

***Fetu'utu'una'i le vā***  
**Navigating relational space:**

**An exploration of traditional and contemporary pastoral  
counselling practices for Samoans**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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## Abstract

Pastoral counselling is one of the important roles of ministers in Samoa. An emerging ethos of individualism is challenging traditional notions of collectivism in *fa'aSamoa* (culture and traditions of Samoa). This evolution has been identified and described as the 'changing Samoan self'. Traditional approaches of counselling employed by ministers in the past must adjust to align with the changes faced by church members today. This thesis presents the voices of 34 Samoan participants living in Samoa that include ministers, minister's wives, *matai* (title-holders), New-Zealand born Samoans, church members, and service users of a domestic violence agency. Participants shared their expectations of being counselled as well as counselling others, together with reflections concerning effective and ineffective counselling practices. A Samoan research methodological framework called *Tafatolu* (three-sides) has been conceptualised and used herein as the methodology for this project. *Tafatolu* methodological framework involves the synthesis of three key parts that this project considers as valuable to any research—a 'contemporary academic' approach to research, a 'cultural' approach, and the 'self' that represents the researcher's perspectives and positioning within the project. Collectively, these three parts have assisted this project in the collection and analysis of data that have informed this study. The findings from this research have highlighted the emergence of a changing Samoan self and counselling practices that remain centred upon God. *Fetu'utu'una'i le vā*, (Navigating relational space) emerged as an applicable approach to pastoral counselling for Samoans today. The enforcement of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* has evolved alongside a changing Samoan self, from the use of physical force, to verbal force, excommunication and punishment, to now include conversations through dialogue. The findings from this

research have forged a theoretical framework of pastoral counselling for Samoans, presented as a continuum of traditional and contemporary understandings. Recommendations from this research propose pastoral counselling practices that cater for both traditionalists and contemporary Samoans.

## **Dedications**

Our lives as servants of God are dedicated to our Lord.

This work is in memory of our loved ones whom our Lord has called:

Papatiso Fa'aolaina Pala'amo aged 2 months (1974): my younger brother

Latai Pala'amo 47 years (1990): my mother

Norman Otele Pala'amo 26 years (2008): my youngest brother

Auola Fiu Tialino Samuela Gibbons 75 years (2008): my father-in-law

Rowena Ana Tua Pala'amo 29 years (2009): my younger sister

Faiupu Maggie Samuela Gibbons 78 years (2012): my mother-in-law

Your love, teachings, and visions preserve with us and have helped shape this project in many ways.

This work is dedicated to my father Fosi who risked his own life to save mine, from a drowning incident when I was 5 years old.

This work is dedicated to my best friend and soul mate, my wife Lemau, and to our sons Norman, Alex, and Jayden: the most supportive, patient, and loving family that any father could hope for.

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Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness. (Psalm 115:1)

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Aligning with Samoan tradition as done so here, we thank others first before our own. For all our Uncles and Aunties and cousins in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane, Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, Dubai, France, and Samoa, we thank you all so much for your ongoing prayers and support, food and monetary donations, particularly when we crossed paths while on this journey. To know that we have a loving and supportive family behind us while on this journey is a great blessing. A special thank you to our Terry St family—Marcus and Kura, AJ, Jason, and Mo, Phil, Afi, and all your families, for hosting us at the start and towards the end of this journey. Thank you also to Va’aelua and Emma, Fa’amanū, Taloolevavau and Fa’afetai and family, for also welcoming us into your home at the start and towards the end of this project. We especially thank you Mum and Nana Falepau, my sister-in-law Maggie and Jackson and

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*Viia le Atua! Praise God!*

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## Glossary

<i>aiga</i>	family
<i>alofa</i>	love
<i>amana'ia</i>	to be acknowledged
<i>e sui faiga ae tumau fa'avae</i>	practices change yet foundations remain
<i>EFKS</i>	Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa
<i>EFKS</i>	CCCS: Congregational Christian Church Samoa
<i>fa'aaloalo</i>	respect
<i>fa'aSamoa</i>	culture and traditions of Samoa; Samoan way of life
<i>faifeau/ fa'afeagaiga/ —fa'afeagaiga taulagi</i>	minister
<i>fale tele</i>	family meeting house, Samoan open house
<i>faletua</i>	minister's wife
<i>faufautua</i>	advice-giving
<i>fetu'utu'una'i le vā</i>	navigating relational space
<i>fetu'utu'una'i muniao</i>	manoeuvring a fisher's rod
<i>fetufaā'iga</i>	sharing perspectives; pastoral counselling
<i>fono</i>	meeting
<i>Fono tele</i>	Annual General Assembly
<i>'i'oimata</i>	apple of the eye; eyeball
<i>ie lavalava</i>	sarong-like wraparound
<i>lē amana'ia</i>	not to be acknowledged
<i>lotu afiafi</i>	evening devotion
<i>matai</i>	title-holder
<i>matai alii</i>	chiefly title-holder
<i>moana</i>	ocean
<i>palagi</i>	Westerner
<i>talanoa</i>	talk; discuss
<i>tama'ita'i</i>	woman; eldest female sibling
<i>tapu</i>	sacred
<i>tele</i>	many

<i>telē</i>	major
<i>tōfā fetu’utu’una’i</i>	reflective wisdom
<i>tōfā mamao</i>	critical wisdom
<i>tulāfale</i>	oratory title-holder
<i>vā</i>	relational space between people
<i>vā fealoaloa’i</i>	relationships
<i>va’aalo</i>	bonito canoe

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## Prologue

(Three Minute thesis speech titled “God, Pastors, Counselling” by the author delivered at the ‘Three Minute thesis speech competition 2014’)<sup>1</sup>

*There was a time in Samoa when the church minister, or pastor, was the first person you contacted when you had problems. Issues with one’s spouse or partner, domestic violence, drugs and alcohol issues; the minister often was your ‘go-to’ person for these issues because people often believed that what the minister said was the God-given truth.*

