements... typical for considerable portions of the urban population of Central America (Nieves 1979:139).

Bender (1967) also detected there to be numerous ethnographic studies where the idea that fathers-husbands who did not reside with their families were considered the norm. This was common in societies where adult men resided in men's houses, separate from their spouse and children, where sibling households existed, or where the father was absent for considerable periods, engaged in trade, warfare, or work. Whether the remaining spouses were considered the household head is unclear.

Therefore, women as head of the household have been around for a very long time, as has the idea that the nuclear family is not universal and that diversity needs to be taken into account when considering residential units and the family, especially as these arrangements can successfully meet the physical and social needs of various household members. Given this, how is it that these diverse residential units and family structures, and idea of the non-male head, became 'other'?

Noticeably, even amongst the above-mentioned writings, judgment calls were being made early on about what was appropriate. Frazier (1939) argued the matrifocal family/household arrangement to be primal, and despite the various arguments that the nuclear family is not universal, some scholars sought to state otherwise: "The nuclear family is a universal social grouping" (Murdock 1949:2-3), suggesting that any arrangement outside of this was a primitive arrangement and was not the norm. Ideas about the nuclear household arrangement with a male head were very influential and belief in the male-headed nuclear family as the preferred household structure took a stronghold. The 'othering' of FHHs can also be understood in more detail by looking at conventional constructions of the concepts household and headship.

Conventional constructions of the concepts household and headship

The household defined, and its functions

Attempts to define and conceptualise the household and the family are endless, and inadequacies surrounding these attempts are also well noted (see Bender 1967, Bohannan 1963, Burch and Matthews 1987, Goody 1972, Kertzer 1991, Malinowski 1974 for some of these debates). On numerous occasions it has been contended that the household and the family are analytically quite distinct, and that this distinction needs to be respected. There needs to be acceptance for “the complete conceptual divorce of the household from the family” (Bender 1967:493). Kinship, which means family, and household, which means residence “do not even belong to the same universe of discourse” (Bohannan 1963:86). It has therefore been argued that families as kinship must be defined as such, as opposed to the idea of co-residence (Bender 1967:493; also see Yanagisako 1979:162).

The concept of household has been analysed from various angles. Ethnographic studies indicated that there were various types of households. The household can be understood as an entity that is very heterogeneous and culturally specific (Ekejiuba 1995, Guyer and Peters 1984, 1987, Moock 1986, Solien 1960, 1965). However, importing ideas from the West, and the East Asian social context, where “millennia of religious, legal and fiscal measures gave the household a corporate character” (Ekejiuba 1995:49-50), economists applying a neo-classical lens laid the foundations for new household economics (see Becker 1981, Koopman 1991). They suggested that households were unified and therefore worked towards common goals, directed by a household head. As such, they could be understood as units of production, consumption and exchange (Chant 1997a:6, Kabeer 1994:99, O’Laughlin 1995:74-75). Essentially certain intimate relationships such as marriage, parenthood and kinship were taken and used to consider basic allocation activities. Becker surmised the idea of the “benevolent...household head to ensure welfare maximization” (Kabeer 1994:99), and subsequently, the household became homogenised and many sweeping generalisations were made. These assumptions went on to underpin and influence many policy documents, generally overlooking or misrepresenting women’s needs and interests (Kabeer 1994:96). Problematically “this altruistic version of the household” became a prototype and “has continued to exert a powerful influence on how households are thought about and data is collected” (Kabeer 1994:96).

In response feminist critiques argued that household models were extremely varied and “that inputs to and benefits of household membership may be heavily circumscribed by shifting and intersecting equalities revolving around gender, age and relations to other household members” (Chant 1997a:6; also see Folbre 1986a, 1986b, Harris 1981, Hart 1995, Kabeer 1994, Moore 1988 and Sen’s 1991b ‘Gender and Cooperative Conflicts Model’). The assumption that the household head behaves naturally in an altruistic manner so as to allocate resources, responsibilities and power fairly, is highly contestable (Ekejiuba 1995:49). Even more so, as divisions of labour are not natural (universal), therefore there cannot be a natural or fixed family model or a universal household (Harris 1981, Moore 1988:56). Households cannot always be understood as “entities governed by natural proclivities to benevolence, consensus and joint welfare maximization” (Chant 2003b:21). However, this is not to say that in some instances they are not. Instead it needs to be understood that household members may have competing, conflicting, contradictory, and co-operative interests, rights, resources and power, and production, consumption, exchange, residence, roles and responsibilities may be organised by differing kinds of units (Chant 1997a:6, Chant 2003b:21-22, Chant 2004:4, Kabeer 1994:Chapter 5, Molyneux 2001:Chapter 4, O’Laughlin 1995:75). Chant (2003a:24) argues the need to look inside households rather than leaving them as undeconstructed and unproblematic. In support of Gonzalez de la Rocha and Grinspun (2001:59-60), Chant (2003a) states:

Analyzing vulnerability requires opening up the household so as to assess how resources are generated and used, how they are converted into assets, and how returns from these assets are distributed among household members (p.24).

Therefore, a closer look at intra-household relations is actually required (Kabeer 1994, Chant 2004:3), as is the need to understand per capita figures of income, consumption and expenditure as opposed to cumulative household figures (Chant 2003a:62). This point will be expanded on later in the chapter.

Problematically, conventional household models are usually deemed to mean the nuclear family understood as ‘a man and a wife and their children’ (Moser 1993:15, O’Laughlin 1995:74). This model does not fit residence, production, decision-making and consumption patterns of many cultures (Ekejiuba 1995:49-50). The conventional household model as mentioned above, is seen to be the benchmark of normality. Regardless of attempts by scholars such as Mohanty (1988, 1991), Parpart

and Marchand (1995:7) or Rathgeber (1990) to eliminate ethnocentric and universalism from household scholarship so as to incorporate ‘other voices’,

most publications which claim by their titles to consist of generic discussions of the ‘changing family’ refer only (or primarily) to advanced economies... mainstream theory has consistently posited nuclear households as a characteristic of modernity (Chant 1999:95).

While the household is a significant site in terms of gender discrimination and subordination and therefore warrants some attention when examining gender and poverty issues (BRIDGE 2001:1), the household is nonetheless problematic as a socio-economic unit of data collection and analysis because it ignores the wider issues of social and gender inequity. This focus on the household leaves the macro causes and real nature of poverty unexamined. The household really has “no analytical priority in the analysis of social groups” (O’Laughlin 1995:74).

Yet, the household as a unit of analysis continues to hold fast. In census documents, a household is usually defined and understood to be a spatial unit where members reside and share basic domestic and/or reproductive activities; a group of people who eat out of the same pot (Chant 1997a:5; also see Brydon and Chant 1989:9, Mackintosh 1979:185-86 and Young 1993:114 who make reference to similar definitions). In critique of this definition, Brydon and Chant (1989:9) argue while members of a household often share the same residency this is not always a given, and even if they do, as already mentioned they do not always engage together in activities or share consumption³⁴.

It has been argued that households have a multiplicity of functions. For example, the household is the sphere of biological and social reproduction, of socialisation, of nurturing and of fundamental decision-making (Brydon and Chant 1989:8, 47). Connected with these multiple functions are notions around who does what, or divisions of labour. Within a household there is usually a division of labour among adult men and women, and children. This focuses around the accumulation and management of resources, and the care and maintenance of any children or dependent elders (Brydon and Chant 1989:49). It has been argued that the household is the most frequent form of social organisation in the developing world,

³⁴ For further comments about the “potential pitfalls of deploying this definition” see Chant (1997a:5).

and the most common place for the structuring of gender relations and women's specific experiences (Brydon and Chant 1989:8, Harris 1981:52). Hence, as already stated the household is a place of conflicting agendas and unequal power relations (Rogers 1980:64, Varley 1996:506).

Norms that affect household composition, shape roles, activities and functions of that household are generally related to kinship ideology. In many developing countries kinship is a fundamental principle of social organisation. Households though are not always about blood relatives (Brydon and Chant 1989:137-9, Chant 1997a:60). Additionally, a difference in the developing context is that when the notion of kinship is referred to, it is not just about parents, siblings and relatives, rather it may refer to, in sum, the place of the household within the wider local community, and thus obligations within the wider local community. Consequently, household organisation may be determined by extending kinship ideology (Brydon and Chant 1989:49).

Therefore, it may be more appropriate to define household by kinship or by economic units (Chant 1997a:5, Harris 1981:50, Kabeer 1994:113-115, Kabeer and Joeques 1991:2)³⁵. In relation to FHHs, households which do not have a husband, father, or son present in a spatial sense, but do so in a kinship sense, may not view themselves as FHHs, when in fact others could see them as such. Likewise, they may view themselves as FHHs when in fact they may not fit conventional definitions. As there are so many problems with defining household, Varley argues that there should be no need to do so prior to the investigation, rather each case should be taken on its own merits (Varley 1996:506). With so many problems apparent with defining the household, this then becomes a problem when seeking to accurately define FHH.

Households are also "permeable units with flows from beyond the household boundaries affecting internal wellbeing" (Chant 2003a:63), yet Western definitions of the household tend to see the household as a static entity, and not just in terms of resources in and out, but in relation to its own boundaries. Households evolve, and not just as members' age and die or when children move on, but within the cycle of a year, especially if the event of migration is taken into account (Chant 1997a:5). The

³⁵ Often definitions utilised in formal documentation and reports of developing countries are based on concepts that are underpinned by Western ideologies.

fluidity of the household/family is well noted by various authors (see Cupples 2002:49 for references to the fluidity of family life), and as I have just mentioned above, the importance of locating the household and its obligations within the wider local community is fundamental. For many cultural groups the concept of household and the concept of family because they are very fluid move seamlessly from that of the immediate family to the wider family network, sub-tribe and tribe. The extended family is the community, and the community is made up of the extended family. Household and the community, or the family and the community are not distinct entities (Puketapu 2002, Stewart-Withers and O'Brien 2006, Williams and Robinson 2002).

In many non-Western instances, of vital importance to the family and household is also the notion of locality, which is where one's tribe, family, land or household is geographically situated. Moreover, the non-Western family generally knows no boundaries because the family exists wherever its members are. Therefore the household may also exist wherever its members are. The household or family may not have closed spatial boundaries like that of the Western/European family or the Western/European community (Williams and Robinson 2002). The extended family relationship is fundamental because this relationship is the basis for all others, including the household.

In summary, the household means different things to different people in different cultural contexts (Chant 1997a:5, Harris 1981:52-53, Kabeer and Joekes 1991:4, Varley 1996:505-6), therefore the boundaries and the function of the household must be empirically determined in each case and there should be no need for priori definitions (Varley 1996:506). In terms of this research, the household will be understood as a conceptual construct, and the research participants will determine the definition and the parameters of the household. The household will also be understood as a potentially fluid and evolving construct. Therefore the location of the household within the wider community network, noting the extended nature of the family, locally, nationwide or internationally, will be given due consideration. The various inputs and outputs of the household, familial and community obligations, and the ways that resources are used and decisions are made will be considered in attempting to understand the household. This research intends to offer a conceptualisation of the household, as it is understood in Samoa, by the participants

involved, which leads me now to the next area of discussion, defining and identifying household head.

Defining and identifying household head

As I have already touched on, Becker (1981) formalised the idea of a husband/wife/child grouping, where the father as appointed household head presides over and acts in the best interest of the household members, and utilises his power to ensure (through manipulation rather than dictatorship) that others in the household act for the greater good. The 'benevolent head' represents the household and ensures that all members of the household are fairly and squarely cared for (Folbre 1986a, 1986b, Kabeer 1994, Posel 2001:653). These beliefs are perpetuated especially when the household is merely viewed as a spatial construct and what occurs in this space is understood in terms of what is 'natural', that is, it is assumed to have patriarchal associations (Rosenhouse 1989:3-7, Varley 1996:505). Yet in certain cultures what is 'natural' may not be gendered or patriarchal. Posel (2001:654) notes that while all households may not be headed by 'benevolent dictators', many are still hierarchical. That is, one person may have more decision-making power and control over resources, (but not use this to benefit the household). From a cultural perspective, the head of the household may just be the oldest person in the household, male or female, regardless of whether they contribute resources and/or hold decision-making power.

Evans (1992:22) argues headship needs to be understood in terms of responsibility rather than just composition. If it is all about composition, then inevitably if a man is present, then the household will be deemed male-headed. Whereas, if it comes down to responsibility, especially economic responsibility, then in many households the fact that the sole or main financial provider is a woman means regardless of male presence, the 'head of the household' is this woman. For this reason Varley (1996) argues that the:

concept of household head – a single decision maker representing members' shared interests – is regarded as particularly inadequate and inappropriate, especially when this role is ascribed to the senior male (p.506).

Varley (1996:506-11) also argues the need to clarify head of household further than just economic responsibility and composition.

When thinking about head of the household, there are many factors that must be considered. Location of the members, the structure of the family, roles and responsibilities within the family, who works the longest hours, culturally determined roles and status, the nature and extent of the sharing relationship, land tenure, and location of the household within the wider community may all be important factors to consider. Thus, the question remains as to whether headship, as captured in household surveys, genuinely reflects the person who may have more say than others over the resources and the decisions to be made (Posel 2001:654).

Mencher (1993:219) believes there are four components to household headship. These are: (1) authority or power; (2) economic power; (3) decision-making; and, (4) rights to the children. Thus, regardless of a multitude of meaning, there are a number of practical and conceptual variables to consider when attempting to isolate at any one time, who the head of a household is, and whether the household head is female. Head of household should actually be defined in a way that suits the level of inquiry or policy being developed. It is this approach that will better capture the diverse position or situation of the household, and therefore the needs of the household (Chant 1997a, Varley 1996:551).

Much of the investigation into heads of households has been fuelled by the urgency to know whether households are able to economically meet their needs. However, to argue that a household is well off because the household head is wealthy says very little about distribution of resources. As I have already mentioned, not all members of the household have equal access to resources, neither are all the members attributed similar rights (Brydon and Chant 1989:9, Harris 1981:52-53, Momsen 1991:42). This focus on household head does little to consider what others may financially bring or contribute to the household (Evans 1992:22, Varley 1996:509-10). It is also inaccurate to assume that income earned by individuals will be contributed to the household budget (Varley 1996:511-17). This is especially so with male income-earners (Chant 2003b:21-22).

Harris (1981) points out that the dominant cultural perception about the 'naturalness' of men as household head means that women as household heads are

seen as abnormal and a problem³⁶. As already noted, family theories typically view the family as a Eurocentric ahistorical framework, which means the family is considered to be nuclear in structure, and the role of the father is to protect, while the role of the mother is to nurture³⁷ (Arroba 1996:8, Levy 1992:95). This is a representation wherein women are daughters, mothers or wives (Arroba 1996:10, Varley 1996:505), and anything outside is perceived to be deviant. Thus, “Societal emphasis on the normality of male-headed households renders women-headed units as an anomalous, isolated and disadvantaged category” (Chant 1997a:3). They are seen to be incomplete families or symptomatic of family breakdown (Chant 2003a:62).

In most household surveys, headship is not objectively defined (Posel 2001:654). Indeed, Buvinic and Gupta (1997:260) rightly maintain censuses are problematic as countries use differing and therefore non-comparable definitions of the terms household and head of household. They ascertain intrinsically there is ambiguity when headship within the household is left to the subjective judgement of household members. Members within a household will utilise differing criteria to make their decision, therefore the question arises as to how households differentiated by headship can be compared when they are socially and culturally constructed through a diverse range of meaning (Kibreab 2003:323-24, Posel 2001:654)? While most operational meanings of headship come with considerable imprecision (Posel 2001:654), there has been a push for a universal definition so as to ‘legitimise’ the right to compare; comparison that then identifies gaps and offers solutions to lessen these gaps.

While defining a household should be left up to the household members, especially as the concept represents them and their lives, one would also need to consider whether household members were speaking freely when asked or were they also constrained by their own perception of what is being asked, and of social norms. Additionally, one would also need to consider whether they understand what the term household means and/or implies.

³⁶ See also Akinsola and Popovich (2002:761), Evans (1992:20-21), Levy (1992:95), Momsen (1991:42), Motie (2000:2), Rogers (1980:64-65), Rosenhouse (1989:5) and Varley (1996:506) for comment on household head usually being attributed to men.

³⁷ See Mies (1986) for discussions on how capitalism has created the modern notion of the nuclear family

When attempting to define household head, it becomes clear that socially constructed ideologies determine who can and cannot define themselves as the household head. It also becomes clear that household head and family head are not always one and the same. That is, there are a number of societies where families do not always form households and where households are not always families (Bender 1967:493). Because of the aforementioned, more often than not, the term FHHs does not reflect the reality of the situation it is meant to represent, therefore whenever the term FHH is applied it needs to be deconstructed (Motie 2000:2). Loi (2003:1) reports it is this problem with defining household head that makes cross-cultural comparison of FHHs particularly difficult. This inability to reach consensus in definition has also meant that the development of a comprehensive theoretical framework for studying the problems of FHHs is not really possible, nor is it desirable. Yet this fact has not stopped policy writers and planners in the development field from attempting to do so. This is especially problematic because development agencies “prioritise policy over research. The information that they can assimilate most easily is in the form of facts and generalisations” (Pigg 1992:504).

In keeping with the idea that the household in Samoa must be viewed as a subjective conceptualisation, headship will be also understood as a conceptual construct, and the research participants will determine its definition and parameters, noting in all probability that these will be fluid. The household will also be understood as more than the sum of its parts. That is the household can be a geographical entity in terms of a spatial setting. Thus the household may exist wherever its members are but it is also understood as having a locality as linked to land, village or community.

Contesting household and headship in relation to female-headed households

The search for useful generalisations about household, headship and FHHs have in a number of instances “turned into a distorting oversimplified account, often with little empirical base” (O’Laughlin 1995:66). Even in relation to a group and context as specific as Eritrean refugees, Kibreab (2003) argues that it is also a generalisation that certain populations, such as refugees, are dominated by women headed households and children.

Some scholars have called for the rejection of inquiry into household as a fixed entity (Rogers 1980:64), especially with respect to economic analysis (Ashworth cited

in Varley 1996:506). However, Brydon and Chant (1989) have argued that the concept of household as an area for analyses is relevant because the household is “both the point of origin and destination for the labour and resources of its component members, the household is the point at which reproductive and productive relations meet” (p.10). Herein lies a dilemma (Varley 1996:506). Even though the concepts household and household head are fraught with problems, the reality is that more and more women and children have become isolated from men’s income (Engle 1997, Jackson 1998, Moser 1993:18, Varley 1996:506), with the ability to earn money sometimes not working in women’s favour (Stichter cited in Varley 1996:506). Therefore “philosophical rejection of the concept head of household is therefore accompanied by the pragmatic need for more information about headship” (Varley 1996:506).

A more in-depth look at intra-household relations, per capita figures of income, consumption and expenditure as opposed to cumulative household figures, is actually required (Chant 2004:3, Kabeer 1994). Chant (2003b:14) argues that the use of cumulative household income disregards the size of the household. Therefore larger households appear better off than smaller ones and this is problematic when comparing FHHs with MHHs, because FHHs are often smaller. This aggregated approach also has a tendency to make FHHs more visible in conventional statistics and they can end up looking poorer than they really are. However, the use of per capita income divided by household members just assumes that resources are distributed equally, and as already discussed this is not always the case.

This focus on poverty as determined by the level of income or expenditure is also problematic. This does little to account for subsistence production, systems of exchange, or reciprocity. In many households there will be a number of inputs and outputs that could easily go unaccounted for, for example, the exchanging of vegetables for a woven mat or meat.

The household needs to be understood both qualitatively and quantitatively, in terms of what each individual person brings, can access, make decisions over, and utilise. All types of inputs, outputs and systems of exchange need to be considered. This will also highlight secondary poverty of women in MHHs. As noted before the household also needs to be understood as being more than the sum of its parts – that it may also be a geographical entity encompassing a spatial setting that is linked

to history, land and a community. This too may determine input types and amounts, especially if the idea of maintaining or building the home front is given due consideration.

So for the most part while there is no simple answer as to whether the household and headship do or do not have something to offer as units of analysis, what this research does acknowledge is that women's poverty or the poverty of FHHs cannot be understood in relation to these concepts alone, and as such they are inadequate as units of analysis. Explicit rationale for this idea will be further demonstrated throughout the rest of this chapter but for the moment a more in-depth look at problems with the way in which FHH have been constructed as the 'poorest of the poor' to the point of orthodoxy, will now occur.

Pathologising female-headed households

Concern for FHHs emerged during the 1970s. Feminist critique argued against the uncritical way in which the household as the socio-economic unit for data collection, analysis and service provision was being employed. Feminist enquiry illustrated that contrary to the hegemonic assumptions that underpinned certain research and policy models, the 'taken-for-granted' reality that households were headed by men, was incorrect and that the inaccurate assumption that households were male-headed had played a role in women's invisibility and exclusion from development (Peters 1995:94). A new theoretical approach to development, one which integrated "an evaluation of women's work outside the formal paid labour force" and one which "took into account household structure, particularly the growing importance of FHHs", was argued for (Elliot cited in Momsen 1987:17).

FHHs quickly became 'problematised' where the concept the feminisation of poverty materialised from debates in the United States about the rise in single mothers, predominantly black women, who were on welfare (BRIDGE 2001:1, Moynihan cited in Momsen 2002:145). Diana Pierce developed the term 'feminisation of poverty' to describe the fact that women not only bear a disproportionate share of poverty but also carried the burden for managing this at the household level (Chen 1995:23). National and local studies emerged demonstrating that FHHs were disproportionately disadvantaged in comparison to other households, and their numbers were growing (Peters 1995:94). The concern

for FHHs has continued to grow (Evans 1992:21), with various Development Studies scholars, government bodies, policy makers, and development organisations continuing to agree that FHHs warrant special attention (Amin *et al.* 1999:1, Buvinic 1990b, 1993, Buvinic *et al.* 1978:5, De Graff and Bilsborrow 1993:317, Kossoudji and Mueller 1983:831, Ministry of Labour, Guyana 2003). “The ‘feminisation of poverty’ has come to mean not (as gender analysis would suggest) that poverty is a gendered experience, but that the poor are mostly women” (Jackson 1998:43). And in terms of FHHs accounting for 33 percent of the developing world (Buvinic and Youssef cited in Rosenhouse 1989:8), then it is assumed that all FHHs are poor.

Female-headed households in the development policy and planning literature

As identified in *Chapter One*, many documents produced after the ‘United Nations Decade for Women’ reiterated the issue of FHHs and poverty. The ‘Beijing Platform for Action’ (1996 - 2001) had as its focus ‘women and poverty’, noting that:

One fourth of all households worldwide are headed by women and many other households are dependent on female income even where men are present. Female-maintained households are very often among the poorest because of wage discrimination, occupational segregation patterns in the labour market and other gender-based barriers. Family disintegration, population movements between urban and rural areas within countries, international migration, war and internal displacements are all factors contributing to the rise of female-headed households (United Nations 1995b:para 22).

In a variety of documents, there are detailed discussions about poor women which use the term ‘feminisation of poverty’ (see Buvinic 1993, Idris 1992:22, ILO 1996, Power 1993, UNDAW 2000a, UNDP 1995:36, World Bank 1995:18-20). These documents make regular calls to “review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty”

(UNDAW 1995:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Beijing/platform/poverty.htm>) and then go on to state the action to be taken is:

Formulate and implement, when necessary, specific economic, social, agricultural and related policies in support of female-headed households;

And:

Enable women to obtain affordable housing and access to land by, among other things, removing all obstacles to access, with special emphasis on meeting the needs of women, especially those living in poverty and female heads of households;

And:

Mobilize all parties involved in the development process, including academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and grass-roots and women's groups, to improve the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes directed towards the poorest and most disadvantaged groups of women, such as rural and indigenous women, female heads of household, young women and older women...(UNDAW 1995:<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Beijing/platform/poverty.htm>).

Many of the actions identified in the 'Beijing+5 Process and Beyond: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century' (UNDAW 2000b) document specify groups of women as their primary targets and indiscriminately include FHHs. These ideas can be seen in the documents that belong to many of the United Nations groups, such as, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). The same is also evident perusing both historical and current documents from other development agencies, for example, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). It is consistently stated that 'FHHs are poorer than MHHs', and when listing 'at risk' or 'vulnerable' groups, and therefore, 'target groups', FHHs are for the most part included. FHH as a category appears to be widely and arbitrarily mentioned in much of the development policy planning literature, with a particular focus on the alleviation of poverty. FHHs became a "proxy for women's poverty", and the undercurrent suggested that the alleviation of poverty for FHHs would fix poverty in the Third World (Chant 2003a:3).

The subject of FHHs has certainly stimulated controversy, and this seems surprising given the fact that the mother/child relationship encapsulates one of the most

fundamental kin relationships. Upon reaching adult status women are usually delegated to the space of being the primary caregiver because it is seen as a natural course of action, hence this controversy seems something of a paradox. Seeing that the status of FHHs could potentially tie women even more closely to child-rearing/home-making responsibilities “then why is there so much heated concern about a situation which in many respects epitomises a stereotypical ideal of womanhood?” (Chant 1997a:1).

Concern emerges not because the situation for many FHHs may be difficult; rather it is the fact they exist at all (Chant 2002:109). FHHs are “considered to be a recent aberration caused by declining moral standards” (Momsen 2002:145; also see Varley 1996), and the breakdown of the family provokes much anxiety in relation to potential impacts on children (Chant 2002:110, Moore 1994). Yet as noted at the beginning of this chapter, ethnographic accounts illustrate FHHs are not new. Momsen (2002:145-146) in citing the work of Barrow (1996, 1998) suggests that family instability should be understood in terms of being a flexible and adaptive response so as to “cope with life in a situation of economic deprivation” (Momsen 2002:146), however this does not occur.

Unfortunately, many people saw FHHs as needing to be managed as they were getting in the way of the greater good of development. This point is important to remember, because not all suggested development strategies or projects are actually in the best interests or meet the needs of FHHs. As noted previously, a broad review of development policy illustrates how FHHs have steadily become one of the most highlighted areas requiring development over the last few decades. There has been a steady increase in the global evidence available that specifically refers to FHHs, although this evidence does little more than reinforce the view that FHHs are single mothers with dependent children (Chant 2003a:48), this view stereotypes the position of women, “a definition of ‘woman’ which is crucially dependent on the concept of ‘mother’” (Moore cited in Varley 1996:515).

Statistics on female-headed households and links with poverty

As it was shown in *Chapter One*, FHHs and poverty have been unequivocally linked. In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, authors such as Tinker (1976)³⁸, Buvinic *et al.* (1978), and later Rosenhouse (1989) highlighted that FHHs around the world could be estimated to be 25 to 33 per cent of the Third World population, rising as high as a sixth of households in Third World countries. Others such as Momsen (1987:53) also began to contemplate the subject, making reference to studies by Nelson (1979) who reported FHHs to be 60-80 per cent in a squatter's settlement near Nairobi. After stating that "one third of households are headed by women", Levy (1992:96) also gives examples of urban areas of Latin America and parts of Africa where FHHs are 50 per cent or more. The United Nations (1995c) in their report: 'The World's Women 1995 Trends and Statistics' published figures of women heading households in Botswana to be 46 per cent, Swaziland to be 40 per cent, Zimbabwe sat at 33 per cent, Barbados at 44 per cent and Grenada at 43 per cent, with most arguing that these figures were rising³⁹. A number of authors have gone as far as saying that even though the numbers are high, FHHs are still under-recorded because of male bias (see Buvinic *et al.* 1978, Buvinic and Gupta 1997:260, Chaney 1984, Folbre 1991, Harris 1981, Moser 1989, O'Connell 1994, Sayne 1991, Tinker 1976, 1990, 1997, Youssef and Hetler 1983). Chant (1997a, 1997b), Kabeer (1994) and Momsen (2002) also note this rise but do so analytically. That is, they deconstruct the true meaning and value of statistics noting the various problems that arise with definitions, identification and comparisons.

Akinsola and Popovich (2002:766) have indicated an increase for both developing and industrialised countries, as do other authors (Brydon and Chant 1989:54, Chant 2002:109, United Nations 1995a). In the Western context the nuclear family can no longer be assumed (Brydon and Chant 1989:54, Momsen 2002:146), meaning that those who are concerned about the demise of the nuclear family and its supposed links to the moral decay of society can view these statistics and therefore panic.

Using the case of Botswana it is clear that statistics available on FHHs are very fluid. The United Nations (1995c) reported 46 per cent of urban households to be FHHs.

³⁸ Also see Tinker (1990:11).

³⁹ Also see Akinsola and Popovich (2002:761), Ministry of Labour, Guyana (2003:1), Moser (1992a:80), Motie (2000:1), National Commission on the Role Of Filipino Women (2006:6), Tuoane *et al.* (2001:1) and Whitehead and Bloom (1992:51) for accounts that FHHs are on the rise.

Meanwhile IFAD (1996) reported between 25 to 40 per cent FHHs for ethnic minorities and remote area dweller settlements in Botswana and up to 50 to 60 per cent rurally. Datta and McIlwaine (2000:45) suggest the need to be cautious about seeing statistics on FHHs as reliable, maintaining they fluctuate markedly due to migration issues, not only between countries but also between the urban and rural sector. A large proportion of FHHs in Botswana are temporary due to male migration. Female migration to the city has FHHs recorded in abundance, however many declare they belong to a wider family network that resides rurally (Datta and McIlwaine 2000:45). These authors also point out that in the case of Botswana, often urban FHHs are a stage in the development cycle and that they do not actually exist prior to migration. Others also cease to exist when men who reside externally return to retire or through redundancy. The variation in all of the figures scrutinised was huge and therefore should not provide rationale, or be the foundation that arguments for resources or policy are based or built upon. The problem with statistics is that official data often captures one section of society at a given time, and does little to account for other circumstances (Motie 2000:1).

An abundance of authors acknowledge that statistics that pertain to FHHs are problematic (Cupples 2002:29, Evans 1992:21, Jackson 1998:43-46, Ministry of Labour, Guyana 2003:1, Varley 1996:505-09). With reference to Nicaragua, “estimates vary too widely to be reliable and emphasis on female-headed households fails to acknowledge the fluidity of family life” (Cupples 2002:29). The Ministry of Labour, Guyana (2003:1) acknowledges that the kind of insights required about “women, families and the household cannot be captured by statistics alone, especially statistics presented in categories isolated from each other” (p.1).

Jackson (1998:44), Momsen (2002:147) and Varley (1996:505) believe statistics for FHHs have been talked up, probably to further support the argument for women specific development, and as already mentioned, as part of the new poverty agenda. Kibreab (2003:314-15) claims international and national NGOs have a tendency to talk up statistics on FHH, eliciting sympathy from donors thereby generating a more fruitful response when appealing for funds. By exaggerating the numbers of lone women with dependent children in turmoil, the host government in poor countries have a better chance of maximising the flow of resources. “Over time statistics assume the status of truth through repetition” (Kibreab 2003:315).

Today “the figure of one-third of all the world’s households being headed by women has become orthodoxy” (Momsen 2002:146; also see Chant 2003a, Moghadam 2005, Varley 1996:505). Yet in tracing the origins and trajectory of this orthodoxy, Momsen (2002) identifies that “no source for the figure is given, although Moser (1989) quotes Buvinic [*et al.*] (1978)” (p.46) [my insert]. This figure of ‘one third’ has now found its way into more recent documents, such as that of the United Nations (2007) (see <http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/habitat/background/bg6.asp>), with little real evidence to support the data being offered. In attempting to calculate what a more realistic global figure might be Momsen and Townsend came up with a figure of 18.5 per cent, which is obviously quite different from the current one-third (Momsen 2002:146).

Momsen (2002) also brings into question the idea that FHHs are increasing. Instead Momsen argues that the data, because it is incomplete, makes the assessment of change over time difficult. While there appears to be the generalised belief that FHHs are on the rise (see Buvinic 1990a, 1990b, Buvinic and Gupta 1997, Levy 1992:96), in analysing various figures from two very similar United Nations publications, Momsen (2002), concludes “rather than supporting a generalised trend towards increasing proportions of female-headed households, these figures appear to reflect national level political and economic changes and an instability of household headship over time” (p.147).

The implied growth of FHHs is very complex. Jackson (1998:44) maintains that changing definitions over time makes growth comparison over the years invalid, with others adding the real extent of the situation is not known because it is not being accurately deconstructed⁴⁰ (Buvinic and Gupta 1997:261, Chant 1997a:69, Datta and McIlwaine 2000:40, Moser and Levy 1986:4, Sen 1994:32-33, Townsend and Momsen 1987:53, Youssef and Hetler 1983:216). Whether FHHs are on the rise or not, Feldman (1992:1) observes women are certainly representative of household heads who have the sole responsibility for maintaining the household over a long period of time.

⁴⁰ Evans (1992:21-22) notes that there is an increase in knowledge about FHHs but these tend to be specialised studies or they focus on small sample households making generalisation difficult.

This lack of clarity around the FHHs data can be attributed to the fact that there are many different types of FHHs, as well as there being many differing reasons for their formation (Buvinic and Gupta 1997:261, Chant 1997a: 91-93, Datta and McIlwaine 2000:41, Momsen 1991:26). The factors that have lead to the formation of FHHs in developing countries range from phenomena such as gender differences in life expectancy, armed conflict, modernity/urbanisation, gender selective migration, gender differences in age at time of marriage, and male desertion. Thus the issues that FHHs are faced with remain diverse. Regardless of this obvious heterogeneity there still remains one extremely pervasive conviction, as already articulated at the beginning of this thesis and that is that FHHs are the ‘poorest of the poor’, hence female headship has become a “proxy for women’s poverty” (Chant 2003a:3). This point is also relevant for the developed world, as it has been suggested that globally single motherhood has been nominated to be the ‘new poverty paradigm’ (Thomas 1994; also see Chant 2003a:2).

Yet the belief that FHHs are the ‘poorest of the poor’ is often demonstrated by confusing examples. Jackson (1998:44) illustrates this in critiquing the World Bank’s (1993) report on Uganda entitled ‘Growing out of Poverty’⁴¹. Jackson (1998) in taking the statement “poorer households tend to be larger, have older and less educated households heads, and are more likely to be headed by a woman”, points out that this statement might be interpreted to mean “the poorest households tend to be headed by a woman, as opposed to a man” (p.44). However, what the evidence actually suggests is that the “poorest households are only slightly more likely than other households to be headed by a woman”, which has a different meaning altogether (Jackson 1998:44).

Varley (1996) observes that care must be taken to recognise diversity in vulnerability; together with the need to be diverse with targeting. Overall, Kibreab (2003) and Chant (1997a:41) are inclined to think that each case needs to taken with its own merits and be based on individual need which is understood in relation to a specific cultural context. Chant (2003a:64) warns purporting FHHs as poorest of the poor ignores lone father households, minimises the poverty of women and men in MHHs, and creates further stereotyping and negative discrimination (see Chant 2003a:64 for further discussions about the implications of constructing FHHs as the

⁴¹ See Kapour (1993) for this report.

poorest of the poor). Rather than taking the female headship and poverty orthodoxy at face value, a number of critical feminist writers have risen to challenge this unequivocal relationship, instead seeking to draw attention to the heterogeneity of FHH.

Challenging the orthodoxy: The heterogeneity of female-headed households

Defining and identifying female-headed households

Simplistically most international and national reports determine FHHs to be a unit where an adult woman, usually with children, assumes headship roles in the complete absence of the male head (Loi 2003:1, Quisimbung *et al.* 1995:7, Rosenhouse 1989:4, Varley 1996:506). Loi (2003:6) identifies that most empirical research that occurs around FHHs generally focuses on male absent FHHs. Therefore in the case of male migration a man is not considered to be completely absent because a man does not have to maintain continuous residence in the village to be a household head. What occurs is that the key elements of the husband's power remain unless the relationship ends permanently. With reference to intra-household decision-making women may therefore rely on absent men to make the decisions (Datta and McIlwaine 2000:40). Women with migrant husbands are often placed within a position that is more in line with the role of caretaker. Sweetman (1998:5) adds that in some instances being a FHH in this type of household can lead to much more stress, confusion and friction around decision-making.

While many women are also responsible for the day to day survival and heading of the household, they may never identify themselves as the household head especially in a formal process such as census (Chant 1997a:8, Gardner 1995:103-104). Instead, Youssef and Hetler (1983:216-23) suggest that being the primary breadwinner or decision-maker may be more useful indicators as to who the household head is. However, this approach is also problematic because of culturally specific ideology that identifies with men as household heads just because they are present, regardless of whether they are making decisions or earning income (Buvinic and Gupta 1993:11, Varley 1996:505). "Linking automatically with the male gender census indicators overlooks or underestimates women who may be in charge" (Hedman *et al.* 1996:64).

In search of clarity, Buvinic and Gupta (1997:260) and Mencher (1993:219) have suggested a number of more specific terms such as ‘female-maintained’, ‘female-led’, ‘mother-centred’, ‘single-parent’, or ‘male-absent’ that should be encompassed within the notion of FHHs. They argue that these terms may more accurately describe divergent family structures and situations, making it easier to distinguish between FHHs as residential units and female maintained families as kinship units. To expand further, women-maintained is where women have a key role in the household’s survival even when there is a man present (Buvinic and Gupta 1997:260, Chant 1997a:9, Mencher 1993:219). However, Cleves Mosse (1993:45) argues that use of these terms just stresses the point that regardless of having the responsibility for maintaining the household, women are rarely granted the same status, and therefore the same respect, rights or power of MHHs.

This recognition may be purposeful though because it may help identify FHHs who reside as a subfamily, within a greater family, which is male-headed. This point is important when considering the allocation of resources. FHHs within a patriarchal system of governance located in a greater family network, may have gender inequity issues as opposed to those FHHs who are maintained as a singular kinship unit (Chant 1997a:9-11, Datta and McIlwaine 2000:40-41). So as to capture this group, a different approach may need to be considered by those involved in planning strategies for development projects.

Offering a broader definition, the United Nations have sought to define FHHs as:

Women [who] are financially responsible for their families, who are the key decision makers and household managers, who manage household economies on behalf of an absent male, or who are the main economic contributors (United Nations 1995b:32).

Whilst certainly more encompassing, this definition still does little to recognise the fluidity of family life, or the idea of joint decision-making. It still assumes that one person has to be pinpointed as the head. The notion that two or more people can be responsible for the welfare of the household gets minimised (Varley 1996:505).

Types of female-headed households

FHHs as ‘female-maintained’, ‘female-led’, ‘mother-centred’, ‘single-parent’, or ‘male-absent’ are a divergent group. Chant (1997a, 2003a, 2003b) reports that

“differentiation occurs *inter alia*” and that “these differences can be eminently important in explaining how female headship does not automatically entail consignment to the category ‘poorest of the poor’” (Chant 2003b:18). Types of FHHs can also be separated into five categories: widowed, single, separated, divorced and de-facto. The first four categories are further grouped as *dejure* FHHs. These households can differ from de-facto in that *dejure* FHHs are households where there is no permanent male partner, meaning they may receive no economic support other than minuscule and/or irregular child care payments (Chant 1997a:15). For the legal norms of society the label *dejure* is applied (Motie 2000:1; see Chant 1997a:15, Youssef and Hetler 1983:232 for a deeper deconstruction of de-facto/*dejure*). De-facto households, meanwhile, may receive remittances, however it cannot be assumed that these are regular. This point will be elaborated on shortly. *Dejure* and de-facto female heads can be very different with respect to finances, power and rights (Chant 1997a:15, Schlyter 1989:16). Table 1 lists various scenarios for supposed FHHs in relation to *dejure*, de-facto and also the male present household.

Table 1: Supposed female-headed households

Male absent	Male present
1. Due to migration (de-facto) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Temporarily - Permanently Remittances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sends - Does not send or sends inadequately Power and decision-making authority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shares while absent and present - Dominates while present and absent - Relinquishes when absent but reinstates on return - Has little or none while present and absent 	Income generation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earns and contributes Earns but does not contribute Does not earn Power and decision-making authority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared Dominates Has little or none
2. The relationship terminates, either through death, separation/abandonment, or choice in relation to a same sex relationship (dejure) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child care support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides adequately - Does not provide or provides irregularly Social service support Widows benefit Food or housing subsidy 	

Source: Chant (1997a).

These scenarios can also be influenced by other arrangements, for example, whether the unit is part of a wider family unit, even though the immediate male member is absent or present. Chant (1997a:21-26) has expressed further groupings for FHHs, such as lone FHHs, single sex female only FHHs, female dominated (in that the only males are children) FHHs, grandmother headed FHHs, embedded FHHs or extended FHHs. In some cases there may be more than one adult in the household and extended generation FHHs are therefore clearly heterogeneous. Table 2 exposes the diverse types of FHH.

Table 2: Typology of female-headed households

Type	Brief description
Lone mother household	Mother with co-resident children
Female-headed extended household	Household comprising of a lone mother, children and other relatives, for example, a grandmother or an aunt
Lone female household	Woman living alone (usually elderly)
Single-sex/female only household	Woman living with other woman (female relatives or friends)
Lesbian household	Woman living with a female sexual partner
Female dominate/predominant household	Household headed by a woman, where although males may be present, they are only junior males with less power and authority than adult females
Grandmother-headed household	Grandmother and her grandchildren, but without an intermediate generation
Embedded female headed unit	Unit comprises of a young mother and her children contained within a large household (usually that of parents). Sometimes referred to as female-headed sub-family
Female-financed/maintained	Women living with a partner but he is not contributing financially, or he has willingly taken on the role of primary caregiver and housekeeper

Source: Chant (2003d:171).

As well as FHH typology, a number of other differentiating factors can determine the situation and position of FHHs. These are class position, owning property or having the ability and resources to own property, stage in life course, level of formal education and qualifications, employment status, income earning capacity, whether they are the sole income generator and having access to fringe benefits, for example, childcare or housing subsidies. Other relevant issues concerning the condition and position of FHHs are whether they are receiving state support, are de-facto or de-jure are residing in the rural or urban setting, their access to social networks and support systems, whether they are receiving remittances, receiving maintenance or financial support from the father, level of power and decision-making within the household and indeed their position within their society, ethnicity or race. All too often FHHs are understood to be lone mothers, with dependents who are generally female, with

little consideration for the above differentiating factors other than to assume they are not present (Chant 1997a).

Reasons why female-headed households emerge

There are various reasons as to why FHHs emerge as will be shown in Table 3. While a number of the reasons listed in the table may be beyond the control of the woman, for example, war, the death of a spouse which leaves a woman widowed, there are other rationale as to why FHHs might emerge. Rather than assuming that FHHs always emerge out of tragedy or abandonment they may emerge because there are now systems and processes in place to better enable and support women. For example, family and divorce legislation, legislation surrounding property rights and the availability of welfare, can all play a part determining whether a woman chooses to leave a spouse. Seeking to enhance personal and family wellbeing and with better employment prospects, the availability of educational and training opportunities and social and legal provisions, many women have made what they perceive to be an informed choice to enhance their lifestyle (Baden 1999:13; also see Chant 2006:11).

Because the issue of migration is so important to the Samoan context this point will now be elaborated on.

Female-headed households resulting from migration

Migration can change surrounding ideology and living circumstances markedly, having significant effects on those who do not migrate (Shakman 1978:5). FHHs that emerge from the process of migration are generally labelled de-facto because in theory the husband continues to have an on-going relationship with the household, sending remittances back home. Even if this relationship is perhaps tokenism and the remittances intermittent, the point is, the male exists (Motie 2000:1). In this instance, the wife is usually responsible for the day to day decision-making and running of the household. In societies where women as a gender are subordinate the absence of a husband can definitely leave women worse off. Women may find they are unable to mobilise resources locally, making them even more dependent on men, yet the remittances that they are depending on, may be insufficient and delivered unreliably (Cornia *et al.* cited in Elson 1992:41). In some instances, migration appears to be a polite term for desertion and should be seen as a male survival strategy rather than a female or household survival strategy (Elson 1992:41).

Table 3: Reasons why female-headed households emerge

<i>Life expectancy of women is greater</i> Due to war and disease; also in terms of marrying older men (see Chant 1997a:91-92, 94-95)
<i>Culture</i> Diverse marriage practices and kinship and residence arrangements (see Peters 1995)
<i>Marriage breakdown</i> Increased divorce/separation due to abandonment or as instigated by the woman (see Duffy 1997, Loi 2003, Motie 2000:2, Posel 2001:659)
<i>Single-motherhood</i> Non-marital fertility or non-marriage (see Momsen 2002:145, Varley 1996:505) Life choice that women make as a means for securing control over their lives and resources (see Chant 1985, Posel 2001)
<i>War</i> Armed conflict - widowhood or separation and abandonment (see Datta and McIllwaine 2000:42, Fawzi-El-Solh 2001) Refugee populations (see Apeadu 1997)
<i>Relationships</i> Same sex (see Mohanty 1988)
<i>Escaping</i> Patriarchy (see Chant 1997a:40, Gibson-Graham 1997:313, Tinker 1990:11) Violence (see Datta and McIllwaine 2000:42)
<i>Husband present</i> Woman as the identified household head (see Loi 2003, Pineda 2000)
<i>Changing family structure</i> Erosion of extended family system and traditional support systems (see Akinsola and Popovich 2002:762, Buvinic and Gupta 1997:3)
<i>Modernity, urbanisation, migration</i> Women as independent earners or labour force participation (see Moghadam 1994) Gender selective migration (see Chant 1992, Loi 2003, Momsen 2002:145) For specifically male out labour migration (see Onyango <i>et al.</i> 1994)

Although de-facto FHHs may intend to be a “transitory phenomena in the life cycle of families” (Buvinic and Gupta 1997:260), it often turns out to be longer-term. This can pose many problems if a woman remains as the caretaker during this extended time, but is unable to make decisions that may impact markedly on the home

situation, for example, the selling or buying of assets, or how to utilise land. This transitory time is also problematic if FHHs are not included in development projects because they are seen to be merely bidding time until the male member of their family returns, or they are assumed to be financially secure because of remittances. It can never be assumed that remittances are forthcoming. As illustrated by Fairbairn-Dunlop (1994) who recounts a Samoan woman's migration experience:

In 10 years we have gone from being a family of 8 children, me and my husband, to being a family of me, my 3 daughters – one who is a widow with 4 children who has just remarried – and a husband in the States, who may come back. He doesn't make enough money to send. In fact he often asks me to send money to him. I can't really say migration has been good for us as family (p.175).

She goes on to add "Everybody thinks that because we have someone 'outside' we have plenty of money... we hardly get any money from the outside" (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1994:176).

Ahlburg and Brown (1998:125) go on to point out, those who plan to return home send higher remittances. For many, rather than migration being a haphazard approach to self-survival, Gailey (cited in Connell and Conway 2000:59) suggests that many families often deliberate long and hard about which family member will not only do well overseas but will be reliable in sending remittances. They further suggest that in FHHs where a male is overseas and is remitting the household tends to be relatively well off. This situation they argue, is quite different to "similar households in developed countries" (Connell and Conway 2000:60).

Therefore, to encapsulate the content of Tables 1, 2 and 3, not only are FHHs very diverse in their typology and the rationale as to why they emerge in the first place, they are also extremely diverse in relation to the issues that they may be confronted with. The following discussion seeks to consider critically what some of these issues may be.

Issues confronting female-headed households

The types of FHH, the variables that have led to their formation, as well as life and cultural circumstances of members, all play a big part in determining what some of the issues for FHHs may be. One such issue is stigma and discrimination.

Stigma and discrimination

Erving Goffman (1963) provided one of the first formal analyses of the experience of stigma and his core theme was about the devaluation of a stereotype. Stigma is about having a set of assumptions, usually untrue, held about your situation. Stigma attaches to the person and discrimination results from the actions of others. Discrimination can occur negatively or positively. It has been claimed that FHHs experience both stigma and negative discrimination (BRIDGE 2001:3, Oliver 1996:52-53), such as being denied access to loans, or through application of a moral lens. To explain this idea of negative discrimination through application of a moral lens further, FHHs, especially in the West, have been held responsible in part for the demise of society. FHHs have been accused of maternal neglect and providing inadequate discipline and poor role modelling in terms of their children. They get blamed for creating living conditions which foster truancy, crime or teenage pregnancy, thus perpetuating the cycle of deprivation. The provision of state welfare for single mothers in the Western context is often quoted as enticing young girls to have babies.

Drawing on the case study of Iran, FHHs face very negative attitudes towards themselves and their children. A well-educated FHH complains that her “neighbour’s improper behaviour and the officials’ negative attitudes give my children a sense of being orphans” (Motie 2000:3). In Iran FHHs are neither recognised legally, nor by society (Motie 2000:2). Looking at the case of Guatemala, Datta and McIlwaine (2000:43-44) revealed FHHs were seen in a negative light by both men and women. Many people felt that FHHs were unable to care for their children and were immoral. FHHs were blamed for the increasing levels of crime and violence, and the “perverse socialisation of children” (Datta and McIlwaine 2000:44; also see Afshar 1991:5, Arroba 1996:11, Moser 1992a:108-09, Pineda 2000:74, Varley 1996:513). Stigma attached to FHHs is underpinned by the notion that motherhood must occur within marriage, and these ideas are perpetuated by communities, the state and the church (Arroba 1996:11, Chant 2003a:4, Datta and McIlwaine 2000:41).

The idea that households without male heads are ‘other’ remains pervasive (Arroba 1996:8, Datta and McIlwaine 2000:44, Young 2006). The stigma and the resulting negative discrimination can interfere with women’s lives markedly because women are unable to be honest about their household living arrangements, such as being a

divorcee, due to the fear of being harmed or disadvantaged in some way. There are many experiences that result from discrimination. Some have practical implications, like being denied access to housing. As Buvinic (1990a:2) recounts, in the Latin American region housing policies seek to discourage renters in favour of housing ownership. However, FHHs do not have the means to buy therefore they usually end up renting and in doing so they pay very high rents. (Also see Moser 1992b:79-80 in relation to the exclusion of FHHs from housing development schemes). Yet housing is not the only issue. It appears that FHHs are often denied access to finance services, employment, or the opportunity to generate income, or they are refused entry to places (see Levy 1992:96 in relation to transportation not meeting the needs of FHHs).

There is also the psychological burden many FHHs face, such as being shunned by family, denied social dignity or being denied relationships. Stigma and negative discrimination can enforce segregation, promote outsider syndrome and dehumanise people. Overall, FHHs experiencing stigma and negative discrimination can find their ability to participate in society or their contribution is limited or restricted. They may find themselves in situations where their opinions are not valued. As such they can become socially isolated or marginalised as individuals or as a social group.

However, even though discrimination can occur negatively, it can also occur positively. FHHs can be discriminated against in positive ways, such as being targeted by development projects because they are seen to be the most in need, or to have special needs. As stated by the IFAD (2000) “projects sometimes find it more expedient to target FHHs rather than women as individuals within their families or local institutions” (p.19). This issue of targeting will be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter.

Double day

Double day is understood to mean that women while doing a full day's work in terms of the activities required to run and maintain a household, also engage in wage labour or some sort of income generation, which constitutes another day's work. Thus, it is considered that many women carry the burden of a double day. This is especially so for FHHs (Fuwa 2000:1536, Moser 1989:1801, Perez-Aleman 1992:48-49, Rosenhouse 1989:39):

Women household heads are typically facing the zero sum game or the double burden. They have no option but to work in the market place because they don't have anybody to generate income and they usually have nobody to take care of children (Buvinic 1990a:2).

They are time poor and consume smaller amounts of leisure time in order to cope with both income generating activities and household chores (Feridun 2005:10).

However, Hartmann (1981) in her paper on housework sees a house with a female head in quite the opposite light. She points out that women living without men do less housework than women living with men, regardless of whether they do or do not have children. Thus, she argues that the presence of men in the household seems to create about eight hours of additional housework for women per week (p.383). Despite women's increasing contribution to income generation, on the whole men have not increased their contribution to domestic work in the household. Women's workload has increase because they have taken on more, not because a man is absent (Hartmann 1981). To assume an increased burden for FHHs is therefore incorrect. It can never be assumed that men are assisting with tasks in the household anyway.

Momsen (1991:42) suggests the size and make up of the household provide better indicators when determining what women's household workload will be. For women in FHHs, especially those that are in extended households, the concept of sharing tasks is more evident mainly because of a higher level of female autonomy. There is also strong evidence to suggest that sons in FHHs contribute more willingly than they do in MHHs (Chant 1997c:157).

Dependency ratio, sole earners and the cycle of disadvantage

Dependency ratios in FHHs are also thought to be higher (Buvinic and Gupta 1993:4, Fuwa 2000:1535, IFAD 2007). It has been stated that although families are smaller, in that they have less children, there are fewer earning adults (Buvinic and Gupta 1997:264-67). Rosenhouse (1989:39) raises the idea that FHHs are often sole or major earners within a household. Again this rides on the assumption that men's income is contributed back into the household or the family (Engle 1997).

It is also argued that this level of dependency, coupled with a lack of childcare support, either formally as in having access to or affording childcare, or informally as

in having familial support, restricts the movements of FHHs and curbs employment options (Buvinic 1990a; see also Moghadam 2005:7). However, many authors have also disputed this point arguing that not all FHHs have young children (Varley 1996, Chant 1997b). Women with young children may also reside within a larger family as a subfamily, and are therefore not left to solely provide for or care for their children (Momsen 2002:148). Rather the responsibility of childcare becomes that of the wider family network (Chant 1991:192, Engle 1997:34, Rosenhouse 1989:35, Varley 1996:512-13). Varley (1996:513) notes that in some cases these embedded FHHs may not be seen to count as FHHs.

Depending on the lifecycle of the household, FHHs may well have older children who are helping with household chores or generating income, which also negates that sole earner idea (Feridun 2005:9). However, depending heavily on contributions from children is seen in a negative light as it is argued to perpetuate “intergenerational transmission of disadvantages” (Youssef and Hetler 1983:240). Regardless:

the belief that female-headed households tend to be poorer based on their common attributes of higher dependency ratios and generally lower incomes, combined with time pressures exerted by the ‘double day’, is still widely held (Momsen 2002:148).

Much of the discussion above demonstrates how arbitrary the label FHHs is, and confirms the point that assumptions cannot be exclusively drawn in relation to a label. Indeed false or incorrect assumptions can be very damaging. FHHs are often placed in a lose-lose situation, because whatever survival strategies they put in place, such as solely supporting and caring for children versus their children participating in household upkeep and income generation, there is a tendency to view the selected survival strategy in a negative light.

Inadequate provision of support

This discrimination can also be observed in the way that many FHHs receive limited or no support from the state (Bibars 2001:86). With reference to FHHs in Egypt, “The state has not provided women with an institutional alternative to the male provider” (Bibars 2001:86). In referring to Mexico, Engles (1997) reports that it has been quite difficult for women to gain state help to secure child support from fathers:

Desertion is necessary in order to seek an award for child support, but is not recognised by law if the father returns within six months. This means a man can come and go for years as long as he spends one night at home every six months (p.35).

Moreover, if a father chooses to stop paying it is up to the mother to legally pursue the case (Engles 1997:35). Limited financial support from absent fathers towards FHHs is well noted (Budowski and Rosero-Bixby 2003, Chant 1997a:103), with many men choosing not to recognise children from prior relationships.

Men tend to regard family as applying only to the women and children with whom they are currently residing or involved with, and distance themselves from the offspring of previous relationships (Chant 2003c:10).

Not only do women not receive legal child support, in some instances, they do not seek it out because of unestablished paternity. In questioning lone mothers in Costa Rica about why they had never sought to establish the paternity of their children, Budowski and Rosero-Bixby (2003) highlighted passive or active desertion or abandonment of responsibilities as the rationale. They go on to argue that:

Paternity establishment is a crucial step for claiming child support legally. It symbolizes a formal establishment of the man's relationship towards the child from which it is difficult to withdraw (Budowski and Rosero-Bixby 2003:239).

Gender inequities

It is also argued that many of the difficulties that FHHs may experience come from being women. Women face discrimination in the labour market, with lesser job stature and lower earnings (Fuwa 2000:1536), and few fringe benefits such as sick pay (Chant 2003a:8). Women may have limited childcare choices because of availability, affordability or quality of childcare (Oliver 1996:52-53). These issues may compound the situation of FHHs. The idea that many women in developing countries are employed within the informal sector (Merrick and Schimink 1983:257) is noted as also having relevance for FHHs.

FHHs are also perceived to experience inequalities with regard to land access, property rights and other material assets (Buvinic and Gupta 1997:265). Primarily this all equates to an increased risk of being poor. When the prior mentioned issues, such as having a higher dependency ratio, come into play, it is easy to see how and

why many have argued there to be an explicit relationship between female headship and disadvantage.

