

# FETU'UTU'UNA'I LE VĀ

## Navigating Relational Spaces

A contemporary Samoan perspective of Pastoral Counselling

**NUS Lecture Series**

Samoa

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(Founded 2017)

# CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH SAMOA

(Est. by London Missionary  
Society LMS 1830)



Malua  
Theological  
College, Samoa  
(Est.1844)



# Overview

1. Samoa: A snapshot
2. Pacific-specific Models of Health used by counsellors/ mental health professionals/ social workers
3. Counselling in the context of Samoa
  - who performs
  - my research into counselling practices of Samoans
  - *Va'aalo* Pastoral Counselling Model
  - Continuum of Traditional and Contemporary understandings of counselling/ pastoral counselling practices
4. Proposal: *Fetu'utu'una'i le vā* Navigating Relational Spaces
  - Counselling for Samoans is about *Vā* Relational Space
  - Soul Talk Samoa Incorporated



# Samoa: A snapshot

Population: 195,979 (2016 Census)

Independence (from NZ Administration) 01 January 1962

Predominantly a Christian nation (made up of):

Congregational (CCCS)	29.0 %
Roman Catholic	18.8 %
Mormon LDS	16.9 %
Methodists	12.4 %
AOG	6.8 %
SDA	4.4%
Others	11.7 %

Languages spoken

Samoaan, English

## **2. Pasefika (Pacific) health models have been developed since 1990s**

- Some are Pacific people-focused, models which are relevant and applicable to some if not most Pacific communities in New Zealand
- Others have ethnic-specific intent though may still have some Pacific relevance
- These have contributed to building a range of Pacific health models created by, and available to Pacific communities

# Collective Relationship

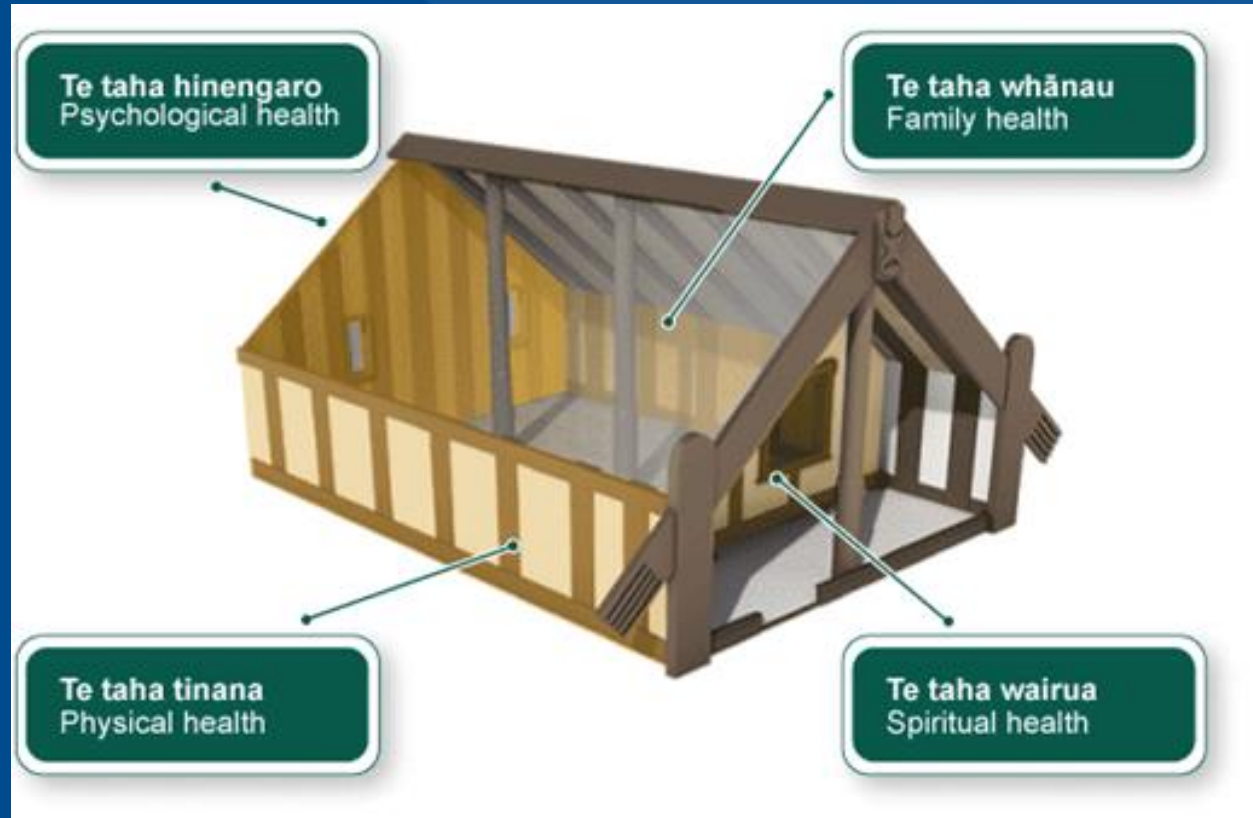
I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share my *tofi* (an inheritance) with my family, my village and my nation. I belong to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my belonging (Tui Atua, 2003, p. 51).