*But that was then; for many Samoans today, what the minister says to go and do is not enough for the people to obey. Why? Because the Samoan person is changing rapidly in many ways.*

*Some of us here may understand this. You build up enough courage to talk to someone concerning your problems, but then afterwards, you are left feeling more confused. My PhD research looks at what the Samoan person has changed from, where he or she is changing to, and how will knowing these changes shape a revised way of counselling done by ministers today.*

*Finding a Samoan word for counselling was a challenge, because there is no such word in our language. There are words that suggest advising, but counselling is much more than that.*

*A Samoan proverb: ‘manoeuvring a fisher’s rod’, comes close to what counselling should be today. It refers to the traditional Samoan canoe fishing for the bonito fish. The fisher in the middle steers the canoe to where the fish are; the fisher at the rear manoeuvres the rod. When a fish takes the hook, the fisher yanks it out of the sea yelling, ‘here comes the fish’ and the middle fisher must steady the canoe so that the fish lands into the canoe, in front of him. Success. Counselling today by ministers should be like this. The minister manoeuvres during the*

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<sup>1</sup> This national and international speech competition required speakers to explain their doctoral research within three minutes.



*counselling encounter, while the minister's wife, steadies and directs where the process goes. Sometimes this is the case, but mostly, the minister acts alone in a two-person canoe.*

*For my research I interviewed church ministers, church members who went to their minister for counselling, and those who chose not to but sought counselling through agencies in Samoa. I discovered that those who went to agencies, rather than their minister for counselling, wanted justice. Going to the agency led to the bad person being locked away. For those who sought counselling with their minister, they saw him as being God's representative on earth. Going to the minister, for them, was like taking their problems to God. It gave them spiritual healing.*

*So, wouldn't it be great if I could devise a counselling tool for ministers that is social, brings justice, as well as being of God, and gives spiritual healing? A tool that draws people to come and talk to their pastor.*

*This tool may be Samoan in design, but it is also useful for many others who have navigated their way through different oceans, and made places like Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, their homes.*

Winning speech of the Massey University Three Minute thesis competition, 2014  
Represented Massey University at the Trans-Tasman Three Minute thesis finals, 2014<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Trans-Tasman Three Minute Thesis Finals in 2014 was held at the University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia.

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 An Introduction

This thesis explores traditional and contemporary pastoral counselling practices in Samoa. In determining a definition of pastoral counselling to be used in this study, I looked at the definitions of two prominent pastoral counsellors. Hiltner (1949), writing around the time of the birth of the pastoral counselling movement stated:

Broadly speaking, the special aim of pastoral counselling may be stated as the attempt by a pastor to help people help themselves through the process of gaining understanding of their inner conflicts. (p. 19)

The American pastoral counsellor Clinebell (2011) offers a more elaborated definition of pastoral counselling:

Pastoral counselling, [...] is a focused form of pastoral care geared toward enabling individuals, couples, families to cope more constructively with crises, losses, difficult decisions, and other anxiety-laden experiences. [...] It aims at enabling troubled people to make constructive choices and changes as well as to learn new skills that will improve the quality of their lifestyles, strengthen their relationships, and help them handle stressful situations more effectively. (pp. 9-10)

Both of these views are at odds with understandings of pastoral counselling in a Samoan context. In this study I will use the term 'pastoral counselling' to mean any discussions between ministers and parishioners to *talanoa* (talk) about personal crises, losses, and problematic situations.

The concept of assisting others in dealing with their problematic situations through *talanoa* is not new to many Samoans, and when this practice is performed by ministers, such practice aligns with pastoral counselling as I will use it here. The way I will use this term is consistent with the current situation of pastoral counselling in the Samoan context. At the conclusion of this project I will revisit this understanding of pastoral counselling from a Samoan perspective in light of findings from this study.

The need for this study has come about because of what I shall identify and call a 'changing Samoan self', which has resulted in direct and indirect challenges to the existing practice of pastoral counselling in Samoa. Undergoing change is not a new concept to Samoans; contemporary Samoan society has incorporated and resisted changes that include the increasing movement of people to and from Samoa, and the impact of new ideas, ideologies, and technologies (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2009). This study explores the concept of a changing Samoan self and its impact upon the pastoral counselling practices in Samoa today.

This research explores an important role of ministers in Samoa today by investigating their traditional and contemporary pastoral counselling practices. Counselling in the village setting has been a traditional practice of Samoans involving elders who are often also *matai* (title holders); the elders of the family become 'community counsellors' to the people whom they govern (Schuster, 2001; Seiuli, 2010). In comparison to counselling in a Western secular context, where intervention plans are developed by both client and a professionally trained counsellor in working towards positive outcomes, traditional counselling in the Samoan context is a more didactic and directive

encounter from these community counsellors. Over time these roles as community counsellors have been handed over to become one of the important roles of the parish minister today, partly as an influence of the arrival into Samoa in 1830 of the first missionaries sent by the London Missionary Society (Tuisuga-le-taua, 2011). The parish minister is today often perceived by Samoans as God's representative on earth, so any word emanating from the parish minister is considered as the infallible word from God (Liuaana, 2004). In the context of counselling members of one's parish, the direction and advice given by the minister will thus be considered as the most moral intervention, since it was voiced to them through God's servant.

