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The Health Seeking Behaviours of Ageing Niuean Women in Central Auckland

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Abstract

This qualitative study encompasses several features in its design. It is exploratory, emergent and the realms of discovery and description are informed by Max van Manen's (1990) human science approach. Van Manen's approach has enabled analysis of the data. Human science is comprised of phenomenology, hermeneutics and language and when coupled with the data collection method of focus groups makes for interesting outcomes. Time is needed to develop the narrative texts as phenomenological interpretation is never complete. There will always be levels of understanding waiting to be discovered. As a New Zealand born Niuean woman, I have provided a preliminary account of the health seeking behaviours of ageing Niuean women (Matua fifine) in Auckland. The context of health seeking behaviour cannot be realized until there is an understanding of the participant's perceptions of health and illness.

Understanding peoples perceptions of health and illness may give insights into the reasons for the decisions that the Matua fifine make when choosing to engage or not engage primary and or secondary health services. This also includes traditional medicine and complementary therapies. The assumption is that people make a direct move to seek a healthcare provider when well and unwell. What is not appreciated are the choices that are also available such as self management or a wait and see approach. Equally important is the role of spirituality, which encompasses Christian beliefs and traditional beliefs.

Background information of history and the Niuean way of life, sets the context for this study. Consultation within the Niuean community is an ethical consideration that has paved the way for support for this study. This study will enable the voice of the Matua fifine Niue to be heard so that health services will be able to respond to and preserve their dignity and individuality which are foundational for good health and positive ageing.

Glossary

Field text is composed of the data collected from the focus group meetings.

Narrative text is my analysis and interpretation.

Rather than use the term participant in the narrative text, the term *Matua fifine* is used as it recognizes and values the contribution that is being made.

“**Ethnic specific**” is the term used to acknowledge that Pacific people are comprised of people from different island groups. E.g. Niue Island.

I use the term **ageing** because mature women participate with older women in the groups in Auckland. To specifically ask for participants and then set an age limit to exclude some, seems disrespectful to those who wish to participate. Flexibility is crucial to this study as it allows room to manoeuvre to accommodate intending participants.

Agafaka motu Niue Niue way of life.

Ai malolo. Illness.

Ai fakahanoa. Do not display any disrespect.

Aitu. Ghost. I take the term to mean a spirit.

Fakaalofa. The definition within the Niue Language Dictionary (1997) gives multiple meanings for the term fakaalofa. These meanings are love, pity, greetings, gift and compassion (p. 63). In this study context, it means a gift. It is not a payment. Neither is it accepted as payment for information. To perceive it as payment is to undermine and under value the giving and receiving that has transpired between two people.

Fakahohoko e manava. To satisfy a craving for food.

Fakalilifu. To respect.

Fakapokia. To be hit by a spirit.

Fakatau au. To walk together arm in arm.

Fifine. Woman.

Fotafota. Massage.

Fuafua. Test or examine. (This is the Matua fifine’s understanding of the term fuafua).

Fakatonuaga. Proof.

Gagao. To be sick. Gagao pikitia. Contagious disease. Gagao matima. A salt related disease (Sperlich, 1997 p.94).

Higoa haau ne fia kai. What do you want to eat?

Lagamatai. To help.

Magafaoa. Family.

Malolo. To be strong, to be healthy.

Masemase kelea. Misfortune.

Mataola. To be healthy looking.

Matua. Parent.

Mamatua. Parent.

Matua fifine. I use the term to mean a mature woman or older woman and as a respectful way of addressing the participants. There is no equivalent Niuean word for participant.

Momotua Elder. I understand it to mean a respectful term for an older person.

Nane. A Niuean dish made from arrowroot and young coconut meat.

Palagi is the term used by Niuean people when referring to mainstream people of New Zealand.

Patuiki. King or Monarch.

Taulaatua. Practitioner of traditional medicine.

Tatalu. A mild illness (Sperlich, 1997 p. 300).

Toafeka. To be in perfect health

Tuafu. To feed with a rich protein (Sperlich, 1997 p.328). A special food for a sick person.

Tunu paku. To cook food on hot embers.