Tui Atua, T. T. T. E. (2003). In search of meaning, nuance and metaphor in social policy. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, (20), 49-63.

# Pasefika Health Models

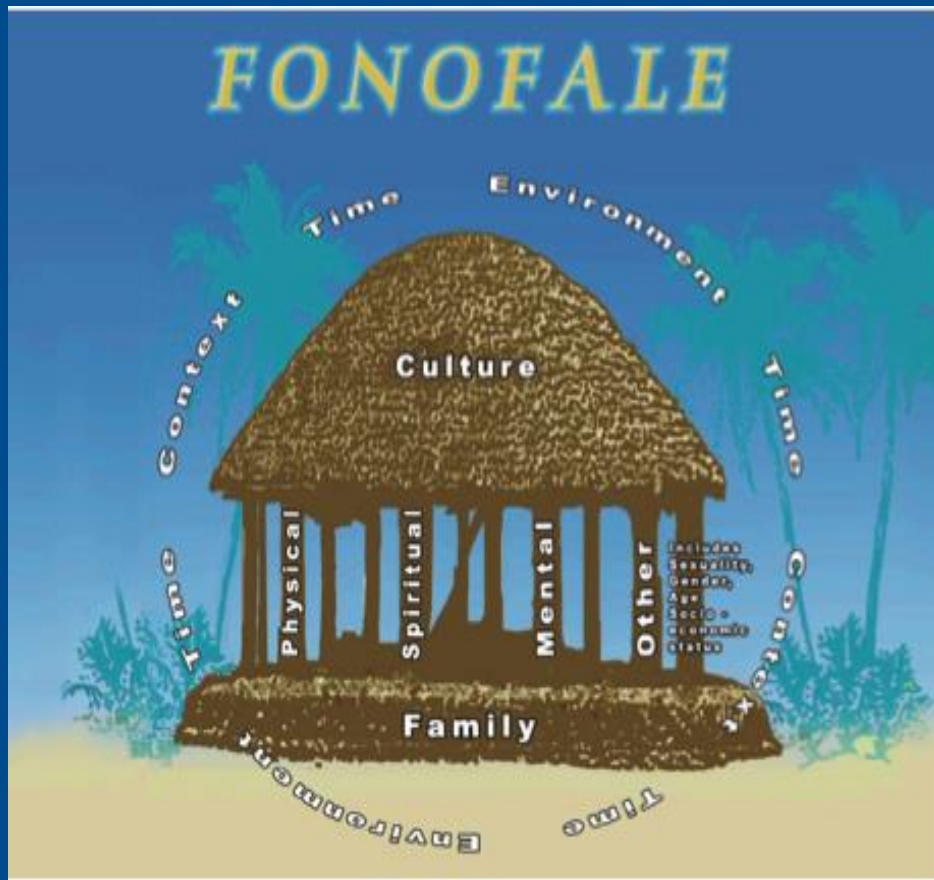
- *Te Vaka Atafaga* –A Tokelauan assessment model
- *Tivaevae* – A Cook Is model (Teremoana Maua-Hodges)
- *Tui Kakala* – Tongan (Konai Helu-Thaman)
- *Fa'afaletui* –Samoan model (Carmel Peteru & Kiwi Tamasese)
- *Fonua* model –Tongan (Sione Tui'tahi)

## The *Te Whare Tapa Whā* Māori model



Durie, M. (1998). *Whaiora: Māori Health Development* (2nd ed.). Auckland, New Zealand: Oxford University Press.