A necessary component in the introduction to this thesis is to position myself within the context of this study. The first step towards locating myself involves acknowledging a Samoan proverb that allows me as a Samoan minister and as a researcher, to explore a current role shared with my colleagues. *E lē a'oa'ia e Laupuā Tamafaigā* is a Samoan proverb that I have translated as: a servant does not instruct nor counsel the king. *Laupuā* represents a servant of a renowned ancient king of Samoa named *Tamafaigā*. This proverb is often heard when advice, guidance, and counsel is offered by someone, especially when the one proposing these alternatives holds a lower status in the community than the intended listeners. It becomes a formal plea for pardon on behalf of the speaker. For the situation when the servant teaches his or her king, this proverb is often used with humility to earn the trust and approval of one's listeners. It is therefore appropriate and necessary in the Samoan tradition that I begin by seeking a way into being heard as a Samoan minister and researcher, since pastoral counselling is

an uncharted ocean of understanding for the Pacific region and specifically to this project, for Samoa. *E lē a'oa'ia e Laupuā Tamafaigā.*

My years as a lecturer at Malua Theological College (MTC) in Samoa training students and their wives for the ministry, have led to an understanding that preparing ministers and their wives to become pastoral counsellors requires careful attention. Also through my years as a parishioner then as an ordained minister of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa<sup>3</sup> (CCCS, hereafter “the church”), I have observed the models of pastoral counselling being used by my colleagues and seniors. In addition, I have been a recipient of the pastoral counselling services provided by the church. Several of the current models of pastoral counselling used by Samoan ministers (including myself) are tailored for *palagi* (Westerner) audiences, with the task of Samoan ministers to contextualise such models for Samoans. After identifying and examining the limitation of existing models for the Pacific region, and Samoans in particular, I conceived the idea of seeking to understand traditional and contemporary pastoral counselling practices of ministers and their wives, and this project was born.

This thesis explores the inter-relationship between pastoral counselling and the changing Samoan self, as unquestioning adherence to traditional practices by the church may have reduced the relevance of these practices for contemporary Samoans. Understanding traditional and contemporary pastoral counselling practices for Samoans has the potential to assist the church to remain relevant for its members.

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<sup>3</sup> This is translated from its Samoan name *Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS)*. The CCCS was formerly the LMS (London Missionary Society) church in Samoa before the CCCS Independence from LMS in 1962.

It is important firstly to set the context of this study: I will begin with the Protestant missionaries who became the first ministers in Samoa.

## **1.2 Samoa upon the arrival of the London Missionary Society**

Ever since the first Protestant LMS (London Missionary Society) missionaries introduced the Gospel in 1830 into Samoa (Liuaana, 2004), religion has been intertwined with Samoan culture. When the first Protestant missionaries arrived into Samoa they brought with them a sacred text, the Bible, which was then unknown to the Samoans. The Bible was in a foreign language and referred to a monotheistic people who worshiped a single and Supreme God.

Samoans at the time were already involved in their own traditional worship to a multiplicity of gods. Each family had its traditional ancestral god, in addition to their village and district gods (Meleisea & Schoeffel-Meleisea, 1987). Traditional worship entailed giving homage in the form of ancient chants, food offerings, the igniting of fire, and prayer. Prayer commonly involved thanksgiving and at times cursing; thanksgiving to the gods for fruitful harvest on land and out at sea, and sometimes cursing one's neighbours including their family gods. Since Samoa was already accustomed to its own traditional worship, the task for the missionaries meant to redirect the Samoan worship away from their traditional gods, towards the Supreme God of the Christians.

The early Protestant missionaries were assisted in their cause by the role that *fa'aSamoa* (culture and traditions of Samoan) played in the process (Tofaeono, 2000). This was the context of Samoa that the first missionaries encountered, and it was not long before the

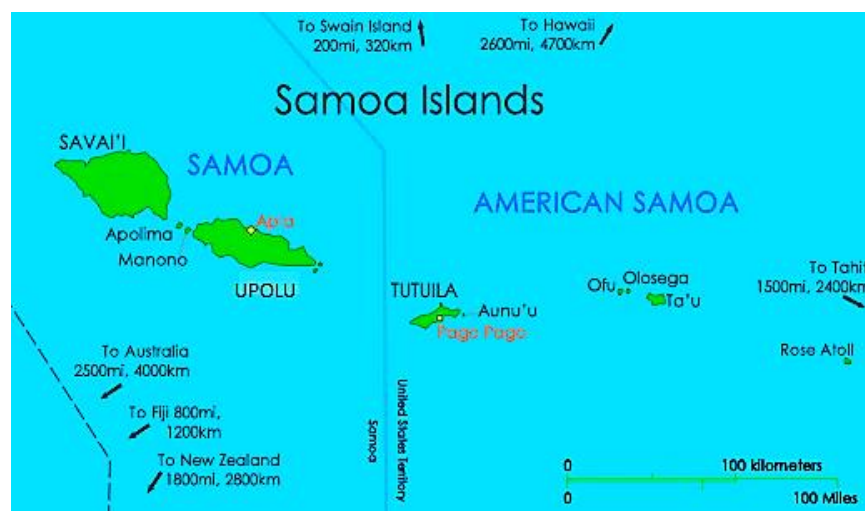
entire archipelago of Samoa accepted Christian teachings and doctrines. The *matai* system as a fundamental part of *fa'aSamoa* meant that if the *matai* converted to Christianity, then his entire family would follow suit, and abandon these multiple gods. Christianity today has become central to the Samoan way of life and its culture, demonstrated in the motto of Samoa: *Fa'avae i le Atua Samoa* (Samoa is founded on God) (Va'ai, 2012). From the time of the first LMS church in Samoa to the establishment of an independent Samoan church from the LMS, the CCCS has been the largest religious denomination in Samoa. In 2012 it had 51,131 members that constitutes 31.8% of the Samoan population above the age of five (Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

### **1.3 A changing Samoan self in the context of this study**

Samoa has experienced several significant changes as will be discussed throughout this thesis. One of the visible indicators of the concept of a changing Samoan self is the move towards living more private lives. The traditional *fale* (house), with its open structure, reflects the historical openness and communality of Samoan life. However, there is a strong move towards buildings that accord with Westernised designs that emphasise separateness and privacy. Households are becoming more private than before. Disputes and issues that were once visible to neighbouring families through the openness of the traditional *fale* now can be hidden from the public eye behind closed walls, doors, and windows. In addition to privacy, there is a growing need for protection and shelter from natural disasters. In a noticeable change at the headquarters of the church at Malua, four buildings were opened for use at the 2013 annual general conference. All four housing structures were designed with closed walls, doors, and windows, subdivided

into individual rooms within its walls (Malua Theological College, 2013). This can be seen as another form of contemporary change towards living private lives in Samoa today.

