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**INTRODUCING DISABILITY CONCEPTS WITH
INTEGRITY INTO
TONGAN CULTURAL CONTEXT**

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DEDICATION

This humble effort is dedicated to my beloved parents:

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ABSTRACT

The case being advanced in this thesis is that “*Fakalotofale‘ia*,” a Tongan concept, should be adopted as a viable and supplementary practice framework for disability services support and delivery systems – within the context of the Pacific peoples of New Zealand – and most specifically for the Tongan segment of that population.

Fakalotofale‘ia encompasses the holistic worldview of Tongan disabled people in terms of their cultural, physical, intellectual, socio-economic and spiritual well-being.

Research evidence has established that the participation of Tongan disabled in available disability support services in New Zealand - is low. This study examines the reasons for the problematic of this low incidence and then reaches beyond that to propose and recommend possible alternatives.

An integral part of this same exercise involves an examination of the practice of *Fakalotofale‘ia* within the structure and values of the “*Kainga*,” the most primary of Pacific kinship systems, processes and relationships. *Fakalotofale‘ia* plays the widest possible and most pervasive range of roles and functions – from everyday maintenance of peace and good order, through to actual dispute resolution and as well as exerting a curative, preventative, educational, spiritual and economic influence on a Tongan’s life and entire social universe.

Tongans both in New Zealand and in Tonga have followed the precepts of *Fakalotofale‘ia* – and have thereby gained a much more enlightened perspective of the reciprocal effects of the interactions between disabled people and members of the *Kainga*.

It is equally of significance to point out that this study had also found that in a number of cases the practice of ‘*Fakalotofale‘ia*’ has been neglected due to some disabling factors and conditions of the new environment. This has had its obvious set-back effects.

For most of the disabled people and their *kainga* however, the practice of ‘*Fakalotofale‘ia*’ facilitates their needs and fills in certain very critical gaps experienced under current mainstream disability support services and delivery arrangements.

1.0 Introduction

Participation of Pacific Peoples - and especially Tongan disabled people in available disability support services and delivery in New Zealand has been found to be low¹. This is an issue of very grave concern and is at the centre of this study.

This thesis thus takes as its point of departure an in-depth and detailed examination of this problematic situation and as well as the many and varied reasons which have given rise thereto.

In the process the fundamental elements of the intricate multivariate relationships between the main parties in this equation viz. the government's health / disability services; the care provision and delivery systems; and the Pacific / Tongan disabled population - as well the problems that arise there from – are examined in detail.

At the same time and on the basis of findings from previous research – possible solutions to and means of alleviating (if not perhaps altogether eradicating) these difficulties are explored.

In concluding its discussions this thesis then follows through with proposals for possible alternative approaches and solutions for the problems raised and discussed.

Most significant amongst these proposals is the cultural practice of “*Fakalotofale'ia*²” – a concept of time-honoured utility within – and at the very root of the holistic universe of, Tongan culture, values and belief systems.

It is therefore the prime contention here that the cultural practice of “*Fakalotofale'ia*” affords us the best perspective from which to view the whole spectrum of disability-related support

¹ Pome'e – “*PIASS Report 2000*” ” and Tahaafe – “*Study of Carers for Tongan Disabled People, 2001.*”