## *Fonofale* model of health

Pulotu-Endemann, F. K. (2009). *Fonofale model of health*. Paper presented at the Pacific Health promotion models: A partnership between the Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand and Pasifika@Massey, Wellington, New Zealand.

## *Uputaua* Therapeutic Approach UTA model of health



Seiuli, B. M. S. (2013). Counselling Psychology From a Samoan Perspective. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 42(3).

# Counselling context in Samoa

- NHS – National Health Services Mental Health unit
- Counselling services in various institutions
- Samoa Victim Support Group, Teen Challenge, Returnees Group, Samoa Lifeline
- Church ministers with minimal counselling training through MTC (for eg) as component of their ministry training **approximately 200 (plus a further 170 worldwide)**

# ...[cont]...Counselling context in Samoa

*Who often take on this role?*

- Elders, Ministers, *Matai* (chief)

*How well are these groups equipped to undertake this role?*

- Inherent, didactical, monological approach



# *Va'aalo* pastoral counselling model (VPC)

based on PhD research <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pala'amo, A. (2017). *Fetu'utu'una'i le vā Navigating relational space: An exploration of pastoral counselling practices for Samoans*. (Doctoral dissertation, Massey University, Albany, New Zealand). Retrieved from <https://mro.massey.ac.nz/handle/10179/11813>



# God, Pastors, Counselling



A Samoan proverb:  
**“Manoeuvring a fisherman’s rod”**  
*Fetu’utu’una’i muniao*



## WHAT DOES COUNSELLING MEAN (to Samoans)?

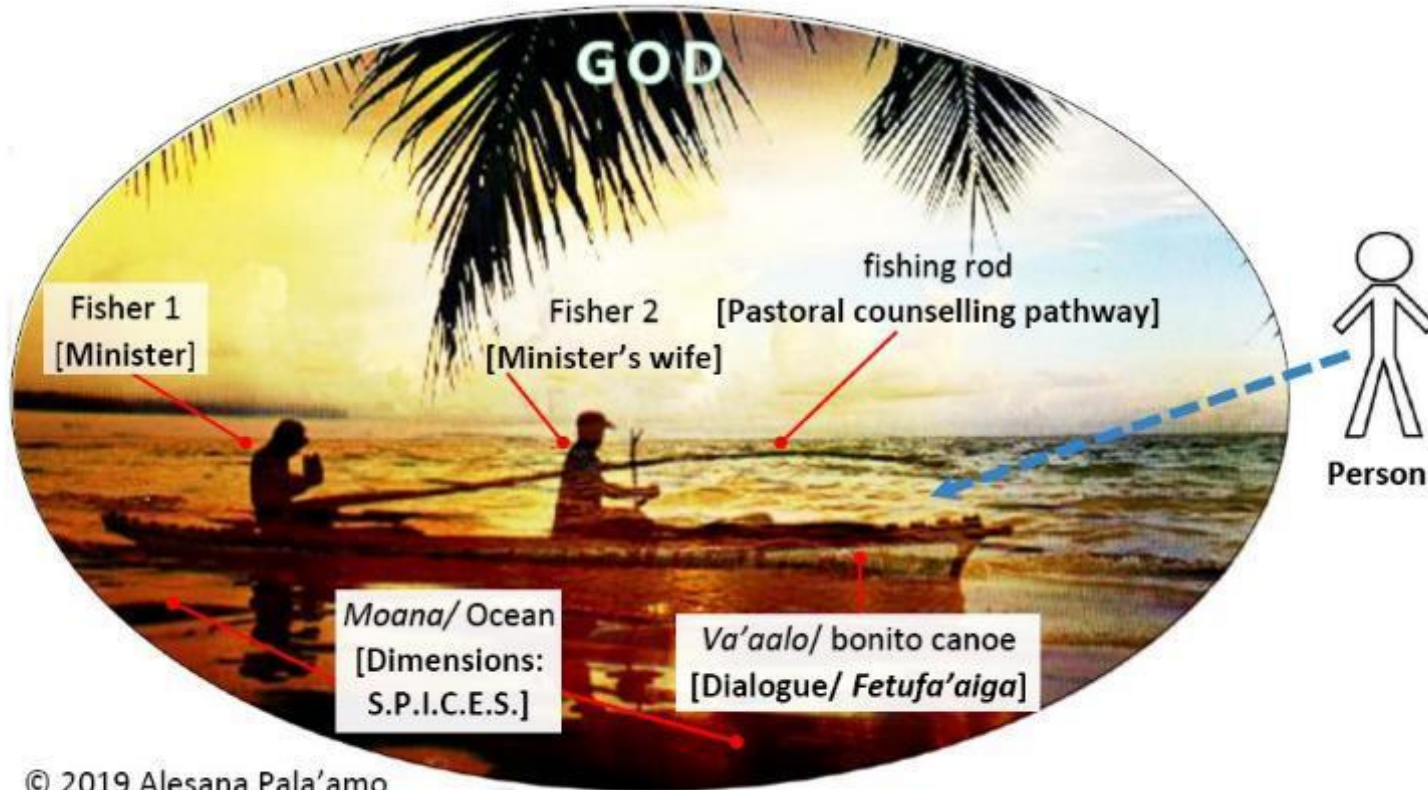
- Pastoral counselling = counselling by ministers
- Counselling to many Samoans is about giving advice
- A Changing Samoa self
- E sui faiga ae tumau fa'avae (Practices change yet foundations remain
  - lived experiences of fa'aSamoa has changed, but the foundations of fa'aSamoa remain.
  - alofa (love), fa'aaloalo (respect), tausí tuaoi (reciprocity)
- *Fetu'utu'una'i muniao*  
*Seugalupe – Pigeon hunting*  
  