The openness of the historical designs of Samoan *fale* with few boundaries aligns with the openness of the ocean that surrounds many Pacific Islands, including Samoa. The historical openness of islands in Oceania comprised of a 'sea of islands'; i.e. islands connected by, rather than divided by sea (Hau'ofa, 1994). Initial interactions with the Europeans during the nineteenth-century imperialism led to the establishment of boundaries that identified separate Pacific Islands nations (Hau'ofa, 1994). This new idea of boundaries and separation began to devolve to island living itself, and at the end of the last century Hau'ofa identified a shift from traditional openness to more enclosed living. Figure 1 shows a map of the islands of Samoa and the islands of American Samoa, illustrating how boundaries have been framed for these islands:



**Figure 1. Map of Samoa Islands**

(Source: <http://www.tourism-samoa.com/samoa-map.html>)



The postcolonial shift in Oceania from being a collective of islands perceived as a 'sea of islands' to becoming disconnected islands divided by sea, parallels the process of a changing island lifestyle, and ultimately the very Samoan self. This thesis considers how Samoans have shifted from being largely identified as a collective people, and how the rise of individualism, where the rights and values of individualistic principles are affirmed, has seen separateness emerge within the communal settings of the family, village, and parishes.

#### **1.4 Pastoral counselling in the context of this study**

A further change in Samoa has been the advent of secular counselling. In 2005, a non-government organisation known as the Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) began operating from its office in Apia to provide care for victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse. The introduction of agencies such as SVSG is an example of the changing Samoan self, where women are exercising choice now that there are options available. Since that time this organisation has become increasingly proactive in the communities, and mostly female victims of violence have come forth to use the services predominantly administered by female staff (Roguski & Kingi, 2011). Women turning to a secular service for counselling are one of a growing number of examples that highlight the need for the church to be responsive to contemporary needs, as part of sustaining relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This thesis will consider how the contemporary Samoan context influenced the emergence of SVSG, and how the minister and his wife collectively can be used as pastoral counsellors to respond to the changing Samoan context.

In September 2009, several regions of Samoa were devastated by a tsunami considered one of the worst natural disasters that have hit Samoa in recent times (Murphy, 2013). The process of recovery following this tragic event highlighted the need of counselling for those affected by the tsunami, and many were looking at the ministers to provide this much needed counselling. It was a time of spiritual uncertainty from the sudden loss of hundreds of unsuspecting human lives, and the livelihoods of thousands of Samoan families. However there appeared to be a hesitation on behalf of ministers to respond to this need; the destruction and mass death did not seem to fit into existing theological models. Reverend Suafa'i Patu<sup>4</sup>, an elder minister in one of the worst affected villages expressed that the ministers in general were slow to respond to the need of the people for counselling (personal communication, September 30, 2009). Further, Reverend Patu expressed that many of the people affected in his village were yearning for spiritual healing, alongside the recovery of their basic human needs. In contrast to the delay of ministers to respond to the needs of the people, the students and staff of MTC, less constrained by tradition of what should be, responded to the reality of the destruction, collected food, bottled water, cooking equipment, bedding, linen, clothing, together with monetary donations, and delivered these items to the worst affected areas the day after the tsunami struck.

At several recent church conferences, a key theme became apparent. Ministers concurred with the view of Reverend Patu that pastoral counselling is an area of the ministry of the church that needs to be developed (Pala'amo, 2010, 2012). Ministers and

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<sup>4</sup> Reverend Suafa'i Patu FT passed away during the writing stage of this project (2015).

their wives are pastoral counsellors by default. They have been given this responsibility, and prior to the inclusion of pastoral counselling in the training of ministers and their wives, the methods of performing this default role were self-taught and inspired both by tradition and by depending on God for strength and the tools to carry it through. There is a growing realisation amongst the ministry however that traditional, implicit knowledge alone is not adequate preparation for meeting contemporary congregational needs.

Many church-goers have found enough courage to come forth and use the services of agencies such as SVSG. At a ministers' renewal conference held in 2010, the general consensus amongst ministers was that the opening of SVSG has encouraged church-goers to surface many of the domestic violence issues affecting their lives. The challenge is that these parishioners gave preference to the counselling service by SVSG, a secular non-profit agency, over the counselling offered by their own parish ministers (Pala'amo, 2010). It is both timely and past time for church leaders to become responsive to the challenges facing their members to ensure that parishioners have the choice of addressing trauma-related issues within their faith community rather than having to seek support outside of this familiar network of Christian support.

In 2011, the church in Samoa opened its inaugural counselling centre in Apia in response to the recent tsunami as well as considerations from church conferences of recent times. At that time Reverend Dr. Geoff Prentice, an Australian pastoral counsellor, was invited to help establish and implement this new service to be operated by ministers of the church. The intention was to have a certified practitioner in the field of pastoral

counselling spend six months in Samoa establishing this new service and pending its success, it would then be operated by ministers of the church (Salevao, 2012). Prentice discovered many challenges in the process of establishing this service, in particular that a western approach to pastoral counselling was not appropriate for Samoans (personal communication, August 8, 2011). Further, Prentice anticipated that a Samoan-focused approach in pastoral counselling delivered by Samoan practitioners would be more acceptable by Samoan clientele.

The opening of its counselling office has also been a response by the church to the societal changes facing its church members (Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa, 2011b). These societal changes are partly a result of globalisation, technological advancement, the global media, and the emigration and return of Samoans to and from countries abroad (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2009; Spoonley, 2001) and have impacted and contributed to the concept of a changing Samoan self. These changes have profound effects upon the lives of Samoans who are also changing alongside the changing face of Samoa (Alefaio-Tugia, 2011). The traditional way the Samoans counselled their people since the arrival of the first missionaries into Samoa has remained the same however, appealing mainly to the older population. These counselling practices included a didactic approach by family leaders instructing members of their family. Therefore, for many of the young and middle-aged Samoans, a revised method of counselling is required, to align with a changing Samoan self.