To summarise, seeking to define FHH as a singular analytical concept is not simple. Not only because of a plethora of meaning that is associated with the terms household and headship but as illustrated in Tables 1-3, FHHs are obviously diverse. Buvinic and Gupta (cited in Datta and McIlwaine 2000) point out “the fact that there is no universal definition has lead some to question as to whether it [FHH] is a useful concept at all” (p.40). Feminist post-development ideas certainly contest the notion that any definitions should be universally applicable, instead, it has been argued that definitions should be culturally specific, locally defined and inclusive of particulars so as to recognise difference and diversity. Thus, the issue is not so much that a universally applicable definition of FHHs needs to be found, but that a definition of FHHs, regardless of particulars, gets applied universally regardless. According to hegemonic development discourse FHHs are generally seen to be a homogenous category and the label FHH is used in a way that suggests FHHs are single mothers with dependent children (Varley 1996:512-13).

Regardless of the clearly demonstrated heterogeneity, and lack of clarity about what the term FHHs means or whether it can be empirically confirmed (BRIDGE 2001:1), the term has been applied indiscriminately in a variety of context, meaning “debates around them have often been framed within narrow parameters” (Chant 1997a:2). This is especially notable when strategies for development are offered. Thus the pervasiveness of the orthodoxy in development policy and practice is also noted.

While many have argued against framing FHHs in this narrow way, as it can leave FHHs under-represented in the development process (Buvinic and Gupta 1997:261, Datta and McIlwaine 2000:40, Youssef and Hetler 1983:216) or misrepresented (Chant 1997a:2, Jackson 1998:46, Varley 1996:505), it is noted there are also certain ramifications that need to be considered when seeking to disrupt this pervasive orthodoxy.

A pervasive orthodoxy: The ramifications of challenging these stereotypes

Throughout the previous discussions that explored the ways in which household, headship and FHHs have been defined and identified, and which also sought to unpack the heterogeneity and problematisation of FHHs, a number of challenges to the construction of FHHs as the ‘poorest of the poor’ have been introduced. To recap, because the concepts of household, headship and FHH are not static, but are subjective, multifaceted, fluid, adaptive, self-determining and resourceful, it can not be assumed that female headship is an indication of poverty, especially because poverty is more than economics, it is also a subjective, multi-dimensional concept. Moreover, the lack of ‘fit’ with quantitative data in relation to incomes, consumption and other indicators of wellbeing, the heterogeneity of FHHs in relation to types, typology, reasons why they emerge and what their various, yet diverse issues or concerns are, also brings rise to challenges to this stereotype of ‘poorest of the poor’ (Chant 2003a:58). Regardless of these challenges, the FHHs and the feminisation of poverty status quo continues to be maintained.

To date, there are two distinct theoretical camps; those who articulate the FHH and poverty connection from a critical feminist perspective (see Chant 1997a, 1997b, 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2006, Grinspin 2004, Jackson 1998, Kibreab 2003, Momsen 1991, 2002, Peters 1995 and Varley 1996) and the bilateral/multilateral development actors, and various NGOs, who situate the FHH and poverty connection within an antipoverty agenda (see ADB 1999:12, The American University of Cairo *et al.* 2007, www.fao.org).

The position and situation of FHHs in relation to poverty has been most thoroughly argued, with critical feminism arguing soundly that FHH cannot be unequivocally equated with poverty. Indeed in terms of the existing FHH literature, that is those who write from a critical feminist perceptive, there are very few limitations per se. Yet, development agencies have continued to quantifiably promote, fund, and target the poverty of FHHs, obviously seeking to stick with their own literature and ideas rather than those that offer a much more analytical perspective. As noted before development agencies have a tendency to prioritise policy over research. Facts and generalisations are favoured. “Appreciation of the many variables and their complex interrelationship... is often beyond the capacity of most development agencies”

(Pigg 1992:504). Hence, “Much policy making has been informed by the idea of the feminisation of poverty” (Catatay 1998:2; also see BRIDGE 1995, 2001).

Some assumptions can therefore be made about why the development industry and donor agencies appear not to be listening to scholars who view FHHs more critically, and as to why these scholars are stuck between ‘a rock and a hard place’ and the status quo gets maintained. Ideas such as securing resources for women’s development and keeping gender on the table get prioritised. Because targeted programmes “serves neo-liberal agendas for efficiency and the substitution of universal social programmes” (Chant 2003a:64), the development industry is unwilling or incapable of the philosophical mindset shift that is required for “revisiting, deconstructing and reformulating the concept of feminisation of poverty” (Chant 2003a:65). The issue of targeting is often cited as the best approach especially when funding is limited, however as Chant observes, FHHs targeted programmes to date:

do not seem to have had appreciable benefits in respect of raising women’s status, social legitimacy and wellbeing, and/or diminishing inequities in gender or household structures (Chant 2003a:64).

While on one hand, securing resources for women’s development and keeping gender under the spotlight are fundamental, a fact that neither those from the development industry nor critical feminism want to see change, on the other hand the targeting debate has become a bit like a cat chasing its tail because the broader global political and economic structures that perpetuate poverty remain unchallenged and unchanged. As the situation currently stands this approach is limited in addressing gender inequity and inequity in relation to the First and Third World. This approach is also problematic because it works from the assumption that women of higher socio-economic status in the Third World do not warrant attention, and neither do poor men nor women with partners who are living a life of deprivation.

The development industry needs to commit to innovative ways of approaching development so as to make genuine improvements to people’s lives and their wellbeing. Instead of targeting and funding more of the same, FHHs need to be seen as a group with rights rather than just a group in need. Yet, as Chant (2003a) also observes there is a need to progress with caution, as disrupting the stereotype that

FHHs are the 'poorest of the poor' is not without implications. Disruption may inadvertently suggest that women as lone mothers are no longer deserving. This also comes with the expectation that recognition will also be given to women in MHHs as potentially poor, which in effect calls for engaging with men, fatherhood and gender relations – most of which has been placed in the 'too-hard-basket' because of resource implications and a "lack of expertise in areas such as GAD for men" (Chant 2003a:65).

Conclusions

In conclusion, the household and headship means different things to different people, hence definitions are complex and varied; they cannot be simply and unequivocally defined or compared. Household and headship are also cultural constructs therefore cross-cultural application in most instances may not be appropriate. While authors such as Chant (1997a:5) have warned about the potential pitfalls of deploying definitions such as household and headship uncritically, on reviewing the literature this warning is generally not heeded.

This chapter has identified a number of factors that need to be considered when thinking about the household and headship of the household or the family, and if the concept of household head is to make any real contribution to policy then indicators of headship must be constructed to reflect that facet of the concept under scrutiny. It is absolutely paramount that head of household is articulated so as to suit the purpose of the study or policy at hand (Rosenhouse 1989). Each case should be taken on its own merits (Varley 1996:506), acknowledging that more than one person can be responsible for the welfare of the household or family (Varley 1996:509). It is also recognised that headship and the household/family, understood as being both a social and spatial concept, could be potentially fluid and may move seamlessly from that of the immediate family/household to that of the wider family network, with the extended family being the community, and the community being made up of the extended family (Puketapu 2002).

As this chapter has shown, because of the pitfalls in defining and identifying household and headship, FHHs have also be defined within narrow parameters, usually as single mothers with dependent children, thus the position and condition of FHHs has frequently been misrepresented. The various theoretical debates about

FHHs are generally underpinned by socially constructed ideas about the family, motherhood and parenting, with the suggestion that the rights, welfare and future of children are compromised in FHHs. Many writers have expressed concern about the social, physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing of children raised in FHHs, even to the point that FHHs as single mothers have been accused as being partly responsible for the demise of society and growing rates of privation, because they perpetuate a pattern of deprivation and neglect. Overall, there is concern expressed for the breakdown of the family unit, the growing numbers of FHHs, and the feminisation of poverty. Conceptualisations of FHH for the most part are essentialist.

Seeing household and headship as appropriate units for analysing women's poverty, or for identifying the poverty of FHHs remains problematic because women's poverty is more than the sum of the household and the household head. Rather women's poverty must be located, and understood in relation to their wider cultural, socio-economic and political context. While the exploration of women's subordination in gender relations is extremely important, so too is the need for seeing the potentials that exist whereby women are able to successfully run their lives. It is only through looking outside the category of FHH that this will occur.

Chapter Five: The Research Strategy and Fieldwork

Constructing a body of thought, much like building a Samoan *fale* (house), has significance in itself, but it must first and foremost be of use to the community it is designed for. It must provide shelter from the outside elements and bring comfort to those inside. It must not shut out the world but be able to invite the world in, on its own terms. In short, a body of Pacific thought should contribute to the establishment or affirmation of Pacific philosophy and ethic – a set of applicable concepts and values to guide interaction within countries, within the region and the rest of the world. The ethic must be acknowledged, understood, and respected by all who interact with Pacific Island communities (Huffer and Qalo 2004:89).

Introduction

Keeping the above quote in mind, this chapter commences by articulating the underpinnings of this research. In discussing the research conceptually, I draw on Pacific thought, making some explicit links to Samoan research principles. I also explore ideas of insider-outsider issues, positionality and reflexivity, which are fundamental concepts in Pacific/Samoan research. Linkages will also be made with feminist research approaches. My intention in exploring Pacific/Samoan/feminist research principles is to elucidate certain influential aspects that have directed the methodological approach of this research. Making clear some of the intersects is also pertinent because as noted in the *Chapter Three*, a feminist post-development framework argues that gender is not to be privileged over class, or ethnicity, therefore feminist research principles are not considered to be more privileged than culturally relevant research concepts.

The actual experience and practicalities of planning and doing the research are then presented. The chapter progresses by discussing the pre-fieldwork issues of selecting Samoa as the fieldwork site, whether or not to take my children on fieldwork, and gaining ethical approval. In terms of doing the fieldwork, the chapter presents the process that occurred as I orientated myself to the field, how I sought to establish trusting relationships and work within Samoan systems. The pilot study, selection of the setting and the participants, the collecting of the data and returning home are also discussed. The chapter concludes by explaining how the data analysis was conducted and identifies what some of the research limitations are.

Conceptualising the fieldwork

The Pacific and fa'asamoa

In social sciences there has been much dispute “over method, meanings and what constitutes good research” (Thaman 2003:10) and for the most part, there remains an “ignorance or dismissal of” ‘Pacific thought’ in academia⁴² (Huffer and Qalo 2004:87). This is compounded by the fact that there is also a lack of consensus, and some have said coherency, about what ‘Pacific identity’ and therefore ‘Pacific thought’ specifically is (Sanga 2004:43). The “development of a substantial regional identity has not occurred, because while fishing for the elusive school of tuna, we have lost sight of the ocean that surrounds and sustains us” (Hau’ofa 1998:392). As mentioned in *Chapter Three*, in steering clear of essentialism, ahistoricity and false generalisations, many have also fallen into the trap of false differences.

Accordingly, in attempting to articulate Pacific thought it is noted that the “voices are plural”, reflecting the totality of the region, and while concepts from one society do not always fit with another, there still exist many similarities which may in fact constitute a Pacific body of knowledge⁴³ (Huffer and Qalo 2004:89). In support of this, Sanga (2004) concedes, ‘Pacific thought’ is not so much a singular body of thought rather it is “paradigmatic”, and most certainly has “a set of philosophical orientations” (p.43). Drawing on Pacific research as explained by Sanga (2004), ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology will now be discussed.

Firstly, ontologically the social world of Pacific people is intangible and internal to their cognition. Therefore, people use concepts and names to explain their reality. Reality is subjective to the context and the people, inclusive of social, spiritual and cultural spheres. Ideas about experience, localism, and particularism in relation to time and space are pertinent:

⁴² Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001) are just two amongst many who suggest that there is also a worldwide movement by indigenous groups seeking to validate their ways of knowing and being in the world.

⁴³ It also needs to be noted that while some may believe the entire notion of ‘Pacific thought’ or a ‘Pacific identity’ is essentialist, Hau’ofa (1998) has suggested that “our diverse loyalists are much too strong for a regional identity ever to erase them. Besides, our diversity is necessary for the struggle against the homogenising forces of the global juggernaut...the regional identity that I am concerned with is something that is additional to our other identities that we already have, or will develop in the future, something that should serve to enrich our other selves” (p.393).

‘Reality’, in this instance, is what people ‘make of it’. It changes. It includes other realities. It embraces change, introductions and trends and makes these its own (Sanga 2004:44).

From an epistemological perspective, Pacific research supports that people know or understand their social reality in a way that assumes knowledge to be relativist, particular and inseparable from the context and its peoples. “The way to explain, know and understand is by using constructs, frames and metaphors that are intelligible to that knowledge” (Sanga 2004:45). The particular ways of framing and passing on knowledge are fundamentally important.

Tamasese *et al.* (1997) have argued that the Samoan way of viewing the world means that they see their world holistically and communicate this through the telling of stories. The interconnectedness of the Samoan worldview is conveyed through language and stories, which are then woven together. Therefore a holistic Samoan view needs to incorporate three perspectives. Firstly, the perspective of the person at the top of the mountain. Secondly, the perspective of the person at the top of the tree and thirdly, the perspective of the person in the canoe who is close to the school of fish. When considering any major issue the three perspectives are equally necessary. The person in the canoe may not have the long view of the person on the mountain or the person in the tree, but nonetheless their opinion is still of value because they are closer to the school of fish. Thus a range of views is always necessary and any less than three may not constitute a perspective (Tamasese *et al.* 1997:1).

This point highlighted how necessary it was to have the views of not only FHHs but of men, of other women, and the key informants, as well as secondary sources. All of these perspectives are equally necessary. This point also highlighted it would be important to use a number of research methods, because it is this that would produce multilayered, complex, and diverse information (see Dupuis and Neale 1998:121 who make this point in relation to feminist research).

As mentioned above, Pacific people use descriptions, imagery, metaphors or proverbs that are integral to their way of life and life practices to explain their world or express their place in their world (Sanga 2004:44; also see Schultz 1985, Swain 1999:79):

E tele a'a o le tagata i lō le lā'au. Ole tagata ma lona 'āiga o le tagata ma lona fa'asinomaga. *The Samoan language is full of expressions; it is this that denotes the cultural aspects of our fa'ā or fa'asinomaga (connections and relationships)* (Moelagi: Business woman and High chief, Nov 2004).

In communicating and transmitting information of importance, the Samoan language/conversation can become less direct, tending towards an illusive style (Tamasese *et al.* 1997:13). Ideas and answers may therefore be camouflaged or, presented as riddles, stories and/or proverbs (Schultz 1985).

I was therefore very mindful of the ways in which the participants may give me their answers, knowing I might need to unpack what was being said or stated. For example, when asking about headship in the household and the family, on a couple of occasions I got discussions about genealogy and service. The following quote demonstrates this point:

Headship is first and foremost about service, about providing. It is about who is rendering to whom, because the way to headship is through service. You must prove yourself, serve your family and your village and your time will come. O le ala i le pule o le tautua (The way to authority is through service). Before you can even think about headship you must be asking yourself what has come before this, what has come before this person...ask yourself who has been rendering who (Josef: Elderly matai, Nov 2004).

It was essential for me to not just consider the words, but to also focus on the fact that what was being said involves more than words (Finnegan 1992). An important facet to Samoan communication is body language as it is this that contextualises and gives meaning to the message (Tamasese *et al.* 1997:14). An example of indirect communication was that I found generally Samoan people were uncomfortable in saying directly that they could not help me or in saying no, rather they would tell me to come back later. I learnt to accept this, understanding if I had not progressed after a few visits that it would be better to terminate the request so as to save face for all involved.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests Samoan people may try to give you the answer they believe you are looking for or the answer that will please you (see Dunlop 1999 who makes this point also). The notion of *ia gata ai i totonu o fale nei le mea ua tula'i mai* (what has happened or has arisen must be kept and restricted within this house) was also something to be mindful of. This point connects well with the idea that people

can gate keep by telling only what they want known. This point will be expanded on later in the chapter.

Sanga's (2004:46-47) Pacific research paradigm understands axiology to mean that the research is absolutely value-laden, thus the researcher, the participants, the conceptual framework utilised, the context, and the methodology all influence the research. In keeping with post-ideologies that were identified in *Chapter Three*, the findings of the research will be "value-laden, open to context and representative of multiple meanings" (Sanga 2004:47). As noted in *Chapter Three*, truth is value-bound, because it is historically, socially and spatially situated. Because reality is contested, truth and knowledge are partial and tentative. Commonalities between post-ideologies and discourses of Pacific research are therefore evident.

When engaging in research with Samoans it is important to understand what values, ideas or beliefs are important. According to Mulitalo-Lauta (1998, 2000) having an understanding of *fa'asamoa*, and incorporating the components of the 'Samoan heart', 'Samoan way' and 'protocols and values' are fundamental to culturally safe research. These components will be described in detail in *Chapter Seven*, but for now this can be understood as:

Ways of describing knowledge, explaining and reporting it must be those that allow for backgrounds, multiple realities, process and contextual protocols to be captured (Sanga 2004:47).

Filipo (2004:179) talks about employing a research process for Samoans which is based on *fa'aaloalo* (respect) towards participants, as it is this that will ensure they have a voice; it is also this that will ensure relationships are formed. Knowing ones place and showing humility and respect in relation to rank are fundamental. The act of service, offering service or *fa'alavelave* can be considered a sign of showing thankfulness and appreciation. In line with *fa'asamoa*, expectations and cultural practices such as *feagaiga* (code of conduct), *alofa* (compassion), *lotu* (religion), *amino kerisiano* (Christian behaviour), *maualalo* (humility) and *momoli* (provide assistance/express solidarity) are fundamental to the research process. These were concepts that helped me to establish a way of relating with the participants and working as a researcher.

Insider-outsider issues

While some dominant approaches to research assume that research by outsiders can and should observe without becoming part of the research (Tuhiwai Smith 1999:137), as I have noted this is not always possible, and neither is it desirable, especially as it is not congruent with Pacific thought. When undertaking research in a cross-cultural context, active acknowledgement of insider/outsider issues and their potential impacts are extremely important.

Because of the dubious history that Western researchers have had in researching so-called ‘other’, I thought deeply about my decision to undertake research outside my own cultural context and my position as an outsider. Rather than seeking to just focus on the harmful aspects of cross-cultural research it is also important to acknowledge some positive aspects. Cross-cultural research is valuable in that it unpacks, interprets, seeks to understand, builds alliances and offers diverse perspectives about differing realities. Cross-cultural research can also be a journey of enlightenment for the researcher and provide fresh perspectives on development and other concerns. “A lack of cross-cultural research impedes our understanding of complex development issues” (Reinharz cited in Scheyvens and Storey 2003:6)⁴⁴.

To assume that ‘insiders’ automatically have a more sophisticated and appropriate approach to understanding social reality in their society is to fall into the fallacy of Third Worldism, and a potential reactionary relativism (Sidaway cited in Scheyvens and Storey 2003:4).

As Tuhiwai Smith (1999) points out, even those from the same cultural context face outsider issues, “there are both multiple ways of being an insider and an outsider in indigenous contexts” (p.137), based on level of education, socio-economic or marital status⁴⁵. In terms of this research whilst I am an outsider because I am not Samoan, as I am a mother, a nurse, Catholic, and a student I had some commonalities that people could and would connect with. These commonalties will be discussed in more detail as I consider the issue of positionality.

⁴⁴ See Scheyvens and Storey (2003:5-8) who articulate in detail the potential value of researching cultures other than our own.

⁴⁵ See Tuhiwai Smith (1999:138) for her account of being both an insider and outsider in her research process.

Positionality and reflexivity

When considering my position in relation to the research a number of issues emerged. First of all, I am a Registered Nurse and my area of practice has mainly been mental health. The basis of mental health nursing is relationships and communication, meaning I entered the field with an advanced style of communication and very solid relationship building skills. Building a rapport in a way that makes people feel important, or suggests what they have to say is worthwhile and meaningful is the essence of nursing relationships. Demonstrating positive regard, empathy when required, asking probing yet respectful questions that are focused, using regular reflection and the use of reframing/clarifying communication processes are all everyday skills in nursing (Leslie and McAllister 2002:701, Peplau 1988).

I considered that identifying as a nurse, even though I was not doing nursing research, would stand me in good stead. Leslie and McAllister (2002:702) argue that because nurses are involved in the ‘everyday’ routines of others, many of which are very intimate, nurses are automatically considered to be morally sound. People generally believe nurses to be trustworthy, honest, caring, practical, no-nonsense and down to earth, yet worldly. “Accustomed to dealing with matters that can be private, delicate, intimate, frightening, or even unspeakable, people tend to relate to nurses openly, faithfully, and expectantly” (Taylor cited in Leslie and McAllister 2002:702-03).

Regardless, all researchers, that is non-indigenous and indigenous researchers still have to think analytically about “their processes, their relationships and the quality and richness of their data and analysis” (Tuhiwai Smith 1999:137), and being an insider will not necessarily make things easier (see Leslie and Storey 2003:133-34 for the difficulties that Sikabongo, an indigenous researcher from Nambian encountered when attempting to hire research assistants). Moreover, the insider, their family and community will have to “live with the consequences of their processes on a day to day basis”, while outsiders do not (Tuhiwai Smith 1999:137).

Nabobo-Baba (2004) suggests that in unsilencing the past and moving forth, Pacific researchers need to “intellectually and spiritually connect with ourselves first and then with ‘outsiders’ who care about our peoples’ education and overall development, wherever our people may be” (p.18). Perhaps this connection could

also be extended to those who are not Pacific researchers, but who are researching the Pacific, whilst attempting to do so in a way that is mindfully ethical and respectful of Pacific epistemologies, ontology, axiology and methodologies. In view of that, the positive response that I received while in the field seemed to support that there is a space for outsiders in Pacific research; however it is fundamental that the outsider as the researcher continuously engages in reflexivity (England 1994, Rose 1997).

It was very important to think about various issues that are inevitably part of the research process. Since the participants and their meaningful experiences are the 'researched' and I was the researcher, I sought to also understand that relationships of power have the potential to be hierarchical. The fact that I initiated the research, constructed the questions, guided the discussion and through interpretation selectively chose whose language and voice to include and exclude implies that my perspective was partial. As England (1994) states this is an inevitable part of the (conflictual) role of the researcher whereby "reflexivity alone cannot dissolve this tension" (p.86). Further, in an attempt to reproduce the participants' voice, my engagement in the research did "not necessarily allow the voices of the researched to speak" as they are potentially mediated through my experiences and values (Winchester 2000:19). My point in mentioning this is that I am aware that there are limitations to the research process even when one acknowledges one's own reflexive position.

However, a certain level of control lies in the hands of those involved with the research because they can tell me only what they want me to know. At any given moment during the process of translation the filtering of information can occur (also see Scheyvens and Storey 2003:5). Therefore, partiality also lies within the hands of the participants and the research assistants who I relied on. It would have been wrong for me to assume that any power lay only with myself in a static way; rather I sought to see any power experiences as multi-faceted, fluid and negotiable.

The relationship between the participants and myself was therefore understood to be a reciprocal alliance, where both parties were in "comparable social positions" (Dowling 2000:29). In support of this, Leslie (1999:149) argues reflexivity and reciprocity are important because they enable (feminist) researchers to overcome some of the more harmful aspects of cross-cultural research, and work towards

research methodologies that empower. This point leads me to the next area of discussion, which seeks to bring to light some of the feminist research principles that were also important to this study.

Acknowledging feminist research principles

As noted in both *Chapter Two* and *Three*, ‘feminism’ is certainly not without criticism, especially in terms of the way some feminisms had assumed ‘women’ to be homogenous, and oppression to be related only to gender; positioning ‘women of colour’ or ‘Third World women’ as ‘other’. However, from a scholarship perspective, feminist critiques of the dominant research paradigms have seen not only the development of new methodologies but raised the possibility of alternative epistemologies. Feminism has offered much to social sciences, gaining value as a legitimate method of research (Tuhiwai Smith 1999:166).

Hall and Stevens (1991) stipulate feminist research approaches share three basic principles. Firstly, feminism argues for the valuing of women and validation of women’s experiences, ideas and needs. In doing feminist research, great weight is placed on the direct testimonies of women concerning their own lives, experiences, and beliefs. Feminist research aims to build knowledge through dialogue and narrative, and expose previously silenced voices (Harding 1987:7-9, Mies 1983, Winchester 2000:19). A gender relations research approach seeks to move from grand theory and universal claims to focus on differences and particularities, providing a space for the expression of the unique experience (Kabeer 1994, Parpart 1993). Therefore, to be true to the process the voices of the participants needed to be interwoven throughout this research.

Secondly, feminism purports recognition that ideological, structural and inter-personal conditions exist which oppress women. Therefore, feminist methodology aims to understand women’s position, condition, and life patterns as shaped by patriarchal structures within society (Harding 1987, Mies 1983). It aims to deconstruct the notion of gender and the power relations that accompany it. However, in support of a Third World feminist perspective, gender is not privileged above class or ethnicity. Thirdly, feminism subscribes to a desire for social change and as such, feminism uses open criticism and political action regarding the ideological, structural and inter-personal conditions which oppress women. Women are viewed as active agents of change, having the ability to transform unequal gender

relations. Ultimately, an objective of the research is women's emancipation (Harding 1987, Leslie 1999, Mies 1983).

Therefore, the key assumptions that inform a feminist approach to research are that women's experiences are the major object of investigation, that the goal of inquiry is to see the world from the vantage point of a particular group of women and that the approach is critical and active in its effort to improve the situation of women (Campbell and Bunting 1991, Parpart 1993). In terms of emancipation, this research is not necessarily assuming that FHHs in Samoa require emancipation, rather exposing their reality may in fact liberate FHHs in Samoa from the inaccurate ideas that may surround their existence, especially should they be considered in relation to current FHHs orthodoxy, specifically, 'poorest of the poor' and the 'feminisation of poverty'. It could be argued that FHHs globally require liberating from current orthodoxy. Moreover, Bhavnani *et al.* (2003) have argued that 'Third World women have never had silenced voices, and in the case of Samoa I am also reluctant to believe that Samoan women have been silenced.

Finally, a qualitative methodological approach to the research is also important because previous conventional studies about FHHs have generally relied on quantitative methodology and data, with a particular focus on incomes, consumption, or indicators of wellbeing in children. While critical feminist scholars such as Chant (1997a) have used in-depth qualitative case studies which this research intends to do also, previous studies have not sought to conceptualise culture to the extent that this study will. This conceptualisation can only be achieved through qualitative inquiry.

Planning for fieldwork

Selecting Samoa as a research site

Often the first question Samoan people asked when they discovered I was doing research was 'why have you decided to come to Samoa to do research?' This was also a question people back in New Zealand asked of me. I would typically reply with what seemed like very simple or shallow reasons. For example, Samoa was close enough to New Zealand making the process less daunting and Samoa was different enough to my own reality to be a challenge. I also considered Samoa to be safe enough from a health perspective that my son Finn and husband Erin could join me

for Christmas during the first fieldwork period. Deep down I would have preferred to say that I had chosen Samoa because I already had a profound understanding of and affiliation with the country, however this would not have been true. However, on my consecutive occasions in the field and towards the end of the research process I certainly felt that I had developed some meaningful connection with the country, the people and the culture that would continue to deepen over my lifetime. In the end I felt very privileged to have been given the opportunity to know something of Samoa.

Children in the field

Whether or not to take my child(ren) for the fieldwork duration or part of, caused me some angst⁴⁶. I struggled at times with the opinions of others at home, especially those who saw fit to make comment about the mere fact I was going away leaving my very small and dependent children. The most popular comment was ‘how could I leave him/them, as they could never do this’. On one occasion this opinion was expressed by a woman who had three children under four and a husband who was doing his second period of duty in East Timor. Likewise, from a distant acquaintance who had not seen his daughter in five years, as the girl was living with his ex-wife in England. I became very apt at *thinking* ‘I can because my husband is so competent and my child(ren) are so secure’, but at *saying* very little, or using humour to deal with the feelings of discomfort at being judged.

All too often I felt judged in terms of my mothering style and the bond that I must have with my children. I was surprised by various women, who on becoming aware of my plans, felt free to comment that they could never do such a thing, as if they must love their children more or have a stronger emotional bond with them. I recall one woman stating “the only time I have ever been away from my children overnight was to have the next one” (Pers. Comm. 2004).

Even in a ‘gender equitable’ society such as New Zealand, gender notions that determine women to be the primary caregivers of children, are still firmly entrenched. Thus, it is much more acceptable for a man to leave his family on business, to attend a conference or to participate in peacekeeping in East Timor than it is for a woman to leave her children. Ironically, my stays in Samoa actually helped

⁴⁶ My second child, India, was 14 months old when I returned to the field in 2004 for 5 weeks.

with easing some of my guilt, in that I met a few women who had left their young children in the care of extended family members while they went to New Zealand or Australia to fulfil academic needs or dreams, some of them for periods of up to a year or more⁴⁷. There is certainly much to admire about the extended family concept, and my time in Samoa enabled me to accept more than rhetorically, the idea that mothering/parenting does not always have to be ‘done’ by the mother, and that the raising of children should be seen as a collective responsibility, involving wider communities.

Naturally I missed being with my family and I can easily recall during my first period of fieldwork not being able to sleep towards the end because I missed my son Finn so badly. At one stage I also had to remove Finn and India’s photos from my computer screen-saver because seeing them constantly was too difficult. The emotional feelings that accompanied being separated from Finn and India just added disquiet to the data collection periods because I would often count the days till I returned home and I always suffered emotional variance if I thought about returning home earlier. I would agonise unnecessarily over whether I had really taken the time to do all the things I needed to do. I would often question myself, ‘was I rushing things so as to go home earlier and was my desire to see my family overriding the fieldwork process and experience?’

Ethical approval and considerations

In planning the research ethics approval was sought and gained through an internal university process. As this research project involved personal interactions between human subjects, ethical considerations were of fundamental importance. A suitable frame of reference was found within the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct which I was bound to as a student/researcher representing Massey University. The major principles are:

- Respect for persons;
- Informed and voluntary consent (of the participants);
- Confidentiality/Privacy (of the data and the individuals providing it, as well as the notion of collective ownership of the process and data);

⁴⁷ It is important to note that these pursuits were not seen as individual pursuits rather they were seen as bettering or adding status to the entire family.

- Minimising of harm (to participants, researchers, institutions, and groups);
- Truthfulness (the avoidance of unnecessary deception);
- Avoidance of conflict of interest;
- Justice; and
- Social sensitivity (to the age, gender, culture, religion, social class of the subjects) (Massey University 2006).

Because the research process was an evolving thus changing process, unforeseen events and consequences are always possible. So, facilitation, negotiation, and renegotiations are essential elements that must underpin the research process if the participants' privacy, anonymity, and minimisation of harm are to be truly upheld (Scheyvens *et al.* 2003).

To support the ethical considerations an information sheet (see *Appendix 3: Information sheet*) that was clear and concise was provided, keeping in mind that the participants had English as a second language. A consent form (see *Appendix 4: Informed consent*) was also made available, while being cognisant that at times verbal approaches and agreements are deemed more appropriate in the Samoan cultural context.

Some ethical expectations, as outlined by formal Western academic institutions, have had to adapt over the years so as to incorporate, or be inclusive of the various cultural ways of ethically doing research. For example, in terms of this research and with respect to informed consent, a number of the participants were not interested in any of the written material offered that discussed confidentially or informed consent. Verbal agreements were considered sufficient, which was very much in keeping with the Samoan way. On a number of occasions people appeared to read the form just to be polite, and on other occasions people appeared suspicious about signing my consent form. Whilst they were always offered, the usefulness of both forms tapered out very quickly, during all of the fieldwork periods. Many Western institutions' angst about the idea that non-Western research participants may be coerced into doing research and thus feel the need to push the idea of gaining a signature to illustrate that informed consent has been acquired. In the case of this research, if people did not want to participate then they did not turn up, or they made themselves unavailable or they gave brief answers to questions. Regardless of

any university regulations, turning up and participating was a much more powerful seal of approval than any signature.

While it is generally seen to be unethical to pay participants, this does little to account for the notion of reciprocity or the presenting of gifts, food, resources or money as a token of appreciation (Filipo 2004:185). Many indigenous approaches to research see ethics as not being something separate from ways of being in the world. As reciprocity sits at the core of Samoan society, to be reciprocal is therefore ethical behaviour.

From a Maori cultural perspective, Tuhiwai Smith (1999) talks about ethical codes of conduct, (or protocols) which govern relationships:

- *Aroha kit e tangata* (a respect for people)
- *Kamohi kitea* (the seen face, that is present yourself to people face to face)
- *Titiro, whakarongo...korero* (look, listen...speak)
- *Manaaki kit e tangata* (share and host people, be generous)
- *Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata* (do not trample over the *mana* of people)
- *Kaua e mahaki* (do not flaunt your knowledge) (p.120).

Filipo (2004:184) draws on the above, liking them to the Samoan cultural practices mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. To reiterate, *fa'aloalo* (respect, politeness and reverence), *loto mauālalo* (being humble), *momoli* (provide assistance or express solidarity), *alofa* (compassion, love and concern), *feālofani* (getting on well with each other), *'āiga* (kin group or family), *feagaiga* (agreement and relationships) and *tautua* (service). Adhering to the practices and principles which govern relationships may be a more appropriate measure of whether the research process is ethical than distributing information sheets or acquiring written 'informed consent'. What is ethical in a Western academic sense may in fact prove to be unethical in a particular cultural context.

Doing the fieldwork

After much planning, in November 2001, for 10 weeks, I flew out of Auckland to Apia, beginning my first fieldwork experience. This same process would occur again in Dec 2004 for 5 weeks and in April 2006 for 2 weeks. On entering the field I

generally followed the same pattern. That is, I would gain my bearings, commence the establishment (or re-establishment) of relationships and familiarise myself with Samoan systems. I would select settings and more specifically participants, administer pilot studies and collect the data. These points will now to be discussed, however it needs to be noted that this process was not necessarily a linear process but one where I worked in a cyclical and adaptive fashion as ideas, issues and opportunities emerged and evolved.

Va feāloalo'ai and ava fatafata: Samoans as a 'face to face' people

The protocols and etiquettes that define *tu ma aga* (respectful behaviour) are known by Samoans as *va feāloalo'ai* or *ava fatafata*. These protocols and etiquettes are needed to establish and maintain good relationships or the relational agreement (Lui 2003:2). *Va* and *ava* refers to the gap or relationship, while *feāloalo'ai* and *fatafata* refers to 'face to face'. Lui (2003) expresses clearly that Samoans place great importance on verbal and personal contacts, and meetings. Lui goes on to say *fa'aaloalo* (respect) is the building block of good relationships. Relationships bind everything together (Lui 2003). This meant that very little about my research could be arranged from New Zealand. Except for a few responses about my accommodations I generally had little success in contacting people. Once I had formed relationships with people or could articulate some connection to someone, people were generally very obliging.

Gaining my bearings

During the initial period of fieldwork I spent the first few days in Apia familiarising myself with systems such as the bank, transport, locating internet access, joining the public and university libraries, visiting the university, and finding somewhere cheap, yet comfortable to live. I also located many of the offices that would become very important during all of the fieldwork periods. Furthermore, I also gained from the 'Secretary to the Prime Minister' official permission to research in Samoa, which would be repeated on subsequent visits, and I was surprised to learn that many people did not. I had assumed gaining official permission was a matter of due course. Even though it was a day long process I left the office with an extend visa granting me permission to research, and an accompanying official letter. By following the appropriate process, hence demonstrating respect for systems and processes, the initial phase of establishing relationships with people, especially those in governmental departments, was made easier. On the face of it I had made my

intentions known and in some part I had been given an official seal of approval. I was to learn along the way that Samoan society is indeed very process orientated, even if the processes appear to be informal.

Establishing trusting relationships and working with Samoan systems

While there are a number of important facets to Samoan life for this research ‘establishing relationships’ was probably the most significant factor to consider. If meaningful relationships were not established then gaining access to the participants would have been incredibly difficult, if not impossible. The establishing of relationships for this research was taken very seriously and I found myself involved in many social occasions, such as, funerals and *fa’alavelave* (to be fully explained in *Chapter Nine*), school graduations, church services and after functions, workshops, Christmas celebrations, bingo, dinner invitations and *to’ona’i* (Sunday lunch), in the hope of making links and connections and building trust.

The publication of Mead’s (1928) ‘Coming of Age in Samoa’ disseminated a belief that Samoan youth were promiscuous. As a result many Samoan’s were deeply offended and to this day remain ambivalent or untrusting of *palagi* researchers (Schmidt 2001). Schmidt (2001) goes on to suggest this to be especially so when the issue of sexuality is being investigated. Whilst I was not considering the issue of sexuality within this research, I was intending to discuss the experience of and attitudes towards single women and their children, which could be a sensitive issue, thus I thought Schmidt’s point something to be mindful of.

While cross cultural research can be difficult because of gate keeping, understood to mean when people, such as family heads, government officials, village chiefs, committee leaders, or religious leaders use their power, or ability to withhold access to people, necessary documents or results (Scheyvens *et al.* 2003), I chose not to dwell too much on this issue. Without a doubt, gate keeping occurred when results never came back to me, or when I was directed in a certain way, however, because I could do little to change this, especially as I was reliant on people to provide these connections, I chose to view the process not as gate-keeping but as control of the research remaining with the people.

My period in the village during the second fieldwork experience also gave me the opportunity to become very involved in village life. Locating myself in a village for

an extended period of time made a real difference to my ability to form meaningful relationships with people, especially the participants.

Reciprocity/generosity... fa'aaloalo and the preservation of mamalu

Reciprocity also had to underpin this research for a number of reasons. The backbone to Samoan society is reciprocity, and reciprocity and generosity as part of the relationship building process demonstrates *fa'aaloalo* and preserves *mamalu* (dignity). "It is also important to not only invest time but resources when establishing a rapport with participants" (Lima 2003:3). The *alofa* (love) in *mea alofa* (a gift or the practice of giving, receiving and sharing of gifts) qualifies most Samoan ideals (Lui 2003:2). Applying this ideal to the research process, in return for seeking information or assistance, the researcher will show their *alofa* through the genuine offering of gifts of service. Thus, I demonstrated my appreciation, my *mea alofa*, in various ways, such as gifting money, small products brought from New Zealand, by offering healthcare expertise, or providing help to access information. In practice, many times when I gave *tālā* (Samoan dollars) to participants, that same *tālā* was actually utilised at the shop across the road to buy a drink and biscuits which I was then offered. By the third fieldwork trip I found myself in the position where meals, transport, accommodation and offers of *tālā* were regularly put to me. When I expressed my humility, I also learnt that reciprocity was not always between two people, that one day I would be able to reciprocate, just not to the person in front of me now but to a member of their family.

The cost of fieldwork can set those in Development Studies away from other social science researchers (Murray and Overton 2003:19). Overseas fieldwork is expensive, and in my case this raised concerns, as each time in the field my family's income generally constituted student entitlements, or scholarships. Maintaining a family and keeping the household running whilst covering fieldwork costs was a real balancing act. This financial balancing act was something that the participants in this research were also very familiar with. In a developing context local people may also assume that the researcher is well off. On a number of occasions I had to explain to people that I was not the employee of a Western company, on a Western salary. Regardless, wherever possible, I was as reciprocal as I could be, often putting the need to *mea alofa* over and above my personal daily living requirements.

Reciprocity also worked over many miles, because once home I returned photos to people, neatly framed, or sent parcels to people in the village where I had stayed. This quote from my research assistant from the second fieldwork period, whom I visited again during the third fieldwork period, sums it all up:

You know that elderly man, the one that you took the tobacco and the food to? Well he says all the time to me, 'Remember that palagi girl, the one doing the research, remember her, she brought me the tobacco and the food; she is a good one...' (Savalia: Savai'i research assistant, April 2006).

Coming to terms with cultural expectations so as to behave in a culturally respectful manner whilst in the field can certainly be a challenge.

Pilot study

Pilot studies were carried out on all three fieldwork occasions. In the first instance, a pilot study was carried out at the National University of Samoa in Apia and at a local business office in Apia. Three women of varying ages were interviewed to allow for any refining of the open-ended interview questions. The purpose of doing this was to establish whether or not the interview questions were acceptable and whether they could be understood. To be acceptable, the questions had to be culturally sensitive and not cause offence. The questions also had to be implicit, meaning certain words required amending. Likewise, it was imperative that the questions were neither too lengthy nor arduous. One such example of change was with the question 'how many people live in this household?' After the pilot study, I understood when asking this question I would need to consider things much more broadly by asking 'how many people live in this house, that house, and the house over there? (for Samoan families often live in a few different houses on a shared plot of land). Are they members of your 'āiga (family)? So, how many houses are in your 'āiga?'

For the second period of fieldwork I piloted the research questions with a local high school teacher, who also acted as my research assistant. During this process the questions were also translated into Samoan. During the final fieldwork period a similar process occurred but with the research consultant from Apia who I employed.

Selection of the settings

Upon commencing the first fieldwork period when I was based on the Island of Upolu, I had hoped to focus on distinct villages, so as to cover the rural/urban spectrum. While in some instances this was possible, participants became more important than the village setting per se. While a distinction was certainly made that placed women in an urban, semi-urban, or rural context at the time of the interviews, the participants' geographical links to their work or their home situation became just as important. As I will discuss in *Chapter Seven*, women can still reside in the village and work in town, or live in town and be actively linked to a village, thus the division of urban/rural is not so easily demarcated. It was important to acknowledge the fluidity of people's lives by not labelling people too rigidly and simplistically.

Overall, the participants represented most possible circumstances. To capture the urban/rural spectrum, participants were understood as women who were living in an urban context (Apia) and were employed or generate income in Apia; women who lived in the village but travelled to Apia to work or generate income; women who lived in the village and had employment within the village or who generated income within the village or women who lived on the village and who were not involved in income generation. Factors such as living on customary land or freehold land in Apia and the women's level of education and ability to generate income were also important characteristics (See *Table 4: Characteristics of the female-headed households in this study*). During the first fieldwork period, interviews occurred mainly in Apia, in surrounding Apia villages⁴⁸, or in villages no more than an hour away from Apia.

In the second fieldwork period I sought to interview women in a more rural traditional setting (still mindful of fluidity), and because my intention was to map sections of villages it made sense to live in a village setting. Selection of the village was based on a New Zealand contact and I rented a house belonging to the extended *'āiga* of this contact.

⁴⁸ Apia whilst being a town comprises approximately 50 villages. These appear chaotically arranged but are readily understood by those who live there in terms of the boundaries and the territory occupied (Fox and Cumberland cited in Storey 2000:87).

Storey (2000:86) claims the visibly poorer and marginal urban villages of Apia are those with the weakest social units and ties to traditional political authorities. In these villages people maybe living on leased land, and be migrants who rely on wage employment and have few subsistence crops. They often have the most run down housing and the worst environmental and social conditions. These villages usually vacate the land closest to the industrial and commercial area (Storey 2000:88). It was therefore my intention to make some attempts to access urban FHHs who were living outside of the cultural family/social networks, and could be considered as coming from poorer sections of society because of unemployment or under employment, lack of professional qualifications, and who also had poor access to supportive resources such as a plantation. This had been attempted in 2004, however the results never eventuated because the contact people moved on. This time attempts were made to access this group through the CEO to the Women's Department at the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. The questions were to be posed on my behalf by a woman with whom the abovementioned CEO had connections with. Because of the sensitive nature of people's position and the fact I did not have the time to meet with people properly it was felt by myself and the CEO that this was the best approach to take⁴⁹. Again I left the country without the data. I found I was unable to ascertain completely whether or not the interviews occurred and therefore whether any data was actually available. From New Zealand I struggled to connect with people⁵⁰, thus the end results proved to be less than fruitful.

Participant selection and sample size

Sampling is the process whereby suitable participants are selected and included in the research (Jackson *et al.* 2003:140). The approach to sampling that I employed for this research is known as purposeful sampling, whereby participants are selected and included because they meet certain criteria (Patton 1990:182-3). That is, FHHs were understood as women who were widowed, divorced or separated, or single, with or without dependents. A key indicator in identifying the study participants was that they had to be a woman whose husband/partner or potential husband/partner was

⁴⁹ Due to the CEO's very busy schedule I had been unable to meet with her until I had been in Samoa for over a week. This was made more difficult due to the fact that this two week period also included Easter and ANZAC public holidays.

⁵⁰ Probably because of the preference that many people have with face to face engagement (emails were not answered), coupled with the fact that people have busy schedules. In terms of the two phone calls that I made, the people I was attempting to speak with were out of the country.

absent partially or permanently. More often than not the women had dependents or had had dependents. Whilst this may appear to be a very crude means of identification, because the term FHHs was not really understood or utilised in Samoa, it seemed to be the most straight-forward approach to take. Identifying oneself as the household head did not include or exclude any of the participants because of the arbitrary and fluid way in which household and therefore household head was understood in the literature, and as it turned out, also the field. Coyne (1997) concedes that purposive sampling facilitates collecting of information-rich cases for in-depth study.

I anticipated that a process of snowballing would also occur. This is when participants are located through the networks of the other participant(s) or word of mouth of the participant(s) (Jackson *et al.* 2003:145). Networks of the Savai'i and Upolu research assistants and the Apia research consultant were tapped into, as were the networks of contacts I had made at the university and the Women's Department at the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development.

With respect to the key informant interviews these participants were also purposefully selected, relying very much on a process of networking. After the first fieldwork experience I made a decision that it was also vitally important to interview men, and other women who could not be described as belonging to the participant group FHHs, so as to understand their opinions and attitudes around the topic of household, household head and FHHs.

As discussed in *Chapter Four*, some of the literature has suggested FHHs to be stigmatised and discriminated against, as well as isolated and marginalised as a social group, therefore it was important to consider these claims and in doing so, gain opinions and attitudes from a cross section of Samoan society. Some of the key informants were selected because of their distinct positions and/or influence in Samoan society, for example, as *matai* (chiefs), school-teachers, business-owners, nurses, midwives, or pastors. Others were selected because they were representative of Samoan society, for example, an untitled man⁵¹, a taxi driver, or a married woman living in her husband's village. Finally, other key informants were understood as

⁵¹ Untitled in Samoa refers to men, generally younger, who have not been bestowed with a *matai* (chiefly) title.

representing people who because of their position in the local or international Samoan community or because of their profession, were considered to have specific knowledge or expertise about women's position and status in Samoa, including the development direction of women (For a full list of key informants who were interviewed see *Appendix 2: List of key informants*).

While this type of approach may raise problems with regard to the generalisability of the study, the aim of the study was to understand the individual stories of FHHs, and situate them within the context in which they live their lives. In keeping with a feminist post-development perspective multiple realities and multiple voices were considered very important. Each opinion is considered valid in making up the entirety of the picture. The approach taken was about ensuring more than one perspective was utilised, that is, the perspective from the mountain, the tree and the canoe were gained.

From the beginning, I had no particular sample size in mind. As Patton (1990) argues “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry” (pp.184-5). Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is useful or credible and what can be done with the available time and resources. In total, 18 FHHs were interviewed and 27 key informants. I decided against further interviews once the data being collected became very repetitive, that is, at the point of data saturation (Schneider *et al.* 2003:442). The data collection methods will now be presented and discussed.

Data collection methods

Primary data collection

So as to provide multiple sources of evidence, multiple methods were used to collect primary data. This multi-method approach to data collection is known as triangulation, and is useful for scrutinising the “validity of a set of information” (Schneider *et al.* 2003:450). Babbie (1989:280) also argues that subjectivity can be partially offset by implementing a process of triangulation. Furthermore, triangulation complements Samoan ways of discovery and understanding articulated as *fa’afaletui*:

Fa’afaletui is the critical process of *tui* (weaving) together all of the different levels of knowledge frames from within the houses of collective

representation, in order that the Samoan world view is substantially enhanced, and added to (Tamasese *et al.* 1997:24).

Semi-structured interviews, following an outline prepared by myself (see *Appendix 5: Interview schedule* according to broad discussion themes) were used. While semi-structured interviews have some predetermined order, they also allow for flexibility in terms of timing and allow the researcher to pick up on a thread or follow a lead that is relevant (Hay 2000:196). The questions posed were open-ended questions for the purpose of stimulating discussion around the topics of inquiry and for ensuring that the voices of the participants were given the chance to be heard.

Ideologically, I also worked from the premise that:

Sitting, asking and listening are as much an attitude as a method. Sitting implies lack of hurry, patience, and humility; asking implies that the outsider is the student; listening implies respect and learning. Many of the best insights come this way. Relaxed discussions reveal the questions outsiders do not know to ask, and opens up the unexpected (Chambers 1983:202).

Hence, I was also in favour of utilising un-structured interviews and discussions.

I never planned anything for immediately after each interview so that I never needed to rush away. Typically, I was offered some sort of refreshment or meal and I learnt very quickly that once the tape recorder was off much of the rich information and stories came forth. While many of the interviews were taped, at the request of some of the participants some were not. During most of the interviews I also made extensive field-notes, although a couple of the participants expressed discomfort at notes being taken whilst they were talking.

During the periods of data collection I was very mindful about how busy people were. The time spent undertaking the interviews was always at their convenience, meaning a few people postponed interviews along the way because something more important came up, for example, a family funeral.

Intrinsically linked to undertaking research in a foreign context is the issue of researching with a foreign language, and therefore the need for translators. Hence I went into the field knowing that a number of the interviews would require translation, and knowing that the true essence of the spoken word may be lost

through translation (Lauta-Mulitalo 1998). The particulars of this research were that some interviews occurred in English without a translator, while other interviews were partially in Samoan and English or completely in Samoan. Those that occurred in Samoan were sometimes translated during the process, enabling me to pick up the threads that came out. The interviews were also re-translated again when transcribing occurred. Clarity was also sought with some of the English speaking interviews to ensure I had understood what was being said. In some instances where the content was unclear, the women were re-contacted to clarify. Only one interview had to be repeated because of problems with the tape recorder. The process remained flexible throughout, so as to meet the needs of the participants and the translators.

During the second fieldwork experience, data was also collected by physically mapping sections of three villages, two in Savai'i and one in Upolu. Villages were mapped geographically so as to obtain a sense of how many buildings and types of buildings were on selected areas of land and how many people were residing in these buildings, in either an extended or nuclear arrangement. Selected households were also asked a set of questions (see *Appendix 6: Mapping of sections of 3 villages*), and a few weeks later these same households were asked the same set of questions so as to identify any changes. The rationale underpinning the mapping exercise was to gain a clearer picture about household/family composition, and ideas of fluidity in relation to the household and headship. I was also very interested to hear what families had said about head of household during the census⁵², and whether they would say the same if the census came tomorrow.

Finally, I also kept a personal journal during each fieldwork period where I made regular comprehensive field notes about my experiences. This included documenting informal discussions about Samoan society, and Samoan women.

Secondary data collection

Utilising a variety of data sources is also understood as triangulation (Elliot 2003:34). With respect to this study, information was sought on an ongoing basis from various sources, including Government reports and policy, statistical reports, reports from

⁵² Census 2001 did not specifically ask who the head of the household was, rather every member present at the census moment was asked to identify their relationship to the head of the household (GoS 2001:168).

NGOs, academic publications and the daily newspapers. These documents, while seen as being very useful because they helped construct a more holistic picture of Samoan society, were also viewed critically, especially some of census documents, given the nature of my research.

In summary, the three periods of fieldwork while distinct were complementary in making up the wider picture of the experience of FHHs in Samoa. This approach to discovery aligns well with the need for a comprehensive range of perspectives, all of which must be accorded value, if the interconnectedness of the Samoan worldview of FHHs is to be truly conveyed. In terms of *fa'afaletui* (weaving) this research needed to consider not only the views and experience of FHHs, but of men, of other women, of elders and of those in professional roles, as well as secondary sources.

Reflections on my positionality

The acknowledgement of my nursing background proved to be useful in a number of instances; because when some participants found out I was a nurse I would visibly see a change in their manner. They would appear more relaxed, especially if they themselves were ex-nurses, health workers, or midwives. It was common to hear that being a nurse was a “very good thing” (Pers. Comm. 2001, 2004, 2006). In another instance a family member was sent to retrieve a newspaper, which had photos of nurses who had graduated the day prior. Some participants and even their family members would also then locate nurses they knew around the district to come and see me, just to say hello. Being a nurse automatically drew an unconditional positive response from those I encountered and made the interview process more amenable. I also gained further credibility when people found out I was a mother⁵³.

While it is acknowledged that engaging in research in a cultural setting other than one's own may place the Western researcher in a position of power (see Scheyvens and Storey 2003:2 for a more detailed discussion), during my fieldwork experience this was not the case. My position as a mother, (and on occasion my admission to being Catholic) overrode my position as a Western researcher, in that people

⁵³ In discussing the concept of caring as connected to mothering and nursing I am certainly not advocating the notion that these skills are innate. It is well documented that professional caring is a learnt process, as is mothering.

expressed concern in relation to my individual presence without my family, because collectiveness is what is important in the Samoan sense. This quote from the field sums up the way that many people saw my position:

Do you have a husband, children? Boys or girls? Where are they? How old are your children? How are they? They must miss you? You must be lonely? You must dream of them and them of you. You need your family and they need you. Without your family, what are you...? Nothing. You must be lonely. Work hard then, dream of them, you'll be together soon (Field notes, Jan 2002).

The difference between this dialogue and the ones I had prior to the commencement of my fieldwork (see the section where I discuss whether to take my children into the field with me) was that these latter conversations never admonished me for leaving my children, and neither did they seek to focus on my supposedly innate mothering duties. Rather people were concerned about my isolation at an individual level, away from the collectiveness of my family unit. I was not being judged for leaving my children in the same way I had been in New Zealand because in Samoa the responsibility for raising children actually rests not with an individual (the mother), but with the wider family network, and therefore the wider community.

As part of the interview process I found it better to commence any conversations by talking about families. We would converse and I would talk about my children and my husband at home, about my siblings and parents, including my mother who had passed away 13 years prior. This positioning myself not as an individual Western researcher, but as a wife, mother and daughter, or nurse and then a student undertaking research, was fundamental to establishing and maintaining relationships and therefore the research process. Finally, it was also important to establish myself as a mother, wife, daughter, sister, employee, friend or a scholar because this is what I was also seeking to understand about my participants.

The politics and practicalities of leaving the field

Kindon and Cupples (2003) dedicate a chapter of a fieldwork book to the politics and the practicalities of leaving the field, arguing that “leaving is a dynamic, challenging and critically valuable part of any fieldwork experience” (p.213), and while there is no ‘right’ way to leave the field *Figure 1: Leaving strategies encapsulates*

the ethical, emotional, personal, practical and professional issues that may require consideration and action.

As already mentioned, the desire to see my family and home obligations had a role in determining when my fieldwork concluded. Other influences were finances, reaching data saturation and having completed the tasks that I had predetermined prior to coming into the field. Similar to entering the field, relationships with people were prioritised and I sought to say goodbye in ways where I was mindful, ethical and culturally safe, and in keeping with many of the issues identified in *Figure 1: Leaving strategies*.