Uka feke. Very difficult.

Vai lakau. Herbal medicine.

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FIGURE ONE
MAP OF NIUE

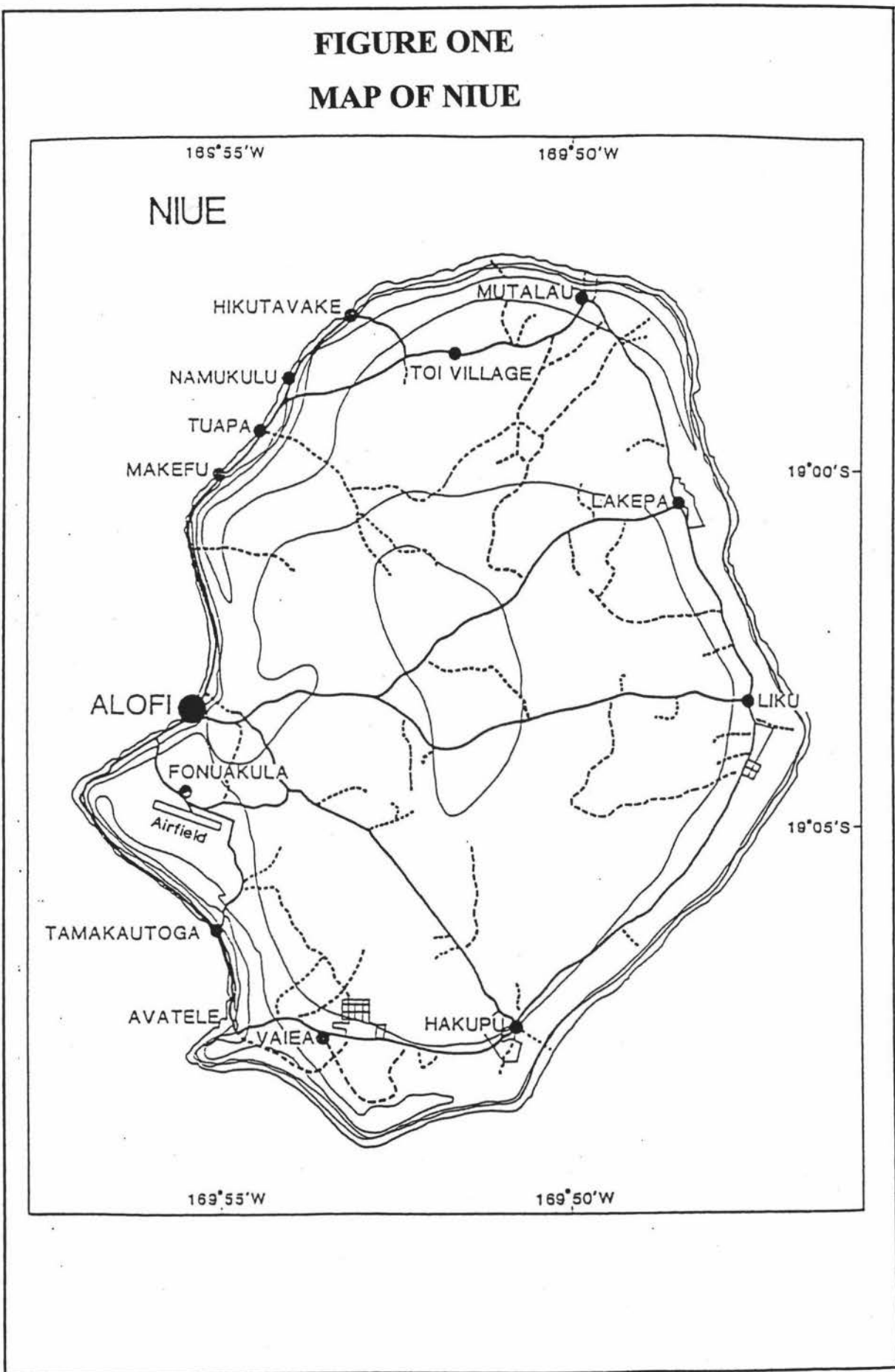


FIGURE TWO

MAP OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