In 2012 and working alongside the opening of the first counselling office of the church, MTC introduced into its curriculum a course that teaches pastoral care and counselling

(Malua Theological College, 2012). Being assigned with the task of teaching this new course at MTC, I discovered a paucity of research on pastoral counselling that included Pacific people in general and about Samoans in particular. The literature and models of pastoral counselling available are primarily from Western/European perspectives that are focused and reflective upon Western/European groups of people. The task in teaching this new curriculum meant translating the available models of pastoral counselling into forms that were applicable to Samoans. The cluster of events identified above has highlighted a gap in ministry of which this thesis aims to propose a theoretical framework of pastoral counselling to narrow this gap.

This thesis also considers the positioning of women in pastoral counselling practices. Women play an important role in this regard, to the extent that minister's wives are afforded their own roles, tasks, and designation titled as *faletua* (hereafter a reference to minister's wife and to be discussed further in Chapter Two). The inclusion of *faletua* into being considered as pastoral counsellors together with their husbands has developed from understanding the concept of a changing Samoan self.

Any discussions about the context of pastoral counselling for Samoans would be incomplete unless a Samoan word is proposed to explain this practice. Presently there is no Samoan word or phrase specifically for pastoral counselling. *Faufautua*—translated as 'advice-giving'—is a Samoan word that often is used to mean counselling, and is certainly consistent with the traditional directive approach I identified above. *Tōfā saili* (search for wisdom) is a concept that involves the search for wisdom towards consensus for any given situation, amongst all those involved (Tui Atua, 2007). *Tōfā mamaso* (critical

wisdom) as the wisdom found within *aiga* and their social and religious communities (Peteru, 2012) is the type of wisdom that is sought through counselling. *Tōfā fetu'utu'una'i* (reflective wisdom) is another Samoan phrase that has been aligned to the concept of helping people through problems faced (Maulolo, 2015). Even though these Samoan terms and phrases may refer to elements of what counselling involves, these Samoan terms and phrases suggest that wisdom is transferred from one person to another; someone knows what is best for another person.

In this thesis I propose *fetufaā'iga* as an applicable Samoan word that consolidates the understanding of pastoral counselling given herein. *Fetufaā'iga* is translated as the 'act of sharing'. The root word of *fetufaā'iga* is '*tufa*' meaning 'to share', and when a prefix and suffix are added it transforms *tufa* into its noun form. Specifically, for this project, *fetufaā'iga* refers to pastoral counselling as a process of sharing perspectives through conversations from minister and his *faletua* with people who seek their help.

*Fetufaā'iga* is the sharing of ideas, experiences, and feelings, through discussions between all those involved in the pastoral counselling encounter. The perspectives shared by the minister and his *faletua* include teachings that are Biblical and theologically-based. Those seeking help also are required to share their perspectives during *fetufaā'iga*. The amount and nature of what is shared by each of the participants involved in the pastoral counselling encounter, becomes a personal and individual choice.

### **1.5 Research problem and the development of the research question**

From consultations with my supervisors over the beginning stages of this project, a primary task became identifying the research problem. Consultations also involved discussions with key stakeholders of the church and Samoan communities which have produced understandings about the current landscape of pastoral counselling for Samoans as presented throughout this thesis. A three-fold outcome from the consultation process has resulted: identifying the research problem, identifying the aims of this research, and the development of the research question at the core of this entire project.

The research problem is that from the present landscape of pastoral counselling for Samoans, pastoral counselling practices undertaken by ministers need to be developed further in order to remain relevant to parishioners whose lives are changing. A significant contributor to this need is the concept of a changing Samoan self.

There are three aims of this research: firstly, to explore traditional understandings and practices of pastoral counselling in which Samoans are involved; secondly, to explore contemporary understandings and practices of pastoral counselling for Samoans; thirdly, to explore the concept identified in this project as a changing Samoan self.

The key research question that has developed for this study is: *How does understanding a changing Samoan self inform the conceptualisation and delivery of pastoral counselling in Samoa?* In addition to this primary question, the following additional questions shape the research: What is a Samoan self changing from? What is the Samoan self changing

to? How will answers to these questions help to inform pastoral counselling that is relevant and meaningful for Samoans today?

## **1.6 Structure of the thesis**

Chapter One has begun as an introduction to this thesis. It has outlined the background to this research, and the rationale and importance of this study. Further, the research problem and aims of this study have been presented. The research question at the core of this project has also been stated.

Chapter Two reviews the literature and resources relevant to this project. The review is carried out in two parts. Part One explores general pastoral counselling practices, as well as counselling practices in working with Pacific peoples and with Samoans. Part Two explores significant changes that have affected the Samoan person, or self.

Chapter Three explains the theoretical methodology and practical methods used in this study in order to answer the research question at the core of this project. A proposed Samoan methodological framework called *Tafatolu* is used as the methodology to this study.

Chapters Four through Six are the findings chapters. Findings are grouped together and presented as the underlying themes which emerged from the data. Chapter Four investigates the first theme, a God-centred approach to counselling Samoans. Chapter Five analyses the second theme, the emergence of a changing Samoan self. Chapter Six explores the final theme *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* (navigating relational space) in counselling



Samoans. There are three words that sum up and correspond to each respective findings chapter: God (Chapter Four), Change (Chapter Five), and Space (Chapter Six).

Chapter Seven is the discussion chapter. This is presented using the metaphor of a journey. This chapter is a synthesis of the three underlying themes including their corresponding key findings, with literature reviewed and the data collected. Discussions presented in this chapter pave the way for the final and closing chapter.

Chapter Eight is the conclusion and leads into the proposals from this project. This includes a theoretical framework to understand pastoral counselling for Samoans, that consists of two pathways of pastoral counselling applicable for Samoans today and a dynamic concept to manoeuvre between the two.