Leaving strategies

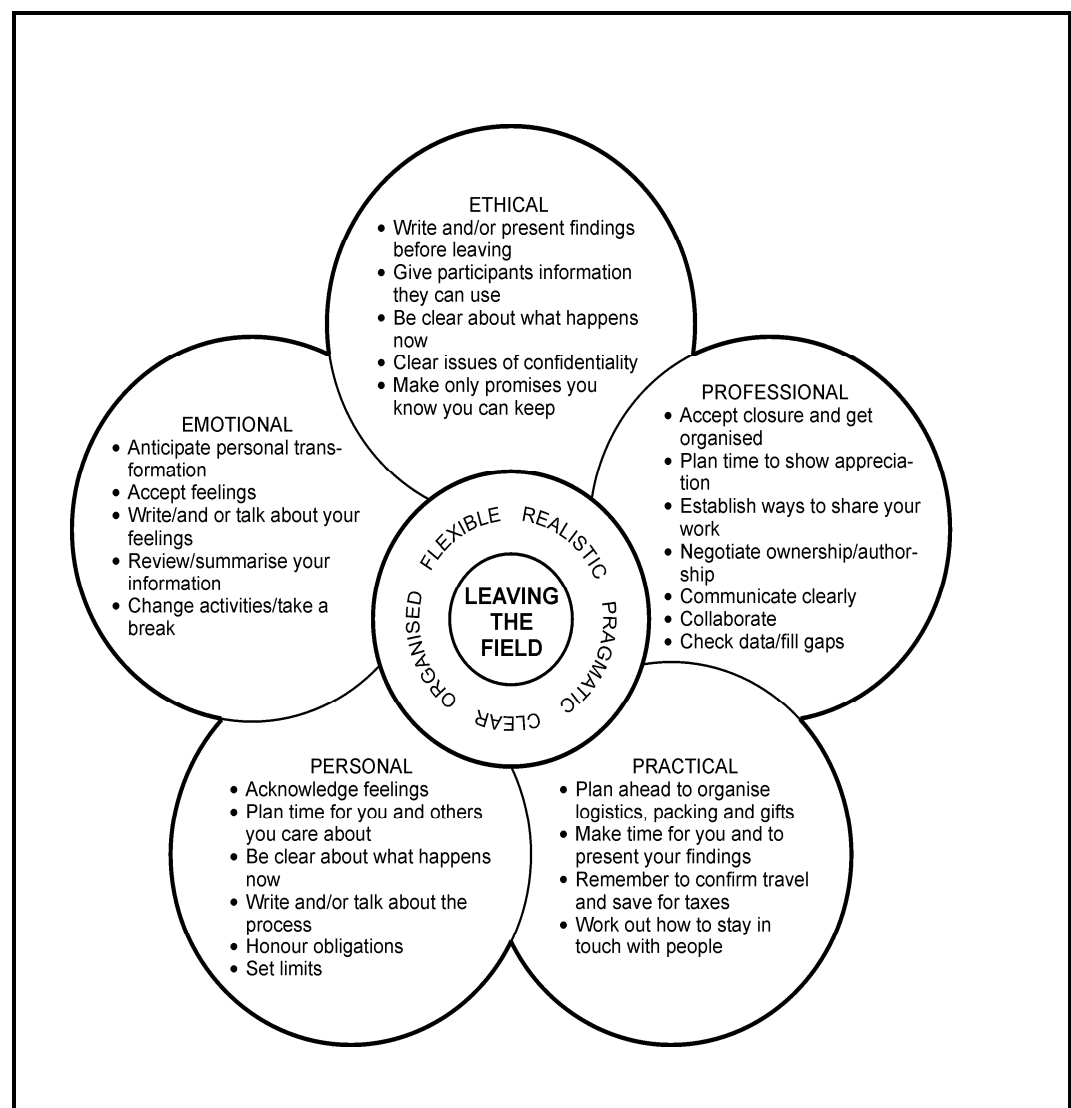


Figure 1: Leaving strategies

Source: Kindon and Cupples (2003:214).

Each time I left I had a very clear list of the reciprocal things I had committed to, as well as research expectations, such as returning copies of my data as findings. Commitments were also made to the various libraries in terms of thesis copies, and any publications and smaller concluding reports from my research were offered and subsequently sent to NGOs, and governmental departments. The last weeks in the field were always very productive and somewhat social, and people's generosity towards me with gifts and meals was humbling. This extract from my field journal sums up my feelings in the final days in one of the villages:

I have had a number of visitors tonight, who came to say goodbye, all bringing gifts. S and her small children brought a hat and a small basket. S tells me the basket is for my bible when I go to church. M brought a *lavalava* (a length of colourful cloth to wrap around my waist and wear like a skirt), and L and D (2 small girls) also snuck over to see me in the dark, they had foodstuffs from the small shop. The family from whom I have rented the house put a barbeque on for me on Saturday night and got in food especially. I am absolutely humbled by everyone's thoughtfulness (Field notes, Nov 2004).

The final visits were always accompanied by requests that I must return and bring my family. I always knew when I was leaving that it would not be for good, and I have subsequently returned to reconnect with people in Apia and the villages.

Data analysis

Data analysis occurred immediately, both in the field and once home. I considered that analysis of the data whilst the information and associated feelings and experiences were fresh was important to the research process. The data was analysed following a process by Emerson *et al.* (1995). The process calls for close reading of and reflection on field notes and transcripts, followed by analytic coding, where notes are first categorised into different themes, ideas and issues and subsequently re-examined in relation to a smaller number of central ideas. Central to this process was the notion that the process is not linear but is cyclical, in that it moves constantly between reading and coding and note taking as ideas emerge and evolve. Focusing on the perspectives of the participants up-held the idea that they had the expertise in local matters (Guba 1990:27).

Limitations of this research

This research has two main limitations. Firstly, this research focuses solely on Samoa; therefore generalisations in terms of the global situation are not possible.

However, to make generalisations at a global level was never the intention of this study as it sought to support the notion of understanding specifics and particularities. This limitation should not be understood to be a weakness.

Another limitation of the research is that it is written from the perspective of a *palagi* New Zealander, who prior to this study had no knowledge of or connection with Samoa and/or Samoan people. The direct experience that I had during the course of this study, which amounted to 3 field visits, totalling 4 months, was by no means adequate time to fully understand a people and their culture, and as I have already mentioned I did not speak Samoan. In terms of the research participants there are also limitations in that I was unable to access many women who live outside of the extended family network. As mentioned above, there is some evidence to suggest that there are people facing hardship because they are living outside of supportive family networks (Storey 2000:86-87; see also Fairbairn-Dunlop 2001:1). A number of attempts were made to engage this target group which never eventuated.

Summary

To summarise, this chapter has presented the conceptual underpinnings of this research and considered in detail the various professional and personal issues that arose before and throughout the fieldwork experience. This chapter has also articulated the methods used to collect primary and secondary data while in the field. Having the ability to undertake fieldwork in a developing country context and being granted the opportunity to form relationships with people from another culture, another way of being, so as to gain insights into their lives, was a considerable privilege.

This research subscribed to a qualitative approach, rejecting the notion of a single, objective, truth (Denzin and Lincoln 1994:13), understanding this to be the best means for discovering the specifics and particularisms of FHHs in the Samoan context. This research also acknowledges the importance of Pacific thought with regard to ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology. My attempts to find some synergy between using a gendered research approach and a methodological framework that was culturally appropriate meant that I also had to actively engage with values, beliefs and practices, such as reciprocity and the preservation of *mamalu*.

I also had to work in a way whereby consideration was continuously given to insider/outsider issues, positionality and reflexivity.

With respect to the data collected, I do not intend to present a universal representation of FHHs; rather the findings seek to add to the existing body of growing critical feminist literature that pays tribute to FHHs as a diverse category. The participating group in this study were highly diverse. This is seen in *Table 4* which displays the ‘Characteristics of the FHHs in this study’. It is shown that they varied immensely in terms of the social, economic and demographic context in which they were located. This diversity can also be seen in the biographies in *Appendix 1: Female-headed households: Participant profiles*.

Characteristics of the female-headed households in this study

Table 4: Characteristics of the female-headed households in this study

	Name	Age	Marital Status	Type of FHH	H/H type & generations in H/H	All adults present in the H/H	Own children	Ages of own children	Dependent children currently in the H/H	All children in school	Whereabouts of partner
1	Caran	65	Widowed	Extended dejure	Extended; 3 generations Mother, son and his wife and their adult children	6	2	Adults	0	Yes	Deceased
2	Delphina	61	Widowed	Extended dejure	Extended; 3 generations	4	7	Adults	3	Mostly	Deceased
3	Diana	35	Separated	Embedded dejure	Extended; 2 generations Mother, father and other sister and her family	5	4 (2 elsewhere)	15-7 yrs	3	Yes	His village
4	Ette	73	Widowed	Extended dejure	Extended; 3 generations Son and his family	3	10	Adults	5	Yes	Deceased
5	Kalani	43	Married	Lone defacto	Extended; 2 generations Niece	1	1	17-9 yrs	1	Yes	East Timor
6	Kyla	45	Married	Lone defacto	Extended; 2 generations Nieces, nephews	1	6	22-9 yrs	5	Yes	New Zealand
7	Leausa	23	Separated	Extended dejure	Extended; 2 generations Older brothers and 3 sisters and a sister's husband and child	7	1	3 yrs	2	Yes	His village
8	Line	55	Married	Extended defacto	Extended; 3 generations Son and daughter, another daughter, and her family	5	10	30-13 yrs	3	Yes	New Zealand
9	Logo	27	Unmarried	Embedded dejure	Extended; 3 generations Grandparents, uncle, aunts and child (cousin)	5	Twins	4 yrs	3	Yes	Unsure
10	Maia	42	Unmarried	Extended dejure	Extended; 2 generations Sister and her family	2	5 (3 elsewhere)	23-7 yrs	2	Yes	Unsure
11	Malia	40	Married	Lone defacto	Nucleur; 2 generations	1	5	20-8 yrs	3	Yes	America Samoa

	Name	Age	Marital Status	Type of FHH	H/H type & Generations in H/H	All adults present in the H/H	Own children	Ages of own children	Dependent children currently in the H/H	All children in school	Whereabouts of partner
12	Mele	70	Widowed	Extended dejure	Extended; 3 generations Single son and married son and his family	4	3	Adults & 5 yrs	4	Yes	Deceased
13	Nell	33	Separated	Embedded dejure	Extended; 3 generations Mother and two brothers	4	3	10-5 yrs	3	Yes	His village
14	Rika	23	Separated	Lone dejure	Extended; 2 generations	1	4	10-3 yrs	7	Mostly	Not recorded
15	Sala	77	Widowed	Extended dejure	Extended; 4 generations Daughters, grand-daughter and their families	11	7	Adults	4	Yes	Deceased
16	Tau	33	Married	Extended defacto	Extended; 3 generations In-laws: father, mother, brother and his family	5	3	8 yrs-3 mths	6	Yes	East Timor
17	Telesia	50	Divorced	Lone	Nucleur; 2 generations	5	6	30-17 yrs	0	N/A	Unsure
18	Vani	45	Married	Lone defacto	Nucleur; 2 generations	1	5 (1 in NZ)	18-4 yrs	3	Yes	East Timor

Cont ...	Name	Schooling	Employment – includes past	Land/ Governance	Lifestyle	H/H census	H/H on interview	Access to a plantation	Cash income	Receives remittances	Receives welfare payments
1	Caran	Primary	Retired housewife	Customary/ <i>Matai</i>	Lives Village Upolu	No	Yes	Yes	Wages - son, grand-daughter Informal sector activities	Yes	Pension (Church)
2	Delphina	Primary	Retired informal sector	Customary/ No <i>Matai</i>	Lives Village Savai'i	No	Yes	No	Plantation/ informal sector	Occasional	No
3	Diana	Secondary	Informal sector	Customary/ <i>Matai</i>	Works/Lives Village Savai'i	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	No
4	Ette	Primary	Retired housewife	Customary/ <i>Matai</i>	Lives Village Upolu	Yes	Yes	Yes	Wages - adult children	Yes	Pension

Cont ...	Name	Schooling	Employment – includes past	Land/ Governance	Lifestyle	H/H census	H/H on interview	Access to a plantation	Cash income	Receives remittances	Receives welfare payments
5	Kalani	Tertiary	Public servant	Freehold	Works Apia Lives Village Apia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Wages - self & husband	Yes	N/A
6	Kyla	Secondary	Business woman	Freehold	Works/Lives Apia	No	Yes	Yes	Businesses	Yes Sends remittances also	N/A
7	Leausa	Secondary	Guest house receptionist	Customary/ <i>Matai</i>	Works Apia Lives Village Upolu	No	No	Yes	Wages - self Informal sector activities	Yes	Yes
8	Line	Primary	Retired housewife	Customary/ <i>Matai</i>	Lives Village Savai'i	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	N/A
9	Logo	Secondary	Office administration	Customary/ <i>Matai</i>	Works Apia Lives Village Upolu	No	No	Yes	Wages - self & aunt Plantation	Yes	No
10	Maia	Secondary	Chef	Customary/ <i>Matai</i>	Works/Lives Village Savai'i	No	Yes	Yes	Wages	Yes	No
11	Malia	Tertiary	Office administration	Freehold	Works/Lives Apia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Wages - self & husband	Yes	N/A
12	Mele	Primary	Retired teacher	Customary/ <i>Matai</i>	Lives Village Upolu	No	Yes	Yes	Wages - son	Yes	Pension
13	Nell	Primary	Not employed	Customary/ <i>Matai</i>	Lives Village Upolu	No	No	Yes	Wages - brother	Yes	No
14	Rika	Primary	Informal sector	Unable to ascertain	Works/Lives Apia (squatter area)	Yes	Yes	No	Informal sector	No	No
15	Sala	Tertiary	Retired nurse/ midwife	Customary/ <i>Matai</i>	Lives Village Savai'i	No	Yes	Yes	Wage - daughter	Yes	No
16	Tau	Secondary	Village teacher	Customary/ <i>Matai</i>	Works/Lives Village Upolu	No	Yes	Yes	Wages - self & husband	Yes	N/A
17	Telesia	Tertiary	Accountant	Freehold	Works/Lives Apia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Wages - self	Yes	No
18	Vani	Tertiary	Office manager	Customary/ <i>Matai</i>	Works Apia Lives Village Upolu	Yes	Yes	Yes	Wages - self & husband	Yes	N/A

Chapter Six: The Samoan Cultural and Socio-economic Context

O Samoa o le atunu'u ua 'uma ona tifi (Samoa is an already defined society), meaning every member knows their place, the expectations of them and their duties (Lay *et al.* 2000:15).

Introduction

This chapter presents certain aspects of the cultural and socio-economic context of Samoa that have relevance to the contemporary position and situation of FHH. The chapter commences by describing Samoa briefly from a pre-Christian and colonial perspective. Having knowledge of historical events is fundamental to understanding the history of resistance, and the desire for and path to self-governance. Knowledge of these events is also fundamental to understanding the current economic and political relationships that Samoa has with countries such as New Zealand, and as will be shown later in the chapter for understanding existing levels of development, various development strategies utilised by Samoan peoples, as well as the current direction of development in Samoa.

A theme that appears throughout the colonial period is the commitment from the Samoans, and from some colonial administrators, to maintaining *fa'asamoa* (the Samoan way). The chapter goes on to describe in some detail the meaning of *fa'asamoa* and in doing so, the *'āiga* (family), and *fa'amatai* (the social and political structure of the village) are also described. Knowledge of *fa'amatai* is important because firstly, it is within this framework that the household and the family are located and secondly, the village and family are where women's status and development experiences, including that of FHHs, is determined. This commitment to *fa'asamoa* can also be seen in the way that *fa'akerisiano* (Christianity), while becoming a part of *fa'asamoa*, has not had the detrimental impact on cultural values, beliefs and frameworks that are *fa'asamoa* that it could have had.

The chapter then goes on to present the contemporary social, political and economic context of Samoa. A brief overview of the Samoan economy will ensue. The importance of migration and remittances to the Samoan economy and family will be demonstrated and the issue of aid will be introduced. Levels of development and the nature of poverty as it is understood by the Samoans will also be discussed. The chapter concludes by discussing

critically where Samoa is located in terms of the global development/poverty agenda, and what some of the policy responses have been to date.

Pre-Christian history

Archaeological research places the Samoan islands as having been inhabited for about 2,500 years (GoWS/UNICEF 1996:3). Regardless of any academic debate, to the Samoans Samoa is their origin (GoWS/UNICEF 1996:3, Meleisea *et al.* 1987a:2). It is believed that Samoa is the cradle of Polynesia, with the island of Savai'i being the legendary island of Hawaiki, from where migration to the North and to the East took place (Dunlop 1999:49, GoWS/UNICEF 1996:3).

Meleisea *et al.* (1987a:2) reports that many old stories explain the origins of the earth and the islands, the origins of the chiefs and the people, and there are many other stories that account for the origins of villages and districts, chiefly titles, or the origins of arts, crafts and traditions. Indeed, every aspect of Samoan life can be accounted for and the possessing of and passing on of this historical knowledge is seen as fundamental to the strength and the survival of the culture. For Samoans:

Knowledge is power, and the most powerful knowledge is historical knowledge: treasured and guarded in people's heads, in notebooks, locked in boxes and *matai's* briefcases or with their precious mats under mattresses. The valuable histories of families, lands, genealogies, villages and events long ago are family property as important as *'ie toga* (fine mats) (Meleisea 1987:vii).

This knowledge comes in the form of stories, poems, songs, proverbs or genealogies, that is, oral tradition, and has been passed from one generation to the next.

For each story there are many versions, some of which contradict each other. The version being told holds special meaning and importance for the storyteller, therefore contradiction does not mean that one of the stories is untrue. It is just that the story has been told in a particular way that explains the situation from their perspective. This is especially so when looking at stories that involve wars over boundaries or titles: "It is more important to consider the reasons why the same story is told in different ways and why one story is true for one family, village or district but not for others" (Meleisea *et al.*

1987a:10)⁵⁴. Thus, in the case of Samoa there are multiple truths and multiple realities that have changed over space and time. As noted earlier this thesis supports multiple truths and multiple realities, which are fluid and evolving. This thesis recognises the importance of this not only in terms of a feminist post-development framework, as was shown in *Chapter Three*, but also in relation to Samoan ways of knowing. For such is the acceptance of multiple truths in Samoa, Meleisea (1999) has argued the Samoans to be post-modernist before they were even modern. “‘Truth’ in Samoa is established by the telling of events that cannot be convincingly refuted, even when all of the listeners know that other truths exist” (Meleisea 1999:55).

For many Samoans time can be understood in relation to pre-Christian and Christian times. Before the missionary arrival Samoa had a complex polytheistic religion, which distinguished between *atua* (non-human gods) and *aitu* (human gods and ghosts), and which also incorporated elements of ancestor worship. However, because there were no outward signs of religion, the Samoans were wrongly understood to be godless (Watters 1959). The critical link between these two periods is that *Nafanua* the Samoan pre-Christian war Goddess, who helped the Samoans win their freedom from Tonga, prophesied the coming of a new religion, Christianity, which would end the rule of the old gods (Meleisea 1999:55). *Nafanua* is now seen to be a prophet who foretold the coming of the Gospel long before it arrived (Saolotoga 1995:25).

First contact, European administration and independence

First European contact in Samoa came in the 1700s when Dutch settlers, namely whalers and sailors, arrived (Kirk 1996:3, Lay *et al.* 2000:49), followed closely by the missionaries⁵⁵. By the end of the nineteenth century, Germany, the United States, and England were all vying for political governance in the Samoan archipelago. A complex affair in its own right, this became further complicated when each country’s representative found themselves associated with different ruling families and supporting on-going traditional chiefly rivalry (Kirk 1996:5, Lay *et al.* 2000:53). This shared interest worked in favour of the Samoans because it meant that the longer term policy of one power failed to be introduced, and colonial in-fighting gave the Samoans an opportunity to play the

⁵⁴ For accounts surrounding the Samoan theory of origin see Meleisea *et al.* (1987a:1-23). For accounts surrounding *Nafanua* see Meleisea (1999:55-59) and Saolotoga (1995:24-25).

⁵⁵ The introduction of *fa’akerisiano* (Christianity) to Samoa will be discussed in detail shortly.

newcomers off against each other (Hempenstall, Kennedy both cited in Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991:v).

In 1899, this inextricable process was resolved, at least in some part, when the three countries signed the 'Treaty of Berlin'. This signing divided the archipelago and gave the United States a formal holding over the islands of Tutulia and Manu'a in the East, which today is American Samoa, while Germany gained jurisdiction over the Western areas of Samoa, and England was granted special rights to the Kingdom of Tonga (Lay *et al.* 2000:56).

In 1908, organised resistance to European rule emerged in the shape of the '*Mau a le Pule*' or *Mau* movement; *Mau* meant testimony. This encompassed a group of Samoans who were critical of the German authorities (and as will be discussed shortly, New Zealand rule too). This group sought to gain more control over Western Samoa from the Germans. Germany responded by heavily fining or deporting perceived trouble-makers (Lay *et al.* 2000:58).

In 1914 with the outbreak of World War I, Germany began to relinquish its control over Western Samoa and in 1920 a 'League of Nations Mandate' placed Western Samoa under the jurisdiction of New Zealand (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991:v). Samoa was placed under the command of New Zealander Colonial Robert Logan (Kirk 1996:11). Logan was well known for his racial intolerance and subsequent blunders, especially when he allowed infected passengers from the 'SS Talune' to dock in Apia without quarantine, and the Spanish influenza epidemic struck. Around 20 per cent of the indigenous population died because Logan refused the medical treatment offered from American Samoa (Lay *et al.* 2000:59). In contrast European settlers were given medical treatment and as a result few died, only 5 per cent (Kirk 1996:11, Meleisea *et al.* 1987b:130). In many Samoan families all of the adults died, leaving countless children without parents. Given the importance of family in the *fa'asamoa* this was a major cultural tragedy. Moreover, because so many people were ill, dying or dead the usual ceremonies required upon death were not adhered to. Sometimes family members ended up being buried in mass graves, which was also deeply disturbing (Kirk 1996:12). It has been reported that "the 1918 epidemic was one of the most disastrous recorded this century" (Meleisea *et al.* 1987b:130).

On-going mistakes by the New Zealand administrators, and inaccurate racial assumptions continued to fuel discontent and fostered growing resentment⁵⁶. Thus, in the 1920s and 1930s, the *Mau* gathered strength (Lay *et al.* 2000:61). ‘*Samoa mo Samoa*’ (Samoa for Samoa) *Mau* argued (Davidson 1948, 1967). The *Mau* not only rejected colonial authority but rejected Western development and culture (Campbell 2005, Field 1984, 1991). However, not all aspects of Western development were viewed with disregard. The *Komiti Tumamā* was introduced in the 1930s by the New Zealand administrators, and brought together in one organisation the wives of *matai*, non-*matai* and the *auauma* (village girls) and still functions to this day (So’o *et al.* 2006:38). These structures will be discussed in more detail in *Chapters Six* and *Seven*.

Storey (2005:79) argues the 1940s to be a “formative, transitional, and critical” period in New Zealand and Samoan history⁵⁷. Appointment of Peter Frazer as Prime Minister in New Zealand saw contact between Samoa and New Zealand increase to new heights. New perspectives were explored, the current social and economic circumstances in Samoa were made visible and for the first time grievances that the Samoan’s had, past and present, were listened to and acknowledged (Storey 2005). It was noted that policy should encourage some degree of change in Samoa to meet rising expectations and demands, but just as importantly policy should also ensure stability through conserving the past, especially in the form of rural-based development. Finding a balance between development and preserving *fa’asamoa* was given top priority. This was fundamental because during this period Samoa was also undergoing many changes because of the American military bases in the Pacific which had “resulted in a significant expansion of capitalism and opportunity in Samoa, but had also resulted in concerns over the implications of this on ‘traditional’ life”, especially the increasing role of capitalism in village life (Storey 2005:81). Promises made by the New Zealand government through trusteeship and development gave recognition to the importance of the village subsistence economy, and sought to “produce a sound basis for a realistic system of colonial advance

⁵⁶ Campbell (2005) argues that colonial resistance in Samoa needs to be understood not in terms of misgovernment but in terms of the fact that the Samoans had a strong sense of cultural identity, and that the level of resistance reflected their ability to secure “opportunities for political expression” (p.69). Thus rather than assuming that the New Zealand regime cultivated dislike amongst the Samoans because of their incompetence, mismanagement and autocratic manner, the New Zealand government actually behaved in a fairly accommodating way which allowed the Samoans to not only participate administratively but also in terms of development.

⁵⁷ Storey (2005:79) notes that despite many of the critical events that took place between the *Mau* protests of the 1920s and 1930s to independence in 1962, this period seems to have been overlooked by a number of writers.

and eventual self-determination” (Storey 2005:90). This meant New Zealand could not only counterbalance destructive change but they could establish a strong post-colonial relationship and through the use of development aid, they “could continue to play a role in Samoan affairs” (Storey 2005:90), which can be seen today. “The 1940s should therefore be considered the opening act of a new era for New Zealand/Samoa relations” (Storey 2005:90-91).

Despite developing closer relations with the New Zealand colonisers Samoans continued to resist colonial domination. Thus it was on the 1st of January 1962 that Western Samoa became the first Pacific Island to claim independence from colonial control (Franco 1990:171). The collective resistance that occurred during the colonial period also ensured that any long-term impact by the colonials was limited. “Samoa is unique because cultural systems, structures and values; the *fa’asamoa* has remained fast” (Meleisea and Schoeffel Meleisea 1987b:168). “*Fa’asamoa* was alive and well at the end of the colonial period” (Twining-Ward and Twining-Ward 1998:1). Unlike many other indigenous peoples who came into contact with Europeans, the Samoans have not become a dispossessed or marginalised culture.

Contemporary demographics

In mid-1997, the Samoan government decided to omit ‘Western’ and Western Samoa became Samoa (Ward and Ashcroft 1998:1). Contemporarily, Samoa is a developing nation with four inhabited islands, a land area of 2830 square km, and according to the Census of 2001, a resident population of approximately 176,710 (So’o *et al.* 2006:23)⁵⁸. The two main islands are Upolu where the capital Apia is situated, and Savai’i (see *Figure 2: Map of Samoa: Upolu and Savai’i*). In terms of population Upolu is the more heavily populated of the two islands with a population of 133,886, while Savai’i has a population of 42,824. The Apia urban area is home to just under a quarter of the country’s population, with 38,836 residents (GoS 2001:10). The rest of the population is spread out in villages, mainly along the narrow coastal areas of both islands. Samoa has a relatively young population, with 40.7 per cent of the population less than 15 years, vis-à-vis, 23 per cent for New Zealand (Faafeu-Taaloga 2003:24-25). There is approximately the same

⁵⁸ As of 2004 Samoa’s population was estimated to be 180,900 (GoS *et al.* 2006:7), although many documents, such as the latest ‘Samoa National Human Development Report: Sustainable Livelihoods in a Changing Samoa’ (2006) continue to use the official population statistic of 176,710 as recorded in the 2001 census.

number of Samoans living overseas as live in Samoa (Huffer and So'o 2000:4). Samoan people speak one language, and have a cultural tradition that is relatively consistent across the country (O'Meara 1990:24, Ward and Ashcroft 1998:1).

Figure 2: Map of Samoa: Upolu and Savai'i



Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/australia/samoa_rel98.jpg

***Fa'asamoa* defined**

Contemporary Samoan society has remained fairly reflective of traditional Samoan society (Holme 1957:420, Meleisea 1992, Ngan-Woo 1985, O'Meara 1990:15). Samoa functions

according to *fa'asamoa* which is defined as “the manner of the Samoans; according to Samoan customs and tradition” (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1996:185), as evident in the quotes that follow:

Fa'asamoa is my heritage, my culture and my language. To me these are the three most important things (Vani: FHH, Jan 2002)⁵⁹.

Fa'asamoa is about being Samoan and according to fa'asamoa there are many expectations. It is providing, and supporting. There are obligations, lots of them, like for a wedding. People tell you what to bring, cartons of fish or 'ie toga (fine mats) (Tau: FHH, Nov 2001).

Fa'asamoa is also the social and organisational system which governs family life and the village. This system of chiefly rule is based on a system of rights and obligations which ensures that family members have rights to family resources (such as land), as well as having the opportunity to be the family chief. Family members in using these resources then work to achieve what is best for the family. *Fa'asamoa* is a system “based on divisions of power, status, labour and expectations – the prime motivational force being to safeguard the family status” (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1996:4). “Service to the family is the key driving force in the family based system” (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2000:99):

Fa'asamoa means not just thinking about yourself but the family. This means if I have some money then I have to pay for things. It is about looking after one another. I have put many of my nieces and nephews through school, paid the school fees and paid for their uniforms. It is about helping each other. You support people if you have money and in return they provide non-monetary things. It is about keeping your spirit intact; looking after your family keeps your spirit safe. It is no good if you are all good and your family isn't. This is fa'asamoa (Telesia: FHH, Jan 2002).

Fa'asamoa, this is about the Samoan way. It is about everything that is Samoan, what you say, how you feel, how you behave and what you do. It is about service to your family. It is about when they (your parents) demand of you, you come. Even when you are 50 years old, you still come. By coming, you show your love. It is very hierarchal. Then I do this also to my kids (Vani: FHH, Jan 2002).

Fa'asamoa, is the commitment that we have to our families - Samoan people are very committed to their families (Malia: FHH, Nov 2001).

Fa'asamoa, this is the air you breathe, the food you eat, and what you drink. Being humble, demonstrating love, showing love to each other and to God the Father. Fa'asamoa is the essence of what it means to be Samoan. What is it? Look around you, look around and tell me what you see? That is fa'asamoa (Mele: FHH, Dec 2001).

⁵⁹ The voices of the research participants will be italicised so they are distinct from quotes from the literature.

As observed in the participants' comments above, Mulitalo-Lauta (1998:29) suggests that *fa'asamoa* needs to be understood for its visible and invisible components. The visible components include the social structures of the *'āiga*, the *matai* system, *lotu*, *fa'akerisiano*, ceremonies, language and cultural practices. Invisible components make reference to ideas, beliefs, values, skills, moods, passions, attitudes and knowledge. Importantly, "all of these aspects are inter-dependent and cannot exist in isolation from one another" (Mulitalo-Lauta 1998:29).

In support of this, Ngan-Woo further explains *fa'asamoa*:

The social structure of Samoan society is held together and is actively maintained, by an adherence to unwritten but universally understood cultural conventions. These conventions govern the formalised giving and receiving of *ava* (respect), of *fa'aaloalo* (reverence), and *alofa* (love, compassion and concern). These practices are the basis of spiritual and cultural living. Respect, reverence and love are seen as qualities acceptable to God and hence necessary in the practice of *fa'asamoa* (Ngan-Woo 1985:9).

In Mulitalo-Lauta's (1998:32) opinion, *fa'asamoa* is understood to have five key components. These are as follows: firstly, the 'Samoan heart', which has to do with a person's emotional and spiritual being. The 'Samoan heart' encompasses feelings, attitudes, skills, knowledge and spirituality. Secondly, the 'Samoan way', describes the manner in which Samoan people should behave. It relates to the way a person verbally communicates, performs a particular act, or carries out ones commitments or obligations. The 'Samoan way' is an approach that involves processes, techniques, procedures and *gagana* (language) as the system of communication. This second component is inclusive of the exchanges of material properties such as food, money, *'ie toga* (fine mats) and gifts as a means to communicate feelings, and demonstrating commitment and love. On the whole it is about "the philosophy which compels living one's life for others" (Mulitalo-Lauta 1998:32). It is also about cultural practices such as *ifoga* (the ceremony of public apology), *fa'aleleiga* (reconciliation) and *si'i* (the tradition of donating goods, money or food) when someone is facing *fa'alavelave* (crisis or ceremony), so as to demonstrate concern and love (Mulitalo-Lauta 1998:32).

The third component is 'protocol and values'. These are the unwritten rules and customs that regulate the social behaviour of Samoans. Protocol refers to the formality and conventional rules of *tu ma aga mamalu a Samoa* (dignified customs and practices of Samoa) relating to custom, tradition, personal dignity and etiquette. Some examples of Samoan

protocol are *fa'aaloalo* (courtesy, respect and politeness), *feagaiga* (cultural code between the brother and sister), or *sa* (sacredness). Examples of values are again *osi 'aiga* (proactive in support of the family), *amio fa'akerisiano* (Christian behaviour), *loto manāalo* (being humble), *amio tamali'i* (diplomacy), *alofa* (love/sensitivity), and *loto nu'u* (having a sense of community) (Mulitalo-Lauta 2000:17-21).

The fourth component that Mulitalo-Lauta refers to is the 'structures and institutions' that are the Samoan frameworks, for example, the '*aiga*, *matai*, *lotu* and *gagana* as a cultural manifestation as opposed to a system of communication. Mulitalo-Lauta (1998:32) notes that structures and institutions are visible in nature. The fifth and final component of *fa'asamoa* is 'ceremonies or ceremonial practices'. This component is physical in a sense, and refers to the space that is provided for Samoans to practice their values and culture as a group or individually, for example, *lauga* (oratory), or drinking '*ava*.

Mulitalo-Lauta (1998) argues that any endeavour with Samoan people must consider both these invisible and visible components of *fa'asamoa*. It is important to incorporate values, ideas, beliefs and practices which are Samoan: such as, *ava* (respect), *fa'aaloalo* (reverence), *alofa* (love, compassion and concern), *fa'amagalo* (forgiveness), *fa'alavelave* (to solve a problem), *lotonu'u* (maintaining/restoring pride), *tapu* (sacred bonds) and *tantua* (service) as well as understand the need to include the *fono* (the village council, which is comprised of *matai*, the head of the various '*aiga*), and the church.

Mulitalo-Lauta's (1998, 2000) definition of *fa'asamoa* is very complex and in-depth, and for outsiders it may not be understood, however for those who are part of *fa'asamoa* its workings and value are clearly understood. My point in presenting this definition is that I wish to demonstrate just how holistic and all encompassing *fa'asamoa* is, and that *fa'asamoa* determines how and what a person in Samoa might think, feel and therefore do⁶⁰. This comprehensive articulation is important for understanding also what the statement 'according to *fa'asamoa*' might really mean in relation to the family, and what this might potentially mean for FHHs. As stated above, all of these aspects are inter-dependent and

⁶⁰ For this research while I have chosen to draw heavily on the work of Mulitalo-Lauta (1998, 2000), he actually goes into much more detail when explaining *fa'aSamoa*. In my explanation I have focused mainly on providing enough detail so as to give overview of what *fa'aSamoa* may entail. I chose this definition above others because this was the most comprehensive explanation including both invisible and visible components that many other authors did not make reference to. As a *palagi*, I was trying to understand some of the complexities of why Samoans do what they do for their family members, including FHHs.

cannot exist in isolation from one another and as I intend to demonstrate it is the *fa'asamoa*, 'Samoa heart', the 'Samoa way', certain elements of the component 'structures and institutions', various 'ceremonial practices', and finally, certain 'protocol and values' that will ensure FHHs are not isolated as individuals or a social group, and that according to *fa'asamoa* neither will they be rendered to the category 'poorest of the poor'.

Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991) observes that *fa'asamoa* "continues to be the enduring central core to which Samoan life moves today" (p.iii). Holme and Holme (1992) concede the reason that Samoa has managed to retain much of its traditional culture, lies within the nature of the culture itself, especially in terms of its attitudes and institutions as they relate to the family (p.100). *Fa'asamoa*, the foundation of Samoa is based on kinship values and this kinship network extends to include migrant families. "There is a very real and intense pride in being Samoan and in being part of the Samoan nation" (Ngan-Woo 1985:9). This pride and commitment to one's family appears to be what drives people (also see O'Meara 1990:15 for references to Samoan pride and retaining a Samoan identity). These points are pertinent, because the Samoan family in all its shapes and forms, and the collective support from and commitment to the family, are at the very heart of this study. This leads me to the next section of this chapter where the importance of the family according to *fa'asamoa* will be discussed.

The importance of the '*āiga*'

Prior to contact by colonial settlers, and the introduction of *fa'akerisiano* (Christianity), the family was where most social interaction and activity occurred (Grattan 1948:10, Saolotoga 1995:18). Traditionally the '*āiga potopoto* (large extended family) was the central force of Samoan life, whereas nowadays, the Samoan family while still being extended, is smaller in nature (Maiava 2001:80). Regardless, while activity and socialisation now occurs further afield than just the family; especially as people are in paid employment, belong to church organisations, sports groups and/or educational institutions, the family still has primary social importance.

All Samoans have their roots in two extended families. That is the family of their mother and the family of their father (Ngan-Woo 1985:9). The "family is the principle focus of identity and social location" (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991:54); the family unit and its position in society is where one derives one's status from (Maiava 2001:79, Ngan-Woo 1985:9,

Saolotoga 1995:20), as well as one's self-esteem (Maiava 2001:79). As noted also in *Chapter Five*, family is fundamental to one's very existence:

...Without your family, what are you...? Nothing (Field notes, Jan 2002).

Samoan's take enormous pride in their family connections (Davidson 1967:29). In explaining the cultural significance of family identification and relationships and the importance of identifying with a family, as part of a strong Samoan system, Moelagi states:

One's identification is one of the core factors in our system and in the life of every Samoan. This is the base and the root of our system. We believe we are the seeds of this earth. When it takes root and grows, the root system spreads out and gathers food to nurture the tree thus developing relationships with other elements of the earth, thus making the tree or the person stronger. Whether the roots get entwined with other trees or other fossils, rocks and water, we are still able to identify certain trees by tracing the source of its roots. At the same time this tree cannot exist without its relationships and without the sharing of the other factors around us and its dependence upon the sun, the air and what is all around... The same fa'ia (the links one has to another person) becomes even stronger when we relate ourselves to the giver of our land, our culture or life and wellbeing. Then everything points to God from which Samoa is founded upon. The interrelationship and our continuous relating of the present to the past and considering our decisions with tafamamao (vision) are the true complications of our root system. This is called our fa'ia or fa'asinomaga (connections or relationships). Identifications and our connections are the key factors holding our people together, no matter what condition, poor, weak, or strong we are still a proud people when it comes to our identifications of who, whom, where, what and why we are connected. This is the root of our wellbeing (Moelagi: Business woman and High chief, Nov 2004).

A widespread goal is to be a part of a well respected family who are well positioned socially (Maiava 2001:79). Therefore, "all of a Samoan's interest and emotion is centred on his or her family and from there to the family's place in the community" (Maiava 2001:79).

All members of the family have a special place and an important part to play within the family. Any addition to individual status will add to the status of the family. For example, while individual achievement in higher education is seen to strengthen and add to the family's status, any deviance may also bring the family into disrepute.

Such is the importance of family in Samoa, it has been suggested that to understand Samoan culture one needs to start with the family, as opposed to rank and status because the 'aiga (family) "motivates all behaviour, including purposes involving rank and status" (Maiava 2001:79). *Fa'asamoa* means that everybody understands what is expected of them in the family and of major importance is the notion of service, "service is the way family ties and feelings of identity are nurtured and is the major means for status raising" (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2000:99). *Fa'asamoa* means that people also understand what is

expected of them by the village. Just as the excerpt at the beginning of this chapter suggests, *o Samoa o le atunuu'u ua 'uma ona tifi* (Samoa is an already defined society), meaning every member knows their place, the expectations of them and their duties (Lay *et al.* 2000:15).

Social and political structures in the village

To understand the household in Samoa, an understanding of village social and political structures is required, because it is in the village that the household is located. Traditionally Samoan settlement patterns were decidedly nucleated. Each village was physically well defined, as was the political authority of *fa'amatai* which determined village social structure and governance (Howe 1984:230). *Fa'amatai* has been called the 'socio-metric wheel' on which Samoan society turns (Aiono 1986:104). According to *fa'amatai*, each village administered its own affairs, determined its own rules and policies, and had the authority to govern the people of the village. All villages were independent from each other, and saw themselves as quite distinct (Howe 1984:230).

Fa'amatai set the appropriate status and roles for Samoans (GoWS/UNICEF 1996:7). *Fa'amatai* determined the status and role of women as widows, wives, sisters and daughters. Under *fa'amatai* there were clearly divided status groups, with an equal distribution of status between men and women and a clear division of tasks amongst the groups, from which the *matai* and the *fono a Matai* (council of chiefs) were served (Cribb 1999, Schoeffel 1983, Simi 1991). Villages were divided into the *o le nu'u o tama' ita' i* (Village of the Ladies) and the *o le nu'u o ali'i* (Village of the Gentlemen) (Saolotoga 1995:20). Further division then occurred with the *o le nu'u o tama' ita' i* to include:

- *Analumua*: Daughters of the village
- *Faletua ma tausī*: Wives of the titled men
- *Avā a taulele'a*: Wives of the untitled men (Saolotoga 1995:21-24, Schoeffel 1995:98).

Historically it was the role of the *analumua* to attend to the ceremonial virgin princess, the *Taupou* (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1996:5, Meleisea 1992:15, 26-27, Saolotoga 1995:21) who was generally the daughter of the paramount chief of the village. *Taupou* would be treated like a Goddess in the anticipation that she would marry an important chief from another village. She would take the lead role in dancing, in the traditional welcomes and farewells and be

responsible for mixing the 'ava at any official ceremony with her chiefs and their guests. She was considered to be the most respected woman in the entire village (Saolotoga 1995:21). The *analuma* ranked higher than either their brothers or their brother's wives. In fact, the *analuma* had a ranking equal to that of titled men (GoWS/UNICEF 1996:8).

The missionaries sought to replace the *analuma* with the *Komiti Tumamā* (women's committees). The church did not approve of the *analuma* because of some of the customs they were part of, such as the *pōnla* (night dances) or the ways that unattached women lived separately from their family or ex-husbands. In those days the *analuma* lived together and on puberty unmarried girls joined their ranks and living quarters (Schoeffel 1995:103). This is where Schoeffel has argued that the *Komiti Tumamā* became subordinate to the *fono*, rather than standing as a parallel institution as the *analuma o tama' ita' i* (daughters of the village). Thus today only a few villages (one of which is Safotu where Moelagi Jackson a key informant in this study resides) still have powerful *o le nu'u o tama' ita' i* (Village of the Ladies with the daughters) and tend to differentiate themselves from the *Komiti Tumamā* (Schoeffel 1995:104)

The *faletua ma tausi* and the *avā a taulele' a*, were considered to have the lowest adult ranking in the village and were responsible for the domestic tasks. Amongst the wives however, *faletua ma tausi* had a higher ranking than the *avā a taulele' a*. The *faletua ma tausi* and *avā a taulele' a* were expected to serve their husband's family and his sisters. It was believed that a *nofotane* (wife married into the family) held a subordinate status to her husband and his family because through marriage her husband had conquered not only her sacredness but also her family's esteem, by extension, which she represented (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1996:8). While it appears as though a daughter-in-law in Samoa is a second-class citizen; this argument was put to me during the final fieldwork period and noted in my fieldwork journal:

Today I (Rochelle) was discussing the idea of *faletua*, an in-marrying women's position, to mean at the 'back of the house'. One of the village women X said to me "I think that palagi sometimes behave in this way. I have this palagi friend she is married to a palagi guy also. Her in-laws well they aren't so nice to her". X then asked me "What about your in-laws? You are married aren't you? Tell me how has your husband's family responded to you over your married life? Are you a good daughter-in-law in their eyes or not?" 'Yes, I see what you are saying' I respond, and out of a discomfoting realisation I change the direction of the conversation (Field notes, April 2006).

Fetauimalemau, in speaking about women's role as *faletua*, reports '*this role is still extremely important...especially because the household is part of the wider village network*' (Fetauimalemau: National Council of Women, Nov 2001). Rather than seeing this role as one of powerlessness, over the years many women have played this role out incredibly well, with pride and flair, receiving much recognition for their services to the village (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1996:91, 127, 2000:99). For if the back is functioning well then all that is out front will also function very well. As the quote suggests:

Not only are many women in Samoa the back of the house they are the backbone, the spine, and what happens when you take away the spine, then it, the entity becomes spineless, without feeling, without sensation, without movement. It, the entity will collapse. The backbone is the most important part even though you don't see it; it is the most important part, along with the heart and the soul which are also not seen. Perhaps the most important things in life are in fact those that are not seen, rather than those that are (Fetauimalemau: National Council of Women, Nov 2001).

Maria K, a Samoan academic, agreed:

To have a strong fale (family/household), you must also have strong foundations, otherwise the cyclone will blow it over. You see during the last cyclone... 'Cyclone Ola', the fales fell, only the concrete foundations remained. It is not what you see that is important; it is what you don't see. Like the coconut tree. What is the point of having a fine tree if the roots are not deep and strong? The roots are what you don't see. Like I said the cyclone will only blow it over. What you do see and what you don't see are both just as important. The front positions and the back positions are both as important. Everybody's place is important and you see everyone has a place; this is what keeps the 'āiga strong, keeps the fale strong, especially in times of the cyclone... or because we are speaking metaphorically, in times of trouble (Maria K: Samoan academic, Jan 2002).

Regardless of *faletua*, this same woman still held status within her own village. Should a woman remain in her village, regardless of marriage, she was still considered to be *auluma*, a daughter of the village, meaning she maintained her high status. Status is very much about location, and even today it is common for people in Samoa, when speaking about women, to say 'everybody is a queen somewhere' (Tui: Business woman, Nov 2004). This also means status and identity are fluid.

Much acknowledgment is also given to various Samoan women who have held positions of power. As already mentioned, Nafanua the prophet, as well as Queen Salamasina the first woman leader of Samoa, holder of four prestige or paramount titles, known for her wisdom as a leader and ability to secure peace and justice, are still spoken of⁶¹. There are also contemporary female power-holders of renown, such as Honourable Fiame Naomi

⁶¹ See Saolotoga (1995:25-27) for a full account of Queen Salamasina, the first women leader of Samoa.

Mata'afa, the current Minister of Education, as well as Fetauimalemau Mata'afa, one of the founding members of the National Council of Women, or Moelagi Jackson, a Samoan business owner, holder of several chiefly titles and community spokesperson.

In terms of the *o le nu'u o ali'i* further division occurred so as to include:

- *Matai*: The titled men
- *Ali'i* or a chief title, which were those who could trace their titles back to sacred origins, and were connected to aristocratic lineages;
- *Tulāfale* or a talking chief/orator title, which were generally about rendering service to, and oratory on behalf of, the *ali'i* (Meleisea 1992:15).

Thus, there were two different types of *matai*, the *ali'i* (chief) and the *tulāfale* (orator or talking chief). Most important were the *ali'i* titles and subservient to the *ali'i* title were one or more *tulāfale* (O'Meara 1990:33)⁶². All *matai* then made up the *fono* (village council), and it was this *fono* that had the authority and power to determine village development, village administration and social control (Meleisea 1992).

While succession to *matai* titles is generally about kinship and decent, kinship and descent are not always about blood ties. Succession is not just about father to eldest son, it is about the most appropriate person to undertake the role, therefore all members of the family including daughters are eligible (Grattan 1948:12). *Matai* titles can be made claim to through either the male or female line (Gilson 1970:29, Ngan-Woo 1985, O'Meara 1990, Schoeffel 1979, Shore 1982:307). While both male and female heirs still have access to *matai* titles, (apart from a few villages in Samoa where women are not permitted to hold *matai* titles) and therefore family land and other resources, *matai* titles have usually been bestowed to men⁶³. Today, the number of women who have been bestowed *matai* titles is increasing, for example, the number of registered women titleholders has doubled in the last three years (Samoa Observer 2005:5). Still many women who are offered *matai* titles

⁶² At the national/political level the hierarchy between titles has lost importance – at the village and district level the values linked to titles and authority remains (Tcherkézoff 2000:14).

⁶³ The NGO Shadow Report on the Status of Women in Samoa identifies this issue and argues that not only does this perpetuate the belief that Samoan women have no place in political or public life, but that this is unconstitutional and not in accordance with traditional Samoan custom (PPSEAWA *et al.* 2004:6).

tend to pass them onto their sons. In other words, more women are offered *matai* titles than are accepted (Maiava 2001:85)⁶⁴.

In critique of the increase in women as *matai*, Thomas (1986:106) and Shadrake (1996:68) argue this has only occurred so women could vote as directed by their family head, and between elections their title meant very little because they would revert back to their traditional roles. This is an interesting perception given that the traditional role accorded women a complementary status as opposed to a lesser status. Complementary needs to be understood in terms of equality, rather than inequality. At times complementary has been misunderstood to mean different and therefore of less value (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991:23).

While the *matai* title came with status and power, in return accountability to the *'āiga* and responsibility for the *'āiga* were expected. For example, the *matai* was responsible for the welfare of the *'āiga*, maintaining peace within the family, upholding the name of the family within the village and making decisions about land use and other resources.

The break up of the family into smaller units has resulted in the splitting of titles meaning in some instances *matai*, whilst demanding rights and privileges as accorded by their titles, are no longer carrying out the expected communal responsibilities as before (Meleisea 2005:83). For example, the maintenance of schools and health clinics, and access roads to plantations were some of the responsibilities that lay with *matai*. Those with few material possessions benefited markedly from the local community provision of services. When these services are no longer available or are run down, it is the poorest that then suffer. They do not have the added extras of a pick-up truck to travel to town to get medical care or attend better-kept schools. "...individualism only works well for those who are reasonably prosperous" (Meleisea 2005:84).

In return for *matai* guidance and leadership, it was expected that *'āiga* members at all levels whether male or female will *tautua* (be loyal and provide service) (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1996:4, Grattan 1948:12). Certainly, the right to hold authority occurred by first demonstrating loyalty and service. The *matai* who was the *pule* (authority) within the *'āiga* would take *tautua* (loyalty and service) into account when selecting another *matai* (Ngan-Woo 1985:11). Today there is some evidence that economics can play a major part

⁶⁴ Also see Schoeffel (1995:104-05) for discussions surrounding women promoting their sons inheritance claims, whereas historically and according to the *feagaiga*, women would promote their brothers' claims.

overriding loyalty and service. A *matai* title may go to a family member in New Zealand with a well paying job, rather than the member who has remained in the village and dutifully worked on the family plantation (Soma: Elderly village pastor and *matai*, Nov 2004).

Despite the examples which indicate a watering down of the *matai* system, it has also been argued that the value and importance of *fa'asinomaga* (connections or relationships) and *faiā* (the links one has to another) means the *matai* system will remain strong and continue to rejuvenate:

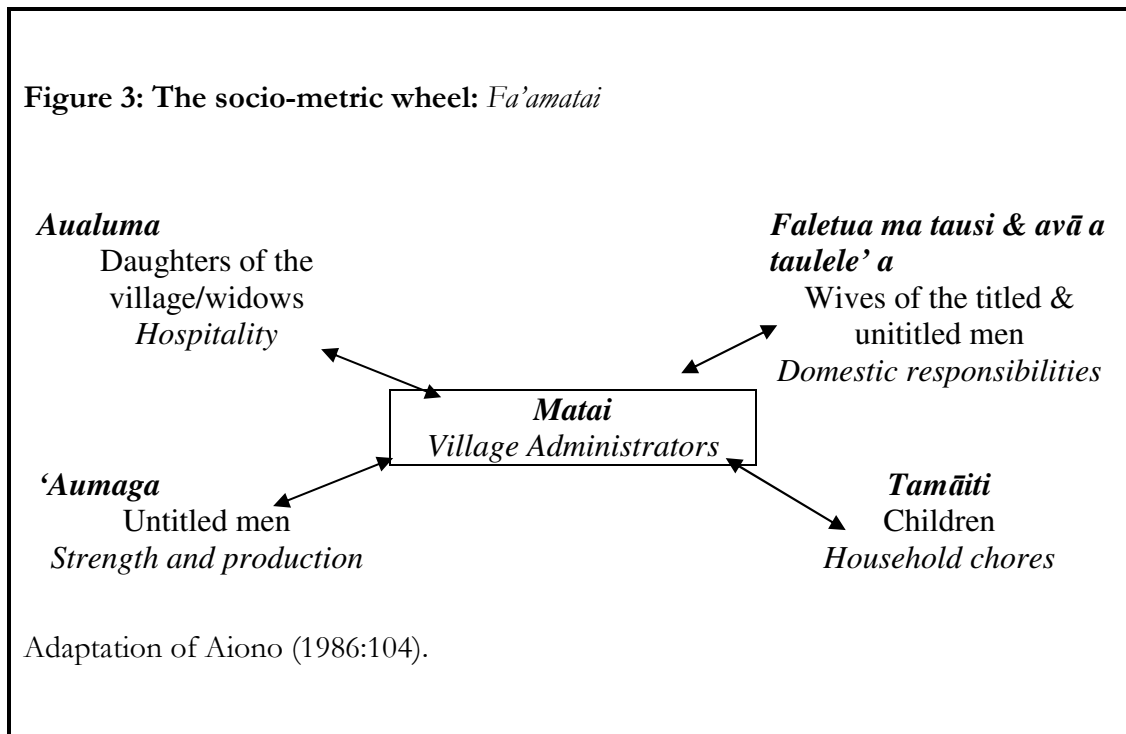
It is through the same faiā that our matai system remains strong. I am convinced that as long as our chiefly system of identification remains there will be more strong seeds who will guard our heritage and nurture more trees to thrive upon the land, thus Samoa will always flourish forever (Moelagi: Business woman and High chief, Nov 2004).

Finally, also included as part of the *o le nu'u o ali'i*

- *'Aumaga*: The untitled men

The *'aumaga* were considered to be *malosi o le nu'u* (the strength of the village), because they were the army, fisherman, horticulturalists, cooks and sportsmen of the village (Meleisea 1992:14). This group was also understood to have a lower status, and women who were *analuma* held higher rankings and had more status.

Below is a diagram demonstrating the ‘socio-metric wheel’ on which Samoan society turned and to a large extent still does today.



In summary, women clearly had two distinctly defined and contrasting statuses. As sisters and co-descendents they were entitled to independent status and rank, but as wives their status and rank derived from that of their husbands. In her natal village a woman was somebody with an important role and status but in another village, especially her husband's, her status was less (Grattan 1948:16, Meleisea 1992:24, Schoeffel 1979). Sisters therefore ranked higher than their brothers, but wives were subordinate to both their husbands and their husband's sisters (Schoeffel 1979). While this may look like married women were devalued or discriminated against, the same could be said for a married man in his wife's village (Saolotoga 1995:20), or for a brother without a chiefly title.

The status of a Samoan woman was clearly determined by the kind of relationships she was engaged in (Saolotoga 1995:20). This difference in status between sisters or daughters of the village and wives, is important in terms of FHHs because traditionally when a woman separated from her husband she would generally return to her own village, automatically guaranteeing her welfare and the wellbeing and security of her children according to *fa'asamoa*.

While Samoan society is still structured in a way where the village and the *'āiga* have remained dominant and where positions and roles continue to be determined by *fa'asamoa* and *fa'amatai*, meaning the household and headship can only be understood in relation to these, *fa'asamoa*, *fa'amatai*, the village and the *'āiga* have not remained static. Before a comprehensive understanding of the household and headship can be gained, some of the influencing factors or reasons why adaptation has occurred require exploring, especially as they relate to women's status. This will now occur with a particular focus on Christianity and the cash economy.

The incorporation of *fa'akerisiano* (Christianity) into *fa'asamoa*

It is argued that *fa'asamoa* “readily absorbs and incorporates ideas and inventions from other parts of the world” all the while providing an “environment which ensures cultural continuity” (Lay *et al.* 2000:15). One such idea that has been readily incorporated is *lotu* (religion) namely *fa'akerisiano* (Christianity). In 1830, John Williams brought the first group of missionaries to Samoa from the Cook Islands. As the Samoans were already aware of Christian ideology from the beachcombers, and other Pacific Island converts (Gilson 1970:68-70, Meleisea 1987:12), *fa'akerisiano* came as no surprise and was introduced with relative ease (Meleisea 1987:12-13):

Prior to the arrival of Christianity we were already practising a Christian/Jesus philosophy...Do unto others etc as you would have done to yourself...because this is the basis of fa'asamoa. They knew it was coming... it was expected ah. This is why Christianity was so accepted. The invisible God was also already here, the only thing missing was Jesus Christ the Saviour. So it was accepted and then the Samoans, well, they just Samoanise the church... (Moelagi: Business woman and High chief, Nov 2004).

As mentioned, a number of explanations have been given for this. Firstly, the war goddess, *Nafanua*, prophesised that a new religion would come to Samoa, ending the influence of the old gods. Williams's arrival was therefore seen by the Samoans to be “fulfilling a prophecy” (Meleisea 1987:13). Secondly, before the arrival of Christianity Samoan people actually had their own notion of *lotu* (religion) in terms of *pa'ia* (sacredness), from which the idea of *tapua'iga* (waiting for a chance for success) is derived (Mulitalo-Lauta 1998:43). Even today *tapua'iga* remains a strong feature of Samoan society (O'Meara 1990). Thirdly, the rapid acceptance of *lotu* and *fa'akerisiano* could also be attributed to the fact that high chiefs were competitively looking for a new source of sacred power (Meleisea 1987:13). Fourthly and finally, *fa'akerisiano* because of its practices reaffirmed ideas around rank in the family and village (Lay *et al.* 2000:52).

The integration of *fa'akerisiano* into *fa'asamoa* also resulted in a number of changes. *Fa'akerisiano* meant that chiefs were no longer allowed multiple marriages as polygamy was outlawed, although it did introduce the practice of divorce (Simi 1991). In the new order, sacred powers were also attributed to pastors (Meleisea 1987:13). While the Samoans still believed that the chiefs had a divine authority, this now came from a Christian god. Hence, chiefs had to set examples by now following the laws of God and displaying Christian behaviours and values (Lay *et al.* 2000:52).