*Va'aalo (fishing bonito)*

# Va...

- As a reference to the bonito canoe (*va'aalo*) used in Samoan traditional canoe fishing, VPC developed from my recent doctoral research. *Va'aalo* pastoral counselling proposes that although respecting *vā* (relational space) is necessary for the harmonious living of Samoans in most situations, for pastoral counselling practices, *vā* must be navigated and manoeuvred in order for this approach to become viable and useful.
- The *Va'aalo* pastoral counselling model is derived from understandings developed from my doctoral research (2017) titled '*Fetu'utu'una'i le vā—Navigating relational space: An exploration of traditional and contemporary pastoral counselling practices for Samoans*'.



# *Va'aalo* pastoral counselling model



## 3 Stages:

- (i) Engage
- (ii) Explore
- (iii) Empower

**STAGE 1:**

**ENGAGE**

## Continuum of Traditional and Contemporary understandings of counselling/ pastoral counselling practices

### Traditional

- God-directed
- God as top-down
- Minister
- Monologue

### Contemporary

- God-inspired
- God alongside
- Minister *and* self
- Dialogue

- What next? After coming into *Va'aalo*?
- **STAGE 2: Explore – S.P.I.C.E.S.**

## S.P.I.C.E.S. Assessment Tool.

This tool explores the dimensions of the person seeking help:

Spiritual  
Psychological  
Individual  
Communal  
Emotional  
Socio-Cultural



## **STAGE 3: EMPOWER**

**...step out of canoe  
and enjoy life!**



# *Fetu'utu'una'i le vā* **Navigating Relational Spaces**

- 1.** Counselling from a Samoan perspective **MUST consider VĀ** or simply, the **Relational Space** between counsellor and client
- 2.** The **counsellor and client** must both navigate this *vā*
- 3.** Only then can **Stage 1 of *Va'aalo* model** begin to take shape

NEW



AN AGENCY PROVIDING

**PASTORAL COUNSELLING &**

SOCIAL SERVICES

*tatou talanoa...let's talk*



1. The availability to use Culturally-appropriate models of counselling (if required)
2. Samoan/ Pacific counsellors
3. Incorporate *Fetu'utu'una'i le vā*  
Navigating Relational Space in our work





F A A F E T A I  
F A A M A N U I A  
L E A T U A  
G O D B L E S S