This study has been a significant journey for me, and like all such journeys must be carried out in a methodical and planned way. The next chapter sets out the landscape for this journey by considering the major theorists on pastoral counselling such as Lynch, Whitehead and Whitehead, and Louw to name a few. The landscape that identifies the concept of a changing Samoan self will also be mapped out.

## **Chapter Two**

### **A critical summary and analysis of relevant literature and knowledge sources**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The review of relevant literature about this project is presented in two parts. The first part investigates understandings of 'self' that include individualistic and collective perspectives. From these considerations, focus upon the concept of a changing Samoan self will be also included. The second part of this review involves discovering how the pastoral counselling movement developed from its inception in the United States, and identifying how counselling Samoans is undertaken at present. From this exploration of the connections and dissimilarities, I have discovered that there is a limitation of any understandings about pastoral counselling in the Samoan context. At the conclusion of this chapter, I will show how the Samoan self is changing, inevitably and rapidly, yet there appears hesitation and delay by the church to align its pastoral counselling practices with such changes. Such lack of movement of the church to align its pastoral counselling practices with changes impacting parishioners is largely the result of not knowing how best to manoeuvre within the context of the changing Samoan self. This review lays the theoretical foundation for such knowledge, aligning pastoral counselling practices with a Samoan self that is undergoing significant changes.

#### **Part One**

#### **2.2 An emerging changing Samoan self**

In order to understand the concept of a changing Samoan self, this section will begin by identifying from where the Samoan self is changing. Macpherson's research (1999)

paves a way forward for this project by demonstrating that the kinship relations of Samoans have been changing since early European contact, through to the present time. In addition to exploring changes in the family, key elements of *fa'aSamoa* will also be reviewed to begin to understand the place the Samoan self is moving away from. *Fa'aSamoa* is considered as the Samoan way of life, including its cultures and traditions. A more comprehensive conceptualisation that I will use is offered by Mulitalo-Lautā (2000) who identifies five key components that define *fa'aSamoa*: (i) the Samoan heart (the emotional and spiritual being); (ii) the Samoan way; (iii) protocols and values; (iv) social structures and institutions; and (v) ceremonies and rituals. I consider this definition as inclusive of the significant dimensions of the Samoan person, and relevant to this study that investigates the concept of a changing Samoan self. This conceptualisation provides the current context of the Samoan person, and more importantly, how a changing Samoan self is emerging from within their individual and collective settings.

### **2.2.1 Social structures - family**

The Samoan person, whether in Samoa or abroad, has always been identified in terms of his or her family (Fa'alau, 2011). Family is a place where many instrumental values such as *fa'aaloalo* (respect) and relationship of the Samoan self to others are established and reinforced (Vaai, 2006). This is the institution where we must begin.

Over time and through the impact of various forces that shall be discussed herein, the shape and appearance of the Samoan family has changed (Macpherson, 1999). In his research, Macpherson discovered that the nature of Samoan kinship has changed since

before European contact to now. Before such time, kinship for Samoans was the central component of their social, political, economic and religious spheres. The kinship of the Samoans also became the platform for the continuation and preservation of the chiefly system or the *matai* system in Samoa. *Matai* became a system of how land and resources were distributed and allocated within the family setting of the Samoans. Macpherson (1999) has identified four key reasons behind the changes in the Samoan kinship: (i) the move towards independence in 1962 meant power and authority for Samoa would be decided from selected *matai* around the country, and families represented by *matai* expressed their interest in these contestable positions; (ii) the emergence of a wage economy in Samoa; (iii) new forms of land tenure; and (iv) emigration of Samoans since the 1950's.

The present study will identify how the changes in the Samoan kinship relations have contributed to the emergence of a changing Samoan self. Knowing the effects of these kinship changes upon the Samoan self will help determine the shape and contours of pastoral counselling that need to be developed for Samoans today.

### **2.2.2 The Samoan way – diaspora and return**

What once was clearly identified as the Samoan way, or simply *fa'aSamoa*, is now not as clearly identifiable. There appears to be an emerging synthesis of the Samoan way with a mixture of Western ways; a hybrid Samoan way due to emigration, the diaspora and the return of Samoans to the islands (Leota, 2013). This synthesis has presented and continues to present challenges between the generations of Samoans, particularly in the

shift in the values held by the contemporary younger Samoans compared to the traditional older Samoans.

Several authors have written about the identity challenges and struggles of New Zealand-born Samoans, with one of the reasons being limited understandings of *fa'aSamoa* (Anae, 1998; Mailei, 2003; Tiatia, 1998). Fuatagaumu (2003) describes the challenge of being a Samoan born to migrant parents in New Zealand, as being born on the 'bridge' in a 'two-dimensional world'. The 'two-dimensional world' Fuatagaumu identifies are the authentic Samoan realm that includes its culture, language fluency, tradition, and understanding of island living, merged with the context of contemporary New Zealand. To ease this tension, Fuatagaumu views the church as a 'bridge' for New Zealand-born Samoans to link these two worlds.

An interesting discovery about Samoans who have immigrated and settled into New Zealand is the impact that migration has had upon their New Zealand-born offspring (Cahill, 2006). There is the expectation by Samoan parents who have migrated to New Zealand, that *fa'aSamoa* must remain constant regardless of geographical location. The settings and the external environments may have changed, but the culture and language that identifies Samoans must not be lost. The present study explores the extent to which this mind-set held by Samoans has influenced the church.

### ***2.2.3 The 'self' as referential and as indexical***

In trying to understand various aspects of the 'self' for any given context, the social relationships that the individual is involved in need to be acknowledged and

investigated. The reason is because different contexts portray and uphold different perspectives of 'self'. For example, as a broad generalisation, Western societies appear to foster a more individualistic understanding of its people where 'self' commonly functions day-to-day upon decisions centred upon the 'self' (Mageo, 2002). However, for groups of people who formulate and make up a larger collective, where the roles of 'self' often function with others in mind, the concept of an individual 'self' where the self is consistently centralised is highly unlikely. It thus becomes a difficult task to seek a "universal or culturally neutral definition of the self" (Johnson, 2011, p. 4). Despite this challenge, clarity of what the 'self' can mean across different cultures can be sought in viewing the self as being either referential—an individual self, or as indexical—a collective self.