Meleisea (1992:22) argues that while the introduction of *fa'akerisiano* had a levelling effect on *fa'amatai*, it also undermined women's status and position as accorded by *fa'amatai*. To explain further, *fa'akerisiano* replaced the ideological rationale of bloodlines which had linked only certain women and men to the gods. While this bloodline link had attributed great powers to only a few grand chiefs, this was through the maternal bloodline. When a number of candidates were vying for a high title, more common when chiefs had sons from more than one wife, selection was made based on the ranking of a candidate's mother or the strength of a candidate's maternal connections. Christian teachings eroded this selection through inherited rank as linked to women (Schoeffel 1979:Chapter 11, Schoeffel 1995; also see Meleisea 1992:40-41 for a clearer account around *matai* inheritance laws and practices).

In the past, the agrarian nature of pre-European-Christian Samoa assured Samoan women access to political and economic power. Women were vital in forming and maintaining alliances between families and other villages; however, the missionaries discouraged women from entering the political (public) arena, seeking to focus on their private roles. The household or nuclear family as the unit of production was encouraged. Christianity often came with ideals that were based on middle-class, Victorian England values, whereby the family unit was nuclear and a man and woman were legally married. Men were the breadwinners and women were the homemakers. Women were meant to prepare and cook the meals, as opposed to the *'aumaga* (young men).

While certain changes stemming from integration with European and Christian influences have "precipitated an intensification of gender inequalities" for some women (Cribb 1999:4), in other ways they have not. In advocating a shift toward all women being seen as wives, rather than sisters, wives who historically had no status in their husband's village gained in status. While some Christian groups rendered women to be equal, this equality

was sometimes below the status of men (Cribb 1995:58-9). Moreover, what the missionaries “did not appreciate was the concomitant decline in the status of sisters would be to the detriment of women” (Schoeffel 1995:103). “The gender attributes of women as sisters and their lifelong rights in and loyalties to their kin group and villages” were underestimated (Schoeffel 1995:107). This is of concern when considering the way the *feagaiga* relationship worked as a safety net for many women. The undermining of this relationship could have had dire consequences.

The cash economy was promoted, in that Samoans were encouraged to sell crops for money and buy European goods (Lay *et al.* 2000:52). Christianity brought with it a change in dress. Women especially, were encouraged to cover up, not a logical idea in the heat. Traditional tattooing was discouraged, as was the use of traditional medicines and practices (Lay *et al.* 2000:52).

Not only did Christianity and its accompanying work ethic impact on the production unit, that is, the extended family structure, it expected that the production units would *fa'alavelave* to support Christianity. When a village converted to Christianity the people would erect a church and a house for the pastor or Christian teacher, and they would contribute to the church by supporting the pastor, with food, money or through the provision of services. Families would also contribute in terms of the crops they grew. For example, coconut oil and arrowroot starch would be collected by the mission and shipped to England where the produce would be sold to earn money for the mission. As was the case in most villages, during church services family heads would call out the donations that their family had made, each family vying for the title of largest contributor. This competition also transpired to a village and regional level (Meleisea *et al.* 1987c:54-55). Today, this is still a common practice.

Undeniably, Christianity has become so much part of *fa'asamoa* that it is now used like the old religion to legitimise its institutions (Meleisea 1992:23). Tradition/culture and Christianity are often so interconnected and overlapping that it is difficult to see where either begins or ends. The national motto of Samoa is ‘*Fa ‘avae i le Atua Samoa* – Samoa is founded on God’ (Lay *et al.* 2000:52). Kamu (cited in Huffer and Qalo 2004:92) contends that the successful integration of Christianity into *fa'asamoa* is more about the commitment by the Samoan people to *fa'asamoa* and the influence of *fa'asamoa* than Christianity. “The Church, while existing in the same world as culture, fails to appreciate the cultural

contributions to the communication of the Gospel in Samoa” (Kamu cited in Huffer and Qalo 2004:92).

From a Samoan perspective, Moelagi seeks to clarify the practice:

Every November you have to put in so much money and this money goes to the running of the church. It is us [the Samoan Congregational Church] and the Methodist that are doing this and there has been a lot of criticism from Western people you know, like some people study the culture of the church and say what we are doing is wrong. But we think that the more we are contributing money the more we are living actively with God. The thing is Samoans were always doing Christianity, the only thing that was different is Jesus Christ, so the money we are giving away we are giving for God because there is so much blessedness. The fresh flowers; my life; my children who are happy; we have enough food. You know every morning I wake up and I wish I could be reborn like [in] Genesis. I wish there was something that I could give, kill a cow or a pig and give. I know this is my only way of thanking God... it is my offering... So the reason why people are poor is because they are seeking to thank God... We are trying to educate everyone though that you don't have to give away everything you have, just give what you can afford to give. God gave you these things to look after yourself first, your children first, what is left you put away 10 sene [10 cents] every day and then just a token of thanks to God (Moelagi: Business woman and High chief, Nov 2004) [my inserts].

As stated above, pastors are seen to be God's spiritual agents, therefore pastors are held in high esteem. As also indicated above, Samoans have continued the practice of *fa'alavelave* (giving) to the church, and providing for the pastor and his family (Meleisea 1992). One of the most obvious features of many villages continues to be the large church or churches (see *Plate 1: Village church*), and situated in close proximity the pastor's large house and the church hall. This gifting to the church is often seen by non-Samoans to be to the family's demise or at their own expense. Many non-Samoans argue that Samoan people will give to the church before they will purchase their own necessities. Many have argued that this overzealous manner of giving and insatiable taking by the pastor needs to stop (Western tourists and expatriates 2001, 2004, Pers. Comm.). Many non-Samoans also report that making a family's contributions public is wrong, and it has been suggested that this 'public shaming' forces families to contribute more than they can afford too, so as to 'save face' (Western tourists and expatriates 2001, 2004, Pers. Comm.).

As noted in preliminary research undertaken by Kerslake (2006) where the socio-cultural way in which people saw and defined poverty was investigated, many families spoke of struggling with *fa'alavelave* obligations to the church and in many instances they reported few reciprocal returns. To explain further, while some pastors are often happy to pray for a sick family member, families did not feel that they could call on their pastor to drive

them to the hospital in the middle of the night, or ask for financial support if the need arose. There appears to be little practical returns to dutiful members of the congregation from the church, whereas *fa'alavelave* to the members of one's family are mostly reciprocated. Thus, it is argued that the idea that there is a relationship between religious responsibilities and issues of poverty is correct (Kerslake 2006; also see Muagututi'a 2006:58). *Fa'alavelave* obligations to the church are therefore very real, and as such they may pose a potential challenge for FHHs, (as do school fees and the need to purchase consumer goods).

Regardless of the negative or positive changes that Christianity supposedly brought to women's status, on the whole this provides a case of the Samoans adapting a paradigm to meet their needs (see *Plate 2*: Returning from Sunday morning church service). Hence it can be assumed that Christianity has probably not had an isolating and detrimental impact on family arrangements and relationships, such as the *feagaiga* relationship, as it could have. This can be attributed to the strength of *fa'asamoa*.



Plate 1: Village church



Plate 2: Returning from Sunday morning church service

The contemporary social, political and economic context of Samoa

Governance structures

As mentioned previously, despite previous Western governance, the land, the resources, and the political power have remained at the village level and in the hands of the *fono* (the village council), *matai* (chief and head of the extended family) and the *'āiga* (the extended family or kin group). This system of governance known as *fa'amatai* is based on traditional frameworks where each extended *'āiga* was headed by a *matai* and it was the *matai's* responsibility to oversee the welfare of the family, manage the land that came with the title and represent the *'āiga* in village affairs as part of the *fono*. While people continue to be governed via *fa'amatai* and the *fono*, a number of changes have occurred to *fa'amatai*.

Current day Samoa is governed by a system that while recognising the traditional system, now incorporates a central government. A system of *matai* suffrage was introduced upon independence, whereby only *matai* could stand for election and could vote. In 1978, the *pulenu'u* committee was established, thus linking central government with the village. *Pulenu'u* are similar to village mayors, with each village council or *fono* electing the person they wish to represent them on the *pulenu'u* committee. Hence the link between government, *pulenu'u*, *fono*, *matai*, and the *'āiga* was made more obvious. In 1990, universal suffrage was introduced for those over the age of 18 years. However, the fact that only *matai* can stand for election has remained unchanged (So'o *et al.* 2006:27). To date, rules of *mālo* (government) are recognised at a national level, however at the village/regional level

the power of *fa'amatai* remains (Tcherkézoff 2000:125). Hence, there continues to be some contradictions between “traditional customary concepts of governance and the modern democratic governance models” presenting a number of challenges to both the community and the government (GoS *et al.* 2006:11).

The Samoan economy

The land and the sea are Samoa's main resources, with 75 per cent of the population still depending on the land and the sea to provide their main income or supplement their income (ADB *et al.* 2000:4). There is no mineral base (Meleisea 1992:66), and industrial expansion is unlikely due to the distance from major trade routes (Overton and Thaman 1999:25-31). Although of late, Samoa is seen to be the economic success story of the Pacific, with the tourist industry noted as a key contributor to economic growth, accounting for approximately 15 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). The tourism industry is the second largest foreign exchange source after remittances⁶⁵, with the potential to increase foreign exchange, providing income and employment in the rural areas (GoS *et al.* 2006:11).

In Samoa 43 per cent of land is thought to be arable; and 13 per cent of this land is considered to have moderate to high fertility (Dunlop 1999:49, Overton *et al.* 1999:168-9). In terms of usable land, traditional agriculture comprises 80 to 85 per cent of the land area under cultivation, and contributes substantially to GDP (Fairbairn 1991:15, Fairbairn-Dunlop 1994:180). Samoa's national economy is heavily dependent on its primary products, including agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. Production and processing of primary products account for 80 per cent of export earnings, as well as 50 to 60 per cent of the work force (So'o *et al.* 2006:29). Since the 1970s there have been changing employment patterns, with noted growth occurring in the financial and business sector (0.7 per cent to 7 per cent), in social and personal services (15 per cent to 20 per cent) and in manufacturing (2 per cent to 4 per cent) (So'o *et al.* 2006:29).

In the early 1990s two major events impacted on the Samoan economy: firstly, two cyclones, Ofa in early 1990 and Val in late 1991, and secondly, the taro leaf blight disease of 1993-1994, which wiped out Samoa's main export crop. Cyclone Heta in 2004 is also

⁶⁵ Other industries considered to be growing well are fisheries and automotive parts – although it is still noted they comprise a narrow export base (GoS *et al.* 2006:4).

noted to have caused much damage (GoS *et al.* 2006). While the economy has recovered well this is seen to be a reflection of the large aid donations received, the reestablishment of the agricultural industry, growth in the tourist and fishing industry, and benefits that have stemmed from economic reform (ADB *et al.* 2000:1)⁶⁶. Remittances that stem from overseas also play a major role. According to ADB *et al.* (2000), today “the most important and stable source of income in the economy is remittances from Samoans working in New Zealand, Australia and the US” (p.1).

‘Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy’ (MIRAB) economy

For a number of decades now, Samoa has utilised to its advantage atypical development opportunities, giving rise to Samoa having a MIRAB economy. The term MIRAB was first conceived by Bertram and Watters (1985) who argued that Pacific Island states had been able to secure and maintain a relatively high standard of living because of the on-going relationships they have in the form of migration and resulting remittances, and aid donations from their previous colonisers. Countries with MIRAB economies “were able to sustain high levels of import consumption, despite long-run trade deficits” (Fraenkel 2006:15), with many MIRAB economies also having government expenditure in excess of locally generated revenue, with the ability to completely finance “their current accounts through aid receipts, service or trust incomes and remittances inflows from migrants working overseas, without recourse to unsustainable borrowing on the capital account” (Fraenkel 2006:15). MIRAB has had such an influence on the economies of Pacific Island nations, that it is actually a model of development in its own right. The components of MIRAB will now be discussed.

Migration and remittances

The first elements in the MIRAB system are Migration (MI) and its accompanying remittances (R) (Bertram and Watters 1985:497). Samoans have been steadily migrating since, and before, the 1980s, when the New Zealand government’s migration quota scheme allowed approximately 1200 Samoans yearly to have residency in New Zealand (GoS 2001:8). While on one hand migration has caused the loss of expertise and skills in

⁶⁶ Samoa is considered to be the darling of the Pacific international aid donor community because of their success with public reform programmes, the development of private enterprises, rates of economic growth, improvements in human development indices and the provision of sound governance (Dr Donovan Storey 2005, Pers. Comm.; also see the following for accounts that support this statement by Storey <http://peb.anu.edu.au/pdf/Samoa%20Update%202003-Salevao.pdf>

the labour force, this is outweighed by the fact there are not enough jobs available for those graduating or leaving school (AusAID 2006). For other Pacific Island countries such as Niue or the Cook Islands whereby the phenomenon of migration has depleted the workforce, especially where shortages to the labour forces are fairly severe (Nero cited in Smith 1998:10), the same cannot be said for Samoa⁶⁷.

Migration and remittances are very important aspects of the Samoan economy and to the Samoan people as will be shown. Demands of a growing cash economy, and the mobile nature of Samoan people have had a definite bearing on the structure of the household and the family, giving rise to household composition and headship being fluid in nature. Limited economic opportunities within Samoa, various political ties that allow migration, family members already residing in Australia, New Zealand and the United States, and the fact that English is taught in schools, means that overseas travel to New Zealand, Australia and the United States is quite comfortable. Consequently, Samoans are frequent travellers. All of these points have relevance to this thesis because they enable all family members, no matter how far away they are, to stay in touch. This has also been made easier for some families with the advent of electronic communication.

When the abovementioned are coupled with the values and beliefs that underpin *fa'asamoa*, it is easy to understand why family members consider migration as an economic strategy. It is the traditional emphasis on the importance of providing and caring for the family that motivates migration and the sending back of remittances (Bertram 1993, Maiava 2001:31). Maiava (2001:84) in discussing why family members donate cattle to the funeral of a parent, talks about the ideas of equating loving with giving, and the social importance of generosity and demonstrating love and respect. It transpires that these same values identified by Maiava (2001:84) are also the same values that motivate Samoans who migrate to send remittances home. It is the search for betterment for the family that has been a key driver in the 'MIRAB' process, noted in this saying "leaving in order to stay' or 'going away without leaving'. This diaspora is bound into island and village life" (Nietschmann cited in Connell and Conway 2000:72). Between the 1970s and 1980s:

about one third of the Samoan population moved overseas, forming communities in the United States, New Zealand and Australia. In a period of 20 years we became, in effect, a nation without geographic boundaries (Meleisea 2005:78).

⁶⁷ It does need to be noted that Pacific Islands, including Samoa, still suffer the 'brain drain' in terms of skilled and/or professional positions such as nursing (Toelupe 2005:250).

However, not everyone sees the migration and remittance relationship in this way, with many believing it to be untenable and/or an example of failed economics. Some have argued remittances encourage inappropriate consumption and consumerism (Connell and Conway 2000:58), believing that because remittances are not personally earned, recipients do not deserve them. It is also argued that remittances distort island economies; island economies are “weak, vulnerable, powerless and dependent” (Connell and Conway 2000:58). This perspective is noted in the comment made by World Bank’s Denise Aldous who, in speaking to a Pacific Economic Symposium, stated that “remittances fostered a dependency culture and harmed New Zealand’s economy” (Fraenkel 2006:17-18)⁶⁸. Connell and Conway (2000) stress:

Remittances and return migrants’ contributions to social and cultural capital accumulation strengthen familial and communal networks and ties. They not only help to maintain these institutions but enlarge their social fields of interaction incorporating them into transnational, multilocal networks of support and empowerment (p.53).

Hau’ofa (1993) noting the importance of remittance practices argues:

Islanders in their homelands are not the parasites on their relatives abroad that misinterpreters of ‘remittances’ would have us believe. Economists do not take account of the social centrality of the ancient practice of reciprocity, the core of all Oceanic cultures. They overlook the fact that for everything homeland relatives receive they reciprocate with goods they themselves produce, maintain ancestral roots and lands for everyone, homes with warmed hearths for travellers to return to at the end of the day, or re-strengthen their bonds, their souls and their identities before they move again. This is not dependence but interdependence, which is purportedly the essence of the global system. To say that it is something else and less is not only erroneous it denies people their dignity (pp.12-13).

For a number of years now Pacific people have formed international networks so as to provide for the family. Thus the people network is paramount, irrespective of locality. Pacific peoples “have grasped the notion of being global citizens and are light years ahead of the rest of us who still feel limited by physical boundaries” (Maiava 2002:3; also see Marsters *et al* 2006 who makes many of the abovementioned points in relation to the Cook Islands).

⁶⁸ The World Bank later apologised for the comments that were made (Fraenkel 2006:17, 28).

Migration and remittances have generally been economically good for the Samoan family, with many families planning long-term by taking migration into account. O'Meara (1990:80) observed families were fairly strategic when planning for long-term financial security, and old age. Most placed one person in a waged job in Apia and one or two overseas. Others remained in the village home and continued to maintain the plantation and care for elderly parents and other dependents.

Since no source of income is adequate or secure enough in itself, most families take a shotgun approach to financial success and old-age security attempting to scatter as many children as widely as possible across the economic landscape (O'Meara 1990:80).

This is a common approach, taken by people all over the developing world, when faced with conditions of economic insecurity; any risks become reduced by “diversifying investments” (O'Meara 1990:80). Bertram (1986:809) argues that aid and remittances are not supplementary to income, rather remittances and aid have been the foundation of the modern Samoan economy.

Regardless of doomsday predictions surrounding remittances, remittances have grown rapidly since the 1980s, and are continuing to rise. In 2005, remittances were recorded as being up 8 per cent on the previous year. Overall, remittance figures are estimated to be 24 per cent of GDP (GoS *et al.* 2006:6), although this figure does not take into account all of the non-monetary items that are sent, such as clothing, furniture, linen, kitchenware, electronic goods and even vehicles.

While Samoa has a high birth rate of 4.4 per cent, the population growth rate is slow at 1.0 per cent because of out migration (Faafeu-Taaloga 2003:22, GoS 2001:9). As recorded over the last few years, approximately 5000 Samoan's have been migrating annually to either New Zealand, Australia or the United States (GoS *et al.* 2006:7). In terms of gender and migration it is noted that more males than females tend to emigrate (GoS 2001).

Aid

The second element in the MIRAB system is aid (A) (Bertram and Watters 1985:499). Under the 1962 Treaty of Friendship it was agreed that the New Zealand government and Samoan government would:

continue to work together to promote the people of Western Samoa. In particular the Government of New Zealand will consider sympathetically requests from the Government of Samoa for technical, administrative and other assistance (GoS *et al.* 2006:15).

To date, Samoa remains greatly dependent on overseas development assistance (ODA) or aid, which accounts for 14 per cent of GDP (AusAID 2006:1). Both Australia and New Zealand are significant partners in development, accounting for approximately 25 per cent and 12 per cent respectively of the aid received (GoS *et al.* 2006:Annex B). Other key donors and lenders are the ADB, World Bank, the European Union, China, Canada, Japan, UNDP, and the World Health Organisation in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund; with the total development assistance to Samoa for the 2005-2006 period calculated to be USD\$52.3 million, consisting of 35.9 million in grants and 16.4 million in loans (GoS *et al.* 2006:18).

Bureaucracy

The last element of MIRAB, bureaucracy (B), makes reference to the notion that the government or public sector is the primary cash employer (Bertram and Watters 1985:500). AusAID as part of their development agenda is working with the Samoan government on the continuation of public sector reform, with NZAID taking a lead role in the development of the private sector, which currently contributes around 12 per cent to GDP. Since the mid-nineties key reforms that have occurred have included the privatisation of some government services and state owned enterprises (SOEs), thus between 1987–1996, 21 SOEs were liquidated or privatised (Knapman and Saldanha cited in ADB 2000:61). Hence it does need to be noted that due to public sector reforms this “avenue for job growth is closing” (So’o *et al.* 2006:29). Despite downsizing, the public sector in Samoa continues to dominate (GoS 2005:6), accounting for 32 per cent of employment in terms of formal job opportunities (GoS *et al.* 2006:10).

Poverty in Samoa

The previous section has shown firstly, how regardless of the missionaries and the colonials the frameworks of *fa’asamoa*, *aiga* and *fa’amatai* whilst evolving, have continued to hold fast in Samoa. Even with the introduction of Christianity, which has been ‘Samoanised’, these frameworks are where the family and the household continue to be located and women’s status continues to be determined. For the most part it appears that women in Samoa have a favourable status. Secondly, in considering the contemporary

social, political and economic context of Samoa, current governance structures and the economic situation have been outlined and the importance of migration, remittances and aid to Samoa has been shown.

Now it is important to consider ideas about poverty in Samoa, especially because FHHs are so often conceived of as impoverished. Poverty has generally been defined as not having enough income. In this sense, poverty is primarily understood in relation to economics (Tuilaepa and Nartea 2002:1). Contesting this narrow definition, it has been argued that poverty needs to be understood as a multidimensional and subjective concept, hence as of late there appears to be a paradigm shift which seeks to understand privation in a way that incorporates the social, physical, spiritual and cultural spheres, inclusive of subjective experiences of poverty, as opposed to just incomes and consumption (Chambers 1983, 1995, Chant 2003b:22).

In terms of poverty classifications, because of favourable levels of foreign aid and contributions from the family systems, Samoa has what is known as an 'atypical development pattern' (Dunlop 1999:58, Fairbairn-Dunlop 1996:4), meaning that rankings on certain poverty indices vary in relation to each other. To explain further, Samoa has high levels of health and education services (and material goods), reflecting a situation of affluence, without the levels of economic development that are generally necessary to support this (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1994:180, 1996:4, Muagututi'a 2006:55-56). However, because remittances and aid have contributed less significantly to areas of trade, Samoa has a less developed commercial sector. This atypical development pattern transpires to mean that while Samoa is classified as Least Developed Country (LDC)⁶⁹, Samoa is also said to have a lower middle-income economy with moderate indebtedness (World Bank 2006:

⁶⁹ Samoa is classified as a Least Developed Country (LDC). The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations uses the following three criteria to identify LDCs, as proposed by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP): a low-income criterion, a human resource weakness criterion (involving an amalgamation of indicators such as nutrition, health, education and adult literacy) and an economic vulnerability criterion (based on indicators such as the instability of agricultural production, the instability of exports of goods and services, the economic importance of non-traditional activities (share of manufacturing and modern services in GDP), merchandise export concentration, the handicap of economic smallness and the percentage of population displaced by natural disasters). Being placed on the LDC list means that a country has met all three criteria. To be removed from the list, a country must have met the thresholds for two of the three criteria in two consecutive triennial reviews by the CDP. To date the total number of LDCs is 50 (GoS *et al.* 2006:16). In March 2006 the United Nations reviewed Samoa's LDC status and recommended graduation to Developing Country status, however Samoa has sought a review of this decision and will retain LDC status for two more years during the review process. For full details see Malielegaoi 2006: <http://www.un.org/webcast/ldc2006/pdfs/samoa-eng.pdf>
For more information about LDCs see <http://www.un.org/special-rep/ohrlls/ldc/ldc%20criteria.htm>

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS>). Moreover, while Samoa might be a LDC, according to the Human Development Index (HDI) Samoa does in fact rank firmly in the medium human development category⁷⁰. In 2002, Samoa had a HDI of 0.769 and was ranked at 75 out of 177 countries (UNDP 2002). In comparison New Zealand is categorised as having high human development, a HDI of 0.926 with a ranking of 18 (UNDP 2002). Samoa is ranked 5th amongst 11 other Pacific countries in the HDI (Tuilaepa and Nartea 2003:2). Regardless, external aid coupled with remittances have been fundamental “in offsetting the country’s vulnerability to the affects of weather, crop destruction and the vagaries of world markets” (ADB *et al.* 2000:1).

From a gender perspective, it is interesting to note that in 1981, 1991 and 2001 respectively, Samoan women have consistently had a higher HDI than men (1981: Men = 0.641 and Women = 0.663; 1991: Men = 0.705 and Women = 0.722; 2001: Men = 0.790 and Women = 0.805). It is argued this is “because of their greater life expectancy and slightly higher education achievement status” (Muagututi’a 2006:56). Figures covering the same periods also show that females have higher enrolments in both primary and secondary school (Muagututi’a 2006:56).

Along with the HDI, Samoa is also ranked on a global scale according to a Human Poverty Index (HPI). The HPI measures deprivation, longevity, knowledge and standards of living. In doing so the HPI looks at indicators such as the percentage of people who do not have access to safe drinking water and health services, the percentage of underweight children and levels of illiteracy. In terms of human deprivation, the World Bank has defined poverty in its absolute form to mean “complete material destitution – as living on less than one US dollar a day in purchasing power” (Muagututi’a 2006:56).

There is much debate about levels of *mativa* (poverty) in the Pacific. In Samoa “describing someone as *mativa* is a major offence” (Tuilaepa cited in Tavita 2006) and poverty is a highly charged, emotive term. The Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa argues that to suggest

⁷⁰ The World Bank’s main criterion for classifying economies/countries is gross national income (GNI) per capita. Previously, this was understood as gross national product (GNP). Based on its GNI per capita, every economy is classified as low income, lower-middle or upper-middle income or high income. Geographical regions and levels of external debt are also used as analysis groups. The World Bank’s analytical income categories (low, middle, high income) are based on the World Bank’s operational lending categories (civil works preferences, International Development Association (IDA) eligibility, etc.). For information about World Bank country classifications see <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS>

Samoa is wallowing in poverty is incorrect: “Samoa is blessed with God’s gifts of fertile soils where anything grows and an ocean full of fish and marine edibles, ensuring that no one goes hungry...” (Tuilaepa cited in Tavita 2006) It is commonly believed that a ‘subsistence affluence’ exists according to the traditional ways of life, *fa’asamoa*, families share in the resources (GoS 1997:5).

The communal systems – including the large subsistence sector, strong cultural identity and traditional values and the stable social fabric based on the village community and extended family systems – have prevented the onset of severe poverty on a large scale in every Pacific country (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2005:72)⁷¹.

Others, however, have declared it a myth that Pacific Island communities “are societies of self-sufficient farmers living comfortably off the bounty of nature and protected from poverty by a strong social support system in local communities” (UNDP cited in UNDP 2000b:Chapter 10), arguing many Pacific Island countries are suffering from marked inequalities and rising poverty. The UNDP estimates that 48 per cent of the population in Samoa live on less than USD\$5 a day (Tuilaepa and Nartea 2003:2), with an estimated 6 per cent of the population living on less than USD\$1 per day (GoS *et al.* 2006:8), which is understood to mean, according to the World Bank, that they are living in absolute poverty. Further investigations, suggest there are new and very real concerns about people meeting their basic food needs:

Approximately 20 per cent of Samoans are estimated to be living below the basic poverty needs line and 9 per cent below the food poverty line and experiencing financial hardship on a daily or weekly basis (GoS *et al.* 2006:8).

Although those who live below the food poverty line may not necessarily be experiencing hunger, Samoa does have a high number of lifestyle illnesses, such as Type 2 diabetes, cardiac diseases, or kidney related disorders, which are the result of poor dietary habits or making poor lifestyle choices. The suggestion that some people are vulnerable to food price fluctuations and are unable to meet basic nutritional needs (GoS *et al.* 2006:8), may therefore be correct.

Fairbairn-Dunlop (1996) in undertaking a poverty study cites a case of a widowed woman, in a household of two other adults and six children, living below the food and basic needs

⁷¹ While Fairbairn-Dunlop (2005) makes this statement it is not done through rose-coloured glasses. Accounts from this scholar also note that in some instances family systems are not protecting people to the extent that they once did.

poverty line. In summarising her findings, Fairbairn-Dunlop (1996) indicates that Apia squatter communities with no access to land for gardens, urban villagers with limited garden space and rural families who may have enough food to eat but have few income generating opportunities or opportunities to market their goods for cash, are possibly more vulnerable to poverty in Samoa. This point is also supported by Storey (2000:88) who stresses while some urban *'aiga* have access to land and crops and have strong family ties, others do not. Symptoms of disadvantage have been noted. Malnutrition in children, unschooled youths working and wandering the streets are visible. The Household Income and Expenditure Survey (GoS 1997) has confirmed that a number of people, in particular those who live rurally and without a wage earner, are also facing some hardship.

The Samoan government has “no specific policies for poverty alleviation” (Muagututi’a 2006:58; also see United Nations 2002:viii). Whilst a number of the development documents talk about ‘patterns of hardship’, ‘at risk groups’ or those ‘most in need’, for the most part, they do this without specifically defining or articulating who these might be. This is a wise approach as it does not unnecessarily categorise people or predetermine whose needs will be the greatest. In a more recent development document some references have been made to vulnerable groups listing youth, women, rural dwellers, the disabled and the elderly as vulnerable, and a passing reference has been made to FHHs in relation to hardship: “Community consultations also identify women-headed households are likely to suffer hardship” (GoS *et al.* 2006:8). This brings me to consider how poverty or hardship might be understood in Samoa, both in formal documents such as policy and informally.

Poverty in Samoa has been described in a number of ways. Firstly, poverty has been described as poverty of opportunity (UNDP 1999:5), meaning, “that disadvantaged groups and rural areas lack opportunities and poor governance to advance their economic wellbeing” (ADB cited in Tuilaepa and Nartea 2003:2). Secondly, in the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (GoS 1997) the terms absolute poverty and relative poverty are defined, with absolute referring to those households living in conditions whereby basic needs, such as shelter, food or clothing are not met, and relative poverty making reference to the fact that people may be living below a certain level in terms of income and resources, therefore their ability to participate or share in the diets, customs and activities that comprise the society is restricted (GoS 1997:5; also see Muagututi’a 2006:57 for poverty definitions). Thirdly, terms such as hardcore and transitory have also

been used to describe poverty in Samoa. Hardcore means that the community is vulnerable to economic shocks and there is an inequitable distribution of growth benefits among the people, and transitory means that the community is vulnerable to natural disasters and epidemic disease, which can push the entire population below the poverty line. Transitory poverty is short term and requires immediate intervention such as emergency relief, and hardcore poverty is longer term and can not be resolved by direct support and assistance, rather it is about improving the economic and social situation (Johnson and Dhal cited in Tuilaepa and Nartea 2003:3).

In keeping with the abovementioned definitions, poverty in Samoa is generally considered to be relative. Poverty is usually described as poverty of opportunity, caused by isolation from the world economy, having few natural resources, being small in population and size, and having limited capabilities to deal with external shocks, such as recession in the global economy and natural disasters (ADB cited in Tuilaepa and Nartea 2003:2). It is also reported that Samoa has a large and at times ineffective public sector (Tuilaepa and Nartea 2003:2). All in all, it is thought by many that Samoa is potentially vulnerable to poverty. This is especially noted given the categories Samoa has been placed into, for example, developing, LDC, and SIDS⁷².

The 'Joint Samoa Program Strategy' in noting that poverty is not officially acknowledged by the Samoan government⁷³, seeks to define the idea of impoverishment as having an inadequate supply of income so as to meet basic needs⁷⁴, having a lack of or poor access to basic public services, including health, education, water, transport or communication and limited opportunity to engage in formal employment (GoS *et al.* 2006:7-8): "absolute poverty, or the inability to meet one's basic needs as it is found in other developing countries or the world... is not prevalent in Samoa" (Adams and Sio 1997:6; also see Muagututi'a 2006:57). This opinion was also supported during fieldwork:

⁷² Samoa is also known as a small island developing state(s) (SIDS). It is considered that SIDS are faced with two main hindrances to development - isolation and small markets. Common issues related to their topography and surroundings, which impact on water tables, coastal zone management, waste disposal and related items, challenge many of them. At the same time, it is argued that building effective partnerships among stakeholders at a local, regional and global scale is the only way islands can improve living standards while conserving the environment. For further information about SIDS see <http://www.sidsnet.org/>

⁷³ Also see Muagututi'a (2006:57) who notes that the issue of poverty is quite a new public concern in Samoa.

⁷⁴ While this reference is made to incomes in a study which sought to ascertain causes of malnutrition in Samoa, it was also argued that cash income on its own is not a sufficient indicator in identifying disadvantage. There are many unidentified exchanges/transactions that occur between families and one needs to account for produce from the land, the sea and the remittances received, all of which occur "outside of the formal market sector" (Adams and Sio 1996:6).

From a Samoan perspective there are poor people in terms of not having enough income to use... but in terms of having food, shelter over your head, and clothes I don't believe, generally speaking, I don't believe that there is even a point of a per cent. Samoans all have someone [who can support them] (Shon: CEO, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, April 2006) [my insert].

Hence even though poverty in the Pacific is rarely as visible or as extreme as other regions of the world, there are certainly people who are disadvantaged compared to others in their communities (Muagututi'a 2006:57). As the quote above suggests, poverty is not so much about having nothing, rather it is about not having anyone that you can depend on.

Comments from the field would also suggest that defining and/or identifying poverty in Samoa is very complex:

Poverty is such a personal thing. In many instances people will deny that they are poor, often they will say you should speak to my neighbour – but put it another way. Do people want better roads, more chances in terms of employment, better water supplies, the opportunity to attend school? Then they will generally say yes. Do they have hopes and dreams for themselves and their children? Then they will tell you yes. We need to shift this focus on just talking about the poor, on just talking about poverty alleviation, we just need to start talking about life, how people are living it, and what it is they want and do not want. What are people doing already – making the most of, ask them, 'what do they think they need help with?' (Maria K: Samoan academic, Nov 2006).

People lives should not be reduced to sets of indicators on which assumptions are then borne out and acted upon (Maria: Business woman, Nov 2004).

Therefore defining, understanding and addressing poverty is not clear-cut, least of all in a context such as the Pacific where “the concept of poverty is politically sensitive and often rejected as a form of post-colonial framing” (Storey *et al.* 2005:31). Hence this explicit focus by development aid agencies on poverty and poverty alleviation may actually be counterproductive, (if not, somewhat culturally insensitive) and actually end up creating dissonance.

This point now leads me into the next part of the chapter which explores Samoa's position and strategic direction in relation to the global poverty agenda and the MDGs.

Policy responses to poverty

Since the 1970s, Samoa has adopted a number of policy strategies towards poverty alleviation, from the “trickle-down blueprinted development approach of capital accumulation” to the “adoption of inward-looking policies in the pursuit of self-

sufficiency” and then “macro-economic reforms and re-structuring to pursue a free market economy through the privatisation of public enterprise, and public sector reform” (Tuilaepa and Nartea 2002:1)⁷⁵. The ADB, AusAID, NZAID, UNDP, the World Bank are, in addition to the government, all working in some way, shape or form to address poverty in Samoa.

Aid programmes that focus on poverty alleviation are very apparent in Samoa. The Joint Samoa Program Strategy 2006-2010 draft paper, prepared by the Governments of Samoa, Australia and New Zealand, is considered to be a supportive document to Samoa’s Strategy for Development 2005-2007 and the guiding framework for development and aid delivery from Australia and New Zealand. It is noted that each agency will take the lead role in certain sectors, for example, New Zealand intends to focus on the development of the private sector, tourism, civil society and community development, and health. In addition to continuing to work regionally with organisations such as South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat or jointly in other areas, for instance, education, with organisations such as the ADB (GoS *et al.* 2006:4-5). Most of this work is intrinsically linked to poverty alleviation.

Undeniably, development in Samoa is influenced or guided by a number of local and regional level analyses and policy documents. Local and regional level documents included the Samoa Program Strategy 2005-2007, government sector plans, New Zealand’s Aid policy framework ‘Towards a Just and Safe World Free of Poverty’, and Australia’s ‘White Paper’ and the ‘Pacific Regional Aid Strategy 2004-2009’, with global frameworks including the MDGs. *Table 5* records some of the documents that currently have an influence on the strategic direction of development, especially with relation to poverty alleviation, in Samoa.

⁷⁵ Tuilaepa and Nartea (2002) note the Samoan government “has been accused of blindly following the growth path of developed countries, adopting the trickle-down approach of capital accumulation as a strategy for reducing poverty” (p.6). They also argue that there has been a large emphasis on alleviating income poverty, with little attention given to other element of poverty such as powerlessness (Tuilaepa and Nartea 2002). A paradox is certainly evident in that the Samoan government whilst not subscribing to the idea of ‘poverty’ in Samoa, has limited options because poverty alleviation is the current development approach.

Table 5: Poverty alleviation policies and strategies with relevance to Samoa

Document and Authors	Overall Intention
MDGs (UNDP 2000a)	A set of targets for reducing poverty, hunger disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women by 2015.
Samoa 2000: Building on Recent Reforms (ADB <i>et al.</i> 2000)	The promotion of macroeconomic reforms and restructuring as a strategy for reducing poverty.
NZAID Five Year Strategy 2004/05 to 2009/10 (NZAID 2004)	Empowering those in poverty through the achievement of the MDGs, supporting governance which addresses poverty, and reducing vulnerability to poverty.
Enhancing the Fight Against Poverty in Asia and the Pacific: The Poverty Reduction Strategy of the Asian Development Bank (ADB 2004)	This is a poverty reduction strategy whereby the ADB proposes to reduce poverty in the region by robust, sustained, pro-poor economic growth and social development, including human development, improvement in the status of women, and better governance
Australia's Pacific Regional Aid Strategy 2004-2009 (Australian Government and AusAID 2004).	This strategy focuses on poverty reduction, stability, growth and peaceful development.
Pacific 2020: Challenges and Opportunities for Growth (Australian Government and AusAID, 2006)	A vision targeting Pacific Island countries whereby poverty reduction occurs through economic reform and growth, and good governance
Pacific Plan: For Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration 2006-2008 (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat 2006)	Articulates the areas where Pacific States will gain the most through the sharing of public resources and the alignment of laws and policies, so as to enhance and stimulate growth, sustainable development, good governance and security.
Australian Aid: Promoting Growth and Stability - White Paper on Australian Government's Overseas Aid Program ⁷⁶ (AusAID 2006)	A strategic 10 years plan for the Australian Aid program in the Asia-Pacific Region. The plan focuses on poverty alleviation and the achievement of sustainable development in line with Australia's national interest.

Moreover, the Australian and New Zealand governments have undertaken a situational analysis so as to determine options where AusAID and NZAID have a role to play in poverty alleviation, thus helping Samoa achieve the MDGs within the set

⁷⁶ In 2000 the British government's Department of International Development (DFID) released a paper articulating what its intended contributions were to be in relation to the MDGs. The paper was also a White Paper, entitled 'Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor' and it is argued that globalisation has much to offer in the alleviation of poverty. Therefore whether poverty is alleviated depends very much "on the policy choices adopted by governments, international institutions, the private sector and civil society" (cited in Willis 2005:175). It asserts that as long as development actors take the correct managerial approach to development then poverty alleviation will ensue; the correct approach is one that "falls within a neo-liberal free trade system" (cited in Willis 2005:175).

targets/deadlines. In a critique of this approach, Storey *et al.* (2005:31) have accused AusAID and NZAID of ‘follow the leader’ behaviour “where these smaller programmes are clearly policy takers rather than policy makers”, and “where the aid fashions have been determined by the wider global actors” rather than those at the local or regional level. An example of this is also noted in the ways that the gender mandate gets applied with little consideration to what gender might actually mean. As noted previously various development issues and fads quickly get accepted - at least superficially - in the developing context, regardless of their relevance (Shrestha 1995:277).

Rather than reflecting regional concerns, it has been argued that the poverty alleviation approach tends to maintain the status quo by:

allowing agencies to accommodate poverty alleviation strategies alongside, or within, existing approaches such as market liberalisation, or good governance, distorting alternative approaches to fit the orthodox model (Storey *et al.* 2005:42).

All too often poverty alleviation rhetoric makes reference to good governance – with good governance understood to mean governance that favours globalisation and neo-liberalism, thus the mainstream development agenda is advocated and reinforced, as are mainstream ideas about the representation of poverty. In fact the same old approach is being mandated by the global institutions such as the World Bank (Bond 2006), the difference is that it is now being sold door to door by regional sales-parties, such as NZAID and AusAID, with no questions being asked about the role donors, or donor countries play in poverty creation (Storey *et al.* 2005:42).

Storey *et al.* (2005) argue that while there maybe a consensus amongst global lenders and donors that poverty alleviation is the number one priority, this consensus may not transpire to the recipients. Previously aid in the Pacific had not been so explicitly tied to poverty. Placing poverty first has not always been welcomed by Pacific recipients (Muagututi’a 2006:57), and may change the nature of or undermine the donor-recipient relationship. Placing poverty first has the potential for creating regional tension in the Pacific, especially if ideas around poverty, the causes and therefore the solutions, do not align (Storey *et al.* 2005). As I have already mentioned, ideas and labels of poverty in the Pacific are very emotive.

This poverty framework can also mandate a top down, one size fits all approach that is abstract from the various social, political, and cultural contexts that they make reference to. Antrobus (cited in Bond 2006:340) reports having little faith in the MDGs, seeing them to be a device of distraction away from some of the wider political and economic processes that cause poverty. “[It is taken for granted that] the G8, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Bretton Woods Institutions and the Third World state elites are the solution, not the main part of the problem” (Bond 2006:342).

Conclusions

This chapter has sought to explain the historical and contemporary cultural and socio-economic context of Samoa within which FHHs are situated. The chapter began by articulating the pre-Christian and colonial history of Samoa, which was helpful for understanding not only post-colonial relationships, in particular the Samoa/New Zealand relationship, but for understanding the commitment to *fa’asamoa* (the Samoan way). *Fa’asamoa*, the *‘aiga* (family), and *fa’amatai* (the social and political structure of the village) were then discussed in detail, and were shown to be critical to this thesis because this is where the household and the family continue to be embedded and where women’s status and experiences, including that of FHHs, are determined. Consideration was also given to the integration of *fa’akerisiano* (Christianity) into *fa’asamoa* articulating what changes (favourably and unfavourably) have occurred in relation to women. In presenting the contemporary situation of Samoa, the importance of migration, remittances and aid to Samoa’s level of development was highlighted. Finally, in considering development in Samoa, a critique of outside-imposed notions of poverty and the various responses that are played out in the context of Samoa was also discussed. It was shown that development is now explicitly tied to the MDGs and the global poverty alleviation agenda, whereby a neo-liberal free trade approach, or similar, is supported. It is also highlighted that intersecting development so tightly with poverty alleviation is potentially problematic given that definitions and understandings of poverty in Samoa are complex and emotive. Knowledge of these ideas and processes is fundamental to understanding the position and development experiences of FHHs in Samoa, which will be discussed in the next 3 chapters.

Chapter Seven: Women's Development in Samoa

'E au le ina'ilau a tama'ita'i... means 'the legacy of women is one of total achievement'. Indeed, the high status of women has long been recognised in our culture and traditions. When women succeed, their families succeed and society prospers. This is the Samoan way (Safuneituuga 2005:3).

Introduction

Building on *Chapter Six*, *Chapter Seven* articulates the changing pace of life in Samoa and how this plays out in relation to Samoan women. The introduction of the cash economy, changes to the *'aiga* (extended family) and the *matat*/land tenure systems and urban drift have naturally had an influence on the structure of the household and women's role and status in Samoa. These will all be discussed. Having located women's current development position, the chapter then goes on to consider the development experiences of women and some of the policies that have been put forward to promote gender sensitive development. The abovementioned dialogue is fundamental for locating the development experiences of FHHs in Samoa. The chapter concludes by discussing how FHHs are currently represented in development policy and planning in Samoa.

The contemporary status and role of Samoan women

The introduction of the cash economy and changes to the *'aiga* and the *matat*/land tenure systems have naturally had an influence on women's roles and status in Samoa. Notwithstanding these changes, it is important to note that women's roles in Samoa vary. Women who reside in a rural environment have some differing experiences compared to women who reside in a more urban environment.

The position and situation of rural women

In the village there is still a strong correlation with the traditional role and the position of women based on *fa'amatai*. The village continues to operate in a semi-autonomous fashion under the leadership of the two major village institutions, the *fono* (village council) and the *Komiti Tumamā* (the women's health delivery committee) (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2000:99). Family are represented in both institutions. The *fono* remains responsible for village development, law and order, and in 1990, the authority of the *fono* was legally mandated by the 'Village *Fono* Act' (Dunlop 1999:57).

The *Komiti Tumamā* are responsible for the health of children and hygiene standards of the village. They are located in a village *fale* and the committee ensures that all children are registered for health programmes. They also carry out regular inspections of households ensuring a particular standard of hygiene is maintained. Generally all mothers belong to this committee, ensuring a certain level of wellbeing for their children and the household. *Komiti Tumamā* activities also include the growing of vegetable crops, fundraising and income generation activities such as the production and sale of handicrafts (see *Plate 3: Women's committee handicrafts fale*), and education or training specifically for women (Dunlop 1999:57).



Plate 3: Women's committee handicrafts *fale*

There has been some debate about the 'real' influence of the *Komiti Tumamā*. The *Komiti Tumamā* were not established as an oppositional configuration to the *fono* (men's council)⁷⁷. Rather they are separate committees and their roles are different and complementary, and part of the greater whole. Thus, these committees and their roles are not situated to be greater versus lesser, or powerful versus powerless. Indeed, the power they hold is different, with one or another's power being more influential depending on the situation, shifting and changing across space and context. Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991:89) observes that

⁷⁷ This is not to say they have not been viewed this way by some looking in, for example, some development agencies or Western scholars such as the above-mentioned Shadrake (1996).

the power of the *Komiti Tumamā* can be very effective⁷⁸; however others suggest that the *Komiti Tumamā* only really has authority in terms of women and the *fono* always has the last say (Schoeffel 1995:104, Shadrake 1996:65). Regardless of differing perceptions held about the power of the *Komiti Tumamā*, the *Komiti Tumamā* has played a fundamental role in health care delivery (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2000) and is an important factor in the lives of all village women. Today, *Komiti Tumamā* are affiliated with other organisations, for example, the National Council of Women, national church associations, and the Samoan Women's Development Committee (GoWS/UNICEF 1996:8)⁷⁹.

Most village women still basically ensure the smooth running of the household by undertaking the washing and cooking, any shopping, as well as being responsible for the care of the children. They also maintain the surrounding household area, for example, the weeding and collecting of rubbish and leaves. Women also take care of vegetable gardens, do the less physical work at the plantation, and gather seafood, including small fish. Many of these responsibilities are also assigned to children and the elderly.

Women also continue to sew, weave, and have the responsibility for the family's health. Women care for their elderly parents, the disabled or infirmed, and as stated above, women continue to play a role in their village committees, as well as the church. One adjustment in the household setting is to do with meal preparation and cooking. Cooking was traditionally the role of untitled men, and in many instances this still occurs:

Last night I stayed in the village of X. I was welcomed and served dinner before everyone else. I noted that L's brother has done all the cooking, and he served everyone too. He served me first, then his parents, his sisters and he turned his back while they ate; then when they were done he and another man ate. He cleared every thing away also. This is definitely at odds with many environments where women and girls eat last, and as such receive lesser food in terms of quality and quantity (Field notes, Dec 2001).

However, with modern amenities such as gas stoves, this role generally delegated to brothers has become one that is ascribed more to women. In many instances, older daughters as well as sons are responsible for preparing and cooking the meals.

⁷⁸ See Fairbairn-Dunlop (2000) for an in-depth discussion about the vital contribution that the *Komiti Tumamā* have made to national development and the community influence they are perceived to have. On the other hand, also see Schoeffel (1995) for a detailed account of how the *Komiti Tumamā* was favoured by the missionaries and established in part, as an attempt to undermine the power of the *auluma*.

⁷⁹ Women's community organisations are seen to be crucial in the process of social services delivery at the village level (United Nations 2002:x).

In the rural areas there are less employment opportunities available, hence the urban drift in Samoa is noted. While some Samoans move to Apia and beyond for better schooling, employment and income generating opportunities, some Samoans also see reciprocity as a burden and so they leave to escape familial obligations. Some Samoans prefer freedom from *tantua*, which they can gain by living in town or overseas, as opposed to the security that the rural/traditional lifestyle gives them (Shadrake 1996:60).

The NGO shadow report on the status of women in Samoa suggests that rural women have fewer opportunities than their urban counterparts:

Rural women do not enjoy the same quality of life as urban women, they have fewer economic options, a lower standard of education and lower health, transport, and market services... increasing workloads and vulnerability to poverty are of concern. Data shows the rural labour force is being depleted by steady urban drift; largely males... in many villages, the task of dealing with the higher old age and child dependency ratios is falling on women (PPSEAWA *et al.* 2004:13).

This places elderly people at risk, especially if they are left to care in isolation for their grandchildren, while their sons or daughters are engaged in income generation elsewhere. Despite the strong cultural belief of providing for and caring about the elderly, it is important to be mindful that the elderly do not become a neglected sector of society (PPSEAWA *et al.* 2004:9).

The position and situation of urban women

The processes that have changed *fa'asamoa* at a village level have had more impact in the urban setting (Shadrake 1996:60). In Apia *matai* authority is less widespread and this can be linked to the fact that only 12 per cent of land here is under customary tenure (Cribb 1995:37, Shadrake 1996:60). Shadrake (1996) gives one example where only 73 per cent of urban dwellers considered themselves to be subject to *matai pule*⁸⁰ (p.60), whereby, virtually all rural people did. It is more likely in the urban setting that the household is the economic unit. This means that 'households' may be decidedly Western in organisation and function, rendering women to a more submissive household position. The household may be headed by a man, whereby he has resource control and decision-making authority (Cribb 1995:68, Shadrake 1996:70). Shadrake (1996) observes that urbanisation has

⁸⁰ *Pule* refers to authority, which may include the power to determine labour and resource allocation such as land and to settle disputes. This authority gets exercised at an individual level within the immediate or extended 'aiga and at a collective level through the *fono* (village council) (Shadrake 1996:53).

reduced traditional forms of authority for women and replaced it with other forms of power for example, being ‘head of the household’, or domestic violence. Many urban women “have traded *tautua* paid to a *matai* who exercise *pule* over resources, for domestic service or low paid employment under the authority of a husband” (Shadrake 1996:70-71). The urban drift and *palagi* existence may also mean women are less likely to be guaranteed the protective rights they had according to *fa’asamoa*⁸¹. This point has been demonstrated in Cribb’s (1995, 1999) research which is discussed in some detail shortly. Moving to Apia does not guarantee employment either. Comparatively women in Apia experience more unemployment or underemployment than men, and this has led some women to look overseas to earn income (Cribb 1999:5).

Not only is freehold land or leased land more evident in the urban setting, but also landholdings are smaller. Limited access to land means that urban people are further reliant on a cash economy, as opposed to subsistence practices. For example, people may not have the land area to plant taro and therefore have to purchase this from markets, or women may not have the time to make *’ie toga*. Indeed, many may not have traditional skills such as weaving.

These points are worth noting, because on one hand while urban FHHs may not be able to meet cultural or nutritional requirements through traditional methods like subsistence, on the other hand there maybe income generating opportunities available to those who have subsistence produce or handicrafts to sell, as will be seen in Lea’s example on page 183. Thus, many women have established their own small businesses and run stalls at the market selling produce or crafts or are employed successfully in the informal sector (Dunlop 1999, Shadrake 1996). This point is emphasised below:

Rochelle: Do you make the fine mats?

Tau: No, I can’t weave. Besides we have no time, we have to buy it. Lots of people don’t know how to weave, ...the mat (laughs). I think that lots of women buy their fine mats because they are working so they have to buy these. They have to buy. They can’t weave or they don’t have the time. This is good though, because the women who weave have a market to sell too. If you don’t have a job then maybe you can weave - make handicrafts to sell - like fine mats and sell these for cash, for your school fees, church donation and fa’alavelave (Tau: FHH, Dec 2001).

⁸¹ *Palagi* means European, those who literally came from the sky (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1996:189). *Fiapalagi* means to be like a white man or to not be Samoan.

Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991) notes that if a woman runs a business or has paid employment, it is unlikely that she will be expected to do the household tasks as well. Other members of the household will do these jobs instead; women do not automatically have a “double day” (pp.126-27):

I don't do anything around our place; just keep my space here tidy. I work all day in town. When I come home I eat, I wash and watch some TV. At the weekends my sister does my washing, she helps to care for my kid. Her husband works at the plantation (Leausa: FHH, Jan 2002).

As well as finding informal sector opportunities, many Samoan women are also highly educated and are in well paying jobs, both in the public sector and privately:

Look I have a good job, I am an accountant. We live on freehold land. When I got divorced, did this matter? Not really. I have always been independent. Just me and my kids, even the kids who are married they have their own households, just by me. We have a house-girl; she does the cooking and cleaning and things like this, and what do I do, well I play golf (Telesia: FHH, Jan 2002).

Many have substantial influence over their lives and work in partnership with the members of their households, or run their households, even at the wider level, as the quotes from Kalani, Shon and Maria K suggest:

He (talking about her husband) is no good with our money. Leave it to me I say; I am the financial manager of this family.

Yep, she is the financial manger (Confirmed by Kalani's sister).

Like I said leave it to me (Kalani: FHH, Nov 2001).

On some occasions a woman might say to her husband, what do you think, what shall we do? That is usually what I say. It is not really what people think, where something comes up and the husband says no, or the decision is just made. It is usually a two-way thing. But there is always that focus on who is the head, who makes the decisions, and generally outsiders...researchers try to attribute it to one person...This is not the case, well at least not in Samoa. Without a doubt women have much influence (Shon: CEO Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Jan 2002).

In my household I never make the decisions without talking to my husband. It is not because I can't, it is because it would be bad manners not to... it is respectful to include him. We decided when we got married that he and I would make the decisions because it is not me alone or him alone. There is now someone else that I/we needed to think about. It is not just his family or just my family. This is the way of a communal society, of a collective society. We both influence the household. Any decision that impacts on the family/the household must be made by the family. You can not perform as an individual in a collective society, it doesn't work well (Maria K: Samoan academic, Nov 2001).

Saolotoga (1995) has commented on the young women who leave their villages early in the morning to go to work in Apia, returning late at night. These women are sometimes referred to as '*teine o le town*' meaning town girls. This is noted to be a complementary label as it carries with it the connotations that they are more advanced than the other young women in the village (p.29)⁸². This approach may provide them the benefits of urban and rural living. Although if we take into consideration Cribb's (1999) viewpoint, that the shift towards a more urban lifestyle may mean women are less likely to be guaranteed the protective rights they had according to *fa'asamoa*, then working urban and living rural may still bring with it a number of negative impacts.

Thus far, much of the information provided about the situation and status of women in Samoa is somewhat conflicting. Whether one sees Samoan women as marginalised or empowered may be very dependent on what lens one is viewing the situation through. On the whole, similar to women in many other countries, Samoan women are neither completely marginalised nor completely empowered. There are certain instances where women are disadvantaged, and issues such as domestic violence and sexual assaults are certainly evident, however, as I have already mentioned there are also instances where women are held in positive high regard, and hold positions of power.

It also needs to be noted that for many people living in the urban setting, the village is still home. People continue to be linked intimately to the village, even when they are physically away. Thus, the distinction between living in the urban setting and living rurally is at times not so clear (see Pigg 1992:493 who makes this comment in relation to Nepal).

The changing nature of the family unit

One of the biggest social changes has been to the extended family. As noted before, the Samoan family is now more immediate, although not necessarily nuclear (Maiava 2001:80). In relation to this, *matiai* titles have become more common, thus land ownership and usage has had to adapt correspondingly and there is more reliance now on the cash economy.

⁸² Although it does need to be noted that many rural women are still perceived by urban dwellers as more in touch culturally. The inland and fairly isolated village of Uafato on the Island of Upolu is often used as an example of those who have expertise in terms of traditional handcrafts, and of living a life that is according to *fa'asamoa*. Some of the women in the villages when discussing Apia meanwhile made reference to the busy pace of Apia, the faster pace of life, the nightclubs and the temptations that people living in cities might be exposed to or engage in, like drinking and 'roaming' around.

The influence of the cash economy on women

A shift towards a cash economy has meant that the family is less able to rely on the subsistence economy or family members remaining within their traditional positions and performing their traditional roles. Cash is required for school fees, church donations, medical expenses, bus fares and consumer goods (Dunlop 1999:58), and comes from numerous sources, for example, the paid employment of a daughter or son, a small shop, a widow's pension, raising cattle and/or plantations earnings, the selling of crafts at the market, or remittances sent from Apia or overseas (O'Meara 1990:166-167). For women, this has meant another shift in terms of their Christian-influenced traditional role in the home. More and more women are the main income earners for the family, through small business ventures, paid employment or the informal sector (Cribb 1999:5).

Fairbairn-Dunlop (cited in Cribb 1999:53) reports that women who generate a cash income can experience an increase in status, acquiring greater ability to contribute to the family decision-making process:

When I first came to this family I didn't know anything. I did all the chores. I used to think about ways that I could get money and one of my friends they told me about Women in Business⁸³, that they were coming to find women who could weave mats and so my mother-in-law taught me about weaving mats. I started making mats with a bigger weave, and progressed to fine mats. Every week they [Women in Business Foundation] would pay me something. I earned some money and then we opened a little shop. My in-laws are very helpful to me; I have gained a lot of respect from them. I contribute more than many others in the family (Lea: Village woman, living in husband's village, Nov 2004) [my insert].

However, if income generation for the family is left in the hands of a woman, especially a single woman, it may undermine the status of the family as well as the *feagaiga* (brother-sister) relationship (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1993:211). It may make it look like a *matai* is unable to fulfil his obligations to his 'āiga, or a brother to his sister. Yet, the *feagaiga* relationship may also ensure her success in the workforce, as she is able to draw on the support of her brother (Shadrake 1996:67-68). As noted in Logo's statement:

He [my brother] knows that my job is important, important to us as a family. He is proud that I have an office job; it has good prospects and is paid well (Logo: FHH, Jan 2002) [my insert].

⁸³ The NGO, Women in Business Foundation was established in 1990/1991 with the intention of involving Samoan women in economic activities. The aim was to "promote and advocate women's interest in business. Stimulate and support small/micro business initiatives, facilitate and nurture cooperation between community groups and government, and act as both an advisory and training source" (Adi: Women in Business Foundation, Nov 2004).

We live in the village but I work here in town in this place [guest house]. My brother will always drive me here and there. It suits me. I hate getting on the bus. It is much better to go by car (Leausa: FHH, Jan 2002) [my insert].

The cash economy does not always bring an improvement in status for women though, even if she is the only or main income earner. Cribb's (1995:7) research on domestic violence identified that even in a very traditional rural village, those women who were more involved in earning a cash income were more likely to remain with a partner who was violent, as opposed to those who did not earn a cash income. Rural women who were earning a cash income have most likely withdrawn from the communal labour pool of the village, meaning traditional escape routes were not so readily available to them. Women in waged employment were also more likely to be members of a nuclear family, which also limited their escape routes:

...the weakening of the power and extended family structure, resulting from the introduction of capitalist forms, is eroding informal mechanisms of social support. Further, the increasing economic involvement of women in a cash-based economy has not resulted in increased power to escape violence because of the persistence of gender relations based on the missionary's masculinist ideals (Cribb 1995:7-8).

On one level while the cash economy has brought many positives in positioning women into the nuclear 'ideal', it has also managed to isolate some women, although it does need to be noted that the cash economy alone cannot be held solely responsible for this change.

Freehold housing is generally associated with nuclear family arrangements. Yet in the urban setting, where most freehold housing exist, freehold households can still comprise extended family members and any resources acquired, including wages, are put into the extended family pool (Cribb 1999:5). "Whether rural or urban, a Samoan household will generally pool their money from various sources and use it as necessary to cover requirements" (O'Meara 1990:166-167).

It is clear from this discussion that regardless of the rural or urban setting, there are a myriad of variables that influence the situation of a woman's family position, the extent of her connection in the wider local community, and her connections with a *fa'asamoa* model that guarantees her social support and a positive status. It is also important to note that a woman's status is not static:

Well my case is an example of a woman who now has a chiefly title in my family, they [the family] look up to me, and they give me respect. This was not always the case; I had a baby out of wedlock,

when I was 19 years old. I have worked hard, made my family proud; regardless of the past we have all moved on. They see me as an astute business woman; I speak my mind, to men and women. They respect me and they look to me for knowledge and direction (Neli: Business woman and gender expert, Nov 2004) [my insert].

Development interventions targeting Samoan women

Samoa has been captured in the women's global development agenda. The Maternal Child Health and Family Planning Programme launched in the 1970s very much reflected what was occurring globally with women's development. The *Komiti Tumamā* (women's committees) set up under New Zealand administration also reflected WID's focus on welfarism. While these committees engendered women's subordinated position because they focused on women's role in the home and as mothers, as well as women's community role, it is noted in the literature (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991:89) and by Samoan women themselves, that the "committees have made a valuable contribution in health and education, to Samoan life, the village and the family" (Pers. Comm. 2001, 2004), and as mentioned before to national development (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2000:97).

To explore further the example of education, compared to other countries in the Pacific region, it has been argued that Samoa has one of the highest adult literacy rates. It is reported that females between the ages of 15-24 years have a literacy rate of 98.4 per cent, with 98.9 per cent being recorded for males (Muagututi'a 2006:44; also see GoS 2001). As of 2003, the school enrolment rate for primary school aged males was 84 per cent, with 85 per cent for females. At the secondary level, 48 per cent of males were enrolled compared with 62 per cent of females (Muagututi'a 2006:44). Whilst these figures of enrolment do not necessarily coincide with the high literacy rates that have been reported for 15-24 year olds, in that enrolment should be higher or literacy rates should be somewhat lower⁸⁴, (Elisara 2006:7), it is observed that with the figures given, females generally record higher than males.

This favourism towards females is also seen in terms of university enrolments. Census 2001 reports, while 1044 males and 953 females between the ages of 15-24 years attended the university preparatory year, or engaged in some post secondary schooling in a tertiary educational institution, 227 females went on to attend university compared to 129 males

⁸⁴ Unless of course some of this group returned to school at a later stage in their life or undertook other forms of literacy education (Elisara 2006:7).

(Elisara 2006:7). Elisara (2006:8) suggests this could be because there remains a general perception that boys will always be able to earn an income through manual labour, whereas girls may not. Therefore, parents see higher education to be more valuable to girls.

During my fieldwork period of 2001, it was reported in the daily newspaper that girls had received most of the dux awards in comparison to boys, as well as many of the scholarships to undertake tertiary study (Jackson 2001:3, 10). In relation to the research participants, I also observed the educational achievements gained, with all having had access to and completed their primary education, while 61 per cent had had some secondary education and 28 per cent had a tertiary qualification or higher certificate, diploma or degree.

It is also argued that the importance and value of education for women has come into being because of the way that women and girls are valued according to *fa'asamoa* and in part should also be attributed to the drive of the women's committees and organisations which continue to articulate the important and valuable role of women in the community and the family.

As well as education, and as mentioned at the start to this chapter, the *Komiti Tumamā* have sought to drive public health programs with a particular focus on children and the household. They have also ensured the maintenance of schools, churches, village health clinics/hospitals, common grounds and water supplies. The *Komiti Tumamā* have played a major role in women's income-generating projects, such as the development of vegetable gardens, poultry farms, or the processing and selling of copra. Furthermore, they have successfully promoted activities such as the production of woven goods either for sale or for utilisation during cultural events. One such example is the making of sleeping mats to use during a *fa'alavelave* celebration such as a wedding (Saolotoga 1995:32-33).

Committees have further evolved to become national organisations, for example, the National Council of Women and later a breakaway group, the Samoan Women's Development Committee Association (UNESCO 2005). The National Council of Women in working with women's committees has continued to promote and coordinate existing public health services, promote the manufacturing and selling of handicrafts and sought to be a national voice for women. While the Samoan Women's Development Committee

Association has established development projects and programmes in accordance with women's economic, educational and health needs⁸⁵ (Saolotoga 1995:34).

Keeping with the WID momentum in 1990, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) was established by the Samoan government. The office was formally opened in 1991, making Samoa the first Pacific Island country to have a separate ministry for women. The MoWA operated under a Women's Advisory Committee made up of representatives from government departments such as health, education, internal affairs and agriculture, as well as women's affairs and various NGOs. MoWA primary objective was to promote and ensure the full development of Samoan women. Many policies, programmes and projects in the areas of agriculture, income-generation, health, education, political awareness raising, or women's empowerment were developed and put into action. The MoWA also adopted a gender and development approach, seeking to mainstream gender, and they set about forging working relationships with various independent researchers, development agencies and NGOs so as to develop a national database on women (UNESCO 2005:3).

As part of this data collection, a document known as the 'Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Western Samoa' (GoWS/UNICEF 1996) was produced, and when coupled with the data from 'Samoa's Country Statement on the Status of Women' (Fosi 1995), it was noted that the status of women compared well with or was better than other developing countries because regardless of the cash economy and the urban drift, *fa'asamoa* and *fa'amatai* had generally remained intact. However reports did indicate there was some evidence that the customary mechanisms of *fa'asamoa* were not operating as effectively, especially in the urban area (also see Fairbairn-Dunlop 2001:1, UNESCO 2005:2). It was identified there were trends towards more FHHs, however these might be defined and identified, an increase in maintenance cases and an increase in the number of women seeking help from relief organisations such as the Red Cross. There was also an increase in the number of women seeking legal advice from Mapusaga o 'Āiga, the organisation that focuses on reducing violence against women, all of which seems to indicate there is some erosion of communal caring (GoWS/UNICEF 1996:9)⁸⁶.

⁸⁵ The Samoan Women's Development Committee Association was established in 1989. This group emerged as a breakaway group from the National Council of Women. They felt that the National Council of Women had become too detached from community health issues and rural women and they sought to redress this (Saolotoga 1995:34).

⁸⁶ Also see the priority areas identified in the 'Samoa Country Statement to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, September 4-15 1995' (Fosi 1995).

These changing times have seen the weakening of the family structures –seen in the broken marriages, increase in solo headed households, [and] physical acts of violence against women and girls, as well as sexual violence within the family setting. Data shows that too many young girls are having babies too soon, too closely spaced and too many. Migration [urban and overseas] is also impacting on families - many villages may consist mainly of small children and women/grandmothers (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2001:2) [my insert].

In response, a number of government bodies and NGOs have considered women's strategic development direction. As of 2003, the MoWA was realigned with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry for Youth Affairs, to become the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. In releasing their first corporate plan, 2004-2007, this new Ministry in considering the future and pathway forward for women, sought to focus on enhancing women in the development of their families and communities. As no-one in Samoa can be seen in isolation from their family or their community, this makes sense as a starting point for women's development, or indeed any development in Samoa. There is also an explicit link between village responsibility for development and *fa'asamoa*. "Village responsibility for village development is at the heart of *fa'asamoa*" (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2000:99).

Care also needs to be taken so as to not misinterpret this focus on 'enhancing women in the development of their families and communities' as only seeing women's development in relation to their reproductive and community roles. In this instance, family is not understood to mean the Western nuclear model of the family, thus re-emphasizing women's role as mother and wives, it is about understanding family in a way that is culturally specific. Family and community are fundamental to both men and women in Samoa, because this is where people's roles, status and wellbeing remain located.

In saying this, acknowledgement has been given to the fact that women's roles in the village have certainly evolved. Many of the women's programmes and projects over the years have sought to focus on providing new opportunities for women so as to accommodate women's changing role. For example, with many women now seeking to generate income, many development programmes and projects have sought to upskill women, provide access to resources and create job opportunities, especially in the informal sector. The Samoan government acknowledges the need to create social, political, economic, or cultural opportunities, and in doing so also recognises the need to create jobs and offer micro-credit to those most in need (UNDP 1999).

The Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2005-2007 has identified six priorities; these are the strengthening of the private sector; agricultural development; tourism development; community development; education development and health development. In relation to community development, this is further articulated as the need to increase village production, maintain social coherence and harmony, with a particular focus on the family unit, the church and youth, and enforcing law and order (GoS 2005).

Comments from the field also support that a directive of the 'Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2005-2007' is about reintroducing village development as it used to be:

Here at the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, our current development focus is on community development ... the revival of the village community and economy. It is about the strengthening of the village, the religious leaders as well as civil society. We are really seeking to do this through traditional structures such as the village council and the women's groups. This is the focus we are taking with women's development. Our population is rural; therefore this makes sense to focus on the village, to prioritise strengthening and reviving the village. This is what women want; this is what the family wants. So in terms of the Samoan Development Strategy 2005-2007 community development is one of the strategic outcomes; in fact it is strategic outcome four in this development plan (Shon: CEO Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, April 2006).

In support of this Fairbairn-Dunlop (2005) observes that studies undertaken in the Pacific have also illustrated that women want development options that build on family systems. This is especially important, because as I have already stated, the family is the village community, and the community is where women's status is located and wellbeing has therefore been guaranteed. Thus, it is very important that Samoan women's development direction is anchored in this location.

To date, there are numerous policy documents available that consider the status and development direction of women in the Samoa. These documents are developed from, or link back into, many of the global or regional development documents. These are as follows, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (UNDAW 1979)⁸⁷, the Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (United Nations 1986), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Office for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, OUNHCHR 1989), the Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) (Pacific Women's Bureau

⁸⁷ CEDAW is an international bill of rights for women, covering all aspects of women's political, economic, and social rights (UNDAW 1979).

1994), the Beijing Global Platform for Action (UNDAW 1995), the UNDP Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UNDP 2000a), the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (Commonwealth Secretariat 2005) and the Revised Pacific Platform for Action (RPPA) (Pacific Women's Bureau 2005). Thus Samoa's national machinery for women holds primary responsibility for implementing programmes that address the various development plans for women.

While all of the above documents are applicable in some way to this thesis, the policy frameworks that hold particular relevance are the PPA (Pacific Women's Bureau 1994), the already discussed MDGs (UNDP 2000a), Samoa's report for CEDAW (PPSEAWA *et al* 2004) and the RPPA (Pacific Women's Bureau 2005). The PPA (Pacific Women's Bureau 1994) and the RPPA (Pacific Women's Bureau 2005) will now be discussed in relation to Pacific women's development vision. A discussion in relation to Samoa's CEDAW report (PPSEAWA *et al* 2004) will follow.

Influence of Pacific and international plans and conventions on women's development

Pacific Platform for Action and the Revised Pacific Platform for Action

In 1994 in Noumea, the 4th regional meeting on women and the 1st ministerial conference on women and sustainable development was held. Out of this the 'Pacific Platform of Action for Sustainable Development and Equality for Pacific Women' (PPA) (1994) document emerged. In working to develop a regional policy, Pacific women not only brought to the forefront the need for greater understanding about the situation of Pacific women, but they demonstrated a desire for an internally driven, coherent and non-fragmented approach to development that development actors, inclusive of national governments, NGOs and international agencies, would pay heed to (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2005:63-66).

As a living document, the PPA (1994) has included the commitments as outlined by CEDAW (1979) and for the most part the Beijing + 5 (2000) outcomes. Clear links have also been made to other documents as they have emerged such as the MDGs (2000c) and the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equity (2005). The PPA (1994) now serves as a national and regional planning framework (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2005:63-66), with each Pacific country setting their own priorities from the PPA (1994) which are reflected in their National Plan of Action (Schoeffel 2004:12).

This document was very important because it was Pacific women's voice at the Beijing Women's International conference (1995), contributing to the Jakarta Declaration and influencing the formulation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). This desire to ensure there was a progressive Pacific women's voice at Beijing was important for a number of reasons. Firstly, through collective thinking and debate questions were raised about whether Pacific women were aware of or making any attempt to implement the Forward Looking Strategies (1986). Questions were also asked about whether the Forward Looking Strategies (1986) were appropriate for the Pacific. Secondly, the development of a specifically Pacific document was important for ensuring that women's Pacific voice was not "subsumed, yet again, into another Asia-Pacific paper" (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2005:64):

... we find that our input is lost in Asia concerns, the assumptions being that Pacific needs are but a microcosm of those in Asia, or that our 'smallness' (in comparison with Asia) makes our concerns insignificant. This is partially our fault. We continually call attention to our 'uniqueness', but at the same time we have seldom examined or documented what makes us different, nor have we networked to present a unified voice on the global scene (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2005:64).

Pacific women believed that a development direction that expressed the uniqueness of the region with culture at its core was fundamental. It was highlighted that a Pacific women's vision of sustainable development must include custom, tradition and family and that women's advancement would ensue within the context of culture and family mechanisms (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2005). The point I, and the women above seem to be making, is the importance of a regional specific perspective when it comes to imagining development. This same point is also fundamental when considering the issue of gender discrimination and women's rights, such as those outlined and required in accordance to CEDAW (UNDAW 1979). This point will be discussed in more detail shortly.

The PPA (Pacific Women's Bureau 1994) has since been revised and is now known as the Revised Pacific Platform for Action (RPPA) (Pacific Women's Bureau 2005). On revision it was noted that the PPA (1994) lacked indicators or timeframes by which progress could be measured, its strategic focus was weak in that there was a lack of focused directed goals and objectives and it did not differentiate between regional and national objectives (Schoeffel 2004:12-13).

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women

Samoa was the first Pacific country to ratify the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the second Pacific country to formally report to the United Nations CEDAW committee on advancing the rights of women. By ratifying the convention, countries commit themselves to proactively take action to end all forms of discrimination against women. There are 179 countries that are party to CEDAW and they are obliged to report every four years to the United Nations CEDAW Committee on the progress of their country. While ten Forum Island member states have ratified CEDAW, only Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Samoa, have submitted periodic reports to the United Nations on implementing CEDAW provisions at the legislative, judicial and administrative level (The Browns Pages 2005).

CEDAW has an Optional Protocol that once ratified by a country gives women of that country access to a complaints mechanism regarding domestic violation of their rights under CEDAW. Samoa has yet to ratify this, though 70 countries have done so. New Zealand and the Solomon Islands are the only Pacific Forum member countries to do so (The Browns Pages 2005).

CEDAW obviously seeks to rid the world of discrimination against women. However, it is generally believed by Samoans that Samoan women are not disadvantaged and that women enjoy a high status because of how women are positioned within the Samoan culture (PPSEAWA *et al.* 2004:1). Moreover, the 'Constitution of Samoa' (1960: article 15(1-3)) states that men and women are "equal before the law and entitled to equal protection under the law" and there is to be no discrimination on the basis of descent, language, race, sex, political or other opinion, social origin, place of birth, family status or religion. It is also stated nothing in this article shall "prevent the making of any provision for the protection or advancement of women or children" therefore any legislation put in place for the advancement of women is not considered discriminatory in terms of the law (cited in PPSEAWA *et al.* 2004:1; also see GoWS 1960).

While those who are involved in women's development in Samoa believe that by and large women are held in high regard, there are certainly areas that need addressing. However, outsiders often misconstrue the status of Samoan women, for example, CEDAW committee experts have stated "the daily lives of Samoan women [are] regulated by customary law and stereotypical gender roles that [are] based on female subordination"

(United

Nations

2005b:<http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2005/wom1481.html>). In particular, they note that widowed and unmarried women have a high social status *almost* equivalent to that of men, meaning two things: firstly, that other women do not share this high status, and secondly, that all men hold high status in Samoa. In terms of the latter point, it is not all men, only some men that have high status, because if we are discussing customary positions then untitled men have a lower status than their sisters. Moreover, it needs to be noted that widowed women, sisters and daughters do have a high social status *equal* to that of some men as opposed to *almost equal*.

There is also the belief that because only three out of the forty nine seats in the National Parliament are held by women that women face discrimination. Because only *matai* or chiefly titleholders are eligible to run for Parliament and more men than women are offered and accept *matai* titles, it is argued that women are discriminated against. It is important to remember that women are accorded the same rights to chiefly titles as men. To argue that women are discriminated against because they are poorly represented in Government makes the assumption that all women want to be *matai*. However, it is certainly true that in some villages women are not entitled to hold *matai* titles.

CEDAW experts were also clear in pointing out that Samoa had lagged behind in producing their report on the status of women (United Nations 2005b). However as Maria states below, the issue may be more complex than just not being timely:

Maybe the issue is we aren't slow about making change, maybe it is a well thought out slowness, an informed choice about slowly does it. Do you think they [development agencies] ever think about that? Probably not, they are too caught up in their own self-importance to even consider that as a possibility. Instead they seem to question our slowness, as not being intelligent enough, dynamic enough or committed enough. Quickly, quickly... isn't always the best way (Maria: Business woman, Nov 2004) [my insert].

Fieldwork accounts have also demonstrated that the gender mandate is primarily driven by outside development agencies; indeed some have reported gender ideology as being somewhat imposed or forced at times:

They [CEDAW] said to us, 'you women are discriminated against'. We said 'no we aren't'. They said 'yes you are'. We said 'no we aren't', and they said 'yes you are'. So we said, 'okay, yes we are'. Well, if you annoy people long enough, eventually they give in. Or, they just become more strategic in disagreeing with you. The fact is we are all discriminated against in Samoa in some way, on some day, by someone. One day you do it, one day it is done to you. That's life. Perhaps we all

need to think about things in a more holistic way, rather than always saying it is just about women (Maria: Business woman, Nov 2004) [my insert].

They [CEDAW] well they were annoyed with our report, with our views. They are so adamant that women are discriminated against in Samoa, that women are second class citizens, it is complicated to be honest, they don't under our culture (Shon: CEO, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, April 2006)[my insert].

This is not to say that Samoan women are not faced with many issues and practices that are discriminatory; “too often the traditional high status of women in the *fa’asamoa* is generalised as the experience of all women” (PPSEAWA *et al.* 2004:5). The reality is that for some women in Samoa they are restricted, disadvantaged and marginalised, in relation to the status of their spouse, and for women acting outside of their culture: “They have little protection and minimal if any access to the usual family and cultural support systems” (PPSEAWA *et al.* 2004:5). Thus, herein-lies the problems: what systems, if any, are available for women living outside of the boundaries of *fa’asamoa*?

Many of the discriminatory issues and practices that Samoan women face are also the problems of development, or issues that have come about because of development. It would also be arrogant and incorrect to assume that historically Samoa did not have customary mechanisms in place to deal with, for example, sexual harassment or an unwanted pregnancy. The issue is that Samoa needs to and is attempting to keep pace legislatively and practically with the changes that the modernising society has brought with it, whilst not undermining the cultural processes and institutions that have generally worked and that now need the time to adapt. As noted by Maria’s comment, any approach taken needs to be one of ‘steady but slow’ because it is about making meaningful and equitable changes. This point is also noted in the reported response by Luagalau Foisagaasina Eteuati Shon (CEO: Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development) to the CEDAW experts:

Although achievements had been made, the Government recognized that much work remained to be done. The country’s culture and social traditions influenced many aspects of people’s lives. Many areas were very sensitive, and she hoped it would be possible to address the concerns in small steps (United Nations 2005b: <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2005/wom1481.html>).

Thus, now that the forces of development influencing Samoan women have been critically considered, inclusive of certain policies such as CEDAW (1979) and the RPPA (2005)

how FHHs are currently represented in development policy and planning in Samoa will be discussed.

Female-headed households and development policy in Samoa

In 2001, the United Nations met with some 150 government ministers, high-level policy makers and experts from 60 least developed, developed and developing countries to discuss gender equality and poverty reduction strategies in LDCs. The 49 least developed countries listed included Samoa. In highlighting some areas of gender inequality it is stated:

More than half of the 700 million inhabitants of the LDCs are women. And more than half of the poorest people in these countries are women, a growing number of them single, unskilled and destitute, who can barely feed themselves or their children.

The number of female-headed households both in the LDCs and worldwide are growing as a result of war, civil unrest, AIDS, male migration, and traditional and cultural values which contribute to discrimination against women (UNCTAD 2001:3; also see UNDP 2000c, UNCTAD 2000).

Making generalisations like this, linking them to LDCs and listing Samoa as a LDC is cause for concern. Statements such as this do not take into account the diverse socio-political and cultural contexts amongst LDCs. As was shown in *Chapter One*, FHH rhetoric can be uncritically transferred and applied into policy and practice very easily.

In the case of Samoa, some research has made reference to FHHs to date⁸⁸, however there is no specific development policy which focuses on the targeting of FHHs. As I have mentioned, a more recent development document, which was jointly developed by Samoa, New Zealand and Australia (GoS *et al.* 2006), does note though that FHHs constitute a group at risk of hardship.

On the whole this lack of targeting has to be seen as positive because it suggests that Samoa has not just replicated what some other countries and development organisations are doing. Rather it has looked at where the real need is, for example, rural women, rural families or the urban poor. In Samoa it appears that any targeting is primarily about the

⁸⁸ See Dunlop (1999), Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991), the 'Report of the Census of Population and Housing' (GoWS 1986, 1991), the report 'A Situational Analysis of Children and Women in Western Samoa' (GoWS/UNICEF 1996), and the 'Food and Basic Needs Expenditure Report' in the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (GoS 1997).

family rather than the individual, which makes sense as traditionally no one is seen as an individual in Samoa. On the other hand, it has been mentioned that those who are most disadvantaged are those dislocated from their families, therefore there are some individuals that can be seen as needing development assistance.

FHH as a development category has not been completely ignored in Samoa, so it cannot be argued it is just missing from the process. This leads me to wonder why Samoa has not joined in the global hysteria that surrounds FHHs, especially as Samoan people have clearly had experiences of divorce, migration, separation and teenage pregnancy as other developing and developed nations do. The answer I believe is a cultural system that remains intact, and, regardless of CEDAW's or UNDP's opinion, the belief that women have a relatively high status because *fa'asamoa* and *fa'amatai* remains. *Fa'asamoa* and *fa'amatai* may be the reason why the category of FHH has not been rendered so visibly problematic, even when Samoan society is being scrutinised under the Western development microscope using a neo-liberal poverty alleviation agenda. It would appear that FHH policy is not relevant in the current context of Samoa.

Culturally-situated development

Similar to other Pacific Island countries, Samoan women are in a transition period. While they uphold customary ways they are at the same time balancing these against available options (UNESCO 2005). Simi sets the government's stance very clearly in the first Samoan (draft) country paper for CEDAW by arguing:

in promoting the cause of women in a country whose constitution stipulates equality of status and opportunities and at the same time expects women to behave as the respected and dignified bearers of customs and traditions it is important to see that the actions or motives when promoting women's issues are not interpreted as radical and anti-society (Simi cited in Esera *et al.* 2001: <http://www.unesco.or.id/apgest/pdf/samoa/samoa.pdf>)

It is important to watch the way in which Samoan society is evolving because changing the manner in which Samoan society functions in relation to co-operation and sharing may impact on less able members of society (Schoeffel 1996:97). It is important to see things from the perspective of the people most concerned, and have faith that those concerned can determine their own directions and solutions. Thus Meleisea and Meleisea Schoeffel (1987b) note:

The persistence of the *matai* system has been criticised by many scholars and journalists from Samoa and overseas...the Samoans have shown that they will work out their affairs in their own way. Despite political and economic problems Samoa has managed to avoid the acute poverty of many Third World Nations... those who pointed to the value of and security offered by traditional Samoans institutions had a good point to make (p.169).

While *fa'asamoa* may have a number of weaknesses it still provides many of the fundamental needs of most Samoans (Meleisea 1992:65), thus it is about arguing for an approach to development which builds on customary ways. In speaking about the Pacific, Hooper (2000) argues:

Custom controls a large part of the economic resources that development, as it is understood by the mainstream, depends on. Society is dependent on a wide variety of reciprocal exchanges and redistributions that integrate whole districts in networks of mutual obligation and concern, all of which is underpinned by a large moral and ideological force (p.3).

Any approach to development, if it is to be successful, must account for this.

It is consistently highlighted, anecdotally and in the literature (see O'Meara 1990), that Samoan people are a fearlessly proud and confident group. As shown in *Chapter Six* it is very clear that Samoans have a strong cultural identity, in that they know who they are, and therefore their place and way of being in the world as accorded by *fa'asamoa*. Samoan culture appears to be an excellent example of a culture standing its ground:

Ever since contact with European Samoans' behaviour has always been dictated by their own construction of reality. Externally imposed or introduced patterns of behaviours, ideologies and actions have tended to be interpreted by Samoans to accord with their own world view (Meleisea 1992:63).

As Schmidt (cited in Scheyvens 1999:61) so aptly puts it:

Live your own culture
Enrich it where possible
Incorporate the best from other technologies without identifying
with the cultures
from which they stem.

And, this it seems, is what the Samoans are attempting to do. This comment from the field also seems to support this:

They [development agencies] tell you what is wrong with you, and then they tell you how to best fix it. Why fix what isn't really broken I say... often we just have to humour them. We nod our heads

and then we just go about our own business. And do they notice... well sometimes yes, sometimes no... they are just too caught up in their own outcomes, agendas or performance measures to even notice... Regardless of their needs, in the end we will do what we want, maybe we might even adapt their business to turn it into our business. My point is, we will do things at our own pace and in the ways that we see fit. We know what is best for ourselves. That is the way things have always been. 'Samoa for Samoa' (Tui: Business woman, Nov 2004) [my insert].

Conclusions

This chapter has articulated the changing position and condition of women in Samoa, in both the rural setting and urban environment. A greater reliance on the cash economy, changes to the *matai*/land tenure system and urban drift have all influenced the nature and structure of the family and the household, and therefore the position and status of various family members, particularly women. However, not all of these changes have been felt negatively, rather new opportunities have occurred whereby women have been able to offset some of the potentially negative impacts. For example, while there is a much greater reliance on the cash economy many women have been able to use this to their advantage and have successfully engaged with the informal sector so as to generate an income. This has not only allowed them to earn income but has given them an opportunity to improve their status within their family. Many women have also been able to gain higher qualifications and secure well-paid jobs. This in part can be attributed to the value that is placed on education and the value accorded to women by *fa'asamoa*.

Samoa has also sought to engage with regional and global mandates that seek to improve the situation and status of women. Thus a women's machinery has been established and gender mainstreaming has commenced. Samoa has expressed a commitment to women's development through engaging with CEDAW (1979), and various policy documents that have stemmed out of the Decade for Women and the MDGs (2000). Samoa has also sought to ensure their specifically Pacific voice is heard internationally through the development of the PPA (1994) and the RPPA (2005). In reviewing Samoa's development direction for women what is obvious is the desire that Samoan women have in relation to determining their own development needs and priorities and how these can best be achieved. Interestingly, at this stage FHH have not been identified as a separate category for development in either development planning, policy or practice.

Finally, one of the points made earlier in the chapter is the important role that the *Komiti Tumamā* have played in not only women's development but in village and national development. Another point made was how women's development has primarily been

located within the village and family structures. Both of these points remain true today. To understand development for women in Samoa, one must appreciate that development occurs within the context of women's committees and organisations, is anchored within a village and family structure, engages with the framework of *fa'asamoa* and seek to encapsulates Samoan women's voices, regardless of global agendas. This in itself can be understood as development.

Chapter Eight: Conceptualising Households and Headship in Samoa

Household is about the land and the titles – see that house over there it is being pulled down, but the land, well that hasn't changed, therefore the household is the members of the family, whoever is living on the land, whoever has a say at that time, whether nuclear or not – the household is that family (Maia: FHH, Nov 2004).

Introduction

By drawing on experiences, information and anecdotes from the field, the aim of this chapter is to conceptualise household and household headship and locate the category of FHH in Samoa. This chapter commences by seeking to define and identify the household and in doing so the idea that the household *is* the family is raised. The purpose of the household and the household as extended kinship networks is explored. The chapter progresses by defining and identifying household headship and seeks to understand what it means to head a household. In undertaking this conceptualisation of household and headship, not only are the complexities that surround defining and identifying the household and household head demonstrated, it is also shown that household and headship in Samoa are fluid concepts. Because of the complexities that surround household and headship definitions, and because of the fluidity observed, some of the difficulties that arose when trying to define and identify FHHs in Samoa are also made visible. In defining and identifying FHHs in Samoa, the factors that have lead to women becoming FHHs are presented. The chapter concludes by summarising some of characteristics of the FHHs that participated in this study.

Conceptualising households in Samoa

Households typically get defined as “spatial units where members live in the same dwelling and share basic domestic and/or reproductive activities such as cooking and eating” (Chant 1997a:5). The household can be the dominion of biological reproduction, of nurturing and socialisation, of care to children and the elderly, of divisions of labour, resource allocation and decision-making. The household can also be the place where cycles of conflict and power relations are played out, where gender roles are prescribed and gender inequality is experienced (Brydon and Chant 1989). *Chapter Four* showed household is a problematic concept (Bender 1967, Chant 1997a, 1997b, 2003a, 2003b, Solien de

Gonzalez 1965), thus the importance of conceptualising the household within the context of this research is paramount.

Formal understandings of household in Samoa

While few formal documents in Samoa attempt to define what a household is, those that do articulate the household in a way that captures a specifically Samoan arrangement. It was therefore understood that a household could include a number of buildings. In 2001, the Samoan Department of Statistics conducted a ‘Population and Housing Census’; the previous census had been completed in 1991⁸⁹. In 1991, the population was recorded as 161,000. There were a total of 22,195 households with an average of 7.3 persons per household, and these households consist of 36,136 buildings, averaging 4.4 persons per building (GoWS 1991:47). The 1991 Census in recording the various buildings per households, and persons per building actually reflected a common practice that is evident throughout Samoa, especially in the rural setting, and that is “one household can occupy more than one building, for example, one household utilising a sleeping *fale*, living *fale*, kitchen *fale* and three small *fales*” (GoS 1999:24) (see *Plate 4: Palagi style house, closed fale*, *Plate 5: Sleeping/living fale* and *Plate 6: Small fale*).



Plate 4: *Palagi* style house, closed *fale*

⁸⁹ There was no census taken in 1996. National censuses are generally carried out every five years but this period was extended because of the costs involved to undertake a census and because there was a lack of skilled people available to conduct it (Faafeu-Taaloga 2003:23).



Plate 5: Sleeping/living *fale*



Plate 6: Children playing in a small *fale*

To further define household using official Samoan documents, the ‘Census of Agriculture’ (1999) reports a household to be “one or more persons living together and having their meals together” adding “an *‘aiga* normally comprises several households” (GoS 1999:24). The importance of this is that the area of analysis, the household, has the potential to be less bounded – it is not so demarcated – meaning it has the potential to become larger or smaller.

Over the last few decades there is some evidence that the household arrangements have become smaller in Samoa (Maiava 2001:87). In discussing the undertaking of two village censuses firstly in 1976, and again in 1986, Meleisea (2005:78-79) points to the fact that while the village population had not grown, there had been a sharp increase in the number of individual households.

Informal understandings of household in Samoa

In addition to the abovementioned formal definitions, this study sought to consider how the household might be viewed informally. When I asked one of the study's key informants to explain what she thought a household was, her response also reflected some of the ideas just mentioned:

... Think of a Samoan house from this standpoint. While in New Zealand a three-bedroom house defines a household, in Samoa a household may include three buildings that are freestanding. For example, a cookhouse that is located separately, a couple of fales or palagi-style houses that are also located separately and the outside areas for showering and toileting. The fales or palagi-style houses can serve the multi-purpose of sleeping area, eating area, gathering area/meeting area or general areas of living. Therefore, the Samoan house can be likened to that of a three-bedroom house, except that all the rooms are freestanding rather than having the adjoining walls. Various members, who can change over time, may use all of those freestanding buildings or just some of them (Maria K: Samoan academic, Nov 2001).

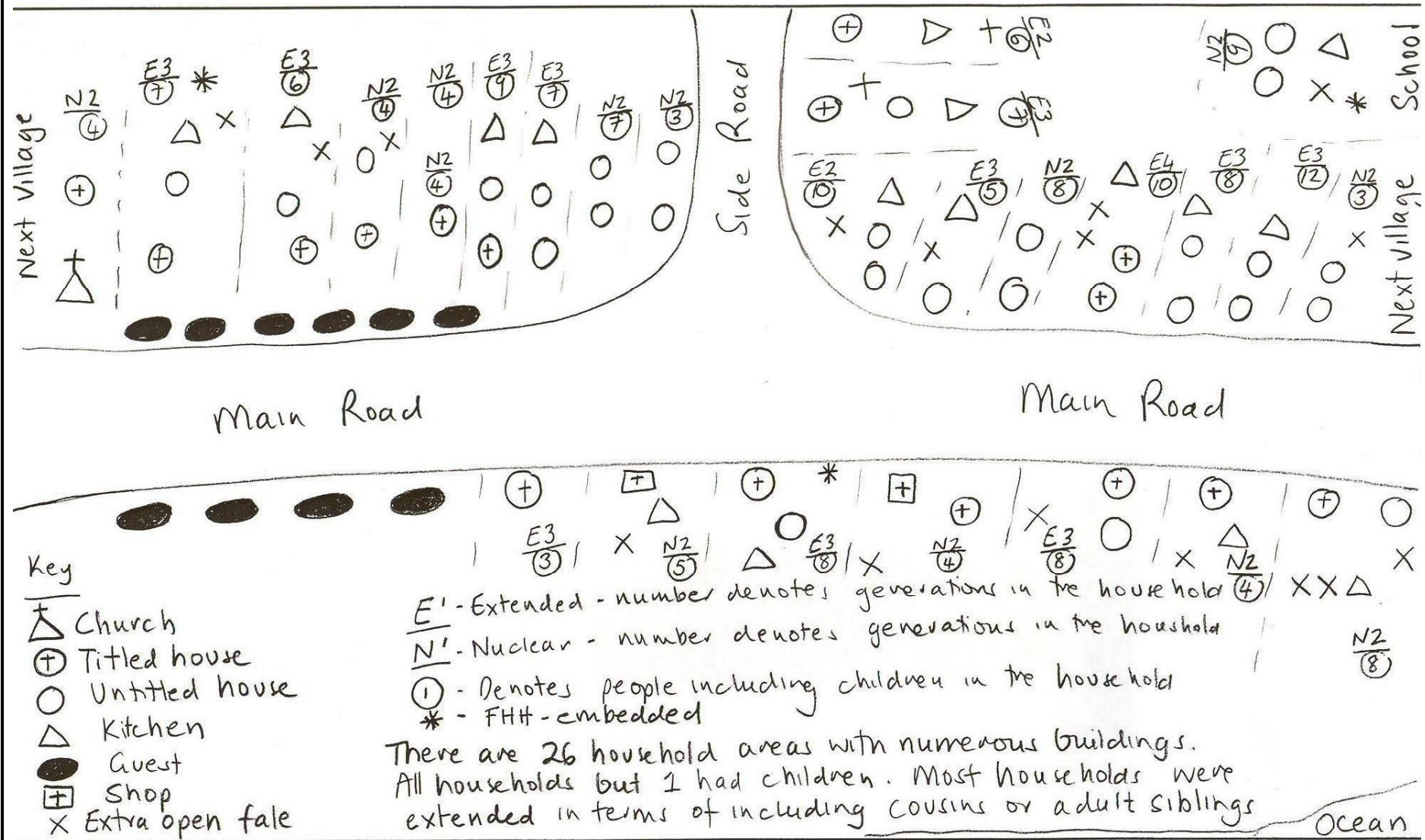
Figure 4, drawn during one of the fieldwork periods, maps the various buildings that make up households in a particular village. *Figure 4* shows that the village is situated next to the ocean; it has a road running through the middle, with housing on either side. At one end there is a church and a small shop is located in the middle. Towards the church end of the village are a number of guest *fales*, which are used for larger family meetings and guests (see *Plate 7: Guest meeting fales*). This village is situated next to another village where a primary school, a health clinic and a women's committee *fale* that sells handicrafts are located (similar to the one back in *Plate 3*).

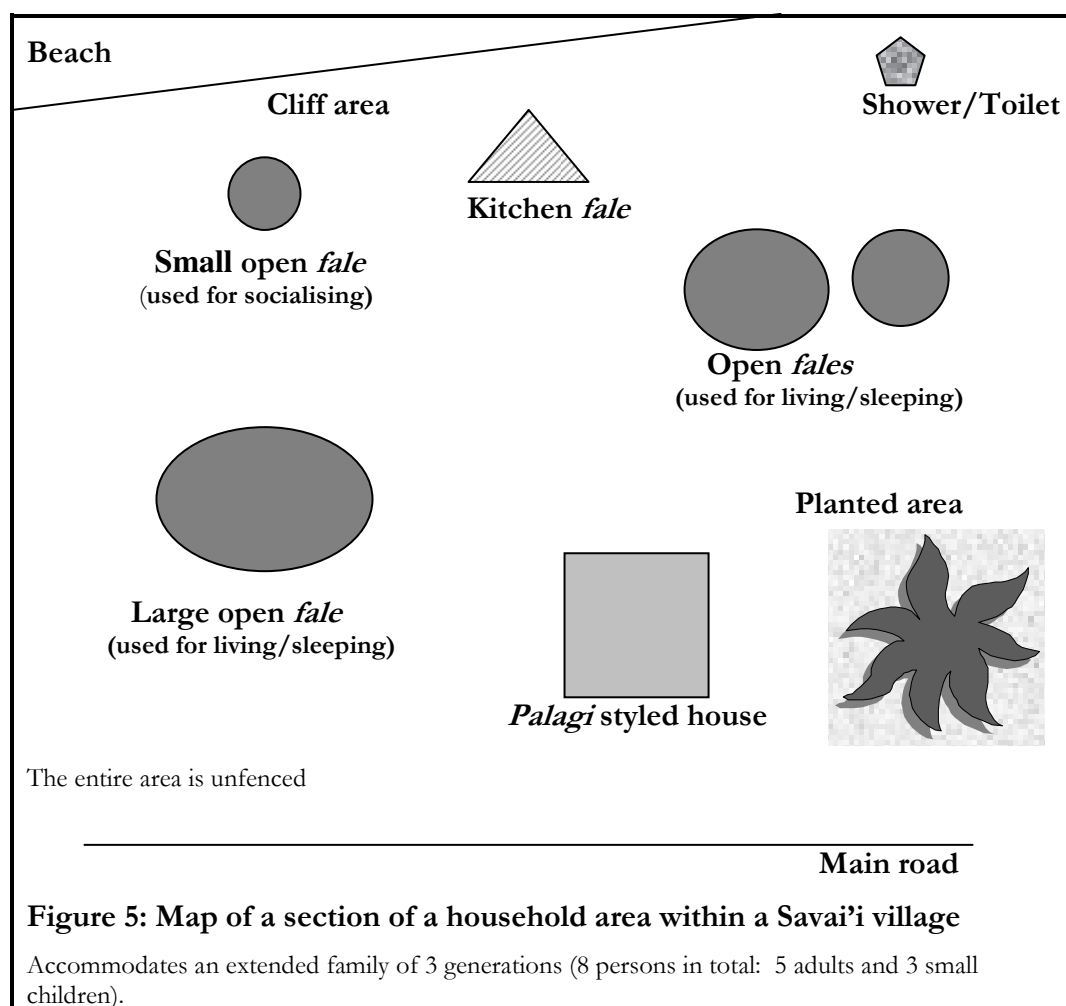


Plate 7: Guest/meeting *fales* located at the end of the village

Figure 4 shows that the village is made up of areas that are not visibly demarcated. By this I mean there are generally no fences. Within each demarcated area, which is considered to be the household arrangement, a number of buildings can be seen. This can be seen more clearly in *Figure 5* which seeks to show an individual household arrangement. The buildings (indicated by the key) may include a kitchen *fale*, *palagi* styled houses, open *fales* and outside toilet/showering area. *Figures 4* and *5* also show that the people living in these household arrangements are either in a nuclear or extended arrangement. An extended arrangement may encompass 2, 3 or 4 generations. To clarify, 2 generations but extended refers to a woman, her husband and their children, and perhaps the woman's sister. Whereas extended but consisting of 3 generations, may also include for example, the woman's parents, or her aunt.

Figure 4: Map of a section of a village in Savai'i





The household is the family

While a household may encompass a number of buildings, some also make reference to the fact that the household is about the people. As indicated in *Chapter Four* the household can also be understood in relation to its members, which are typically members of a family. As noted in the statements below:

A household is a group of people living under one roof. By the term one roof I mean one compound, for example the sleeping fale, the main fale or the cooking fale. It is not necessarily a nuclear unit, but it is a family, relatives, an assortment of relatives as I call them. You know your parents, your children... that's a household... all living together (Shon: CEO Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Jan 2002).

The household can be seen as either the various houses, or household can be viewed in the family sense. Translated verbatim, household is ʻāiga, which means extended rather than nuclear family, as opposed to house which is fale (Fetauimalemau: National Council of Women, Nov 2001).

Telesia thought that the household could also be defined by the type of land that it was situated on:

My two children who are married have their own households in Apia. They are on freehold land like me...being on freehold land makes a difference to how people see their household. Still, it is about the family though isn't it? (Telesia: FHH, Dec 2001).

Being on freehold land did not distract from the fact that the household still meant family however.

In many instances the household was a term that held little meaning, thus it is argued that the family as a unit of analysis may hold more relevance. This is especially noted in the accounts given below:

Household means the same as family. That is whoever is living in the houses, on the land with the fales, whether it is a nuclear family or not, the household is the family (Sala: FHH, Nov 2004).

Look around you, it [the household] is all of this – it is the children, the people. The household is not just the fales; it is what's in the fales. Like these kids (Meli: FHH, Jan 2002) [my insert].

June also talked about her household as her 'aiga, and she made reference to them in a relaxed and confident manner. It was like she was very proud of *who* they were, and she demonstrated this by her desire to share the details of her family with me:

...My brother, well he is my uncle. You see my mother and father here in Samoa; well they are also my grandparents. My mother who had me and my father and two younger brothers are in Auckland. My grandparents are now my mum and dad. My parents [in Auckland] wanted me to stay here, to be with them, to care for them [my grandparents]. They need someone to be with them. I am the special one (laughs shyly) and I can do this. I am the one with the job you know and my brother [Uncle] [also has a job]. My sister [Aunty] is in the village with her child, my brother [Uncle] is at the training college and my other two sisters [Aunties who are younger] are at college also (June: Young woman who resides with her extended family, Dec 2001) [my inserts].

Repeatedly the words household and family were used interchangeably. Nell stated adamantly:

Household what is it? It is the family (Nell: FHH, Jan 2002).

Vani saw her household as her family also, and Ette a 74 year old widow saw her household as the family, who were always available to assist her:

I am so proud of my family because they do everything for me...even though they have grown up whatever I want, they come home and give me everything I want... they really look after me. The boys, the girls, they all come home (Ette: FHH, Jan 2002).

Household was not only a physical feature but also an emotional bond:

Household is what you see, as well as what you feel about your land. It is about who is doing what for who and why. Regardless of whether they are present (Diana: FHH, Dec 2004).

Therefore in terms of this research the household could be seen as the various *fales* that housed the *'āiga*, or it could be viewed as the *'āiga* alone. Generally though, it was about the land and the titles that the *'āiga* are linked to, rather than any household structure per se. The hub of Samoan society is the *'āiga* (the kin group/extended family) and Samoan culture defines the *'āiga* as *'o ē 'uma e tau ile suafa ma le fanua* meaning all those who are bound to the title and the land (Josef: Elderly *matai*, Nov 2002). The quote from Maia at the beginning of this chapter also supports this.

In terms of this research so as to fully understand the purpose of the household, the household was considered to have both practical and emotional attachments.

Household purpose

As identified in *Chapter Four* households have multiple functions. There is usually a division of labour, which focuses on the care and maintenance of any children or elderly dependents, as well as the accumulation and management of resources (Brydon and Chant 1989:49). Tau, whose husband is a policeman and is currently working as a peace keeper in East Timor, demonstrated this when she defined and determined her household by its duties, by what her household did at a nuclear level and then at an extended level, as well as divisions in labour:

The household can be defined by the duties that need doing. There are some duties that are those of the greater household and some are my responsibility. The size and the shape of the household depends on the duties, on those responsibilities. For me, I have to keep money for church, and their (she points to the children) school fees. This is what my immediate household does, but my wider household well it is so much more, especially when I think about the village... about fa'alavelave. My husband's brother and father they go to the plantation. I would never do this. My husband's mother she does a lot of the cooking, when she cooks she cooks for all of us. Before this baby was born I used to do this too... But not a lot because I am a teacher at the school across there (she points across the water)... Now I am on maternity leave, so I am just looking after these kids, I am not really doing too much, other than contributing money...my husband contributes money also (Tau: FHH, Jan 2002).

Even though 'Tau's husband was away and she had two children plus a newborn, she appeared relaxed. While her husband was away many of the duties of her nuclear household had just become the duties of the extended household, so she did less.

While in many areas of the developing world the household is the most common area for the structuring of gender relations and women's specific experiences (Brydon and Chant 1989:8, Harris 1981:52), taking into consideration the participant's responses it would appear that in Samoa the family and the village provide a better framework for the structuring of gender relations and women's specific experiences. If the unit of analysis is to be the household then culturally defined household boundaries are fundamental (Ekejiuba 1995, O'Laughlin 1995):

Everybody has a role in the family – small children, big children, everybody men, women and old people. This is because everybody has a role in the village. You know this – everybody in Samoa eh... knows their place (Nell: FHH, Jan 2002).

Women, men, children, everybody knows what they need to do, and I think they do it (Rika: FHH, Jan 2002).

As noted before, '*o Samoa o le atunu'u ua 'uma ona tofi*', meaning Samoa, an already defined society, that is everybody understands his or her role(s). *Fa'asamoa* and *fa'amatai* determines the roles. This point was also reiterated in the comments made below:

This idea of 'household' though is a legacy of colonial rule. In Samoa we like to think about the family and the village (Shon: CEO Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Jan 2002).

A household, well what is this? Does it matter? I prefer to think about the 'āiga: 'āiga, and land. Household it is such a Western term. 'Āiga is what counts... land, titles, family. This is what is important (Neli: Business woman and gender expert, Nov 2004).

Thus, when people spoke about the family being more applicable than the concept of household, this was understood to encompass extended kinship networks.

The household as extended kinship networks

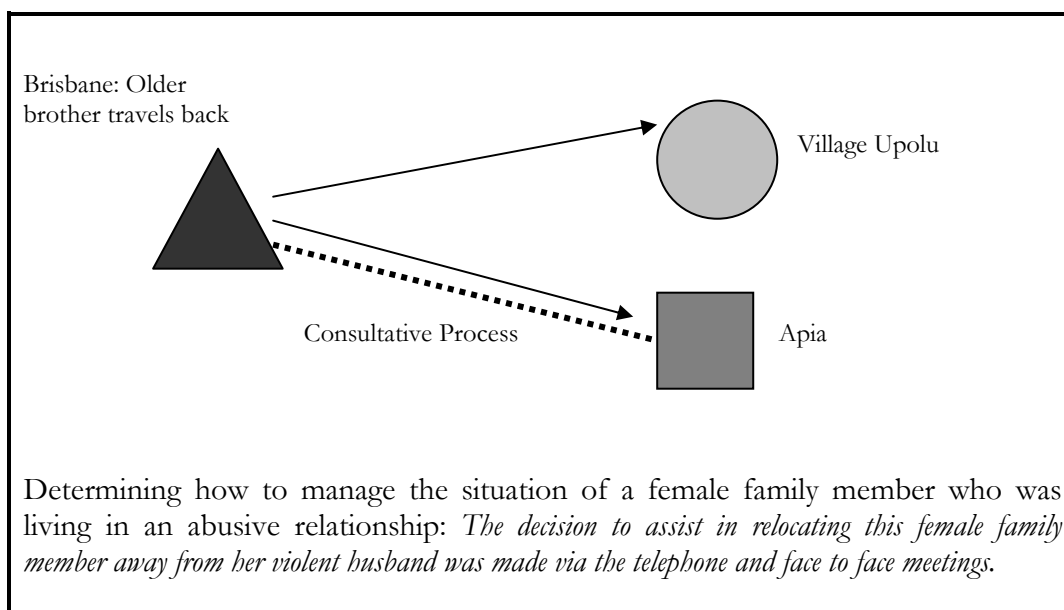
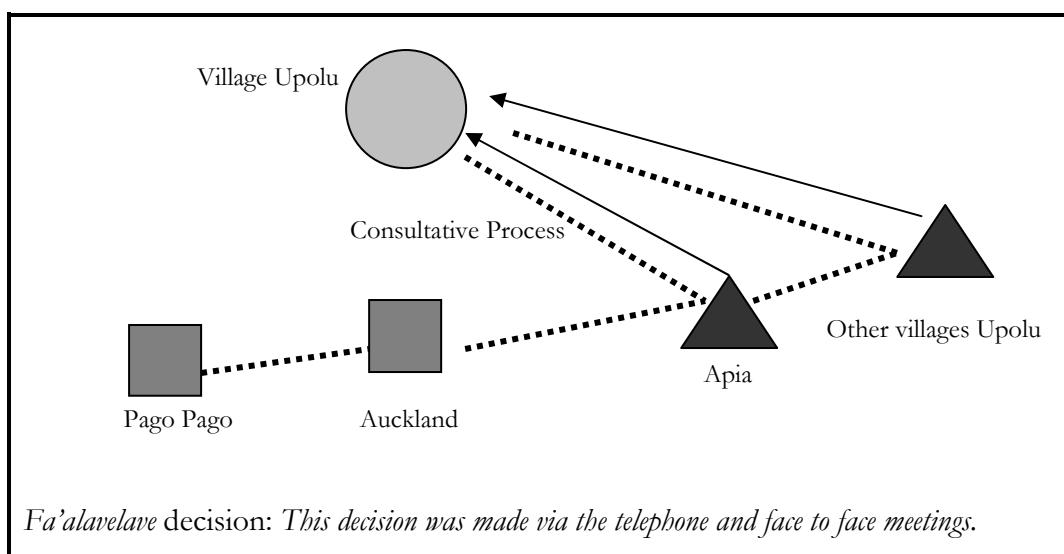
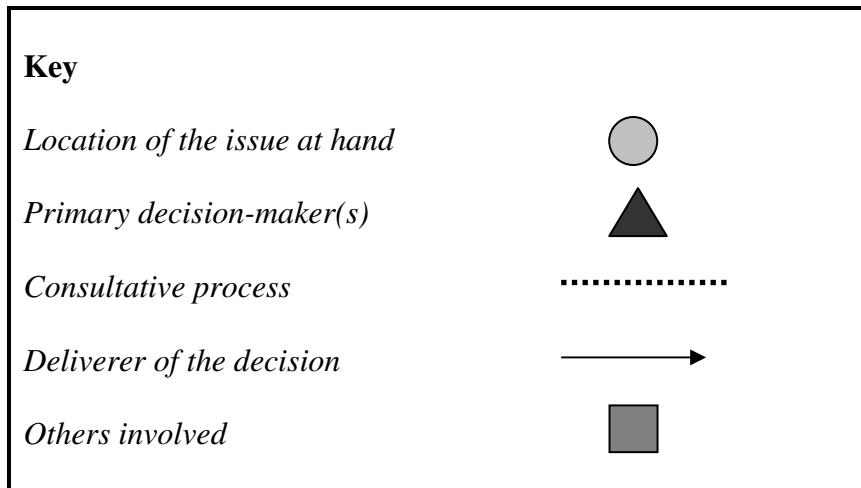
It follows from the discussion above that households are not just about who lives in a defined space and shares chores and activities; rather the organisation and boundaries of the household may also be determined by kinship (Chant 1997a, 1997b, 2003a, 2003b). Indeed kinship networks which are explicitly linked with household nurturing and

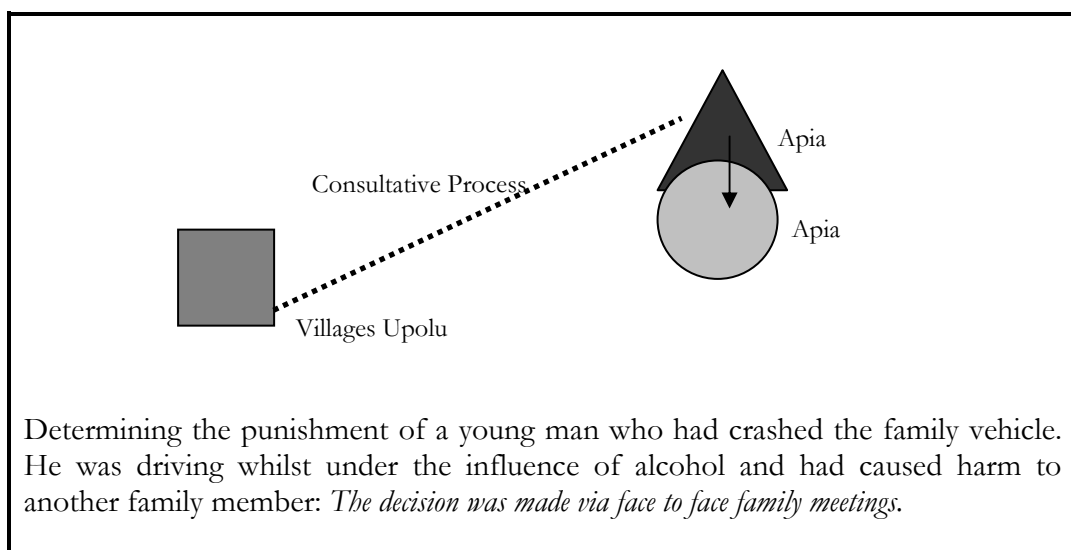
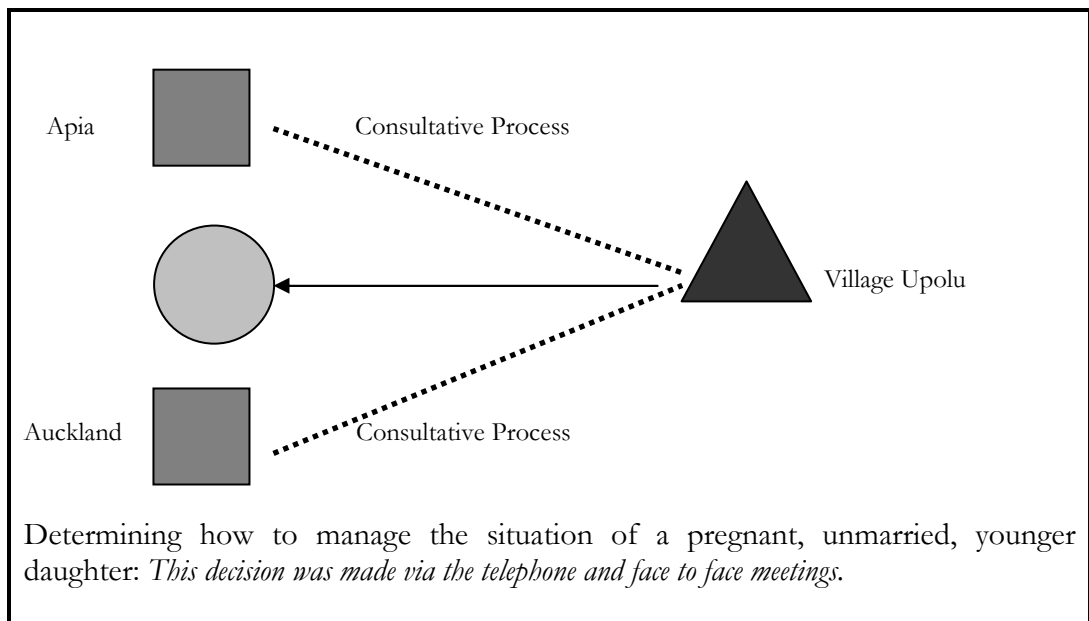
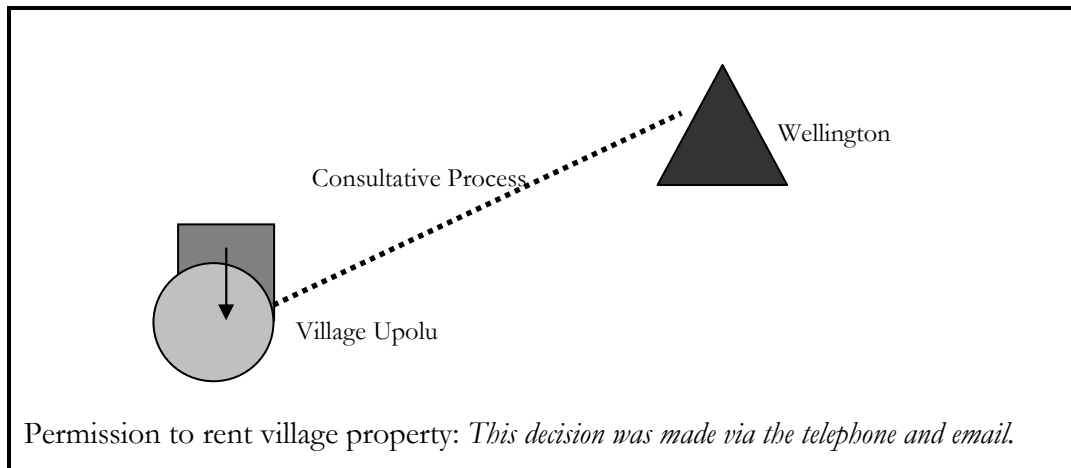
socialisation, resource contribution and allocation, and decision-making, may change the organisation and functioning of the household and extend the boundaries of the household well beyond the local, regional or even national domain.