Harari (2015) writes of the concept liberal humanism that perceives the quality of humanity as located in the inner-core of individuals. It is the divine spark found within the individual that liberal humanism celebrates. However, there is a strand of humanism called socialist humanism that values the collective of individuals. In contrast to liberal humanism that advocates an individualist approach, socialist humanism prioritises for equality to prevail amongst the collective of individuals (Harari, 2015). These two strands of humanism can help to explain a changing Samoan self, with the rise of individualism amongst a society that still nurtures and values collectivity.

The referential self can be understood as an autonomous being, who is in control of one's own decisions, actions, and future outcomes (Landrine, 1992). In addition, the referential self has the freedom and the opportunity to choose and to act as they wish,

with the right to refrain from acting or making any decisions with others in mind. A key element in the referential perspective of the self is the level of autonomy upon one's life. This can be understood as primary control, or simply, that all control is exerted from within the self. For communities that are individualistic in nature, primary control entails the involvement of the self within its surrounding environment with the sole objective of meeting only the needs for the individual (Landrine, 1992). In essence, the referential self directs and steers all activities that he or she participates in, towards decision-making and action that primarily will benefit the self. Nevertheless, the decisions and actions centred upon the self can also benefit others as well.

In contrast to the referential perspective of the self is the indexical self. This understanding of the self takes into account the many relationships within which the individual self is found, and the self does not function separate or apart from these relations (Landrine, 1992). The indexical self is not independent from the communities or social groups that he or she is part of, but has a particular role and function within these groups. For collective societies such as those of the Pacific nations, the indexical self is more likely to infer meaning of the self in these contexts. Johnson (2011) gives an example of the indexical self as a concept in the south African Zulu culture known as *ubuntu* that is translated as "a person is a person by virtue of other persons" (p. 5). *Ubuntu* is a concept widely held throughout indigenous African cultures. Likewise in most African communities, human existence becomes the situation of belonging and connectedness in relation to others in the community (Henrickson, Brown, Fouche, Poindexter, & Scott, 2013). It becomes a task of this project to investigate the possibility of a changing Samoan self that moves along a continuum between an indexical self, a

person to be understood in terms of other persons, and a referential self that is located in individualism. Precisely what this transitional movement constitutes will become one of the outcomes for this project.

#### ***2.2.4 Interweaving the West with Samoa***

The importance of the self within the counselling process is a concept that is evident in all types of counselling across all different cultures (Johnson, 2011). An individual can be understood as an autonomous entity on his or her own in any given context; yet the individual must also learn how to co-exist with others who as well hold to their own selfhoods. An important task of pastoral counselling can be to inform how one can hold onto his or her own selfhood, amidst the many selfhoods that make up any given community.

However, for communities where the selfhood of the person is shared with others from the same village or tribe, as is the case for many Pacific nation communities, selfhood here takes on a different form. The individual in these situations would commonly be identified only through the larger social relationships to which they are involved. Tui Atua (2002) writes about Samoans being connected to the cosmos, the village and the nation where individuals co-exist with the larger settings that surround them:

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 *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. (p. 2)



This project highlights the changing Samoan self, and the challenge for ministers is providing pastoral counselling amongst a spectrum of individual and collective selfhoods.

#### ***2.2.5 A perspective of an emerging changing Samoan 'self'***

The notion of self-determination is an important concept within this thesis, although it is a foreign concept to many Samoans. A large part of the exploration in this thesis involves addressing changes in the Samoan self, and whether such changes include the concept of self-determination. In an article that discusses different perspectives about the self, various understandings about what defines self-determination are discussed (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995). The first distinction concerns self-direction, where the individual self determines what is needed for himself or herself to live and grow fully in life. Although mimicking how individualistic *palagi* live may appear controversial to traditional Samoans, possibly this is the direction that a changing Samoan self is heading. In addition to being regarded as a relational self, the Samoan person may also be considered as a self-directing individual. The second distinction is self-determination that disconnects the individual from any group associations and restrictions. The significant groups for the Samoan person include one's family, and the social and religious groups that many Samoans affiliate with.

This thesis proposes that the changing Samoan self is undergoing a transitional shift along a continuum between self-direction and self-determination. Although complete separation from the significant groups that the Samoan person is linked to may be highly unlikely, I will investigate a changing Samoan self from an indexical identity to greater

self-determination and self-direction. Further, this study explores the understanding of how ministers and parishioners co-exist and co-support each other (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995) and how such a relationship has shaped and re-shaped the Samoan self today.

In an effort to determine commonalities between Western psychiatric understandings of self and Samoan understandings of self, Bush, Collings, Tamasese, and Waldegrave (2005) asked a group of *palagi* psychiatrists in the Wellington region of New Zealand how they understood 'self', and then compared their findings to a traditional Samoan understanding of self. The comparison made was based on an understanding of a Samoan self as a relational self with meaning derived from relationships with others (Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave, & Bush, 2005). What they found was that the *palagi* psychiatrists' valued individuality as a core understanding of self, while a Samoan understanding of self is relational. A challenge in the present study is to identify whether ministers themselves consider the Samoan self as being relational, or individual, or both. If the Samoan self is changing, ministers must identify and acknowledge that change, and reconfigure pastoral counselling practices to meet the changing contours of the relational or the individual Samoan self.

In this thesis I will consider and operate through the concept of a changing Samoan self. That said, although several societal changes have made an impact upon Samoans, the individual person is still understood in terms of being in relationship with others. This thesis proposes that the context of these relationships have changed—the family, village, and the parish—yet the Samoan person is still involved in these relationships. The way how Samoans remain connected in relation to others—regardless of one's

status in the family, the *fa'aSamoa*, and parish—becomes a major exploration undertaken in this study. The contemporary Samoan self is faced with the task of negotiating and navigating an environment that sees value in being a relational self—indexical, yet a self that requires to be individual as well.