During the second fieldwork period one of the key informants, Savalia, demonstrated this point nicely when she told me that she had not had time to prepare anything for our *to'ona'i* (Sunday lunch), so she would just ask her husband to go to the next village and get food from her sister to feed us. Savalia informed me that she knew her sister's family would have made a big *umu* (a customary way of cooking/steaming food with heated stones) and that her nuclear household would naturally be accommodated by the wider family network. In this instance, the spatial boundaries of Savalia's household and her sister's were simply extended to accommodate the situation at hand. Savalia was not considered to be an outsider; therefore there was no need for a formal request to share her sister's family lunch. After church Veni, Savalia's husband, drove away and returned with a sufficient amount of food to feed the entire household, including myself.

In Samoa, when needing to access resources, the family/household boundaries are not fixed. This point is also noted in terms of the decision-making process, whether it is about resource acquisition and use, or the welfare of one of the members of the household. Some other examples of family/household decision-making networks that went well beyond the local, regional or even national domain, are illustrated in Figures 6: Family and household decision-making networks, and can be understood in terms of the key. As will be shown, the people who had a primary role in making the decision, did not always deliver the decision, this could be done by another member. At times the people who had firsthand involvement with the issue, for example, the pregnant woman, the woman residing in an abusive relationship, and the young man who had consumed alcohol and then driven and crashed the family vehicle injuring a family member, may not be consulted with when family members sought to rectify the situation.

Figures 6: Family and household decision-making networks as locations





While kinship may play a fundamental role in determining and extending the boundaries of the household, as also observed in *Chapter Four*, kinship is not always about blood relatives (Chant 1997a:60). A statement from June illustrated this:

In our household, we cook for all of us but the man next door, well he eats with us all of the time, everyday. He does in the evening especially... this is just what we do... I don't know why... well just because we want to be ... giving things and taking care of him. He does things for my father and my mother because they are old and can't do everything. He is [part of] our household and our family too (June, Young woman who resides with her extended family, Nov 2001) [my insert].

A similar account was given by Meli, a widow and retired teacher, who reported that in her household she has three grown up children, her three grandchildren and a small child who is not related. Meli only made this differentiation about the small child because I asked her. In her opinion they were all her children, regardless of whether they were big or small, regardless of whether she had given birth to them or they were a blood relation.

During the fieldwork period, on numerous occasions, someone would be discussing something about their cousin and on further exploration this person might have distant kinship connections or no kinship connection at all. While the connections were not explicit to me, they were certainly understood by those involved.

In certain cultural contexts when the notion of kinship is referred to, it is not just about parents, siblings and relatives, it may also refer to the place of the household within the wider local community, and therefore obligations, roles or existence within the wider local community.

The household does not always have defined static boundaries. It is important to understand the household as it is linked to the wider family structure and village network, and to comprehensively understand that it is these linkages that enable people to meet their needs. The household must be seen as being part of the greater whole.

In summary and as demonstrated in *Chapter Four*, when attempting to define the household what was clear is that the household means different things to different people, therefore each case should be taken on its own merits. It was also noted that the term household was used interchangeably with the term family, and when discussing the family it could include either the immediate family or the extended family, and this was determined by the issue at hand. Geographically members of the family/household may be

separated, but this commitment to kinship and political institutions holds fast (Franco 1990:171). The term family was also not just about blood ties.

It was clear that the household is a practical and conceptual construct, which needs to be understood for not only its physical elements but the emotional elements also. To Samoans, the family and the village are deemed to be more important than the concept of household and as such, care needs to be taken so as to not simply apply another Western category, 'household', to a unique cultural context where family, land and titles are clearly more important than the buildings that a group of related or unrelated people might live in.

Conceptualising household head in Samoa

Household headship definitions are also laden with ambiguity. As identified in *Chapter Four*, when thinking about headship of the household a number of factors need to be considered, such as, location of the members, the structure of the family, roles and responsibilities within the family, who works the longest hours, culturally determined roles and their status, the nature and extent of the sharing relationship, land tenure, and the location of the household within the wider community. Below both formal and informal definitions of household head in Samoa are discussed.

Formal definitions of household head

The Samoan (1999) 'Census of Agriculture Report' states:

head of household is the person who is considered to be the head by the members of a household, that is, all the persons living in the household (p.24).

The 'Reports on the Census of Population and Housing' (1991, 2001) gave no definitions, and neither did the 'Household Income and Expenditure Survey' (1997). Thus with little to go by in terms of formal headship definitions, this study as it had done with the household, also sought to understand headship definitions informally.

Informal definitions of household head

In seeking to understand headship definitions informally, consideration was given to how and why people made their decision. Ette who informally saw herself as the household head explains:

Because I look after all of them. Even though one of my boys is a matai, and he is the formal head of the family...in the Samoan culture... well I am still the head of the household. Even though he can go to the meetings and say, everything he doesn't know, so he asks me ah, to explain, what to do, because I have been to that place before him (Ette: FHH, Jan 2002).

What Ette meant here was that because of her years of life experiences she was wiser than her son even though he was a *matai*. Ette believed that she could draw on past experiences and on her acquired knowledge about certain situations, and by sharing this knowledge with her son the *matai*, she would help him come to make the right decision. The fact that her son also came to Ette to get advice and to consult with her also suggested that he recognised his own limits and Ette's strength:

Rochelle: So, he is the head in a formal sense because he is *matai*, but you informally because you have knowledge.

Ette: Yes.

Rochelle: You know your daughter Sue; she said that your daughter Bette is the head because she is the oldest.

Ette: *Ah yes, Bette is the head also, because, they all come here, oh yes. Then they all wait until Bette comes here, and then I explain what to do. When we have to discuss something, especially a big decision, they all wait, they all wait for the oldest and the second oldest, my daughters. Then they all discuss what we are going to do (Ette: FHH, Jan 2002).*

It appears in this household that there are several heads, and while this may appear confusing to onlookers like myself, it is exceedingly clear to those involved in the process. Tau reports that her father-in-law is the head of the greater household and she points to the house next door:

Tau: His name was written [as head of the household] on the census. My husband and I, we are both the boss, the boss of this house here. But many households generally work in with other households. We all do things together. So who is the boss, who is the head, well I don't know. I think I am the boss. I think I am the boss of everything especially as their father (she points to the children again) is not here at the moment.

Rochelle: So informally yes, but formally like in the census no?

Tau: Yes, but it doesn't mean anything this head on the census, I think (Tau: FHH, Dec 2001) [my insert].

Similarly, Mele states '*this is the strongest voice behind this family*', (and she points to herself as she is saying this, and laughs and laughs). In the census Mele indicated that her oldest son was the head of the household. But when it comes to the family, she is the head of the family. But '*in those papers like that, like the census*', [I put my son], '*because it is by matai, which is my son. So officially, yes... publicly he is the household head but privately I am. The papers aren't what counts*' (Mele: FHH, Jan 2002) [my insert]. To explain further Mele states:

The whole family contributes to any decisions, it not just the head that makes decisions, and then my son the matai he delivers any message (laughter) so the truth is we all do the thinking, and he is the voice. It is a formality that the matai speaks for the family, to the village, but underneath I am the boss, I am the real voice in this family (Mele: FHH, Jan 2002).

In asking Logo who the head of her household was, she did not really know, and then she thought it must be her father (grandfather), but she also listened or took instruction from her parents in Auckland who had a lot to do with the family dynamics, and remained in very good contact. Logo's situation was not clear-cut at all.

On the other hand, Caran is the head of the household both formally and informally. Caran whose husband died 25 years ago when she was 40 years old explains because the household is ever-changing, so then is the household head:

Prior [to my husband dying] it [the household] used to be just my husband and I, but when he passed away everyone came to live with me, my sister, and niece and her husband who are next door (Caran: FHH, Dec 2001) [my insert].

Caran does not think much about household head, but she is the household head, and she said this in the census. The interpreter goes on to explain:

You know she is looking after her mother who is ninety-nine and quite a character. So her, her mother, and her sister live here. This household is made up of palagi houses, two of them, also a fale, and a cookhouse. It... the house is like a compound, it is this whole compound. Even though there is a man next door he is not the household head, he is the husband of her niece, they have a child too. Household head, well it is hierarchical. First the matai, then the oldest... so when her son and her brother come, they take over and she is glad. It is too much. But she is the head for now because there is no matai...but still she has the authority because she is the eldest...they [her son and her brother] will always consult with her when they make the decisions anyway (Caran: FHH, Dec 2001) [my insert].

When Nell was asked who the household head was on her census, she stated that her mother filled it in:

My mother was the household head on the census form. (After some thought she added...) but the matai is the head.

Nell's family or household consisted of her 3 children, her mother and her two brothers:

My uncle is the matai, he is the family head but he doesn't live here, yeah my mother is the household head (Nell: FHH, Jan 2002).

Thus, the household head might be the same as the family head, or it might not. Accounts also showed that the identified head was not always the person who has greatest access to

resources, or more control over the decisions being made. In support of Posel (2001:652) the identified household head was in some instances symbolic. While in some cases the head of the household was determined by hierarchy, for example the oldest person in the household, being appointed head of the household was also determined by a person's ability to contribute income, or the qualifications they might hold, which linked back to ideas about services rendered and adding to the status of the family. Gender in some instances, meaning a male was favoured, also had a bearing. Headship is clearly something that is fluid, which changes as the family changes.

This study saw self-identification to be an important factor when identifying household head. Some scholars have argued there is ambiguity when headship within the household is left to the judgement of household members because members within a household will utilise differing criteria to make their decision, thus how can each household be compared when they are socially constructed through a diverse range of meaning (Kibreab 2003:323-24, Posel 2001:652-54). Of greater concern, however, is the misinterpretation that can occur when this judgement call is left up to an outsider. In most instances the process or rationale that a household group might utilise to select the household head may not be transparent to the outsider, meaning that misinterpretation of the situation or the issue is highly likely.

Moreover, in terms of my own study, self-definition of headship and household was not going to be problematic because the point of this study was to recognise the validity of the individual's opinions in determining their own categories and way of being in the world rather than seeking to compare their households or their ideas. Viewing the household merely as a convenient instrument for data collection and comparison, rather than a conceptual construct, runs the risk of leaving fundamental questions unasked and unanswered (Kabeer and Joekes 1991:2, Varley 1996:515). In identifying with the belief that household headship was also a conceptual construct consideration would therefore need to be given to the idea that multitude meanings are valid and that these meanings would not be static. Defining household head needed to be left up to the household members, as the concept represented them and their lives. Self-identification would also demonstrate just how complex the category was.

In saying this, I still felt uncomfortable requesting headship identification, because as Posel (2001:652) suggests this request presumes that households are hierarchical, thus forces

people to put one person above all others. In many instances, participants appeared to identify a household head because I wanted them to. This point was summed up nicely in the end by Naomi who replied:

Naomi: Who is the household head you ask? Well no one person is. Today I am, tomorrow he is. The next day we both are. This is an odd question. Does there have to be one? Who is the household head in your house?

Rochelle: 'No-one is' I answer quietly, 'no-one in my household is the household head'

Naomi: Then how come you are asking this type of question? (Naomi: Village shop owner and school teacher, Jan 2002).

What does it mean to head a household?

Posel (2001) raises the question, "Household heads, what do they do?" This is something that this study also sought to consider. Shon deliberated:

Shon: So what does it mean to head a household? Well it means a lot of responsibility. It means making sure everyone is okay. If someone is ill, it is making sure they are looked after, making sure they go see a doctor, or you take them. It is making sure that they have food to eat and if there isn't any then you make sure that there is. Making sure everyone does their chores and helps and chips in with the various activities of the household. Making sure that you go to church because church is fundamental, making all the children go to school... So all those divisions, indirectly and directly become the responsibility of the head of those households... So it is really about ensuring that the people in the household run smoothly, so that everybody is well taken care of. Also making sure that when there are problems... to facilitate the resolution of those problems... whether it is children with their teachers, whether it is between the children. It is making sure that the family runs smoothly and that there is peace and harmony within the family.

Rochelle: Maybe people think about head of something as a status thing, everyone seems to forget about that responsibility that goes with that status...?

Shon: Yes you have that status but you also have that responsibility, a huge amount of responsibility... (Shon: CEO Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Jan 2002).

Head of the family/the household is about obligations and responsibilities not just about privilege, power, or control. Kyla added to this, by saying being the head of the household is only as good as the household he or she heads:

What good is being the head of something that doesn't exist or that doesn't work, well probably an embarrassing reflection of your own abilities... You see in Samoa if the family is functioning poorly then everybody will know that you are doing a poor job, so it is in your own best interests that the family is headed well, otherwise you will be embarrassing yourself. It will be evident for all to see what a bad job you are doing. Pride is very important in Samoa so it is important to be a good head (Kyla: FHH, Jan 2002).

Shon agreed adding:

If you are asking who is the head of those household things... Well most likely it has nothing to do with what you want to know about. It is more important to ask who is responsible for ... who is carrying the responsibility for this particular thing? Instead of who is head of household and drawing poorly informed assumptions, ask instead who is responsible for the smooth running of the household, who is carrying the responsibility? You will more often than not, find a woman; you will find it is the mother. If you have to give the title head of household, it needs to be assigned by who is doing what tasks, what jobs. It is like having key indicators, like having a job description. Ask if you do this and this and this, then you are the head of the household... you need to meet a set of criteria before you are and I know if it was done this way in many countries you would find it will be a woman. Focusing on labels takes away from the importance of the role by itself and the importance of the role as it sits within a wider context. Perhaps doing away with the label all together might be the best thing and focus on who and whom is doing what and get over this obsession with needing to pin it to one person (Shon: CEO, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Jan 2002).

In addition, Maria claimed:

It is a Western practice to focus on head of household. These agencies [development agencies] are always asking so who is the head of the household? Generally speaking, all over the world we have been brought up to respect our fathers, our dads... so we just identify that they are [head of the household] but mothers play an important role, just as important. This need to identify one person doesn't take into account the important role of mother. It is this dualistic..... um dichotomous fascination about one or other, better or worse, greater or lesser, head or not the head (Maria K: Samoan academic, Nov 2001)[my inserts].

In summary, the participants felt that being head of the household was not just about being in charge and dictating to household members what needed to occur with respect to duties, roles, resource allocation and spending of finances; it was also about the obligations and responsibilities of each member. It would be fair to suggest that often multiple members held the responsibility for the smooth running of the household and the family, and at times the role of headship was attributed for a period of time to differing people. It would also be fair to suggest that the basis of a person's power in the household varied according to the make-up of the household, which could be constantly changing.

Fluidity of the household and headship

In all fieldwork discussions a point that kept emerging was the idea that the household structure and headship are fluid:

The concepts of household and family in Samoa may be one and the same... both are very fluid, they can fluctuate and either may be defined depending on the circumstances that are being referred to (Fetauimalemau: National Council of Women, Nov 2001).

The family, the household is not only a physical entity but as an emotional and spiritual entity that can change, depending on the context. It depends on what is happening. The family is defined by the context... Sort of like the Samoan language. We have many words... in isolation they are the same but when you put them into a context; surround them by other words, then the meaning changes. This is the same for the family; put the family into a context then the boundaries and limits change, the meaning of the family changes. The expectations and roles may change because of the decision that is being made. Today I will contribute a lot; tomorrow I may contribute very little. It all depends on the concern, or the decision to be made. The household cannot be viewed as something fixed (Diana: FHH, Nov 2004).

Households evolve through death and birth, through marriage, and in particular through the event of migration. Single household members could shift from one household to another within the wider kin group:

That girl over there she is staying with us now – she is my cousin – her mum and dad are in New Zealand. She had a fight with my Aunt – so now she just lives with us (Logo: FHH, Nov 2004).

As noted in this example, this fluidity is also discussed in the literature: Sela and Leilani both unexpectedly lost their husbands and became relatively young widows in Samoa. With things looking somewhat hopeless and with children to support, relatives in the United States both extended invitations to them to come and live with them. Both Sela and Leilani accepted, with Leilani taking her children with her, and Sela making the decision that her 5 children would remain in Samoa with her mother. Both accounts from these women show them and their children moving in and between Samoa and the United States, with the support of their family/community so as to meet the needs of themselves and their family (Burns McGrath 2002:310-12).

This fluidity as linked to circumstances also applies to headship. These quotes below describing the various ways in which the women saw their household and headship situation highlights this fluidity. As mentioned earlier, Tau, whose husband is a policeman currently deployed as a Peace Keeper in East Timor, saw her husband's father as head of the greater household. Tau points out to the house next door saying:

His [my father-in-law's] name was the name written on the census form, however I see myself as the head of this smaller household. I am the boss of everything in this household. I am the boss because my husband is away. So informally yes I am the head, and formally no (Tau: FHH, Dec 2001) [my insert].

Kyla and Malia also note:

Yes I know I am the head of the household but he is the one who is the public head. I tell him what to say and he says it... at the meetings. But it is always what I have said. It is good because he is the one who has the hard job, delivering the message. It suits me fine because then if the message is not received well, they will disagree with him instead of me. I am the decider, but he is the deliverer ... It suits me to not be the head of the household, there are too many decisions, it is too much hard work. People, they are at you all the time wanting things, wanting your time, wanting fa'alavelave. When my husband was away I used to just tell them I can't help or I cannot make this decision until my husband gets back. I could, but I couldn't be bothered. Sometimes it is useful not to be in charge, so to speak (Kyla: FHH, Jan 2002).

You know my kids think that their father makes the decisions, it is actually me often but I can't be bothered arguing with them, so he is the one who will tell them. I am lazy in this way. He is the bad guy many times because he is the one who has to uphold the decisions I have made.....funny when you think about it. He says he gets tired of being the bad guy especially with the older kids. Yeah the kids would probably say he is the head of the household, he would probably say 'not likely' (Malia: FHH, Jan 2002).

Mapping the fluidity of household composition and headship

Surveys undertaken during the second fieldwork period also demonstrated the fluidity of household composition and headship and the questions asked for determining the changing characteristics of the household can be seen in *Appendix 6*. Over a 3 week period, 2 rural village areas were mapped and surveyed, and over a 5 week period, another village area closer to Apia was mapped. The households were surveyed twice, in the beginning and again at the end of the 3 or 5 week period. In total 23 members of households were questioned. The most common household arrangement to see was one where the family was extended. Extended though did not always mean 3 generations (as in an elderly person, their adult children, and grand children). Out of 23 households, 17 households (73 per cent) were extended, and of these extended households, 1 household encompassed 4 generations (6 per cent), 7 households encompassed 3 generations (42 per cent) and 9 households encompassed 2 generations (53 per cent). Who slept in the household could differ from who ate in the household. In a couple of instances people ate within a particular household but never slept there.

Questions were also asked about FHHs so as to identify those that may be embedded, which means those women with dependent children who may be living within a wider family arrangement, such as her parents, or widowed women living in a wider family network. Out of 23 households, 7 households (30 per cent) had embedded FHHs, primarily widowed women. One woman became the head of the household during the

survey. During the first survey her husband had just been visiting overseas, but by the second survey she informed me that her husband was to remain overseas.

In asking these questions it was shown that over a period of time the household structure can change markedly because the members can change. This can have a bearing on roles, responsibilities and status, including that of headship. Out of the 23 households over this short period of time, 4 households (17 per cent) identified someone else as the head because members had changed. One of these households had no change in members but still identified a new household head. The way in which people identified a household head was not consistent. The head of household was not always attributed to one member; it was not always about the *matai*, or the oldest person. Even when men were present some households identified a woman as head of the household.

What people said in the census also differed. Some people could not remember what they had said, or even if they had identified anyone. While others had clearly indicated a head of household they also said that if census came tomorrow they would say something different. This difference was usually because of the changes that had occurred with members, or because people had differing roles, such as becoming a *matai*.

Over a time period, even one as short as 3-5 weeks, members came and went. People left for health reasons, such as receiving medical treatment in another country, or they returned to care for sick or elderly and therefore dependent family members (this issue will be explored more shortly). Members also left to attend to other family matters, to engage in paid employment or educational courses. Children shifted about because of financial issues, that is, the household was not managing financially and other members elsewhere had offered to take them in for a period, or for educational purposes. That is, they went to live with relatives in Apia to attend school, because the Apia school was considered to offer a better standard of education. In one instance, a 12 year old girl whose mother was living in New Zealand went to live with other relatives because the family she had been living with, which included her Uncle's wife, had been mean to her. Out of 23 households, by the return visit, 12 households (50 per cent) had some difference in membership.

Susana's quote, below, demonstrates how family structure can quickly change and in her case has done so because her mother is ill and her older sister has returned from New Zealand and her other brother from Pago Pago (American Samoa) to be with her:

Someone needs to be with her [mother] and to be with our father, they will stay for as long as it takes, that is the Samoan way. Even though they were in other countries, they have returned so this changes the household. A household depends on what is happening. In your country when family comes home they are guests, in our country when the family comes home everyone moves about into their next position. Perhaps you were the head, but your uncle comes home, then he will be the head (Susana: Young, single, village woman, Jan 2002) [my insert].

From my own experience I recall a number of years ago working in a joint nursing leadership position with a Samoan woman who had to quickly return home because her mother was unwell. In the end she never returned to the position and I recall over this period the organisation that we worked for was unable to ascertain how long she would be away or indeed if she was going to be returning. Despite the organisation having some dialogue with family members here in New Zealand, they were still unable to pinpoint when or if she would be returning to work. Thus in this instance, the needs of the family in Samoa overrode all else.

In 1928 Mead noted that Samoan children were able to choose the household in which they resided. At different times for various reasons Samoan children might reside in a variety of households (Mead 1928:36)⁹⁰. Bender (1967:494) argues families do not cease to exist when their members reside separately, and in the case of Samoa this is very evident.

In situating the family members, what is best for the person and the children determines where and with whom they are placed, or live. Maia, talking about the birth of her first baby, stated:

My family didn't want me to marry this boy from the village and I didn't really want to either, even though he asked me. When X was born X went to be with my older sister in Apia, and X was loved by everyone. This is what the family just did (Maia: FHH, Jan 2002).

Maia also spoke about another time when the extended family made a decision about her future and her place within the wider family:

A few years ago I met this German man who wanted to marry me but my family said that I shouldn't because who would care for the children that I had if I got married and went to live in Germany. So yes I agreed not to marry him. At this time I was living with my extended family in American Samoa, helping care for some of their children. My staying here was important for the rest of the family (Maia: FHH, Nov 2004).

⁹⁰ While much of Mead's work has been contested see: Derek Freeman (1984), 'Margaret Mead and Samoa: The making and unmaking of an anthropological myth', this point appeared fairly plausible. Also see Schoeffel (1995) where she discusses the traditional arrangement whereby the first born of a sister would go to live with the brother that she had a particular *feagaiga* relationship with.

Similarly, Savalia reported that it is better for her son to be in Apia than with her in Savai'i so that he can attend school. '*They have better schools in Apia*' (Savalia: Savai'i research assistant, Nov 2004). Support for this is also noted if I recount what I said at the beginning of this chapter where June reported:

My parents [in Auckland] wanted me to stay here [in Samoa], to be with them, to care for them [her grandparents]. They need someone to be with them. I am the special one (laughs shyly) and I can do this (June: Young single woman residing with extended family, Jan 2002) [my inserts].

In summary, most households are extended; the household composition is diverse, complex and fluid. Household headship was also fluid. Both headship and composition can change rapidly, and often. While the core group of the household may remain, others could and did, move in and out. This was especially so with single household members who shifted from one household to another within the wider kin group. Transient household members were sometimes away for very short periods, going to Apia or Pago Pago for the week for work or school and sometimes they were also away for longer periods, such as going to New Zealand for months on end to be with family, to work, or to receive medical treatment.

Identifying female-headed households in Samoa

Seeking to identify FHHs in Samoa proved to be a difficult process. No actual FHH definition has ever been specified in any of the Samoan development documents, and as there is no current development policy in Samoa that makes specific reference to FHHs a culturally determined definition could not be located. Thus, consideration was given to the idea that as the group was so small their needs did not warrant particular attention. However, I learnt from the fieldwork that while a number of agencies had not given FHHs as a development category any thought, as they did not see FHHs as an appropriate category for the Samoan context, non-representation of a group in the development process does not always mean that the group has not been considered. Moreover, it might be easy to assume that the non-representation of FHHs in development policy is a negative thing, however in many instances not being represented is better than being represented inaccurately and as such reinforcing stereotypes, or as I have already mentioned targeting one group over another based on assumptions. The inability to identify a prior definition meant that nothing about defining FHHs in Samoa was presumed. No assumptions were made about the research participants either.

Ambiguity around household and headship definitions meant my ability to identify and locate participants was also not straightforward. Informal discussions about the category FHHs left many people somewhat confused about what I meant and therefore without any ideas to offer when I was trying to locate participants. Even when the term was articulated in other ways, for example, single mothers, or divorced or separated women, or women whose husbands were away working, people still struggled with immediate knowledge of someone or an understanding of what I really meant. This occurrence happened amongst a diverse range of people also, so I could not explain away this issue as being more about the people I was speaking to as opposed to my topic. It occurred with village people, town people, those with a formal education and those without a formal education. When I left people to ponder over my inquiry, people would return to me later and say *'oh yes I know someone'*, and then they would proceed to tell me about someone in detail. Sometimes this someone was very close to them for example, a divorced sister. From this experience it was hard to believe that people had not known in an instant who was being referred to at the initial inquiry stage. Perhaps this experience said more about my style of communication and cultural issues in communication as well as the fact FHH is a foreign concept.

However in saying this, there was one example where I was actually interviewing a woman with her sister present, when the sister as a potential participant came to light. As the participant and her sister were both asking me questions about my research, the sister of the participant stated *'my husband is in Pago Pago, American Samoa... he has been there for a year...he sends remittances'*. We all just looked at each other and started laughing, at the obvious. I had known both these women for about three weeks, and had a number of previous conversations about my research but the fact that one of them could have been a research participant never emerged.

Because Samoan people are rarely seen in isolation, then it is difficult to comprehend someone in this way, as a singular entity. The notion of single motherhood and separated or divorced women are all labels or categories that suggest an element of disconnectedness. This is very much in opposition to ways of being in the world for Samoan people. To further demonstrate this, people did not struggle with the concept of being widowed. Perhaps this is because this is not a category that suggests having had control over one's disconnectedness, like the terms separated, divorced or single do.

Whether people knew in detail the circumstances of others was also an idea that was given consideration. For example, a couple of us might be sitting discussing people around the area, and someone would say *'this lady she has no husband'* and the other person would disagree and say *'no remember he was only there [in another place] for this period of time. He is back now'*. Or *'no she has gone to his village now. They are still together'*. Thus even when people were apart I got the sense that they were still together. Another example was when people said *'no they are still together but he lives with his [natal] family during the week and comes back at the weekend'* [my inserts]. At face value the Samoan family seems very mobile.

Another idea for consideration was that perhaps people were testing the ground, and seeking permission first from those concerned, before they pointed me in the right direction. This was something that I never really sought to clarify because it was not going to make a difference to what I was doing, and that this process whatever it was, was not mine to try and understand.

Finally, once research participants were identified none of them referred to themselves as FHHs. It was not a concept that they were familiar with. The concept FHH was not known amongst key informants either. There was also no pattern in the way that FHHs sought to identify who the head might be. Even in official processes such as the census survey identification of household headship remained arbitrary in nature. Some saw it to mean head of the immediate family, head of the wider family, head of the household compound, the oldest person, or the family *matai*. Some identified with more than one person, some identified with no-one. Some changed their minds whenever they were asked.

Are female-headed households as a category increasing in Samoa?

Given the difficulties that occurred when attempting to define and identifying FHHs in Samoa, and the arbitrary nature of the category, it can be surmised that identifying what percent of household are FHHs and whether they are increasing would also be difficult. This lack of clarity around global statistics has been discussed in detail in *Chapter Four*, and many of the statistical issues noted are also applicable to Samoa and the Pacific Region. It is well noted globally that FHH statistics are questionable and that while many argue that FHHs are underreported, this idea that one in three households in the developing world context is headed by a woman is a serious over-estimation (Chant 1997a, 2003a, Varley

1996). Taking into consideration the statistical data that is currently reported, estimations also vary widely.

Investigations by Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991:137) have suggested that FHHs figures have probably been underestimated in Samoa. For example, her study reports that villages which are close in proximity to Apia are likely to have 40 per cent of households headed by women, while women head 33 per cent of households in rural villages (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991:137). Fairbairn-Dunlop's figures were quite different from those recorded in the national census, which reported FHHs to be 12.5 per cent in 1986 and in 1991 to be 16.7 per cent (GoWS 1991), with 18 per cent in 2001 (GoS 2001). While I have no intention of debating these figures, consideration needs to be given to the idea that census figures may only take into account women who are widowed, divorced or single living in a lone mother arrangement, whereas Fairbairn-Dunlop's statistics may encapsulate all arrangements such as those shown in Tables 1 and 2 in *Chapter Four*. The point being, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from these statistics. It is noted though, that head of household was no longer differentiated by gender in the 2001 Census.

Going by official statistics it would appear that FHHs are slowly growing in numbers in Samoa. From a recorded 12.5 per cent in 1986 to 18 per cent in 2001, there has been a 5 per cent increase over a 15 year period. Momsen (1991) argues that the privatisation in the means of production and a decline in co-operation within kin groups can provide the conditions for the growth of formally identified FHHs. Thus, the increase in formally identified FHHs in Samoa may be an indication that kin networks are becoming more individualised and disconnected, and it may be as I have suggested above, that a Western type female-headed family model is becoming more apparent.

Incidentally, over the last few decades a change in the nature of migration in Samoa has also impacted on the level of de-facto FHHs. Maria K felt that the incidents of de-facto FHHs were not as prominent in Samoa as they once were. Because of changes in migration law and quotas families are more likely to migrate together, especially if they are seeking to shift permanently or for an extended period of time, as opposed to separately (Maria K: Samoan academic, Nov 2001). Hence it is possible that formally identified FHHs may not be increasing at such a high rate because of this counterbalancing.

A summary of the characteristics of the female-headed households in this study

Before concluding this chapter, I want to provide an overview of the diverse characteristics of the FHHs that were involved in this research. As noted earlier, profiles of each of these women are provided in Appendix 1.

With regard to personal details, a number of variants were noted. In terms of their ages, the range was from early twenties to late seventies. FHHs also varied greatly in the number of children they had had, or cared for currently or over the years. Similarly, all of the children of FHHs were or had been in regular school. Moreover, all of the female household heads had primary level education, whilst 62 percent of the participants had secondary level education and 28 percent had a tertiary qualification. This supports the fact that Samoa has taken an approach to education which women have benefited from. For the six female household heads who had not gone onto secondary school, four of these were widowed and over the age of fifty, thus represented a differing generation in terms of what schooling opportunities might have been available to them.

In terms of household living arrangements these were dynamic and diverse. That is the household might encompass five buildings shared by everyone, or consisted of separate buildings that were not all shared. The extent that the FHHs were embedded in a wider family or living in an extended family situation was high. The extended family could be multi-generational or it could be extended in terms of siblings, brothers/sisters-in-law or even cousins. All of the FHHs had men present to some extent, whether it was a father/in-law, brother/in-law, son/in-law, or cousin.

Level of tertiary education and professional employment had a bearing on whether FHHs were able to live in a nuclear arrangement on freehold land. When they did it was usually in Apia. However, even those FHHs that had their residence in Apia made references back to their natal village where they would have remaining family members. It was common for Apia FHHs to engage with their extended natal family back in the village regularly.

The routes in which the women entered female headship varied. Women were without their partners because of death, migration, divorce/separation, because their partner was receiving medical treatment or because they had never established a partnership/relationship beyond having a child. While I tended to focus on the complete

absence of the husband/partner to determine those that were or were not FHHs, because Samoa is a MIRAB economy, I also decided to include those that had a husband or partner absent long term due to migration. The quotes below demonstrate the varying routes into female headship:

Caran's husband died 25 years ago when she was forty. Prior to his death it was just Caran, her husband and their children in the household:

...but when he passed away everyone came to live with me, my sister, and my niece and her husband who are next door, also my mother who is ninety-nine years old (Caran: FHH, Dec 2001).

Line and Delphina were widowed also. Line's husband died one year ago and she still *'misses him dreadfully'*, she gets tears in her eyes when she tells me this (Field notes Nov 2004). As far as I can ascertain through the interpreter, Delphina's husband was alive when the census came in November 2001, but he died not long after this. Ette also is a widow and her husband has been dead for many years now. All of these elderly widows live with other family members.

Diana on the other hand is separated and just recently she had come to be with her sister and her sister's husband in her own family village. Right after the separation, Diana remained with her husband's family, usually with his mother, but his mother had recently passed away so she decided to come back to her own village.

Nell's husband just left her and their three children. *'He has another one'* she told me, *'Another what?'* I say, and she replied *'girlfriend'* (Nell: FHH, Jan 2002).

Women upon separating or divorcing did not always return to their natal village, whether they did or did not was dependent on the relationship they had with their ex-partners family, where they were in the course of their life, their ability to generate income/access income, and depended also on the level of dependency of their children.

To differentiate between lone FHHs and embedded was not simple because even those that identified themselves as being 'lone' were certainly not alone from familial supports. To explain further, even when FHHs identified they lived in their own *fale*, other adult family members generally lived only metres away, meaning disconnection or isolation of

even women in their own *fale* was limited. This connectiveness played out through the provision of emotional and financial support.

Many of the FHHs were on customary land, under village rule at 72 per cent. Many could identify with a *matai* that they were governed by, while others that did not often talked about titles not currently bestowed. The extent that FHHs had access to a plantation was high at 94 per cent.

The extent that FHHs had the ability to generate income was high. Productively active FHHs varied in terms of both living and working in a village, living in a village and working in Apia, or living and working in Apia. Most households had a wage coming into the house. Just as many FHHs in the household/wider household earned the wage as did men. There was not a marked gender difference. The wage earner, regardless of their age or gender, appeared to contribute their wage income to the household. Some of the widowed women were able to draw on a pension, and regular remittances were received by 88 per cent of FHHs.

Conclusions

This chapter has explored and outlined the concepts of household, headship and FHHs in Samoa. In doing so, it has been shown that household and headship are multi-faceted, complex, unbounded and shifting entities as seen in the summary of characteristics of participants in this study. Moreover, household is both a social and spatial entity. The household also needs to be understood as being intrinsically intertwined with the family and the wider community, at the village level, nationally and across the seas, and this has ramifications for how headship may be defined and how headship roles can be played out. Given the cultural complexities that surround these definitions, I question whether these concepts, as they are generally understood in a Western sense, possess any real meaning in a unique cultural context such as Samoa. Thus it is posited that the family offers a better unit of analysis than the household and that headship can only be understood in relation to this. As it stands the concept of FHH currently holds very little meaning in Samoa, especially as a category for development.

Chapter Nine: Experiences of Female-headed Households in Samoa

Deconstruction of the female-headed household and broader cross-cultural awareness (Mencher and Okongwu cited in Momsen 2002:149), combined with better data availability, require the demythologizing of our concepts (Momsen 2002:149).

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to deconstruct FHH in Samoa with the intention of firstly, understanding what the development experiences of FHH are and what the importance of culture in relation to these development experiences might be. Secondly, a deconstruction of FHHs in Samoa will add to the growing debate which seeks to contest essentialist conceptions of FHHs. As mentioned in *Chapter Three* because categories can never speak entirely for the individual's identity and experiences, the importance of seeing inside and outside of a category is noted. The empty space surrounding the category of FHH is acknowledged and their experiences will be rendered visible.

As mentioned in *Chapter Six* the *'āiga* is very important in Samoa and *fa'asamoa* means that everybody understands what is expected of them in terms of the *'āiga* and the village. It was also stressed that according to *fa'asamoa* and *fa'amatai* women have generally been situated as having a high status, with their welfare and the wellbeing and security of their children automatically guaranteed. Drawing on fieldwork observations, in-depth interviews and the literature, this chapter examines what the aforementioned might mean in relation to FHHs. The chapter also explores how cultural frameworks, such as the *feagaiga*, understood to mean balance within relationships and the brother sister relationship, and how strategies such *fa'amagalo* (seeking forgiveness) and *fa'ailo ga tama* (to mark or distinguish a child/accepting the baby), and to *fa'alavelave* (demonstrating love and concern), might lend themselves to the position and condition of FHHs. As such the importance of culture in framing the development experience of FHHs will be made clear.

The chapter begins with an in-depth discussion surrounding the *feagaiga*, brother/sister relationship. Having knowledge of the *feagaiga* is fundamental for appreciating the experience and position of women who become pregnant outside of marriage. The chapter then moves on to discuss how pregnancy outside of marriage can disrupt balance within the family, however in saying this, the framework of *fa'asamoa* provides cultural

options such as *fa'amagalo* and *fa'ailo ga tama* for restoring this balance. The chapter then moves on to discuss the notion of embeddedness within the wider family network, showing that regardless of their start in life, single mothers and their children are not stigmatised, nor do they face ongoing discrimination as individuals or as a social group. With regard to the framework of *fa'asamoa*, the chapter progresses by exploring this in relation to other arrangements of FHHs. Thus, the experiences of widowed women as a group are presented, and these experiences are understood in relation to the idea that values accorded to the elderly. Much value is also accorded to children, particularly babies; this too is discussed. Other arrangements of FHHs such as divorced women are presented, focusing on how the family can provide emotional support during this period of turmoil. One idea that is raised in the literature is that FHHs are resource poor. This idea is considered in relation to FHHs in Samoa and in doing so dialogue surrounding financial interdependence, remittances and the cultural practices which encapsulate *fa'alavelave* will ensue. In light of these points this chapter then considers whether FHHs in Samoa are the 'poorest of the poor'. Finally, the chapter concludes by offering some overall remarks about the development experiences of FHHs in Samoa and what the importance of culture is in framing these experiences.

The *feagaiga*, brother-sister relationship

The concept of *feagaiga* is the “metaphorical foundation for the ideological structure by which order is maintained in Samoan society” (Schoeffel 1995:98)⁹¹. *Feagaiga* means agreement, contract or covenant (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991:72), and the relationship between the brother and sister is a *feagaiga* relationship. Whether formalised or not, it involves distinctly ascribed statuses and roles that are quite different, while being complementary (Schoeffel 1979:19-21). Thus it is considered that women as sisters are the holders and transmitters of sacred power and men are the holders of secular power and authority (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991:72). Hence, the *feagaiga* is a contract whereby the brother holds the authority and the sister is understood to hold the honour of the family. It is a contract because the rights, privileges and obligations that correspond to both are clearly spelt out and understood according to custom (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1996:7-9, 186).

⁹¹ Historically the institutionalised divisions of the *feagaiga* was expressed in many villages as the *o le nu'u o tama' ita' i* (Village of the Ladies) and the *o le nu'u o ali'i* (Village of the Gentlemen). These divisions differentiated the realm of influence of the *anuluma* (daughters of the village) and the *ali'i* (chiefs) (Schoeffel 1995:98).

According to Samoan ideology, the *feagaiga* also represents balance within relationships. For the brother/sister relationship this balance is between the political power of the brother and the moral power of the sister (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991:72). Cribb (1999:4) argues that it is this *feagaiga* bond between the brother and the sister that allows women a complementary amount of power. “The brother/sister relationship is understood to be one of mutual support and formal, mutual respect, in which precedence in certain matters is given to the sororal party” (Schoeffel 1995:88)⁹². The notion that secular actions require moral or spiritual support is also essential to the *feagaiga*:

A contrast is drawn between sacred power or moral authority and secular authority and action in which sanctity attributed to one party lends dignity and legitimacy to the action of the other (Schoeffel 1995:86-87).

This means that while a brother may have the authority to make a decision he also needs his sister’s approval – indeed she may have the last say. This complementary power means sisters can assert influence within the family decision-making process, whether it is about controlling money or bestowing *matai* titles, and they can assert influence in the conflict resolution process, or in terms of resource allocation (GoWS/UNICEF 1996:8).

The *feagaiga* relationship also offers a woman protection. As the *analumua* (daughters of the village) sisters are considered to be very important in safeguarding the dignity and standing of the *‘aiga*, hence a sister is seen to rank higher in status than her brother. This requires a brother to be of service to her.

This is further supported through the socialisation process of child/adult respect which occurs from a very young age, whereby children learn to obey and serve their parents without question (Maiava 2001). Meleisea (1992:64) refers to the “iron discipline and conformity” that is a part of Samoan society. This is also reinforced with reference to the scriptures, with 90 per cent of Samoans being Christian. Disobedience is often punished quite severely: “Obedience and love are equated at an early age” (Maiava 2001:81). Maiava (2001:81) referring to Freeman (1984:275-76) goes on to write about the ambivalent love/fear, resent/respect type of relationship that many Samoans have with their parents because of this strict approach. Many Samoans, even as adults, continue to be fiercely loyal to their parents, hence they live their lives obeying, serving and giving to their parents

⁹² See Schoeffel (1995) for an in-depth account of the *feagaiga*, in particular the historical rights and responsibilities accorded to brothers and sisters in relation to property (p.92).

(Freeman 1984:209-10, Maiava 2001:82, O'Meara 1990:78, 170). Even when married, a man or a woman may listen to the final say of their parents, as opposed to their spouse. For family members this can transpire to mean that, whether they want to or not, they will provide for and care for each other. According to *fa'asamoa*, in terms of obeying one's parents and maintaining the status of the family, and accorded by the *feagaiga* relationship, the brothers will care and provide for their sisters should they require it, whether they want to or not.

Under a *feagaiga* relationship, brothers are obliged to serve and protect their sisters as well as any of her offspring for life (Holme and Holme 1992:30; also see Meleisea 1992:14, 26, Ngan-Woo 1985:23-24, O'Meara 1990:103-09 for reference to the *feagaiga*, brother/sister relationship). Meleisea (1992:14) observes the Samoan proverb '*o le teine o le 'i'oimata o lona tuagane* – which means a girl is the inner corner of her brother's eye. This means that a sister is likened to the most vulnerable part of the eye, as opposed to the English saying 'apple of his eye' (Meleisea 1992:26; also see Ngan-Woo 1985:24 for reference to a brother's eye). Therefore, it is a brother's role to protect his 'vulnerable' sister, and as women play an important role in upholding the dignity and the prestige of the '*aiga*, which is linked to sexual behaviour, this means their virtue and purity also require protecting (Dunlop 1999:54). Relationships between young men and women prior to finishing high school are therefore not promoted, and even upon finishing school relationships remain tightly monitored (O'Meara 1990:103-9; also see Schoeffel 1995:8). Premarital sexual relations are "condoned in boys, and forbidden to girls" (Schoeffel 1995:89).

On one hand this obligation to protect and serve may offer a woman a sense of security, while on the other hand it may be problematic should she deviate from the expected norm, for example, getting pregnant outside of marriage. Single mothers constitute a typical scenario of FHHs in the international literature, with some reporting that single mothers are negatively stigmatised, discriminated against, and ostracised because of their circumstances. By exploring the general attitude towards sexual relationships and pregnancy outside of marriage, the likelihood of FHHs in Samoa being stigmatised and ostracised will now be considered.

Single mothers

Disrupting the harmony of the family

Single mothers are depicted in the literature as (one of) the most common forms of FHH, thus their status in Samoa needs to be specifically considered. While keeping the family honour seems pertinent, there are certainly mixed messages in the literature about what the appropriate sexual behaviour for Samoan girls might be. It was reported, famously, by Mead (1928) that Samoan girls had considerable sexual freedom. Holme (1957) conceded, “promiscuity is condemned by the church but winked at by the family” (p.411). O’Meara (1990:107-08) disputes this, making reference to the double standards attributed to boys and girls. Young men are encouraged to have affairs, while the same activity is forbidden of their sisters: “Most families go to great lengths to guard and restrain their young girls” (O’Meara 1990:107-08). While this study did not examine the sexual freedom of girls and women, it did suggest that the *feagaiga* may mean an unwed pregnant woman is not beyond forgiveness. However, before the process of forgiveness is explored I will discuss some of the responses an unwed pregnant woman may be confronted with.

When an unmarried woman’s pregnancy becomes known some are treated badly, indeed some are even violently chastised (Naseri 2001:135-42). Yet, in any given situation where the family was angry with a young pregnant woman, it seems they were just as angry with the supposed father. O’Meara (1990:105) recounts the story of a young burly man who broke the jaw of another young man who he had caught sitting under the breadfruit tree with his twenty year old sister. O’Meara reports that he thought the response was “a bit hasty and over protective”, however nine months later the sister of the burly young man gave birth to twins (O’Meara 1990:105; also see Schoeffel 1995). ‘Taking matters into your own hands’ to handle sexual indiscretions was seen as a viable option:

If she gets pregnant, well this is very unfortunate. The family would be very cross, her dad and her brothers, her mother and her sisters, they will all be disappointed in what she has done. I think her brothers will beat him up (Mose: Matai and retired school teacher, Nov 2004).

In recounting the discovery of her pregnancy, Leausa recalls how angry and ashamed her family were:

My family was so angry with me. Yes they were so angry, they were so angry with me because I was young at that time. My brothers were so angry with me because my pride was taken away. They were shamed by other boys; their friends laughed, did things like that (Leausa: FHH, Dec 2001).

This anger could also be seen in the story of Rika, who went on to marry her partner, and is now separated:

Rika: Everybody called me names, it hurt so much

Rochelle: When they were angry with you did they ever hurt you physically?

Rika: No they just said bad words at me, and this was so hard but they never hit me. I think that all families try to act like this (Rika: FHH, Jan 2002).

While being on the receiving end of bad words as opposed to physical abuse may seem that a person has been let off lightly, it is well noted by Macpherson and Macpherson (1987) that words can have an extremely harmful effect. Samoans have a saying *e pala le ma'a* 'ae le pala le 'upu, that is, stones may be reduced to sand, but words never decay; similarly, *e sola le fai*, 'ae tu'u le foto, that is, the stingray escapes, but leaves behind its barb (p.311). Both of these sayings suggest that harmful words can have a long lasting if not permanent effect, especially if it is considered that a person has brought shame to the family. Various proverbs that date back to pre-Christian Samoa, as well as those drawn from the scriptures, reinforce the idea of shame. For example, *fa'ato'ilalo le 'aiga* (causing the family to sink), *toso i lalo le 'aiga* (to bring the family name down), *māasiasi* (guilty for having brought the family into disrepute) (Macpherson and Macpherson 1987:311). When this is coupled with the idea that what is done is not forgotten, good or bad, then for some young women suicide may seem like a viable option, or lead to ideas about taking the life of the unborn child because they are unable to face family members and the consequences of their actions (Fiti-Sinclair 2003:54-55).

While Maia, an unmarried mother, had never considered suicide herself, the shame of her pregnancy had a heart-felt impact. Maia became pregnant with Leilani, a child that was later diagnosed with a disability, after she had a very short-term relationship:

He told me that he loved me, and so I went with him and then he said [later] that the baby wasn't his (Maia: FHH, Nov 2004) [my insert].

Maia reported that she felt so devastated and ashamed. Maia was also very worried about what her family would say, because this was not her first pregnancy outside of marriage:

I took some Samoan medicine to try and get rid of the baby, to kill the baby. Then the baby was born and she had a disability. I thought that God was punishing me for trying to kill the baby, I was so angry at myself; at everyone... all I did was cry. I felt so very bad, so ashamed about what I had done. I hated myself so much. You know for the first month Leilani seemed normal, looked normal and then her face, her look, her features became apparent. I was so sure that God was punishing me and so I believed that I deserved it (Maia: FHH, Nov 2004).

While most women have no intention of bringing shame upon their family members O'Meara (1990) notes that crossing forbidden sexual ground is a way that girls can covertly express feelings of anger and hostility that they are generally not able to express. "One young mother told me that she had an affair and became pregnant because, as she said, 'I wanted to do something to hurt my parents'" (O'Meara 1990:108).

In talking about single mothers and pregnancy, Yvette thought this idea of hurting one's parents was also very probable, but as a general rule people might just want to be together and have a baby anyway:

We had a friend at University in Australia well she got pregnant. We all felt sorry for her having to tell her family because we knew they would be cross at her, really cross at her boyfriend. They didn't know her boyfriend. They had lived together before this, that made her family angry too, but they just did it anyway. I think that a few young women do get pregnant; I have wondered why they don't use birth control, so maybe they want to get pregnant, and to just get married. Perhaps that is what they want, what they know; to be in love, get married and have a family (Yvette: Tertiary educated young woman, Nov 2004).

Yvette also raised the idea that having a baby when you are not married is not really such a bad thing, but it is just made worse through the gossiping or seems bad because of where you come from:

In Apia we are more progressive in our thinking, we accept things easier. They are really traditional in Savai'i, so maybe what you think depends on where you are from. I think in the villages it gives people something to gossip about (Yvette: Tertiary educated young woman from Apia, Nov 2004).

It is commonly said that 'something that has happened on one side of the island in the morning will be well known on the other side by noon' (Pers. Comm. 2002, 2004). As observed in Maia's story above, and Teresa's tale below, gossip or bad words can be very harmful to the individual as well as the family's status:

Yes people they gossip, even your family can, and it can be really hurtful. A few years ago my stomach well it was getting bigger and bigger, it looked like I was going to have a baby. But I was sick I had a tumour in my stomach, some of my family came to the hospital with me so they could see the truth, they thought that it was a baby and they didn't believe me that it was a tumour. So when I had the tumour removed, well after that they were very sorry about what they said (Teresa: Young, unmarried village woman, who works in Apia in the public sector, Nov 2004).

Yet this rebuke by the family and society for the most part appears short-lived, with a number of strategies available for making amends. These will now be discussed in more detail.

Cultural strategies for making amends

Fa'amagalo: Seeking forgiveness

When an unmarried woman discloses she is pregnant she can obviously tip the balance and disrupt family harmony, especially as according to the *feagaiga*, a sister holds the dignity of the family with her. Most importantly though, the *feagaiga* means an unwed pregnant woman is not beyond forgiveness. *Fa'asamoa* recognises that harmony or relational bonds disturbed by deviation can also be restored. “*Fa'asamoa* recognises human fragility and is willing to forgive” (Ngan-Woo 1985:24; also see Lui 2003:2-3). A person can seek *fa'amagalo* (forgiveness) by undergoing the process of *fa'atoesega* (formal apology) or in extreme cases, by the offending person and/or their *'aiga* performing a public act of apology and penance called an *ifoga* (Lui 2003:2, O'Meara 1990:121). The couple, or the girl and boy separately, can apologise. For Samoans “this act of humility and self-abasement is profoundly moving” (O'Meara 1990:122).

Maia, reflecting back to her first pregnancy, recounted:

Maia: Well I was 20 years old when I had my first baby. I took a big apology to my dad for what I did. Because that boyfriend is the boy of my village so my dad knew who he was.

Rochelle: Did anything happen to the boy? Did he have to apologise? Do you know?

Maia: Well he was really afraid so he just hid.

Rochelle: He just hid?

Maia: Yeah, and then afterward he came to me and he said he has to come to me [to take responsibility and ask me to get married]... and I said no. My dad said that I was not allowed to marry him. So I said no and my dad said no too... Dad did not want me to marry him. So I accepted this, so I stayed alone and had that baby.

Rochelle: So they didn't want you to marry him?

Maia: Yeah that's right

Rochelle: So he went away?

Maia: Yeah he went away and he married another lady.

Rochelle: Wow, did that make you sad?

Maia: Yes (nods), but not really, I accepted it because that is what my dad said (Maia: FHH, Nov 2004) [my insert].

Marriage is seldom forced. As seen in Maia's story, families prefer to have an unmarried mother rather than taking into their midst a man they do not particularly like or whom would not make a suitable husband (Holme 1957:411).

Fa'ailo ga tama: *Accepting the baby*

The restoration of harmony can also occur through the *fa'ailo ga tama* (to mark or distinguish a child or young one). According to *fa'asamoa*, the arrival of a new baby warrants the process of *fa'ailo ga tama*⁹³. This is an official acknowledgement of the newborn baby by the parents of the two 'aiga's. This process gives formal recognition to the social and cultural connections that the two 'aigas have through blood (GoWS/UNICEF 1996:6, Ngan-Woo 1985:14), thus consolidating the relationship between the new baby and the father's family.

Ngan-Woo's (1985:14) detailed account of *fa'ailo ga tama* illustrates that the process of *fa'ailo ga tama* involves the preparing and presenting of food and other gifts, such as fine mats, money, or gifts for the baby, from both sides of the family to one another. By presenting gifts, the father's side demonstrates that they are a family that has wealth, status, credibility and prestige. On the mother's side, the presenting of gifts demonstrates that the family understands and practices the values of *fa'asamoa*. In doing this, both families acknowledge that they have a commitment to the newborn, and even in years to come they will honour their obligations. This commitment to family is even extended to the wider family of the baby (Ngan-Woo 1985:14).

For a child that is born outside of wedlock, once the *fa'ailo ga tama* has been performed then the baby is no longer considered illegitimate. The newborn baby is generally welcomed unconditionally, without being stigmatised (Holme 1957:411). As Ngan-Woo writes:

The process of *fa'ailo ga tama* gives the child a place within the 'aiga of both the father and mother. All support systems will be made available to the child and no attempt will be made to morally condemn the mother or the father because the child has been born out of wedlock (Ngan-Woo 1985:14).

⁹³ In the document 'A situational analysis of children and women in Western Samoa' the ritual is referred to as *fa'afaiilegā tama* (nurturing the offspring) (GoWS/UNICEF 1996:6).

Fa'ailo ga tama is also a means for achieving reconciliation between the two families. This is a necessary process if the couple are not intending to marry each other (Ngan-Woo 1985:14).

Caring for children

As mentioned earlier, babies in Samoa are regarded in a positive light – whatever the birth circumstances. Everybody in the family pampers, cuddles and greatly cares for babies especially for the first two years of their lives (Maiava 2001:80, O'Meara 1990:77, 169). With adult sisters, brothers, cousins, aunts, and uncles all living in close proximity, a functioning extended/immediate family not only means that the elderly are taken care of, but also that small children are cared for (Lay *et al.* 2000:15). A number of authors highlight that the elderly also play a major role in caring for small children (Holme and Holme 1992:97) (see *Plate 8*: Elderly man with his great grandson). The care of small children is also delegated to younger children, usually girls of about six to seven years of age. This care may include carrying them around, entertaining them, stopping them from disturbing others, especially adults, and protecting them from other children (Grattan 1948:165, Holmes 1957:402). In light of the above, there are obviously many hands around to help with the care of small children, especially babies. A note from my fieldwork journal also reiterates this:

I got the bus this morning; it was very, very, crowded. A young woman got on with a very tiny baby. The baby only looked a few days old. The old man in the front seat tapped the woman, said something, put his hands out and she passed him the baby. She went to the back of the bus and sat down. Twenty minutes later the old man got off and handed the baby to an elderly woman. Ten minutes later the young woman walked down the isle to get off the bus, she made a noise to get the old woman's attention and she smiled, nodded, collected her baby and got off the bus. Later when I spoke to Savalia (Savai'i research assistant) about this, I asked whether the woman with the baby would know the people on the bus and she said 'probably not, but it doesn't matter because everybody likes babies. Everybody wants to hold, cuddle and help with babies' (Field notes, Nov 2004).

Plate 8 shows an elderly man who has the primary role in caring for his great grandson during the day. Freely available childcare is a very useful asset to have access to, especially for those FHHs who might require childcare because they are in formal employment. Chant (1997a:45-46) noted the childcare difficulties that FHHs report having. Whether it is not being able to access childcare, afford the cost of childcare, or being forced back into the workforce when they would rather be at home with their children, childcare is often a number one issue for parents (also see Mädje and Neusüss cited in Chant 1997a:40, Oliver

1996:52-53). As a general rule however, obtaining childcare so one can attend work, study or generate income does not seem to be an issue in Samoa.



Plate 8: Elderly man with his great grandson

The restoration of harmony

Regardless of a woman's tumultuous beginnings into motherhood, once people come to terms with a young woman's pregnancy, any negative attitudes tend to settle down. As a general rule, Samoan society does not admonish these women for life. Savalia states:

When the baby is born they will forgive her. The family might be cross – feel ashamed, but they will love the baby (Savalia: Savai'i research assistant, Nov 2004).

It is not the habit for the new mother or the family to abandon the baby. Soma, an elderly village pastor and *matai*, supports this by saying:

Well you know there are a lot of girls who have children with no father and you know we all hate it. It disgraces the name of our family; it disgraces the name of our mum and our dad. However, this lady who has no husband, who is pregnant, well we will all look after that lady and the child. In my family, while we were never cross, we felt very sad. But the thing is... the baby and her, well we feed them, we look after them, and we do everything especially for the baby. The blood, the bones,

and the flesh this is what is most important (Soma: Elderly village pastor and *matai*, Nov 2004).

The restoration of harmony when deviance occurs is fundamental to social functioning. This need to restore harmony has been applicable in a couple of instances in Maia's family. Maia told me about when her younger sister decided to become Mormon, to change religious denomination, and how her brother and father were very angry about this, as were her sisters. The family had always belonged to the Samoan Congregational Church and the Samoan Congregational Church was the first Samoan Church to be established. The family had a long history with the church and they were proud of this history and the relationships that they had built up over the decades:

There was so much disharmony in the family at this time, there was crying and fighting, and I remember my brother hit my sister. They didn't speak for ages (Maia: FHH, Nov 2004).

O'Meara (1990:43) notes while many villages are divided between two or three religious dominations, each with its own church and pastor or priest, some villages are noted for discouraging straying or converting to another domination, not only because of spiritual conviction but because they fear religious divisions will disrupt village harmony or family harmony depending where the division occurs. In Maia's opinion her family were very angry about this; indeed it seemed they were angrier than when she got pregnant. Maia thought her family forgot the fact she was pregnant pretty quickly.

Other accounts from the field also suggest that there were various means available for restoring harmony. Given the power of sisters according to the *feagaiga*, a young woman might go to an older sister or a natal aunt if they found themselves pregnant and unwed because the *feagaiga* may mean these women would wield more power to calm the family:

With my first baby it was difficult for me to tell my dad, because I had that first baby when my mother died. My mother never knew. So I told it to one of my extended family, my aunt... so I talked to her to make it easy for me (Maia: FHH, Nov 2004).

Yes they were very angry at me, but I apologised. My parents were away at this time, and I was living with my grandparents, so my Aunt she did the talking, so did my grandmother. My older brother he came. I could tell they were so disappointed like they had lost hope in me or something. Then my boys were born. My grandfather and the twins, well they are inseparable. My grandfather is old now. The twins keep him living, he says (Logo: FHH, Jan 2002).

A young girl may also draw on the mediation, strength and advisory skills of her mother:

If her dad is cross with her, her mother will mediate and advise. There is a process that will occur to work it out (Mose: Matai and retired school teacher, Nov 2004).

The couple themselves may seek to marry legally, or start co-habiting as in a common law marriage. These hidden relationships may be seen by some as part of the courtship process that leads up to marriage (O'Meara 1990:105). The family may also insist that they marry, however if marriage is not considered to be a viable option the family may send the young woman away to live with relatives in another village. Sometimes young couples also elope and will return once the family has calmed down and accepted the marriage (O'Meara 1990:105).

Embeddedness

Other members of the immediate or extended families may also informally adopt the babies of those women who do not marry. There are various instances where the family pulls together and the mother and the new baby become embedded in the wider family network:

Maia: If somebody sees that you are just pregnant without a husband, well they talk and they talk... you know like that. But on the whole they understand because it didn't just happen to only me, it happens to all the girls. So that's why they calm down and left me alone. In the end I don't think that they treated me any differently. They knew that it could happen to anyone.

Rochelle: Where did your first baby go? Did someone adopt your baby?

Maia: Well firstly with my dad until I got stronger, and then when he died... then my younger sister and her husband adopted her... this was while I was in American Samoa. At that time I was with other family members, as a baby sitter. This baby is the girl who is in Apia now attending school.

Rochelle: Were you okay about adopting?

Maia: Ah yeah, the baby went to my own sister I was very happy about this (Maia: FHH, Nov 2004).

These decisions are made by the family as a whole and appear to be made based on what is best for the entire family:

Of course the family will help care for her – sometimes children might go elsewhere. Sometimes a baby goes to other members of the family. A young girl might go to Pago [American Samoa], New Zealand, or Australia. She does what her parents say. Parents decide what is important (Josef: Elderly matai, Nov 2004) [my insert].

Adoption may also occur covertly, meaning some women and children became so embedded within the immediate family that it is difficult to tell which women gave birth to

what babies as the family would just refer to them as their children. This was reiterated when Diana stated:

Sometimes you don't even know in a family whose baby is whose. They [the family] won't tell you, and they will just say the baby is a cousin or a sister or a brother. But the baby will still be loved (Diana: FHH, Nov 2004)[my insert].

This was also confirmed by Bronwyn the Apia research consultant that I worked with during the second fieldwork period when she told me:

Parents of a young girl will often tell you that the baby is theirs, that it is their youngest child. This is the great thing about having so many available hands around to help (Bronwyn: Research consultant, Apia-based, Nov 2004).

This care for children of the extended family is based on the value accorded to children in Samoa: "A Samoan family's greatest resource is its children. The only assurance of support that people have in old age" (O'Meara 1990:79). Those that have few or no children usually adopt, whether it is temporarily or permanently from close relatives (O'Meara 1990:79).

Even though adopted out, many women continue to have relationships with their children. Accounts from Maia about her first born who was adopted (informally) by her extended 'āiga suggested she still had a solid and loving relationship, even though she had not been a central feature in her daughter's up-bringing. Moreover, it appeared that her daughter had not experienced any deprivation because of her birth circumstances. As noted in my field diary:

Maia is planning to take the early ferry this Friday to Apia, to attend her first daughter's school prize giving. Her daughter is receiving a prize. Maia seems very proud (Field notes, Nov 2004).

It was consistently restated that regardless of predicament, no-one would be left to fend for themselves and neither would they be rejected for the rest of their lives by society or their family:

Well yes it is better to have a husband. But we know they don't though. I know I have seen pregnant girls. They go to the hospital. You see them getting bigger and bigger and then the baby is born and her mother, and her sister, even her dad will care for this baby (Lea: Village woman, living in husband's village, Nov 2004).

This point is also confirmed by Tina in discussing her brother who has a baby to a girl in a neighbouring village:

Boy, when our mother found out she said to him 'you get over there and marry her, care for her and this baby.' She was cross at him, really cross (Tina: Tamaese's sister, Nov 2004).

Tina's brother, Tamaese informs me later that they are not married yet, they are living in-between both families:

I love my son, I really want more children. They are a gift. It would be good to have another son. My mother has stopped being mad with me (Tamaese: Untitled man fathered a child outside of marriage, Nov 2004).

Neli a private business woman and spokesperson on gender issues spoke about her own personal experience as an unmarried mother from years ago:

Well in my case I am an example of a woman who had this thing happen. I had a baby that was born out of wedlock... I was alone and with the baby. In the beginning when my father found out that I was pregnant he didn't say anything to me... he wouldn't speak to me. My family has a chiefly title, and for my father it was a very hard thing to accept this kind of thing. We came from the village where the culture is very strong and so I didn't even tell him that I was pregnant, I just left it like that and I led a normal life and when he found out that I gave birth to a baby boy, although he was ashamed about this kind of thing, when the baby was born he was the first one to come to the hospital and he wanted to take the baby with him... So you see the anger and the hatred in the beginning, all of the words like 'we have lost hope in you', well when my family saw my son all of that was gone, gone, gone (Neli: Business woman and gender expert, Nov 2004).

Hence women who have babies outside of marriage appear not to be ostracised forever. This point leads me to the next area of discussion, which seeks to look at in more detail this idea of whether FHHs are stigmatised and discriminated against, and/or socially isolated as individuals or a social group.

Stigma and discrimination

Globally, in many instances, not only have women been ostracised when they had a baby out of wedlock, but their children have been stigmatised and discriminated against for their entire life, especially if they were obviously 'mixed race'. One only has to look at adoption rates in Western countries during the 1960s and 1970s, the historical accounts of women being placed in mental institutions because of pregnancy outside of marriage, as well as recent accounts of abandoned babies, with specific accounts of abandoned 'mixed race' babies in places like post-war Vietnam, to realise the extent of this rejection. The stigma and discrimination accorded to unwed mothers and their children over the centuries, has been enormous (Broder 2002, Gordon 2001).

The father of Maia's youngest daughter is *palagi*. Accounts of her daughter's life suggested that exclusion or abandonment of a child is not the Samoan way, regardless of parentage. Diana's biological father was working as an engineer in Apia when Maia met him, and as stated before he was unaware of her birth. Diana clearly looks *palagi*, and even though she had dark hair and eyes, she was very fair skinned and had obvious non-Samoan features. Diana does extremely well at school and she was in the 'Miss' competition. The 'Miss' competition is a beauty and talent competition for the girls of the villages in the area and it seemed that Diana was the favourite for winning the 'Miss' title for her age group. Maia believed that both her girls, Diana with her *palagi* features, and Leilani with her disability, were integrated without reserve into village life. My observations also supported this statement:

I saw both Leilani and Diana in church today. They come in their white dresses and sit with the rest of the children. Leilani often cuddles up to people... they don't seem to be bothered. Compared to the rest of the children in the village Diana looks markedly different. From what I can see no one seems to be bothered by her difference either (Field notes, Nov 2004).

Maia also talked a lot about her hopes and dreams for Leilani and told me in detail about the nationwide disability survey she helped with. The survey attempted to record all the children in Samoa who a particular disability, thus identifying where they were, who they were and what their needs might be. Maia reported that she was part of a working group who were then able to secure funding from a New Zealand agency because of this survey. When Maia talked I could see the pride on her face and hear it in her voice as she recounted the work they had done. Maia reported that she has received many accolades from people in the district because of her proactive role in this process. Because of the new funding, Leilani and others with this disability will now have access to resources that they would not have had previously.

In summary, overall responses to single women with babies were ultimately positive. On one hand when a child was conceived out of wedlock, while many Samoans expressed shame, anger and grief and without a doubt this issue posed great moral concern for many Samoans, a process of forgiveness, acceptance and reconciliation occurs. Any small baby, regardless of circumstances is seen to be a '*gift from God*' (Maria K: Samoan academic, Nov 2002), therefore the needs of the baby, as well as the woman, will be met. On the whole the women in this research did not feel that they were discriminated against or stigmatised because they had had a baby outside of marriage. While everyone had an individual story

to tell about their experience, there appeared to be no longer-term ramifications. They did not believe that their situation had a bearing on their ability to access or mobilise resources.

While some women felt this week's gossip might include themselves, this did not mean they would be next week's gossip. There always seemed to be some story somewhere, about someone or something, which provided new amusement or entertainment. Moreover, because Samoan people were fairly mobile and because people's overseas relatives moved about the place regularly there was often something occurring, for example a *fa'alavelave*, as a distraction.

On the whole, *fa'asamoa* accords Samoan women an expected degree of security and certainty, and since it is within the family that the *feagaiga* exists, it can be argued that the family is potentially very valuable to the single mother, not only for ensuring her own wellbeing as well as that of her children, but for ensuring she has an element of voice within her family and within her village. This point leads me to consider further how *fa'asamoa* might lend itself to other FHHs arrangements such as widowed women.

Widowed women

While in some cultures widows are attributed with low status, according to *fa'asamoa*, the elderly are given great respect and authority because they are the ones that hold and impart knowledge. They pass on genealogy, family stories, and the belief system (Holme 1957:420, Lay *et al.* 2000:17): "The aged are respected for their wisdom and knowledge of Samoan traditions and they are often called upon to give advice in the family and the village council" (Holme 1957:417). In the past it was thought that if family members died feeling angry with their relatives they would return and punish the living. Therefore great respect was accorded to the elderly (Lay *et al.* 2000:46).

Because children are taught from a very young age to obey and serve their parents, it is easy to appreciate that any widowed woman may be well taken care of by her family members. Even those who are located overseas worry about who is taking care of their parents. Many adult children will also return home to do so, if and when required. Parental influence does not seem to be diminishing, quite the opposite. That is obligations to and the care of parents appears to be strengthening (Maiava 2001:82).

In many instances though, the elderly still contribute back into the family. In a survey undertaken by the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development which looked at the needs of the elderly, it was identified that ninety percent of the 916 respondents were engaged in some sort of income generating activity, which included the selling of crafts and agricultural produce. The respondents also reported that they still contributed to family *fa'alavelaves*. The study estimated that only seventeen percent of the pension was used for personal purchases. "Almost 40 percent of the pension is used to pay for children's school fees, school uniforms, electricity bills and food" (Shon 2003:48).

A number of the respondents reported that they were unable to budget for nutritious food while on a pension, and that the pension needed to increase (Shon 2003:47-48). However, an increase in the pension may not necessarily equate with better nutrition for the elderly, as this increase may also go back into meeting the needs of the entire family. If a widowed woman or man for that matter, was unable to meet her or his needs in terms of food requirements, she or he would not be doing this in isolation from the rest of their family. The family would also be struggling.

People automatically reported that widowed women are to be honoured and revered, they are not seen as a burden and wherever possible their lives are to be lived in comfort:

When a husband dies his wife, the widow is cared for by her children. A widowed woman is always cared for, everybody does everything for her. Taking care of her – she just sits and they do everything (Savalia: Savai'i research assistant, Nov 2004).

Everybody cares for the widowed woman especially the old woman; they care about old men too. Parents are with their children. This is the Samoan way (Lea: Village woman, living in husband's village, Nov 2004).

O'Meara (1990) in making a general statement about Samoa, observes it is not a world of ease and leisure, unless you are *old* or important (p.19) [my emphasis]. It is noted in the document 'A situation analysis of children and women in Western Samoa' (1996), that the *anualuma* which are the widowed women and daughters of the village, are considered to be a very powerful lobby group in the village and their status is ranked as being on par with that of the titled men (GoWS/UNICEF 1996:8). It would appear on the death of a husband that a wife gains status, because she goes from being *faletua* (wife of a chief) or *ava a tanulele'a* (wife of an untitled man) who are relegated to the back of the house and have a lesser status, to *anualuma*, ascribing her with much more freedom and influence than before.

The opinions respondents held about widows remained fairly static, regardless of the key informants' gender, economic status, level of education, position in society or age. Yvette, a young, tertiary educated urban woman stated:

A widowed woman? Well everybody cares for her, especially if she is old. Like my grandmother she is the one that everybody goes to, she has a house girl that does everything and when she tells the family to come for fa'alavelave, they do. Everybody, they respect her. Her son, my uncle lives very close, she is in our family village. His wife cares for her too. This is what the Samoan family does (Yvette: Tertiary educated young woman from Apia, Nov 2004).

Ette, Yvette's seventy-four year widowed grandmother confirmed this in a later interview:

My son the matai well he lives there (Ette points to a house 20 metres away). His wife is from New Zealand (Maori). They came here to be with me. So they stay there and I stay here just me with my house-girl, a girl from the village. They share what they have with me and my house-girl does the work. My oldest daughter she pays for the house-girl. My son in Australia sends money too. Fifty tālā for you they say. I put it in my purse, and if I want I buy something. And I get given some tālā every week from my daughters. I don't worry about anything; I just clean up the house and cook the food for them when they come (Ette: FHH, Jan 2002).

This perspective is very much at odds with some of the ways that widows are viewed in some cultural contexts (see Young 2006). Young (2006:203) goes on to say that "no such practices are suffered by widowers...the ill treatment of widows is thus an acute expression of gender inequality" (Young 2006:202).

As mentioned previously planning financially for old age is fundamental; continuing to build the home environment is also just as important:

Even if you are from New Zealand or Australia you will want to build what is here, because this is where your heart lies. This is the meaning of being Samoan. We always keep in mind the land of our fathers, of our ancestors. I am not an individual because of a tofi (status/position) (Mose: Matai and retired school teacher, Nov 2004).

This spiritual connection with home is demonstrated further in Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi's (2003) personal account, as he identifies with the ambivalence of going away to work:

By chance I met in Apia one of the elders of my family - Gaopoa by name - at that time he was over one hundred years of age. He grabbed my right arm, took it in both of his hands and massaged it gently, as we say in Samoan 'lomi'. He looked into my eyes and said very slowly: 'Tupua, tautuanā mo 'oe le atunuu'. Roughly translated: '[Tupua] Bear in mind the land of our fathers'... Gaopoa was not talking to me. He was talking to the gods of my fathers, who inhabit my psyche. He was talking to my ancestors, living and dead who murmur admonition to my soul. He was talking to the land, the sea and the skies, the antecedents of Polynesian man... (Tamasese 2003:49-50).

As noted before, people continue to be intimately linked to their villages. Even when away, many Samoan continue to have this strong connection with their family, village and nation:

I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with the land, the seas and the skies...I belong to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me... this is the essence of my sense of belonging (Tamasese 2003:51).

In connecting the wider *'aiga* including land and titles, to the care of widowed women, Mose made these comments:

A widow, well everybody feels sorry for her – even those who have migrated. Everybody will help her. If no one is at home someone will come home to be with her, or she will go to them. Samoans are always thinking about building up the family, building up the village. It is important to have someone here in the village, as long as someone is here in the village, the family continues. Remember land and titles are very important (Mose: Matai and retired school teacher, Nov 2004).

As also mentioned earlier, it is not uncommon for family members who are overseas to return home to care for an aging father or mother.

I have come here from Auckland, as my mother is very sick. She had a stroke. We had a family meeting all of us, we had a discussion to see who would come and be with her, I am the eldest and as many years ago I worked as a nurse, the family including myself thought it was best that I come. My brother he will also come soon from Brisbane, this is what we do, this is just what is expected (Rosa: Woman residing overseas who has returned to care for her sick mother, Nov 2004).

When I asked Rosa how long she was planning to be in Samoa she told me *'I have no idea, for however long it takes'*. Family members returning home to be with dependent or sick family parents was also noted in other key informants' stories, such as Naomi's:

Because our mother is ill – someone needs to be with her and to be with our father. They will stay as long as they have to (Naomi: Village shop owner and school teacher, Jan 2002).

Those members who did not come to assist in person, contributed in others ways, like financially or by assisting family members who had remained at home:

I have children back at home in Auckland too. My other sister is helping to care for them while I am away and we have our other brother's daughter, our niece staying. She is doing a course at Manukau [Manukau Institution of Technology] (Rosa: Woman residing overseas who has returned to care for her sick mother, Nov 2004) [my insert].

It is also very common for an aging person to make a trip to family members in New Zealand or Australia, especially if they require medical treatment:

Yes I am now living with my children, my wife she is in New Zealand she is getting treatment for her diabetes. She is getting better because she is in Auckland, she is at Middlemore hospital, and our daughter who lives in New Zealand is with her (Soma: Elderly village pastor and matai, Nov 2004).

Ette summed it all up when she suggested this elevated status is an expectation:

Ette: This fussing by everyone is something of a well-earned entitlement. When you get old, you have worked hard; you shouldn't have to worry about a thing. Not a thing... me, I just worry about where they will bury me. Don't bury me here, bury me over there I say (and with this comment Ette laughs and laughs).

Rochelle: Where is your husband buried, is he here?

Ette: No over there, in the place over there, in the village. We have another house, like the one in front there.

Rochelle: So you want to be over there with him?

Ette: No, I want to look out to the ocean (and again she laughs) (Ette: FHH, Jan 2002) (see Plate 9: Widowed female-head of household).



Plate 9: Widowed female-head of household

Reflecting back to Mulitalo-Lauta's (1998, 2000) understanding of *fa'asamoa*, the components of the 'Samoan heart', 'Samoan way' and 'protocols and values' can clearly be seen. As a general rule the elderly are well taken care of, but to truly understand the situation of an elderly woman one would need to look comprehensively at the family

context in which she resides. Any person can only be taken care of according to the means of their family.

It can therefore be assumed that for FHHs such as the elderly widow or the single mother the family as it functions according to *fa'asamoa* might be very valuable. Family responses towards women who are separated from their partners because the relationship has dissolved will now be discussed.

Divorced women

As identified in the literature the situation of some divorced women has been viewed unsympathetically and they are often held responsible for the breakdown of the marital relationship (Chant 1997a). Rather than equating blame, a number of the participants identified that their families had provided enormous emotional support, with some seeing any marital breakdown to be a wider family problem, which required wider family input. Diana a thirty-six year old woman who had been separated from her husband for the last seven years told of the way that her husband's family rallied together to support her and help her:

When my husband was running around, some of the people in the village knew and they made jokes and they said things like he is at the beach fales dancing with other women. There was a lot of gossip about us. I felt really ashamed. I used to think that people would think I didn't advise him well about what he should be doing or behaving. My brothers-in-law and mother-in-law were all very angry with him, very ashamed that he was doing this, drinking all the time and running about, they helped me. They thought he was bringing shame to the whole family because he wasn't coming to church either and he was getting into fights. Sometimes he hit me too. I think that people felt sorry for me because he got into lots of fights. The village council said that we had to fix it. It was very hard for his mother because they had to pay a fine, some tala and then he went to Apia. It was good when he went because he didn't help [around the house or the village]. In the end, I was so glad when he went. It was better; it got better because my husband's family helped so much. I think his behaviour reflected badly on all the family (Diana: FHH, Nov 2004) [my insert].

Only recently had Diana returned to be with her own family, initially choosing to stay with her husband's family even after he left, because of how good they had been to her. Diana's situation was now fairly good. Diana reported she felt well supported in an emotional and spiritual sense, and they were able to meet most of their physical needs. Financially they did not have that much money, but overall they were able to meet any *fa'alavelaves* and generally all of the children went to school. Her sister's oldest boy sometimes collected bottles for sale and he also helped in the plantation.

Diana reported that her own mother expected that her brother, who lives nearby with his immediate family, would always look after her making sure that she had things. Her brother, who is the family *matai*, runs a small shop with his wife and also works on the ferry, so the family has a cash income.

Judgments about the breakdown of a marital relationship varied:

Maybe they [the village] might think that she hasn't advised her husband very well so that he will be good. Maybe she hasn't said to him be good. I think that they should go and see the pastor; they should talk to someone, someone who can help them to be a good couple (Sam: Shop owner and *matai*, Nov 2004) [my insert].

When a marriage breaks down I know our family would feel ashamed, I think that the kids will feel bad because everyone will know. Couples need to try harder (Lea: Village woman, living in husband's village, Nov 2004).

A woman and man need to work at their marriage. They need to ask God to help them to be a good couple. Be a good family (Savalia: Savai'i research assistant, Nov 2004).

While marital union and the maintenance of marriage are preferred, the participants in this study indicated the maintenance of a marriage did not come at the expense of a family member:

If a family member has been treated badly the family will try and put it right. Like my cousin, well her husband hit her... well I tell you, they all went there; the family all went there and they told him [off]. Yes, my mother and my aunty told him [off] and he regretted this. They just took my cousin and her kids away and told him to get lost. He was really sorry. She isn't with him now (Yvette: Tertiary educated young woman who lives in Apia, Nov 2004) [my inserts].

This collective support may also come from the wider community as seen in a comment noted in my fieldwork journal during my stay in a village:

Savalia said today that a woman who she had purchased Samoan cocoa off her a week ago came to her door crying, asking for *tālā*. Her husband had been beating her and she had decided to go away to Apia. Savalia gave her some *tālā* and *sene* and the woman waved the bus down and got on the bus and went. Savalia said the woman was worried though because she had left her 2 year old with her husband and she really wants her little boy to be with her. Savalia told the woman to send her family and the police and that they will help her get her son back. Later I asked Savalia whether this man who had beaten his wife will get in trouble with the village council. Savalia reports that the village chiefs will only step in if the woman went to them personally, even with her family. Savalia states 'village chiefs don't usually respond to gossip, although it is quite likely that this man might have some trouble with his wife's brother. Savalia adds 'violence is not something that is acceptable in Samoa, although it does happen'. Later, we saw the husband of the crying lady

biking past, Savalia said he waved, but she didn't wave back. He had the child. Savalia made comments about him not being a good man, and that people will be watching him (Field notes, Nov 2004).

At a later time Savalia went on to say:

If a man does bad things people have been known to blame the woman, believing she has given bad advice (Savalia: Savai'i research assistant, Nov 2004).

Many people made reference to the fact that women have a role to play in giving advice.

A woman's role is one of advisor so if I see that my sister is having problems with her husband I might say to her now sister would you mind telling your husband to do this.... Tell him all that what we can see doesn't look that good. He is drunk all the time with no plantation, with no taro plants for your children. Then the lady, my sister will advise her husband and then sometimes the matai who knows also, with his power he will advise all of the family (Sam: Shop owner and matai, Nov 2004).

Taken to the extreme, if something goes wrong in a family a woman can be held wholly responsible and stand accused of not fulfilling her advisory role or duties. As noted by this quote in the national newspaper, from a member of the public in response to a 2004 murder-suicide incident. This incident involved the death of two children and their mother at the hands of their father and husband before he killed himself:

I think that these occurrences take place because of problems between the mother and the father. A mother's role despite any differences should be to always give advice and be calm in any situation regardless. These reasons are common in any family and its effect on the children is very strong. Mothers should be aware of the fact that they are the peacemakers, and should learn to calm and solve any situation (Samoan Observer, 23 Nov 2004:4).

In this man's opinion it would appear that this terrible tragedy is the result of this mother and wife not fulfilling her advisory, calming, and problem solving role, rather than the husband and father being out of control, thus unable and/or unwilling to take on the advice of a wife.

Josef thought that people rushed into marriage and this is why people ended up having problems:

Some of the problem is that people only know each other for about two weeks, then they are married and then they are divorced. They don't even know each other. Or one is drinking, roaming around; going to the beach fales...I think in Apia the nightclubs are a problem (Josef: Elderly matai, Nov 2004).

In agreement Soma states:

For divorced people, well this happens for a reason. I think it is because the woman and the man they did not understand each other, there was not enough time before they got married, only two weeks and then they are married (laughs loudly and shakes his head). You see young couples they concentrate on the destination, there is not enough time being friends and making sure they really love each other. If you take your time then you will not be surprised by any problems, you can't hide any problems you have forever. You know if your husband is having some problems and they are not being hidden like drinking, gambling and smoking, then we can solve the problems very easy, because you understand your husband and your husband understands you, and it is all based on living and knowing. It is hard work marriage; you have to try. Many things can lead to divorce. Roaming around, if you don't have enough money to support your family, not enough food...but if they love each other, they might ask God to supply us with resources, ask the family, so...things get better.

Rochelle: So if a couple is struggling because they are very poor, the rest of the family should help to try and alleviate some of those worries so they don't end up divorced.

Soma: Yes that is right (Soma: Elderly village pastor and *matai*, Nov 2004).

Even when I changed the scenarios and ask the question 'what if a women leaves her husband, as opposed to her being abandoned by him, would that make a difference to how she is viewed and treated?' Soma's response stayed consistent:

We don't omit her for any of these reasons, it because she is one of our family, the flesh, the bones ... the bonds of the 'āiga are very close... (Soma: Elderly village pastor and *matai*, Nov 2004).

Court officials have identified that the number of married couples separating has been increasing yearly. Additionally, married women and single mothers are seeking support from the Court's Maintenance Office, so as to gain child support payments from absent fathers⁹⁴ (Semu 2004:8). In drawing together information about why couples are separating, the usual accounts are of men and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and other various social stressors, however, one of the main reasons given is also trouble with a spouse's family:

The main reason for many couples separating is the lack of respect by young couples for their parents. Young couples do not know where to draw the line between themselves and both their parents according to our culture (Semu 2004:8).

⁹⁴ The Courts have also noted that it is mainly women that come for support, as opposed to men. They state "maybe men are ashamed to come here because people might think that their wives are supporting them..." arguing it is still common for Samoans to see men as the 'breadwinners' for the family (Semu 2004:8). Alternatively, maybe men are not looking for maintenance support because they are not the primary care givers.

It seems that people are happy to accommodate their natal family members, but not their partner's family. Many couples are favouring or expecting a *fiapalagi* way of life – in which a person is independent at 18 years, rather than the *fa'asamoan* way of life which means a person is not independent until their parents pass away, no matter how old they might be. Rather life is one of interdependence. This conflict is leading to marital breakdown (Semu 2004:8).

Overall there was a definite consensus that divorced women would not be stigmatised, discriminated against and ostracised; the family would act as the social security system should any of these women, widowed, divorced/separated or single require something. Only in very rare cases would this not occur:

Yes this is the Samoan way to care for her, unless she is really bad and they are cross at her and they don't forgive her, if she is doing things to make them ashamed. Then maybe they will talk and advise her not to do these things, to apologise... If she doesn't maybe they will chase her away. The village can fine you because you do things that are not good (Lea: Village woman, living in husband's village, Nov 2004).

Whether a woman decided to return to her natal family was very much dependent on the relationship she had with her family and his family. It has been suggested that women are choosing not to return to their natal villages on the break-up of a marriage, instead many are choosing to rely on their own financial resources (Dunlop 1999:96).

Financial interdependence – earning and controlling resources

Women globally are said to not only earn less, but to have less say and control over economic resources (Elson 1999). In this study a number of the women interviewed were financially independent. In a number of instances they were the financial providers for the wider family network. For example, Leasua, a single mother of a three year old, was the only person in her *'āiga* who was earning a regular formal wage from her position as a guesthouse receptionist in Apia. While others in her family contributed cash earnings through their small business ventures (Leasua's brother ran a fishing business where he sold fish products at the market, and Leasua's married sister had a couple of small business enterprises such as handicrafts which she sold to a stall at the Apia market and a village-based weekly bingo enterprise), the regular fixed waged income came from Leasua's job. Even though Telesia was a divorced woman with six children, she was in a good financial position as a public accountant, meaning she was able to not only make provision for her own children but for other members of her extended *'āiga*. There was also Kyla, whose

husband spent the better part of their married life out of the country working while she continued to manage their family-owned business ventures. Kyla made provisions for a number of children belonging to extended family members.

Many of the participants reported they had control over resources and had input into how resources were to be used. As is shown in Nell's case, despite the fact she did not earn any of the money she was considered by her family members to have sound budgetary skills:

My brother works in Apia as a labourer, he is the only one with an income in our family, and he brings his wages to me. I am the one who manages the household budget, for all of us. I am good at planning for what we need. I feel that I am the one who controls our money (Nell: FHH, Jan 2002).

My younger brother well he doesn't have a wife – he brings his money to us – to our family. I budget for our family, for mum and the donations to the church and to the village for our fa'alavelaves. I make these decisions (Ana: Village woman informal sector trader, Jan 2002).

As indicated by Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991:200) there is a perception that because *matai* are the deciders and it is mainly men who are *matai*, women have little control over resources. Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991:200) believes this to be untrue, arguing many women believe that men waste money on beer or give it away. Many women also believe that men cannot be trusted to think long-term. Therefore, many women are very strategic in their financial planning in that they deposit the money with local shops and make purchases against it at a later date, or they buy up fine mats and store these for *fa'alavelave*. Hence when their husbands come seeking money, there is none available and any future necessities have been planned for (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991:200).

This financial planning for a rainy day was evident in a number of the women's stories, as was the perception that women were wiser managers of finances. This was mentioned in *Chapter Seven*, whereby both Kalani and her sister talked about the fact that Kalani's husband was 'no good with money', leaving the financial planning and budgeting to Kalani.

In spending time with the South Pacific Business Development (SPBD), a micro-finance organisation based in Apia, it was noted that none of the people who came asking for micro-finance for small business ventures, were men. In investigating further, Tim the General Manager of SPBD reported on his experience of working with micro-finances:

Women are more reliable in terms of repaying loans as opposed to men; the literature also seems to support this. In terms of the loans it is the group who filter's who can belong and women seek to engage other women, generally from the same village, generally women who they have prior relationships with because then they are also more likely to adhere to the loan requirements and conditions of lending. Peer pressure works well.... Especially as they offer a group guarantee. If one woman can't meet her payment that week, the group will pay it for her.... This makes them wise about who they then want in their group. They absolutely need to know and trust each other, and women seem to trust other women as reliable payers (Tim: General Manager SPBD, April 2006).

The process does not set out to exclude anybody; rather exclusion comes about because of one's ability to pay the loan back and if the relationships people have with one another are a problem then ... people do get missed out. Small businesses are fundamental to women's ability to plan for and manage expenses such as school fees, home improvements or fa'alavelave. In many instances a small business venture may be their only source of cash income (Tim: General Manager SPBD, April 2006).

To follow are two case examples of women as the initial instigators of small business ventures, which came about because of financial support from the micro finance organisation SPBD. The incomes generated by these women's businesses are supporting family networks, inclusive of elderly widowed women. These examples show that not only are they supporting their elderly widowed mothers, but they are also supporting multiple family members. In both cases the interdependency of the family members is noted, as are the multiple strategies utilised for income generation, such as selling produce at the market (See *Plates 10 and 11*). None of the women referred to in these 2 cases, in particular those that might be considered to be vulnerable, such as the widowed mothers, Mary as a single woman, or Poema's husband's younger sister, appear to be in a situation whereby they are more at risk of poverty.

Small Business Case Example One: Apia, Wednesday 26th April 2006

Mary, a thirty-three year old single woman who has no children, is helping to support her wider family of ten, including two small children and her elderly widowed mother. Her mother is considered to be the head of the household. In terms of income generation only Mary, her sister who also helps run the stall, and her brother earn a wage. He is employed as a store person.

The family lives in Apia in one of the Apia villages. They are on customary land and they have access to a plantation. They also grow bananas and aubergine around their *fales*. There is no family *matai* at the moment.

The market stall is considered to be a family business. With a small loan of 500 *tālā*, Mary started up her jewellery business by setting up a stall at the back of the market. The business did well, so Mary took another small loan of 750 *tālā* and expanded the business, which now consists of 3 stalls. They have also expanded their ware from jewellery, to carvings and cloth products. These are purchased from carvers and women who sew in the villages.

The cash earned is used for school fees, home improvements, consumer products, and *fa'alavelave* – including church donations. The impetus for this business was that Mary used to work in Pago Pago, American Samoa, but her family needed her to return to Apia, so Mary came home to help and this business just eventuated.

Mary's family also has family members in New Zealand who sometimes send remittances.

Small Business Case Example Two: Apia, Wednesday 26th April 2006

Poema is a 37 year old woman who is married to a taxi driver. They have six children. Poema and her husband are also supporting her husband's younger sister and Poema's widowed mother, who Poema states is the head of the household. The family lives in Apia, on customary land, according to *matai* governance – the family *matai* is an uncle. They have access to a plantation and they also grow small crops around the *fales*, such as taro and bananas.

Poema and a friend share this business, and the stall mainly sells sewing products, such as shirts and dresses. To date, they have had two loans, the first one was to set up the stall, and with the second loan they were able to make the stall bigger. The money that Poema and her friend earn from their small business they use to buy meat, pay for school fees, *fa'alavelaves*, to buy clothing for their families and consumer goods, as well as buying goods for the stall. The goods they sell, they either make personally or they buy from women they know.

Poema's family also receives remittances from extended family members in New Zealand.



Plate 10: Market stalls in Apia



Plate 11: Selling produce at the market

Remittances

The family's inter-dependence can be seen by the fact that both *Case examples 1* and *2* also talked about receiving remittances. As discussed in *Chapter Six*, Samoa as a MIRAB economy has come about because many Samoans while living and working abroad are sending remittances home. And as discussed in *Chapter Four*, de-facto FHHs, that is, women who are managing households and family life while their husbands are working in another place, also constitute a typical scenario of FHHs in the international literature. In some cases, de-facto FHHs do not always receive the remittances they need to survive,

and neither do they have good support networks. Many are also not in a position whereby they have the authority to make household and family decisions.

All of the families in this study received remittances in some shape or form. Remittances came as cash donations, regularly or intermittently at Christmas time, or for a *fa'alavelave* – either in a time of crisis or in terms of an occasion such as a wedding, a bestowing of a *matai* title or a funeral. Because of *fa'asamoa* and the need to *fa'alavelave*, family money seemed to move backward and forward as required. *Fa'alavelave* will be discussed in detail shortly. Remittances also came in the shape of consumer goods, such as electronic equipment or airline tickets. In one instance, a family had received a shipping container with clothing, bikes, and household furniture from relatives in New Zealand.

The de-facto FHHs in this study all had established systems of contact with their husbands, meaning they could not only access money easily they were also able to access each other to discuss issues with relative ease.

My husband has been away for three years now. I am used to life this way. We talk on the phone everyday. So it is not difficult to make decisions. I just pick up the phone, talk to him, and see what he thinks. He comes back some weekends when he can. We made a decision to stay in Apia because of my job, and because of the schools. Town schools are better (Malia: FHH, Nov 2001).

The de-facto FHHs in this study all appear to be located within a supportive wider family network. While Tau's husband, who is a policeman, is working in East Timor, their household is located just a few meters away from her husband's father and mother, and her husband's brother, his wife and children. The wider household consists of 5 adults and 6 children. Tau expressed that her husband's family was very helpful to her especially as she has a 3 month old baby. Kyla's husband is currently working in New Zealand and she is the only adult in her household. However, she has numerous extended family members around and outside of Apia that give her practical assistance whenever she requests it. Because of Kyla's financial position whereby extended family members look to Kyla and her husband for financial support, Kyla is in a situation where she has the authority to direct people to assist her should she need to. Finally, Line's husband is in New Zealand with family. Line lives in an extended family situation with some of her youngest children, and another grown daughter and her husband. The household consists of 5 adults and 3 small children. As Line has 10 children in total, many are also living in villages close by and come at a moments notice.

Nonetheless, as Tau reports, for many women the absence is still a difficult time:

To have my husband away is sad, it is sad for the kids because they really miss their dad. He is away for 6 months; he will be back on the 30th of January. I am counting down the days. He left in July when I was 7 months pregnant so he wasn't here when our new son was born. He said he really missed being here. Sometimes I don't miss him (laughs), because I am the boss now, the boss of everything, (laughs), and anyway, I am too busy to miss him. He calls a lot, we have a phone here. We put this on [had the phone installed and connected] when he went away. He calls day and night; being a nuisance (laughs and laughs), so yes, I hear from him lots. The wages he gets are in a bank account here, he also gets an allowance for being in East Timor. Every time he calls, we say to him (laughing as she is talking), 'more money, more money, send us some more, we have nothing' and he does. At this time I feel we are rich (Tau: FHH, Dec 2001) [my insert].

Two years later when I returned to the area, Tau's husband had returned and they had invested some of this money in building a large *palagi* style house in which they all lived.

Sala summed up the experience of the migration and remittances for de-facto FHHs by stating:

I think if you are not getting any money from your husband overseas then it is probably because he isn't really earning very much. I don't believe that any husband would do this – leave his family to be without them, this is not the Samoan way. It is important to fa'alavelave each other, to help each other out (Sala: FHH, Jan 2002).

The practice of *fa'alavelave*

Critical to understanding how the family functions according to *fa'asamoa* is also the practice of *fa'alavelave*. Mulitalo-Lauta (1998, 2000) identifies *fa'alavelave* as one of those cultural practices that demonstrates love and concern. But *fa'alavelave* can actually be understood in two ways (Maiava 2001:92). The first meaning of *fa'alavelave* makes reference to the larger, formal, traditional ceremonies or occasions that occur throughout Samoa, such as weddings, funerals, the bestowing of a *matai* title or perhaps a church dedication. These ceremonies involve the formal exchange of gifts, *fa'alavelave* (Maiava 2001:92, O'Meara 1990:156-62). The second meaning of *fa'alavelave* refers to a problem, a difficulty, a small disturbance in routine, or a domestic crisis. Therefore the term *fa'alavelave* could be used when referring to an argument, getting into trouble or needing help, for example, needing to find money for school fees (Maiava 2001:92). Both these meanings have relevance to this research because it is important to try and understand how and why FHHs might be assisted with a problem, a crisis or a difficulty, as well as considering how FHHs might manage the demands of ceremonial *fa'alavelave*. It is also important to consider what these ceremonies might offer in the context of women's daily lives.

In relation to the first definition of *fa'avelave*, many expectations and demands may be forthcoming. Maiava (2001:94) notes that many outsiders and urban Samoans speak about how problematic *fa'avelave* is. In an editorial piece for the 'Samoan Observer' Savea Sanoa Malifa writes about a woman who appeared in court for stealing an 18-carat gold ring from her employer. It was reported that this woman, whose husband was in prison, had stolen the ring to get money so she could meet the demands of an expensive *fa'avelave*. Upon sending the woman to prison for six months, the Chief Justice Patu Falefatu Sapolu said 'she should only be worrying about her bills, feeding the children and paying the school fees, not *fa'avelave*'. Malifa retorts it is not that simple. "People are often made to feel like outcasts if they try to do this" (Malifa 2002:7). Malifa finishes his editorial by stating "*fa'avelave* is known to be the main reason people are poor in this country, so that they go out and rob, steal. Get rid of *fa'avelave* and we're a completely new country" (Malifa 2002:7).

Savea Sanoa Malifa appears to have made these comments to start a debate via the newspaper. Thus, in response to Malifa's column via the 'Letter to the Editor' column, Lusi Fach writes:

If you ask me, I would say it is time to forbid *fa'avelave* in Samoa, let alone other foreign countries where Samoan people are still carrying out this slaving tradition.

The author of the letter goes on to write, it is not that she does not support *fa'avelave* it is just that she believes the answer is different:

To teach those village *matai* and high chiefs about firstly, the consequences of giving everything you have for a *fa'avelave*. Secondly, the importance of family development, NOT trying to impress the village and thirdly, family first, seeing that everyone is well and happy before anything else. There should be law to permit and limit certain kinds of *fa'avelave* if we have to have one...It is our responsibilities as the people of Samoa to make a difference and to change the everlasting burden of *fa'avelave* on our poor citizens (Fach, 22nd January, 2002:7).

In response to this, Shon argues the practice of *fa'avelave* really gets misunderstood and taken out of context by some people:

Yesterday I saw this letter that made me livid. A Samoan... was writing this very negative letter about fa'avelave.... It [the letter] was related to a court case. It was way unfair [the letter] because fa'avelave is part of the reciprocity that goes with fa'asamoa. When something happens to me, my relatives come with things...with money and fine mats to take care of this something. And likewise when something happens in another part of the family I go. That is the essence of

fa'asamoa and fa'alavelave. *Helping each other* (Shon: CEO Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Jan 2002) [my insert].

Shon went on to say:

Shon: The problem with fa'alavelave is that parts have been commercialised and as a result the essence of it and the importance of it is being forgotten. It is now viewed by many as a very negative part of Samoan culture, and it is not.

Rochelle: It is not?

Shon: No, not at all!

Rochelle: This is my understanding, as told to me by an elderly woman, that you always ended up with what you brought.

Shon: Yes, yes.

Rochelle: So, maybe you came with one fine mat and some money, and you went with something different, but relatively the same in value. Any discrepancies evened themselves out next time. Are there problems now?

Shon: Yes, it seems to be a competition now. The scale that our fa'alavelaves are being carried out are now very high, and a lot of it has to do with the American Samoan people. When they come to the family fa'alavelave here, they bring some practices that are introduced practices. Fa'alavelave themselves, occur because of a family event, whereby everybody in the family contributes – When someone in the family dies the family comes together to feed the people, to provide some nice mats to sit on, and mats for the fale. Fine mats to offer, you know as part of the ceremonial exchange. The family members contribute to make the funeral occasion. Everybody chips in like that, not only is it the immediate family who helps but all those who are related. It is important that things go smoothly, because it is a reflection on the whole extended family. Fa'alavelave is about distributing this burden. That is fa'alavelave (laughs). That's what a fa'alavelave is (Shon: CEO Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Jan 2002).

During the fieldwork periods while various issues that surrounded *fa'alavelave* were certainly mentioned, those with the strongest opinions were generally non-Samoans. There is a general perception that people give more than they can, with only one or a few, usually *matai*, standing to benefit. This benefiting was usually understood in terms of financial gains. These same people freely accounted that people took loans and stole, if necessary, to meet the demands of *fa'alavelave*.

Many Samoans also have a love/hate relationship with *fa'alavelave* (Maiava 2001), and while Samoan people also agreed that the practice of *fa'alavelave* has become problematic, this issue of spending more than you have is not specific to Samoa:

What is so different from Westerners overspending on their assets or not being wise about their spending, but as soon as Samoan people do this, then their culture is to blame. They are seen as not being financially wise, or being fiscally ignorant. If you want to talk about overspending and the mismanagement of funds and finances then the West is where you ought to look first. Every society has those that have and those that haven't, and every society has those that spend more than they

can afford. But Western society is very good at pointing the finger and blaming culture, like fa'asamoa and the church when they are doing exactly the same in their own place (Mose: Matai and retired school teacher, Jan 2002).

New Zealanders spend their money on their shopping; Samoans spend their money on fa'alavelave (Soma: Elderly village pastor and matai, Nov 2004).

While many people complained openly about the expectations and demands of the ceremonial *fa'alavelave*, all the while they are also planning for the next *fa'alavelave*:

Fa'alavelave is too hard today, because this generation they want the big money, they used to only want one carton of fish, now they want ten or more. It is the American Samoan influence; people went to Pago Pago. They have a lot and I think they are showing off. Sometimes there is embarrassment if the fa'alavelave contribution is small. But you know all Samoans love the fa'alavelave... (Ette: FHH, Jan 2002).

At face value, however, this is also fairly similar to the way New Zealanders complain about the pressures, expectations and costs of Christmas, all the while planning for the next one. This connection is made by Shon:

Capitalism has changed fa'alavelave, just like capitalism has changed many things. The problem is not fa'alavelave, it is capitalism. I am sure many Westerners spend beyond their means right? To show an outward image of wealth, why should Samoans be any different now that we have been influenced to some extent by the West? Look at Christmas, do we ban Christmas, do we call for the government to ban Christmas, just because we have lost the true essence of it? To get rid of fa'alavelave is as absurd as saying to New Zealanders let's get rid of Christmas. To get rid of fa'alavelave would be to get rid of Samoa (Shon: CEO Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Jan 2002).

Managing fa'alavelave

Given the expectations that surround *fa'alavelave*, and the accounts that *fa'alavelave* could potentially be a burden, for example in terms of church donations, it is important to consider how FHHs might manage other *fa'alavelave* obligations. The quotes below give some indication of this:

Rochelle: So now that you are a widow does your family do *fa'alavelave* on your behalf?

Ette: Yes mostly. If I have something to give then yes I will contribute. I give them, 'ie toga (fine mats), something like that. Or I might cook up food to take.

Rochelle: Do you make fine mats?

Ette: Well I used to; I can't weave now days... my fingers are not good nor are my legs to sit on. I used to weave very well, I really liked weaving... But now my family they look after me when *fa'alavelave* comes around (Ette: FHH, Jan 2002).

Rochelle: So while you husband is away who provides, do you? And who decides what you need to bring? Does the *matai* tell you what to bring?

Tau: Yes, that is his job to co-ordinate what everyone needs to bring. He tells the family members what to provide. Now that my husband is in East Timor they don't tell me to provide too much, sometimes even nothing.

Rochelle: Oh okay.

Tau: They said because my husband is in Timor that I don't have to provide.

Rochelle: What, you mean you don't have to provide things for them?

Tau: Yes, but regardless I want to give something, so I give them some fish.

Rochelle: Do you think that is common for other women, single women, who are by themselves - like a single person whose husband has passed away? Do you still have to provide for *fa'alavelave*?

Tau: Yes you have to. In fa'asamoa if you are in the family then you have to provide. But the family should support you if things are difficult. Perhaps you provide with them and you contribute less. You see normally my husband and I will give something, now it is me with his parents and his sister and husband together rather than being separate. I might even provide something else for the family, maybe not fa'alavelave. You see the pressure is less because he is away... and with the new baby. If my husband were here... then we would have to provide lots. Now I can bring whatever I want to, because I am the only one with the children (Tau: FHH, Dec 2001).

Vani: My husband is a matai – he has one of the family titles. So we contribute to every family fa'alavelave and our family members' well they know that we are working – so they expect more from us. So we contribute more than most, I think. When we have our own fa'alavelave, the family they also contribute, so we all share the responsibility and we work together as a family. Sometimes it is a struggle to meet these commitments and expectations. I think that all families struggle – A family that doesn't struggle is probably a family that does nothing together. Sometimes you have to sacrifice, like we might want to paint our fales – but we have a fa'alavelave, so we leave it. We give the money, instead of renovating. It is a balancing act. But to be sure, one day we might need something and everyone will come and do the same for us (Vani: FHH, Jan 2002).

While clearly most Samoans believe *fa'alavelave* has an important role, these quotations show there is the need to look at ways to better manage *fa'alavelave*:

I know for example when women's development programmes came one of the problems identified for small businesses was fa'alavelave. But you cannot take fa'alavelave away. The way we should do it, is we should address it, put it as part of the business expenses. Work it into the budget because you cannot take it away. You could talk to just as many people who have fa'alavelave under control. Like they say we only give this much. So if this person dies and they sit here in the family, then this is how much we give. Or if this happens we only give this. They put limits and boundaries around fa'alavelave so they can manage it. If everybody approached fa'alavelave with this attitude, then it wouldn't be an issue. All processes have good and bad points, however everybody tends to focus mistakenly on some of the not so great things or consequences of fa'alavelave, let's also not forget the good things that fa'alavelave does. The fact of the matter is it is here to stay. Fa'alavelave has endured because of the good things it has to offer (Shon: CEO, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Jan 2002).

The process that occurs for each *fa'alavelave* will generally be different (Maiava 2001), and is understood intrinsically by those involved. It is clear that this enduring practice had much deeper and meaningful underpinnings than what was being accounted for by those that criticised the practice. Some of these will be explored further now.

The endurance of fa'alavelave

Maiava (2001:94) in support of O'Meara (1990:214-15) observes that the endurance of *fa'alavelave* can be attributed to a number of reasons. Firstly, *fa'alavelave* are a huge social event. Secondly, villagers are able to exchange subsistence goods for cash and other purchased goods, especially through engaging with urban and overseas family members. In many instances a profit can be made. *Fa'alavelave* has evolved so as to take advantage of the cash economy (O'Meara 1990:215). This point is pertinent for FHHs who are involved in the informal sector, or for FHHs who have small businesses where they sell traditional products such as fine mats (see *Plate 12: Komiti Tumamā: Making 'ie toga for sale*), or produce.



Plate 12: *Komiti Tumamā: Making 'ie toga for sale*

The third reason O'Meara (1990) and Maiava (2001) offer for the endurance of *fa'alavelave* is the status and prestige gained from public displays of giving: "It is important to give and to be seen to give because generosity enhances status" (Maiava 2001:94). "Anyone can have their moment of glory. Those who have moved away from the culture in other ways can instantly atone" (Maiava 2001:95). Finally, the fourth reason for the endurance of

fa'alavelave is that *fa'alavelave* maintains the connections of the larger extended family and reminds people of its security (Maiava 2001:95). For clarity, I asked one of the participants 'what would happen if people did not want to provide *fa'alavelave*?'

Rochelle: What happens if people said, 'I don't want to do that?'

(Tau laughs and laughs. Even the interpreter laughs and laughs).

Tau: What, I don't want to do that? There is pressure in the village, pressure in the family. Samoan life is reciprocal. You cannot expect yourself if you do not contribute. If you give, then you shall receive. In the family you do it. If you can't, they would support you, help you. But you would feel some shame – it is not just about the money though (Tau: FHH, Jan 2002).

Thinking back to some of the values, ideas, beliefs and practices such as, *alofa* (to show love, compassion and concern), *tautua* (to be of service), *osi 'aiga* (to be proactive in support of the family), *fa'akerisiano* (to demonstrate Christian behaviour), and *loto nu'u* (to have a sense of community), that are *fa'asamoa* though, the essence behind why people do give and want to give is clear. Again, *fa'alavelave* needs to be understood in terms of Samoan ideals and values rather than Western ideology. As can be seen in Tau's statement whereby she stated that to *fa'alavelave* is at the very core of what it means to be a Samoan:

Being Samoan has many expectations. It is providing, and supporting. There are obligations, lots of them, like for a wedding. People tell you what to bring, cartons of fish, 'ie toga (Tau: FHH, Dec 2001).

Our family is very big, if weren't for fa'alavelave we never could have afforded to give our daughter a wedding that included all our family. Fa'alavelave enables you to include everyone in these very special family occasions. Fa'alavelave means you don't have to miss anyone out (Line: FHH, Nov 2004).

Many saw *fa'alavelave* as an investment in the future:

People in New Zealand spend their money buying houses, Samoans, well we spend our money on fa'alavelave. They are both good investments, they are both about investing in the future and in the next generation... because they see this getting together, this sharing, this networking, they have experienced this and they like it (Savalia: Savai'i research assistant, Nov 2004).

Fa'alavelave exchanges are not always about money; they are a way of connecting with each other:

Ette: Boys girls, brothers, sisters; they all have a special place. There are only four of us alive now, in my family.

Rochelle: Yeah. Are they here?

Ette: They all stay in New Zealand, the girl and two boys, there is only me here. One of my brothers stayed here but he died, it is just me here now. They all went more than 20 years ago.

Rochelle: Do you keep in good contact with them?

Ette: Oh yes, they ring for my information or she (points to the house-girl) goes for the telephone, to go and ring them and I speak to them, or I write letters. Samoan families they always keep in touch no matter how far away they are. Without your family, without being in contact hearing things from home... you feel like nothing.

Rochelle: So they still ring you because you are the only one in the family here, they still ring you because you know what is happening and this is what you give them?

Ette: Yes this is fa'alavelave.

Rochelle: So did they know about the funeral here in the village last week, did they contribute to the fa'alavelave?

Ette: No, this is not their village; I am from Savai'i, we are from Savai'i. But yes they know about the funeral, they know about it all... (Ette: FHH, Jan 2002).

Ette then asked me about the Pastor's funeral that was being held back in Apia, around the corner from where I was living: 'How many cars have you seen, how many people do you think were there?' I told her as much as I could and I made a mental note to observe better when I pass so that when I came back in a couple of days I would have something to tell her.

In summary, if *fa'alavelave* is understood in terms of Samoan values, and practices rather than Western values and practices, then its real value will be appreciated. A culturally bound practice cannot be accurately understood if it is critiqued under a Western microscope. *Fa'alavelave* is a lot more than just the occasion; rather it is also about managing a problem, a difficulty, a small disturbance or a domestic crisis. *Fa'alavelave* becomes for many individuals a cultural protective factor. *Fa'alavelave* is also about the 'āiga's obligation to contribute to or rise to an occasion, a situation or a crisis, demonstrating love, concern and commitment. It is about responding appropriately to the immediate or extended family in times of need. Ongoing ceremonial *fa'alavelave* provides a reminder and reassurance that the social and security roles of the extended 'āiga still function (Maiava 2001:96). Because of the 'Samoan heart', because of protocols, values and ceremonies, because of the family as a part of Samoan structures and institutions, this practice of *fa'alavelave* will endure.

By understanding the social importance of visibly demonstrating love and concern through giving, especially in times of *fa'alavelave* (crisis), we can understand why FHHs might remain part of the fold and not be isolated as individuals or as a social group, rendering them alone to the category of 'poorest of the poor'. The ceremonial practice of *fa'alavelave* also limits people's chances of becoming socially isolated. How each family

manages the financial obligations of *fa'alavelave* is specifically determined. Whether *fa'alavelave* is a burden is context specific, which is no different to how we all manage our financial obligations in diverse ways, some of us being more successful at this than others. Without a doubt the poverty of some families must make managing *fa'alavelave* obligations difficult, and in some instances it may accentuate their level of hardship.

Poorest of the poor

In listening to respondents' voices it seems that FHHs might be well taken care of and indeed many might fare better than their male counterparts and married counterparts. This was partially confirmed in looking at figures in the 'Household and Income Expenditure Survey: Food and Basic Needs' (1997) report which highlighted that FHHs were more likely to have daily food expenditure surplus to requirement, compared with MHHs (GoS 1997:15).

In terms of whether a woman without a husband might be economically poor, it was thought that she would only be poor if her own family was poor, not because of her own personal circumstances:

If she is poor it is because they are poor. You know these people here, next door, they have no one in their family working, no one has money, and they just go to the plantation. They don't send some of their children to school. They are poor, they have an elderly man in their household, his wife is dead and they have a woman, her husband he is dead too (Line: FHH, Nov 2004).

Well this other woman I know they are also very poor. She is doing some weaving now with some committees and she is doing a roadside stall, selling vegetables... she told me she has a better plantation now (Sala: FHH, Nov 2004).

Yes we are struggling. Things are hard for us. We don't really have anyone overseas and we don't have anyone earning enough of a cash income. It is hard for us as a family, even when my husband was alive things were hard for our family (Delphina: FHHs, Nov 2004).

Dunlop's (1999:96) study on Samoan women in the informal sector, reported that the responses from those who identified themselves as FHHs did not differ greatly from the larger sample. Therefore, compared to the rest of the women in the study, Dunlop surmised FHHs were not in a position of greater risk or disadvantage because of their circumstances (Dunlop 1999:96). Because of how Samoan society functions it is believed that formally identified FHHs, even if they are a growing group, will not become the 'poorest of the poor', disadvantaged, or socially isolated.

Maria (Samoan academic, Nov 2004) and Tui (Business woman Nov 2004) both argued that if Samoan society was to change to such an extent that FHHs were no longer captured up in the family network, then it would no longer be Samoan society. The day that the Samoan family is no longer able to meet the needs of its family, then this change will have far reaching consequences for not only FHHs but for the elderly, small children, the sick, the mentally ill, and those that are physically or intellectually disabled. If this were to occur, Samoa society would no longer be true to *fa'asamoa*. Identity, belonging, security, reciprocity, and *alofa* (love) are all intrinsically linked, and are at the very core of how and why Samoan society functions. Both Maria and Tui, as did many others, believed that the whole family would be reduced to disadvantage before any individual was left destitute. *Fesoasoani i le 'āiga* (helping the family) was a common phrase often spoken by many people. Maiava (2001) supports this:

belonging, identity, and social security is provided by valuing kinship, social and community relationships. Fraternity, solidarity and participation in society by all its members is valued in the face of external alienation or isolation. *Fa'alavelave* to Samoans meets this need (p.219).

It is important to keep in mind various possibilities though, especially societal changes that may occur over time, for example, a reduction in inward remittances and what this monetary change might mean for the Samoan household in terms of how it is structured and functions. A number of authors have reported that while Samoa is certainly a collective society, families are now becoming more immediate, although not necessarily nuclear (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2005, Maiava 2001, Shadrake 1996).

These steadfast ideas and practices of collectiveness may be one rationale for why FHHs in Samoa have not been and are not considered to be a development category. If we consider the simplistic way that many have interpreted FHHs to be a unit where an adult woman, usually with children, assumes headship roles in the *complete* (my emphasis) absence of the male head (see Loi 2003:1, Quisimbung *et al.* 1995:7), then it might be fair to suggest that rarely are women in a unit completely absent from a male head, because they have relationships with fathers, uncles, older brothers and *matai*. As indicated throughout this chapter, everyone has obligations and responsibilities to each other, as accorded by *fa'asamoa*. The various agencies and development consultants that I spoke to during the fieldwork did not pay particular attention to FHHs as a category for development:

Neli: Well in terms of the work I do I don't have any specific approach/way of targeting this group of women [FHHs] that you are talking about, I only target women as whole, whether they are married, whether they are solo mothers. The point is to focus on women. I think we have done this a lot lately in Samoa. I think that having this women's agenda has meant that women as a whole, or many women are empowered, they feel empowered. They know where to go to get this and where to go to get that. Because of all of the workshops that have been running over the years the information is out there; women get a lot of information from workshops that they attended. Our women realise the importance of their roles.... in their marriage, whether they are alone; whether they are widowed, whether they are solo mothers; without a father for the children...they know about the importance of their role... and as long as they have got money to support the children, whether they have a good job, a secure job or a good family, or financial security in terms of their own house, own land then they will be fine. It is important to focus your strategies on building girls and women as a whole, then they will handle whatever comes their way (Neli: Business woman and gender expert, Nov 2004) [my insert].

Or as Moelagi saw it:

Moelagi: Even if the family doesn't really like the woman, it is the responsibility of the family to care for her... especially the children. It is their total responsibility to see that this woman and her family are cared for, looked after.

Rochelle: Because if they are not, it will reflect badly on the family?

Moelagi: Yes, absolutely. The family gets so involved because whether they like it or not those children are the offspring of the family, because they carry the name of the family. You know there needs to be a review of the law very soon, because the law is for the New Zealand family and it has not accommodated much of the culture eh, because sometimes it goes heavy on the man and that this woman will have no other income to rely upon and in fact this woman will be better off, maybe in a better off situation than the poor guy, than the father. Let's not just focus on this woman alone let's think about everyone I say (Moelagi: Business woman and High chief, Nov 2004).

Conclusions

In recounting the experiences of these FHHs this chapter has revealed two important points. Firstly, how *fa'asamoa*, in attributing importance and value to all of the family members, regardless of their non-marital or marital situation, has ensured FHH are not stigmatised or discriminated against and isolated as individuals or as a social group. Secondly, *fa'asamoa* and in particular the *feagaiga* brother/sister relationship, guarantees the security of FHHs and any children. In considering the findings it would be safe to assume that FHHs in Samoa are not victims of their own economic, patriarchal or cultural circumstances, and that in most instances they are faring well, or at least as well as other members of their families.

Through a deconstruction of FHH in Samoa the development experiences of these FHH are shown. How important culture is to making sense of the development experience of

FHH is clearly illustrated. There are a number of systems, processes and structures with both invisible and visible components that determine how a Samoan person behaves within and outside the family, so as to achieve the goals of the family and safeguard the family status. There are clear expectations outlined by *fa'asamoa* which ensure various members look out for other family members, as is especially noted in the *feagaiga* brother/sister relationship. According to *fa'asamoa*, a sense of *tautua* (loyalty and service) to the family is also very strong. *Tautua* (obligations and duty) to the *'āiga* are extremely important (Ngan-Woo 1985:10-11). In return, all members of the family will share in the resources and successes. By understanding some of these expectations and processes, and the values and beliefs that underpin them, we can begin to understand why the Samoan family functions in the way that it does, and then understand how various experiences or circumstances might be managed, for example, the single mother, or how various members might be treated, for example, the widowed woman.

In Samoa the extent to which FHHs are embedded in their families and wider communities requires exploration, before any assumptions can be made about their situation. This is especially so as no individual lives in isolation under *fa'asamoa*. FHHs need to be situated within the wider socio-economic, political and cultural context in which they live their lives as women, sisters, daughters, mothers, as an employee with a professional qualification and income, as the owner of a business, or in terms of their position as the family income generator within the informal sector. FHHs need to be understood according to the role they are fulfilling or in terms of the many and varied ways they play out their lives, as opposed to the label FHHs. To focus on this category alone would merely place a small part of a person's identity over and above who else they are as a person, and the development potential they hold may get missed or underplayed.

If poverty is understood to be a multi-dimensional concept so as to also incorporate levels of agency, self-esteem, worth and value in society, inclusion/exclusion in decision-making processes and levels of participation in society, as well as a person's access to resources, it has been shown throughout the entirety of this chapter, that FHHs in Samoa are not the 'poorest of the poor'.

In utilising a framework of *fa'asamoa* to explore the development situation and experiences of FHH the importance of culture in framing their development experiences has been made clear. Leaving culture out of the equation may have meant that many of the ways in

which FHH manage to navigate their lives could be missed. Adding culture to the explanation has enabled a greater vision of what is inside and outside of this category. Without considering culture, the explicit nature of the brother – sister relationship would not have been clear, the cultural exchanges that occur within the remittances and migration arrangement would be unknown, ideas about building the home front and the intimate relationship that many people have with the land would have been underestimated. The commitment that people have towards their family members, regardless of where they are, would not be acknowledged so fully.

Although categories may prove to be useful in helping us arrange the world we live in, notwithstanding the fact that all categories must be understood as contestable, categories are by no means universal. Thus consideration needs to be given to the idea that FHH as a category is not relevant at this time in Samoa.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

The power of development is the power to generalize, homogenize, objectify. One way to contest this homogenizing power, albeit in an incremental way, could be through the articulation of individual biographies and autobiographies of the development experience (Crush 1995a:22).

Reflections on a contested category

This thesis reflected a coalescing of three concerns. These were the application of female-headed households as a normative development category into policy and practice, the overriding influence of the poverty consensus in development policy and practice, and the need for a more meaningful engagement between culture, indigenous knowledge(s) and development.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of women as heads of household to be an indicator of poverty (World Bank 1989:iv). Comparisons between male and female heads of households were drawn and it was strongly, yet uncritically, argued that women who head households were not only greatly disadvantaged but that this disadvantaged household type was proliferating to such an extent that there was undoubtedly a global feminisation of poverty occurring (UNDAW 1995, UNDP 1995:36). The notion of a feminisation of poverty quickly took hold in women's development circles, so much so that overcoming women's poverty became one of the key policy goals of the 1995 'Beijing Platform for Action' of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Female headship and the feminisation of poverty had become intrinsically linked to the point of orthodoxy, and female headship had become "proxy for women's poverty" (Chant 2003a:3).

By being represented as poor, marginalised, isolated, oppressed and powerless, universal claims have been made about how FHHs are discriminated against and marginalised because of their social, economic and cultural surroundings (Buvinic and Gupta 1997). In assuming all FHHs to be poor and powerless, FHHs are also understood to be dysfunctional – perpetuating a cycle of deprivation (Datta and McIlwaine 2000:44). In many instances, single mothers and their children have been identified as the problematic issue (Thomas 1994).

Through analysing power, knowledge and discourse, scholars who were writing from a critical feminist perspective sought to contest the rather grand claims surrounding female headship (Chant 1997a, Jackson 1998). By bringing into question the naturalness of

concepts such as the household and headship (Varley 1996), critically debating the statistics that were utilised to support the poorest of the poor and the feminisation of poverty arguments (Evans 1992, Momsen 2002), and unpacking the development experiences of FHHs, the diversity of FHHs was also shown. This diversity was observed in the types of FHHs that exist, the reasons why they emerge and their experiences (Chant 1997a). It was also shown that not all poor women head households and not all households headed by women are poor (Varley 1996). While there may be a certain relationship between FHHs and poverty in that there are circumstances that may disadvantage FHHs making them more vulnerable to poverty, this is not the experience of all FHHs (Chant 1999, Datta and McIlwaine 2000:41). Thus, it was asserted that many FHHs function fairly successfully in not only the economic sense but in the practical and social sense too (Chant 2003a, Momsen 1991:27). In seeing poverty as a multifaceted concept the so-called poverty of FHHs also becomes less apparent.

To elaborate, when poverty is understood to encapsulate not only economics, but comprises issues such as social exclusion, poor access to health care and education, domestic violence, and the inability to make choices and be involved in decision-making processes, then FHHs may not be so poverty stricken. Thus, while some FHHs may be economically poor they may feel their situation is more manageable, or even more desirable, than it would be if they had a male household head because they have the ability to make choices about how and when money should be spent (Chant 1997a:54). Whether a woman is emancipated or disempowered is very context-specific and the situation can only be determined in relation to her qualitative, subjective experiences or opinion. This study showed that typically FHHs in Samoa *do* have agency.

It was thus claimed that the targeting of FHHs with special assistance was doing little in terms of explaining and addressing the nature of poverty (Moore 1996:74), or the wider issues of gender inequity (Baden 1999:13, Moghadam 2005:30). Focusing on FHHs did not factor men into the equation, other than to see them as problematic, or to assume that women in a MHH would not be as poverty-stricken as their counterparts in a FHH (Grinspun 2004:2).

Yet despite these critiques of the way FHHs have been normalised as problematic, development agencies have shown a preference for utilising their own research and adhering to the generalisations about the poverty of FHHs. Such is the power of

hegemonic development concepts that FHHs are uncritically integrated into development policy and translated into development practice and programmes. Such is the power of hegemonic development discourse that poverty alleviation and the achievement of the MDGs are the accepted development framework supported by many development institutions, NGOs and donors. The position of privation accorded to FHHs is firmly cemented within this framework. FHHs make an ideal target for those working to alleviate poverty and achieve the MDGs. This is a concern because acceptance of the new poverty agenda in the Pacific generally and in Samoa in particular, is a means whereby certain categories, labels and other such accompanying orthodoxies may also gain acceptance and become entrenched, regardless of cultural relevance. This is especially so where there are no local reports, policy documents or research to challenge the rhetoric.

There is little literature with respect to FHHs and the Pacific context. Given the current orthodoxy surrounding FHHs as poor, isolated, marginalised, disempowered and lacking in agency, and the overwhelming push by many development agencies through policy and practice to uncritically target supposedly poor and marginalised groups as determined by the poverty agenda, it was felt that a study about FHHs in a Pacific context was needed. This was the basis for this thesis. By positioning the category of FHH within a Pacific environment it was hoped that additions would be made to Pacific knowledge and current understandings of development, as such, the important role that locality and culture play in understanding the development experience of FHHs would also be emphasised.

As noted at the start of this thesis, all too often when development and culture intersect, culture is understood to be problematic and static. Culture is often viewed as impeding development and as isolated from the wider socio-political economy (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006). Radcliffe and Laurie (2006) argue that culture needs to be viewed as multi-dimensional, creative and as having potential for understanding and addressing the processes whereby social injustice, uneven development and gender inequity occur in the Third World. Regarding culture as creativity means dealing with, in unison, the structural inequalities of economies, and the social, economic and political forces that create and determine the importance of certain racial/cultural categories over and above another, which can in turn harmfully impact on the development opportunities of so-called 'others' (Radcliffe and Laurie 2006:245). Seeing culture as creativity renders visible the 'empty space' whereby the development priorities, opportunities and solutions that people identify for themselves become more apparent.

Seeing culture as creativity also enables us to see the development successes that are already occurring in the Pacific and elsewhere; FHHs in Samoa are one such success story. Noting development accomplishments is especially important, because as Barcham (2005) argues, rather than directing aid monies towards the same old tired approaches to development and wondering why these are not working, it would be more productive to spend some of this money exploring some of the approaches that are working, and to better support or make the most of these (p.1).

Findings

Using a feminist post-development framework, this thesis created a discursive space for repositioning the development experience of FHHs and contesting normative FHH thinking and development rhetoric. In looking at the case of Samoa, and in utilising primary and secondary data from numerous sources, the following research questions were answered:

- *How are FHHs constructed and represented by development theory and practice?*
- *What are some of the challenges to essentialist conceptions of FHHs?*
- *What are the development experiences of FHHs in Samoa, and what is the importance of culture in framing these development experiences?*

In terms of relating particular chapters to the research questions, *Chapters Two, Three and Four* of this thesis have illustrated how and why FHHs are constructed and represented by development theory and practice in essentialist ways and why this is problematic. *Chapters Three and Four* have also articulated some of the challenges to essentialist conceptions of FHHs. *Chapters Six and Seven* have demonstrated how FHHs are constructed and represented by development theory and practice in Samoa. The detail in *Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine* has provided various challenges to essentialist conceptions of FHHs. Finally, *Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine* have also presented the development experiences of FHH and the importance of culture in framing these experiences. The following section will elaborate on the findings of this research in relation to the research questions that were explored.

FHHs in Samoa are difficult to define. This is because in Samoa both the household and headship are articulated in ways that identify them to be multifaceted, dynamic constructs. Rather than static entities, headship and the household also proved to be fluid; this fluidity will be discussed in more detail shortly. The desire by many development agents to identify a bounded household, along with a household head, forces members of the household to identify, whether correctly or incorrectly, with a fixed closed space and a single person (Varley 1996). This is incredibly problematic when this becomes the unit of analysis, and multiple conclusions are drawn from it. When head of the household is understood in terms of either/or, as in female or male, this dualistic approach to thinking, which sees the household as either male/not male (female) leads to a 'closing off' of options and possibilities (Massey 1996:113).

In many instances, this study showed the household and family to be intertwined. The family as a unit, which may or may not be intergenerational, held more relevance to most Samoans than the concept of household. While there has certainly been a shift away from the larger extended family towards smaller family/household units, in this study the family was shown to be a more important functional unit than the household. Therefore, in some cases the family continues to offer a better unit for analysis especially when attempting to understand the situation and status of its members.

This research also confirms Schwimmer's (2003) notion that household/family is both a spatial and social unit. Family members may live separately, thus spatially and according to census they form separate households, however from a social perspective the various members in their separate households function as a unified family forming "a single economic establishment holding joint assets and transferring income to meet needs as they arise" (p.1). Schwimmer (2003) goes on to argue that the relevant unit of analysis is not the census household but the domestic network, which involves collaboration between various kin. This point very much fits with ideas raised about trans-national and multilocal kin networks of support and empowerment (Connell and Conway 2000:53; also see Bertram and Watters 1985:511, Maiava 2002). This is especially so given the point above made by Hau'ofa (1993), and supported by Pigg (1992:493), that many people remain emotionally linked to land, a village or a community, thus the importance of maintaining the home front even when gone is paramount.

In support of Chant (2003a:63), Cupples (2002:49) and Puketapu (2002), headship and the household/family need to be understood as fluid concepts. The household is not always a static group of people in a static place. Not only do households change when members move in and out, but the boundaries of the household can at times move in an effortless fashion from that of the immediate household/family to that of the wider family network, with the extended family being the community, and the community being made up of the extended family. Therefore the household/family needs to be seen as a shifting configuration, with the boundaries of the household/family being determined by the mobility of various members or the issue at hand. While the heart of the family remains connected to the ancestors and land, its members may reside, participate, contribute and make decisions from across the seas (Hau'ofa 1993), and thus the family is where its members are. These same principles were also applicable to FHHs in that they too need to be understood as shifting configurations.

Headship within a family may also be determined by the issue at hand, and not necessarily attributed to one member (Varley 1996). Various members saw themselves as having headship duties or responsibilities which contributed to the smooth functioning of the family unit.

According to census, between 1991 and 2001 FHHs in Samoa have risen from 12 to 18 per cent (GoS 2001), with the latest census (GoS 2001) choosing not to highlight FHHs as a separate category of data collection. In terms of the national profile and official statistics FHHs are shown to be small compared with other countries (GoS 2001:95). Accounts from Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991) suggest that FHH could be higher than this official figure. Regardless, the issue of importance is the arbitrary way in which people do or do not identify as the head of the household, and how this can change. The RPPA cited at the start of this thesis suggests that information about the growth of FHH can normally be derived from census data and/or surveys (Pacific Women's Bureau 2005:70). I would like to suggest instead that census data needs to be treated with caution.

Accounts from the field, within development projects and at policy level, highlighted that FHHs are not a well understood or utilised category in Samoa. Rather than understanding this supposed invisibility of FHHs to be the result of neglect or oversight this study has shown this lack of identification with the label FHHs to be a wise approach, as it does not unnecessarily categorise people as FHHs and allows for experiences that may be located

inside and outside such a category. This is important because as noted in *Chapter Three*, when people are categorised their label can end up wholly defining them. The category they are defined by and the accompanying label becomes the primary focus of development interventions, and the process does not allow for other experiences to be spoken of or understood. It is not possible to have an all encompassing category that represents the diversity and multiplicity of people's experiences who may be defined by such a category (Foucault 1970).

The fact that the FHH category or label has not been rendered visible in development policy and practice in Samoa also means that a woman's circumstances as a single mother, widowed woman, or woman with an absent partner because of migration or the breakdown of a marriage, is not how she is primarily defined. Rather, each woman continues to be understood in relation to the cultural framework of *fa'asamoa*, which situates her and her children within her family, natal village and the wider community. This highlights the importance of culture in framing the situation of FHHs.

In seeking to discover who FHHs were, attempts were also made to determine whether the participants saw themselves as FHHs, and how they made or did not make this decision. What was determined was that generally the women did not see themselves in this way, and neither did their family members. Thus the category or label of FHHs was not embedded into Samoan daily life. This would support the argument posed by Chant (1997a) that FHH is not a universal concept.

Yet, despite the difficulties that arose in defining and identifying FHHs, the FHHs in this study were highly diverse in terms of age, position in life cycle, number of dependents and employment status. Whilst they varied in many ways, there were also other factors that were similar, for example, receiving remittances, being in a situation where they were embedded within a wider/extended family network, or having access to a plantation.

The route by which women entered female headship varied. That is, they were without a partner because of death, migration, divorce, or separation because their partner was receiving medical treatment, or because they had never established a partnership/relationship beyond having a child. In light of the above-mentioned comments, and in support of Chant (1997a, 2003a, 2003b, 2004), Momsen (2002) and Varley (1996), FHHs are clearly not a homogenous group.

In determining the personal experiences and situation of FHHs in relation to their family members and the wider community, this thesis has also shown that contrary to popular belief, and in support of claims made by numerous scholars (see Appleton 1996:1823, Chant 1997b:50, Kennedy 1992, 1994, Kennedy and Peters 1992:1083, Kibreab 2003:329, Lara 2005:9, Varley 1996:514-15), not all FHHs are poverty stricken victims. *Chapter Nine* has shown that Samoan FHHs are not the poorest of the poor, neither are they socially isolated individually or as a social group:

If she is poor it is because she comes from a poor family, or she must be disconnected from her ʻāiga, from our culture (Naomi: Village shop owner and school teacher, Jan 2002).

The overriding importance of the family and the invisible and visible components of *faʻasamoa* work as protective factors, ensuring FHHs are not stigmatised, ostracised and discriminated against because of their circumstances:

We forgive her, even if she doesn't have a husband. When the baby is born everybody will look after her and the baby. This is what faʻasamoa is (Mose: Matai and retired school teacher, Nov 2004).

In terms of these participants, *faʻasamoa*, *faʻamatai*, the *feagaiga*, brother/sister relationship and the practice of *faʻalavelave*, all contribute to ensure the inclusion, wellbeing and welfare of FHHs, as well as guaranteeing the inclusion and security of their children. The cultural framework of *faʻasamoa* has also guaranteed that these FHHs retained a level of agency and voice, with the ceremonial practice of *faʻalavelave* making certain that these FHHs are not isolated. These points also support the notion that culture is fundamental to understanding the experience of FHHs in Samoa. As stressed by Shon:

When we start to see certain people within our society, such as our parents, young women with babies, the disabled or people who are ill, not being cared for by their family members then we need to ask ourselves as Samoans 'what is it about our culture that is not working?' When we are no longer making attempts to meet the needs of our family members then we are no longer Samoan (Shon: Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, April 2006).

Everybody wants to look after their mother. Like me now. When I finish here, talking to you, I am going to call someone to go to my mother's home in the village to make sure she has some lunch, if not I will take her some. This is what it means to be Samoan (Maria K: Samoan academic, Nov 2004).

There were many instances in this study where FHHs showed themselves to be wholly in charge of their own welfare and destiny, contributing emotionally, financially and practically toward their wider family networks. As was shown in the case of Telesia and

Kyla, wider family networks inclusive of fathers and brothers can be very dependent on the advanced level of education, professional qualifications and skills, and the high earning capacity of women. Thus they are hardly the vulnerable victims that the conventional development literature portrays them to be.

It is clear from the findings that culture, as ideas, values, behaviours, feelings, and practices, is fundamental to framing the development experience of FHHs in Samoa. In favour of arguments posed by Radcliffe and Laurie (2006), a cultural framework contextualises the concept of family, and the relationships between women and their brothers, fathers, uncles, and sons, as well as contextualising the value already attributed to women and children within a society. Understanding the situation of FHHs in any given society can only be realised in relation to their position as women, daughters, sisters, mothers and grandmothers, rather than the label, especially so, given that the label FHH was not known in Samoa. This point supports further not only the idea that FHH is not a universally applicable label, but also the fact that labels are not always useful to Development Studies.

There is an overriding assumption that labels are useful to the field of development because they allow us to categorise, make assumptions and draw neat conclusions. Apparently they give us a common starting point of reference. However, this desire to label gives us ‘analytical blinkers’, and stops us seeing the diverse and meaningful ways in which people engage with development (Eyben 2005). The desire by the development field to label is hugely problematic because not only are the development labels, trends and issues dictated from the outside, so are the solutions. If solutions are not anchored in the knowledge base of the target group, how can they be fully concerned with local needs (Gegeo 1998:289)? Even when and where there is agreement that target populations need to participate in their own development, this development “continues to be based on western development models” (Gegeo 1998:289), rarely are indigenous models of development considered, and if they are, they are certainly not prioritized.

Having an understanding of the cultural frameworks of any given society is fundamental to understanding from the outset the relevance of concepts such as household, headship, FHHs, and what constitutes poverty and development (Barcham 2005, Fairbairn-Dunlop 2005, Hooper 2000). An in-depth understanding of cultural frameworks helps situate the roles and status of household/family members, the various obligations of the

household/family members, as well as identifying arrangements of reciprocity. Understanding local systems, especially those of reciprocity, may also make more visible the inputs and outputs of all household members, all of which are necessary for understanding the position of household members, at a micro and macro level. The maintenance of family systems and customary ways has ensured the wellbeing and security of FHHs in Samoa.

To understand the relationships between culture and development is to therefore understand relationships between peoples – as well as their dreams, hopes, and their visions for themselves and their families. What aspects of tradition people choose to keep or change, as well as the meanings that they give to the process of improving the qualities of their lives, are at the centre of understanding development (Carruyo 2003:200, Eyben 2005:4).

A focus on FHHs tends to understand FHHs in static ways, in that they are not seen to have shifting identities or the capacity to be actors in their own development. These women are much more than the label or category of FHHs, and when they are understood in terms of their multiple and variable ways of being in the world, then the numerous ways that this seemingly poor and marginalised group of women can, and do, exert agency in the context of their everyday lives will finally be seen.

Implications for future research, policy, planning and practice

This study has drawn on arguments from critical feminism, which seeks to challenge the current orthodoxy surrounding female household headship. While some FHHs may be vulnerable, not all vulnerable people are poor, and female headship should not be blamed for the poverty that some FHHs face. This research has explored the development experience of FHHs using the Samoan context, showing that FHH has not been adopted as a development category in Samoa at a grass-roots level or in development policy and practice. Further research is necessary so as to ascertain where else in the Pacific the label FHH may not be appropriate or applicable. As this study has highlighted how problematic universal labels and categories can be, serious thought needs to be given to what other categories/labels are problematic and applied in normative ways in Samoa, the Pacific, and in other areas of the developing world by the development community. There is definitely a place in development scholarship and research whereby categories are continuously deconstructed and contested.

Research that continues to question how useful this desire to categorise and label really is to Development Studies is fundamental because shifting beyond this desire to categorise and label will provide a space for envisioning new approaches to development thinking and practice, and for seeing the ways that people themselves successfully create and pursue opportunities.

This exploration of FHHs has demonstrated just how important it is to understand any development issue from a local perspective as opposed to just accepting supposedly universal rhetoric about development. Local explanations thus far have illustrated FHHs are not an issue in Samoa, or at least not a major priority compared with other concerns. In examining the experience of FHHs in Samoa, this thesis has emphasised the significance of specifics and particularities and therefore the importance of discovering what has importance locally. Seeking to understand ideas, experiences or problems as they are locally defined and explained and then adopting local solutions is fundamental to good development. This exploration of FHHs shows not only how important locality is in achieving accuracy in development thinking and planning, it also shows how important local knowledge acquisition is, if development is to be correctly imagined and successfully carried out. Although in saying this, the local does not exist in a vacuum, thus the local also needs to be positioned in relation to the global environment.

There is data to suggest family systems in Samoa and other areas of the Pacific are becoming weaker. With an increase in the number of land disputes and misuse of family land, unemployment and conditions of poverty such as overcrowding, poor nutrition, crime, violence against women and children, and a lack of regard for the elderly. It is also noted that more marriages are breaking down and there are more households being headed by women (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2005:72). Moreover, there is also some evidence of women with dependents struggling to survive. “The growth of households headed by women is clear in all our countries, and many of these families are living in conditions below the poverty line” (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2005:72). However, the experience of these women needs to be understood at a local level, rather than seeking to understand them from the perspective of the wider FHHs literature, or from the directions taken and arguments put forth by global organisations, bilateral or multilateral development agencies who in most instances, attune themselves to global rhetoric on FHHs.

As this research did not engage explicitly with individuals or families who were living outside of cultural structures, this is an area where research gains might be made. In a number of Pacific development documents it has been suggested that those living outside cultural frameworks, with restricted access to land, limited space for subsistence gardens, and few opportunities for generating a cash income, many of whom live in the urban environment, constitute a vulnerable section of society. Thus ongoing investigations into the situation and position of these population groups, regardless of whether they are FHHs, are required.

Should the Pacific see a rise in poor FHHs, female headship should not automatically be blamed; instead this poverty needs to be seen in light of the breakdown of cultural frameworks, because when cultural frameworks are intact, as I have shown in the case of Samoa, FHHs are not all poor and disadvantaged. Any development strategy aimed at female headship would be better aimed at strengthening appropriate cultural frameworks, supportive traditional values, and in particular, the family, rather than focusing on FHHs. This is not to say that a blind eye is turned in favour of all that is customary, because it is also important not to romanticise culture (Jolly 2002:2). These frameworks can also create enormous inequities, especially for women. As argued by Yabaki and Norton (2004) “Cultural practices that do not enhance family and community cohesion should be scrutinised for modification or elimination” (p.6).

If future development issues are to be addressed in an effective manner, each issue needs to be understood fully in relation to the cultural frameworks out of which it arises, because it is also within the cultural frameworks that solutions can be found. Any action taken to address these issues need to remain cognisant of the desire that Pacific peoples have for an approach to development that favours cultural identity, traditional values and family systems. Development in this instance needs to build on what works, and change what is not working.

In terms of policy the poverty alleviation agenda and the MDGs accentuate the need “for safety nets and targeted social welfare - especially in relation to the household” (Jackson 1998:47). In doing so, the importance of FHHs as a target group is reiterated, albeit uncritically. As the Pacific has shown a commitment to the poverty alleviation agenda and the MDGs, perhaps because of the nature of aid delivery to the region, it is therefore vital that FHHs in the Pacific region are understood in more detail. There is a need to

understand in a critical fashion various myths that surround female headship (in particular those that focus on poverty), especially as they are translated into development policy and practice. Policy in the Pacific which uses the category of FHH or makes reference to FHHs needs to be viewed critically and treated with caution. At this stage development projects which seek to target FHH in Samoa would not be that useful. There is a need to understand in much more detail the experiences of these women with regard to poverty and livelihoods before any policy or practice recommendations are made.

In relation to other FHHs in the Pacific region, any research undertaken would need to understand fully the household, family, headship and poverty in terms of the cultural context in which they are embedded. There is prime opportunity for context specific research (urban, rural, national and regional) about widowed women, and women with dependents who are either single mothers, or are divorced or separated from their partners, which places culture at the forefront. Application of a Pacific lens to the category FHHs not only builds on Pacific knowledge, but provides a space for envisioning development as a culturally specific, imaginative and opportunistic experience. The importance of seeking to understand FHHs in relation to local circumstances and culture is thus highlighted.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Female-headed households: Participant profiles

It is important to introduce the participants separately because “the inevitable fragmentation of analysis can, to some extent, reduce the wholeness of the person who has contributed in a very personal way” by telling their story (Carrier 1996:77). Each participant is introduced separately and is inclusive of age, marital status and location of their husband or partner, financial circumstances, for example remittances received, or whether on welfare. The participants’ levels of education and employment statuses, the types of household/family they were currently residing in/with, are also included as are the location of all of their children and whether they were responsible for any other children. Whether the children have or are attending school is also incorporated. I have also presented some detail about their extended families, including parents, and siblings and in-laws if it was applicable. Finally, I have included how they defined their households. The purpose of this information is that when reading quotes from these women in the findings chapter, readers will have a deeper understanding of the rich and diverse backgrounds of the research participants. For the purpose of confidentiality the names of the participants have also been changed.

1. CARAN

Caran is a sixty-five year old widowed woman, who has two adult children. She lives in an extended family situation, with her son and his wife and their also adult children. She also has her elderly mother who is in her nineties living with them. The household is on customary land, in a village near Apia, the *matai* title is currently not bestowed. They have access to some land behind this house where they plant vegetables. Her son is a teacher meaning that cash income comes mostly from his position. His wife has a small shop, and does some informal sector activities such as weaving, her grand-daughter and her grandson are looking to run a taxi business, and her grand-daughter is working in a shop in Apia so also has a cash income. Caran receives a small pension too. They generally get remittances for *fa’alavelave* only.

Caran reports that she did not identify herself as head of the household for the 2001 Census, she thinks it might have been her son. However, if she were asked today she would say that she was the head of this household.

Caran was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a widowed woman. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Caran to be an extended de jure FHH.

Caran as a potential participant was made known to me through a research contact at the Samoan National University in Apia.

2. DELPHINA

Delphina is a sixty-one year old widow. She has always been, as she put it, a housewife, and she has never had a job where she earned a wage. Delphina has seven children. Some of her children are in Apia working, some are in Samoa and in her village. She also has grandchildren. They do receive some remittances but they are intermittent. The household is situated on customary land in a village on Savai'i. There is no *matai* in Delphina's family at the moment. Her son in Apia will get the title at a later date. The household has access to a small plantation. They earn money by selling taro from the plantations and by weaving and selling fine mats. Her son works at the plantation with her daughter's husband, his brother in law. Delphina's grand-daughter dropped out of school because they could not afford the school fees. There are three generations in this household consisting of three children and four adults.

When the census occurred in 2001 Delphina's husband was still alive so he was the head of the household. If the census people came tomorrow Delphina would say she was the household head, even if they had a *matai* living with them.

Delphina was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a widowed woman. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Delphina to be an extended, de jure FHH.

Delphina as a potential participant was made known to me through the research assistant utilised while in Savai'i.

3. DIANA

Diana is thirty-five year old separated woman and she lives in a village on the island of Savai'i, with her mother and father, and her sister and her husband and children. Her own husband has returned to his village. Diana has four children, but the two older ones are living with their father. The children range in age from seven years up to fifteen years. The household is situated on customary land under *matai* rule, they have access to a plantation,

and receive remittances from her brothers and sisters who are overseas. Diana works in the informal sector so a cash income comes from remittances and the vegetables she sells at the market. They are also involved in the making and selling of small cakes.

Diana sees her mother and father as head of the household, and this is what they said for the 2001 Census.

Diana was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a woman with dependent children whose was separated from her husband, the father of her children. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Diana to be an embedded dejure FHH.

Diana as a potential participant was made known to me through a social contact I made in Apia in 2001.

4. ETTE

Ette is a seventy-four year old widowed woman, who has ten adult children. She lives on family-held customary land in a village not far from Apia. She has her own *fale* and a few meters in front of her *fale* is her son's *fale*, where he lives with his wife and five children. Her son works as an engineer at the hospital. They have access to a plantation, and there are a number of *matat* titles in her family, some held by her own children and their partners. The family receives remittances from New Zealand and Australia and they also have a number of members who have well paying jobs in Apia.

Ette identifies that she is the head of her household; she also said this in the 2001 Census.

Ette was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a widowed woman. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Ette to be an extended, dejure FHH.

Ette as a potential participant was made known to me through a research contact at the Samoan National University in Apia.

5. KALANI

Kalani is a woman in her early forties with a tertiary qualification, who works in the public sector in Apia. Kalani's husband is currently serving in East Timor with the police force, and they have one child, aged nine years. Kalani lives in an extended arrangement, in that

she also has her seventeen year old niece living with her. They reside on freehold land, in one of the Apia villages. Kalani reports that there are *matai* in her family and her husband's family, and that they also have access to family land and a plantation. As both Kalani and her husband earn a regular wage, they mostly contribute remittances to other family members, as opposed to receiving them.

Kalani is the head of her household and this is what she said for the 2001 Census; however Kalani reports that the household is usually jointly run with her husband.

Kalani was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a woman with dependent children whose husband was absent because of migration. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Kalani to be a lone, de-facto FHH.

Kalani as a potential participant was made known to me through a research contact at the Samoan National University in Apia, as well as through one of the other participants.

6. KYLA

Kyla is a married business woman in her mid forties who has raised six of her own children and five others born to members of her extended family. Kyla's eleven children are between the ages of twenty-two and nine years. In Kyla's household at the moment there are five dependent children, three of her own and two others. Kyla and her husband have a number of small businesses and currently Kyla's husband is in New Zealand doing business. He has been away for most of the year. Kyla is unsure when he will be returning. Kyla and her husband and all the children live on freehold land in Apia. While Kyla and her husband see themselves as being part of the Apia lifestyle, they still return regularly to their family villages where their extended family members have customary land holdings and *matai* titles. Kyla's husband is also a *matai*. Kyla and her husband contribute regularly to others in their wider family network.

Kyla considers herself by proxy, to be the household head, though generally the household was headed by both Kyla and her husband. Although on the census form her husband stated he was the household head, Kyla reported they meant nothing by this.

Kyla was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a woman with dependent children whose husband was absent because of migration. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Kyla to be a lone, de-facto FHH.

Kyla as a potential participant was made known to me through a contact at a local business association in Apia.

7. LEASUA

Leasua is a twenty-three year old separated woman with one child, a three year old boy. Leasua lives in an extended family arrangement, which includes her older brothers, one of whom is intellectually impaired, and an older sister and her husband and their child. The household is on customary land under *matai* governance in a village near Apia. Leasua works in Apia as a guesthouse receptionist and her brother runs a fishing business. They also have access to a small plantation and her brother takes the fish and the surplus produce to the market to sell. Leasua's parents are in America Samoa, with some of her younger brothers, and they send remittances. Mainly though, the waged income comes from Leasua's job and from the fish sold at the market. Her sister also has a small business enterprise of bingo, and an arrangement whereby she makes handicrafts which are sold to a stall at the Apia market.

Leasua identifies that she sees her older brother to be the head of the household; she believes this is what the family would have said in the 2001 Census.

Leasua was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a woman with a dependent child who had left her husband. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Leasua to be an extended, dejure FHH.

Leasua as a potential participant was made known to me through a personal contact in the tourism industry in Apia.

8. LINE

Line is a fifty-five year old woman who is currently separated from her husband. He has been in New Zealand visiting his relatives for three months and Line does not know when he will be coming back. Line's husband is a *matai*, and the household is on customary land. They have ten children, ranging from thirteen years up to thirty-three years. Line

stated she has ‘always been a housewife’. Some of Line’s older children are in New Zealand now, and remittances come regularly from New Zealand. Two of Line’s sons who are in Samoa have employment that earns a wage income, which they contribute back into the household. Line also has seven grandchildren, who come and live with them off and on. The household has six members, all adults.

When the census occurred in 2001 her husband indicated he was the head of the household. If the census were to come today Line she would name herself as the household head.

Line was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a woman with dependent children whose husband was absent because of migration. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Line to be an extended de-facto FHH.

Line as a potential participant was made known to me through the research assistant utilised while in Savai’i

9. LOGO

Logo is a twenty-seven year old single mother, who is employed in an office in Apia. Logo has two twin boys, four year olds; they are cared for at home by Logo’s aunt while she is at work. In Logo’s household there are her grandparents, who are very elderly and dependent, her uncle who is at the ‘Trade College’ and her two younger Aunts who are still at high school, as well as her older married Aunt whose husband is away at the moment. Logo’s married aunt is a teacher and also has a small child. Logo did not elaborate with any depth on the father of her twins, other than to say he was not around, and that he did not provide or participate in her twins’ lives. Logo lives on customary land, with access to a plantation and currently there is no *matāi* in the family. Logo’s own mother, father and siblings live in American Samoa. Logo is the only person in her household to earn a wage, but the family also receives some remittances from her parents in Pago Pago (American Samoa).

Logo sees her grandfather as the head of her household, and although she cannot be sure, she believes this is what the family would have indicated during the 2001 Census.

Logo was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a woman with dependent children who had never resided with or married the father of her children. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Logo to be an embedded, de jure FHH.

Logo as a potential participant was made known to me through a business associate in Apia.

10. MAIA

Maia is a forty-two year old unmarried woman with five children; their ages range from seven years up to twenty-three years. Two of her children reside with her and three reside with extended family members. Maia is unsure of where the fathers of her children are, they do not contribute to their children's upkeep, and in some instances they are unaware they have children with Maia. Maia lives in a Savai'i village, on customary land, according to *matai* rule. She and her children have access to a plantation. Maia resides with her younger sister and her husband. Maia works in a restaurant, and her wages are contributed to the household. They also receive remittances from her older sisters in New Zealand.

Maia reports that she is the head of the household, although she has no idea what was said for the 2001 Census, and she does not remember identifying herself.

Maia was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a woman with dependent children who had never resided with or married the father(s) of her children. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Maia to be an extended, de jure FHH.

Maia as a potential participant was made known to me through the research assistant utilised while in Savai'i.

11. MALIA

Malia is a woman in her early forties, who is married but has been physically separated from her husband for the last three years because he is working in America Samoa. Malia holds a tertiary qualification and she works for the public sector in Apia, as an office administrator. Malia lives in a nuclear arrangement, in a freehold household in Apia. Even though on freehold land both Malia and her husband continue to identify with family *matai*. Malia has five children, and their ages range from eight years up to twenty years. Malia's husband regularly remits his wage; they have a joint bank account. Although Malia lives in Apia, she has access to a plantation in her natal village. Malia's household cash

income comes from her wages, her husband's wages, and remittances they receive from New Zealand. With the cash income that Malia and her husband earn they also contribute to other households back in her husband's village, as well as to her mother who is widowed.

Malia identifies that she is the head of her household; she also said this in the 2001 Census.

Malia was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a woman with dependent children whose husband was absent because of migration. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Malia to be a lone, de-facto FHH.

Malia as a potential participant was made known to me through a research contact at the Samoan National University in Apia.

12. MELE

Mele is a widowed woman in her sixties, and a retired teacher. She lives in a village on Upolu, on customary land, according to *matai* governance. They have access to a family plantation. Mele has four children, three of her own, all grown up, and a small child from her extended family whom she cares for. Mele lives with her two sons, one of whom is married and his wife and three children. She has a daughter in Australia. They receive a cash income from the unmarried son who is a policeman, and Mele also receives a pension. The household occasionally receives remittances from family overseas.

Mele identifies that she is the head of her household, however in the 2001 Census her son who is a *matai* indicated that he was the household head.

Mele was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was widowed woman. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Mele to be an extended de jure FHH.

Mele as a potential participant was made known to me through a research contact at the Samoan National University in Apia.

13. NELL

Nell is a thirty-three year old village woman, who is currently separated from her husband. Nell moved herself and her three children back to her natal family when her husband left her. He has remained in his village. Her new household consist of herself, her children, her mother and her two unmarried brothers. Nell left school before she could sit any exams, thus she has no formal qualifications. Until recently Nell worked in the kitchen at the National Hospital in Apia, but presently she is unemployed. Nell's family reside on customary held land according to *matai* rule, and they have access to a plantation. Nell's oldest brother has a labouring job and provides the cash income for the household. They generally receive remittances at Christmas time from extended family members who are overseas. Her ex-husband does not currently contribute to the care and upbringing of their children, although occasionally he provides financial support.

Nell sees her mother as head of her household. During the 2001 Census Nell was with her husband, and she does not recall who the identified household head was.

Nell was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a woman with dependent children whose husband had left her. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Nell to be an embedded, de jure FHH.

Nell as a potential participant was made known to me through a research contact at the Samoan National University in Apia.

14. RIKA

Rika is a twenty-three year old woman with four children, whose ages range from three years up to ten years. Rika is separated from her husband and is not sure where he is or when he will be back⁹⁵. He does not contribute to the care of the children financially or otherwise. Rika and her children are currently staying with her sister, her sister's husband (who is around intermittently) and their three children in an area in Apia township. It appears that the family pay rent for the property where they live, they do not have access to a plantation, and while there are *matai* in their families, it appears they do not see themselves as being governed by *matai*. Rika and her sister earn money though informal

⁹⁵ Rika appeared very uncomfortable when her husband and his whereabouts were mentioned. The people that had pointed me in the direction of Rika had indicated that he was in prison, therefore I did not pursue this avenue with her.

sector work as street traders, helped by the children. They do not have anyone overseas who remits to the household.

Rika reports that both her sister and herself are jointly in charge of their household; and that she does not remember the census.

Rika was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a woman with dependent children whose husband was absent. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Rika to be an extended, dejure FHH.

Rika as a potential participant was made known to me through a personal contact at the local market in Apia.

15. SALA

Sala is a seventy-seven year old widow and she is a retired nurse/midwife. She has seven adult children and they live in various places. Her eldest child is 61 years old and the youngest is 49 years old. Two of her children are in Pago Pago, two others are in New Zealand, and two are in Apia. Sala lives on customary land in a village on Savai'i with her remaining daughter and her husband, and some of their children, one who is married, also with a child. In this household there are eleven people across four generations, including four small children. Sala's daughter is a teacher so they get a wage income. They also get income from New Zealand in the form of remittances and they have access to a plantation.

Sala is considered to be the head of the household. This is stated by her daughter without hesitation. Sala's son-in-law is a *matai*, so his name was recorded as the household head on the 2001 Census.

Sala was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a widowed woman. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Sala to be an extended, dejure FHH.

Sala as a potential participant was made known to me through the research assistant utilised while in Savai'i.

16. TAU

Tau is a thirty-three year old married woman whose husband is a policeman, and who is currently serving for a second time in East Timor. Tau is a primary school teacher in the village and at the time of the interview she was on three months paid maternity leave. Tau and her three children live in their own small *fale* on a small area of land with her husband's family less than 50 metres away. Tau reports that this is her husband's family's village that they live in and they are on her husband's family's customary land, under *matai* rule. As a family they have access to a plantation and Tau's husband sends remittances while he is away. He receives his normal salary as a policeman as well as an allowance for being in East Timor.

Tau reports that she did not identifying herself as head of the household for the 2001 Census, rather, this was her father-in-law. He is the head of the greater household, but if she were asked today she would say that she was the household head of this *fale*.

Tau was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a woman with dependent children whose husband was absent because of migration. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Tau as an extended de-facto FHH.

Tau as a potential participant was made known to me through a research contact at the National University.

17. TELESIA

Telesia is a well-educated woman in her early fifties. Telesia works as a Chartered Accountant and she lives on freehold land in Apia, in a nuclear arrangement. Telesia has six children ranging from the age of seventeen to thirty years. Two of Telesia's children are now married and are also living on freehold land in Apia, the other children live with her. Telesia is divorced and definitely sees herself as head of the household. When completing the census in 2001, Telesia had it recorded that she was the head of her household.

Telesia also has a large extended natal family in Samoa, with many family members situated in and around Apia. She has ten siblings in all, most of them married with children also. While her father has passed away her mother remains in a village less than twenty minutes away on customary land under *matai* governance, so even though Telesia lives in Apia and on freehold land Telesia retains her links to this village, because this is her family village. Telesia therefore has access to a plantation back in this village. While Telesia

reports her husband does not contribute to the children in any way, she is not worried as she is in a 'good financial position'.

Telesia was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a woman, with children and without a husband as she was officially divorced. Telesia also self reported that she was a female headed household. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Telesia to be a lone, de jure FHH.

Telesia as a potential participant was made known to me through a research contact at the Samoan National University in Apia.

18. VANI

Vani is a woman in her mid forties, she is married and her husband is in East Timor on peace-keeping duties. Vani lives in a nuclear arrangement, just herself and her children, of which there are five, ranging in age from eighteen to four years, although one child is currently residing in New Zealand. Vani has a tertiary qualification and she holds a managerial role in a small office in Apia. Vani's household is in a village, on land held according to custom, and there are two *matai* in the family, one of whom is Vani's father-in-law. The income for Vani's household derives from the wages that she and her husband earn. They also pay to help other members of their family, and sporadically they receive remittances from family overseas, primarily for *fa'alavelave* and other occasions, such as Christmas.

Vani identifies that she is the head of her household; she also said this in the 2001 Census.

Vani was identified as being a suitable participant for this study as she was a woman with dependent children whose husband was absent because of migration. For the purpose of this study I have labelled Vani to be a lone, de-facto FHH.

Vani as a potential participant was made known to me through a research contact at the Samoan National University and through a contact at a Government department, both in Apia.

Appendix 2: List of key informants⁹⁶

1. Adi: Women in Business Foundation (F)
2. *Ana: Single young woman, resides in the village and employed with the informal sector (F)
3. Bronwyn: Apia research assistant (F)
4. Fetauimalemau: National Council of Women (F)
5. Josef: Elderly *matai* (M)
6. *June: Young single woman living with extended family (F)
7. *Lea: Housewife, living in husband's village (F)
8. Maria: Business woman (F)
9. Maria K: Samoan academic (F)
10. *Mary: Small business owner, informal sector Apia (F)
11. Moelagi: Business woman and high chief (F)
12. *Mose: Talking chief, retired school teacher (M)
13. *Naomi: Villager shop owner and school teacher (F)
14. Neli: Business woman and gender expert (F)
15. *Poema: Small business owner, informal sector Apia (F)
16. *Rosa: Middle-aged woman, currently residing overseas, who has returned to care for her sick mother (F)
17. Sam: *Matai*, shop owner, and qualified engineer (M)
18. Savalia: Savai'i research assistant (F)
19. Shon: CEO, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (F)
20. Soma: Elderly village pastor and *matai* (M)
21. *Susana: Young, single village woman, unemployed. The family has no-one with a paid job (F)
22. Tamaese: Young untitled man, who works as a taxi driver, who also has a baby outside of marriage. Tamaese is not residing with the mother (M)
23. Teresa: Young village woman (F)
24. Tim: General Manager South Pacific Business Development (M)
25. *Tina: Sister of Tamaese (F)
26. Tui: Business woman (F)
27. *Yvette: Young, single, tertiary educated woman, who resides in Apia (F)

⁹⁶ Key informants are listed with regard to their name, and for the capacity by which they were interviewed. (F) denotes female and (M) denotes male. Use of a * indicates that a pseudonym has been utilised. Key informants were given a choice, those speaking in a professional capacity such as Shon: CEO: Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development generally chose to use their own name.

Appendix 3: Information sheet

Thank-you for your interest in the proposed study, this is a research project about female-headed households in Samoa⁹⁷.

My name is Rochelle Stewart-Withers and I am in Samoa to do fieldwork for my thesis for a doctoral qualification in Development Studies. I am associated with Massey University, in Palmerston North, New Zealand.

The primary objective of this study is to understand the daily experiences of single mothers, and widowed or separate women, (either through the process of migration or martial breakdown), who are with or without dependents.

If you are interested in participating you are invited to spend time with me where you are welcome to ask any further questions you may have about your participation in the research. If you wish to take part in the research, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You will be involved in one to two interviews, lasting about one hour each, depending on the time that you have available.

If you decide to take part in this study, you have the right to withdraw at anytime and you also have the right to refuse to answer any particular question. You also have the right to stop the recorder at anytime, and have erased what has been recorded at any point.

To guarantee privacy I will ensure that the data is transcribed only by myself, with the help of my interpreter(s) who will also be required to sign a confidentiality form. All data will be stored securely in a safe place. Identifying names will be removed and pseudonyms will be utilised. Neither identifying details or your name will be used in any publications or reports. All recorded interviews will be erased following analysis of the data.

I hope this process has answered all your questions.

⁹⁷ The term FHHs had to be clarified so that all of the participants understood what the study was about from the outset.

Appendix 4: Informed consent

Female-headed households in Samoa: A study about the daily experiences of single mothers, and widowed or separate women, (either through the process of migration or martial breakdown), who are with or without dependents.

I have read the information sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point during the study. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

I also understand that I may decline to answer any questions during the interview, and that I may request that any comments be taken 'off the record'. I understand that I can answer the questions and not be recorded or have notes taken at the time. I also understand that I have the right for the audio-tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to provide information on the basis that it will only be used for the purpose of completing the research project. I understand that I will not be identified by name and that I may specify any further degrees of anonymity.

I agree to participate in the study under the conditions set out on the information sheet.

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

Signed: _____ (Signature)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 5: Interview schedules according to broad discussion themes

1. Interview schedule for female-headed households

- I. Personal details – age, qualifications, employment status, children - whether dependent, other dependents, marital status, whereabouts of partner, contributions to dependents or household from partner, governance issue, land and resources access and use
- II. Household/family members, configuration and ways of functioning – ascertain the meaning of household
- III. Household/family roles and responsibilities
- IV. Headship understandings – roles and responsibility, identification in relation to the census - ascertain the meaning of headship
- V. Personal experiences – poverty, stigma and discrimination, coping emotionally, practically and financially and level of voice and agency
- VI. Cultural obligations – *fa'alavelave*
- VII. Cultural protective factors – exploration of cultural concepts such as *fa'asamoa*, *fa'amatai*, the *feagaiga*, brother/sister relationship and *fa'alavelave*

2. Interview schedule for key informants (also includes questions below in section 3)

- I. Exploration of the meaning of household and headship in Samoa
- II. Attitude towards FHHs
- III. Personal experience with FHHs
- IV. Cultural obligation and protective factors in relation to FHHs - exploration of cultural concepts such as *fa'asamoa*, *fa'amatai*, the *feagaiga*, brother/sister relationship and *fa'alavelave*
- V. Poverty of FHHs

3. Interview schedule for non-government organisations, development agencies and government departments

- I. Exploration of cultural concepts, *fa'asamoa*, *fa'amatai*, *fa'alavelave* and the *feagaiga*, brother/sister relationship
- II. Exploration of the meaning of household and headship
- III. Prevalence and knowledge of FHHs
- IV. Organisational targeting of FHHs
- V. Future plans in relation to FHHs
- VI. Overall development agenda – policy and practice particularly in relation to gender and policy alleviation

Appendix 6: Determining the changing characteristics of the household

Questions asked:

1. Who is the household head?
2. Is this what was said in the 2001 Census?
3. If the census came tomorrow who would you say the head was?
4. How many people (adults and children) slept in the household last night?
5. How many people (adults and children) were cooked for last night?
6. What is the family size, how many adults and children are in this household today? Where are the members who were present in the first survey and are now absent?
7. Is the household extended or nuclear, how many generations are included?
8. Are there any FHHs embedded? (Give clear explanation – before determining answer)