Samoans can be considered as 'individual' selves within their own rights, in addition to their 'relational' connections to others. Mageo's (1998) concept of an egocentric self—that focuses upon individualism, inner feelings and thoughts—echoes Landrine's (1992) notion of the referential self discussed previously. Likewise, Mageo's (1998) explanation of the sociocentric self—that emphasises the social roles that people play—reflects Landrine's argument about the indexical self. Mageo's concepts of egocentric and sociocentric distinctions of the self are useful for this study, as the emerging changing Samoan self appears to embrace both categories of self. Relevant pastoral counselling practices in Samoa today must therefore be dynamic to cater for both the sociocentric Samoan self (traditionalists Samoans) as well as for the egocentric Samoan self (contemporary Samoans).

The evolution of the Samoan self leads the discussion into the second part of this review of literature that considers how pastoral counselling has evolved from its beginnings to the present day.

## **Part Two**

### **2.3 Pastoral counselling**

The second part of this chapter provides a review of the pastoral counselling literature and general counselling practices. Literature reviewed will also include counselling approaches in general, and specific methodologies of counselling work with Pacific people and specifically with Samoans.

#### ***2.3.1 The development of the pastoral counselling movement***

In its beginnings in the United States, pastoral counsellors commonly were clergy who were theologically trained as ministers, and who also undertook a qualification in counselling (Bidwell & Marshall, 2006). Literature identifying the development of the pastoral care and counselling movement in the UK and America commonly establishes its beginnings with Anton Boisen around the 1950s (Foskett, 2001). A progressive empirical theologian, Boisen proposed that theology should not solely be concerned with Biblical texts alone, but it should also be concerned on learning from what Boisen calls 'living human documents'. This concept embraces the notion that people themselves, their experiences and embodiment, can be 'read' as having theological relevance. Three separate studies conducted with mental health professionals, religious and spiritual counsellors, and service users, examined the commonalities amongst these three groups (Foskett, 2001). The results found that even though an interface between the three groups is necessary to include all areas of the service user's life including spiritual life, such an interface is both non-existent and difficult to bring into practice. The secular counselling professionals and the religious and spiritual leaders appear to

work independently of each other, with one neglecting the other's significance in the holistic and overall counselling experience for the service user.

A study has explored the distinction between pastoral care and pastoral counselling (Yeo, 2002). Pastoral care is seen as having a different focus compared to pastoral counselling. In pastoral care, Biblical injunctions are given on which care can be built. Pastoral counselling by contrast deals with problems concerning living, when disruptions occur to the personal and family life of the individual. Associated with the treatment of these disruptions are skills that can be acquired from a psychological counselling background.

### ***2.3.2 An overview of pastoral counselling***

A valuable skill for any pastoral counsellor is to focus on a values-based approach to the work they do (Lynch, 2002). This approach provides a framework of reflection for the pastoral counsellor, to show an alternative to thinking about the pastoral practices in one's work, and to identify how ethics and values are related to these practices. The task becomes one for the practitioner himself or herself to think and reflect and develop their own skills of reflection, to manage the many issues raised in the work of pastoral counselling. At the centre of all reflection is a values-based approach. Drawing on Boisen's concept of people as living human documents in the pastoral context, it is vital that a values-based approach accommodates the real and shifting lives of parishioners. In relation to this thesis, these lives include the changing Samoan self.

Samoans give significant value to the social institution of one's family (Poasa, Mallinckrodt, & Suzuki, 2000). 'Family' includes one's parents and siblings, as well as family *matai* and the larger context of the extended family members. In addition, high value is placed on one's faith (Taule'ale'ausumai, 2001). A substantial value is also placed on one's heritage and identity, or rather on one's culture. In order to develop relevant pastoral counselling today it is essential to understand how the intersection of the social (family), cultural (heritage and identity), and religion (faith), together with the mindset of the Samoans (psychological dimension), shape Samoan ontology and epistemology. These four dimensions may appear as being individualistic, however they also reflect elements of the wider collective identity. The social, cultural, and religious dimensions all rely heavily upon the relational experiences that the individual encounters in the wider settings. These four dimensions also establish a sense of context, connection, and belonging for the individual—the self is part of a larger social and cultural context. It is precisely this context that the changing Samoan self is emerging from, and as we have seen, 'self' for Samoans includes understandings that are both individualistic and collective.

Therapeutic conversations are prescribed as a model of pastoral counselling (Yeo, 2002). This approach can be explained as formal and informal conversations between a minister and someone seeking help. The process may lack any clear, precise and structured strategies for intervention strategies. The underlying factor is that there exists a clear intent by both parties for healing. In the application of therapeutic conversations, or pastoral conversations as they are also known, the development of healing can begin. Arguably therapeutic conversations can be identified in the pastoral

counselling work that ministers in Samoa are involved, focusing on what can be termed as 'implicit healing'. This term refers to healing that comes about through talking, with no clear intent of applying any form of intervention. 'Explicit healing' in contrast refers to outcomes from specific strategies implemented in pastoral counselling.

Healing in the Samoan context concerns reconnection and reintegration in people's relationship with God, family, and their extended communities. The understanding of healing itself for Samoans may also be changing along with a changing Samoan self (Culbertson, Agee, & Makasiale, 2007). The benefit of therapeutic conversations for Samoans is that it involves a practice common to Samoans being an oratory people (Tanielu, 2004). The challenge is that often only certain people with authority are expected and allowed to speak in specific situations. This project therefore identifies how pastoral counselling in Samoa can use therapeutic conversations and develop both implicit and explicit healing.

A model of pastoral counselling known as the *conversation model* locates at its centre the pastoral problem, surrounded by three-fold participants that formulate this model: Christian tradition, experience, and culture (Whitehead & Whitehead, 1995). Christian tradition is the foundation where the faith of individuals grows and develops. Christian tradition also includes hermeneutics (Osmer, 2008) that involves interpreting meaning from the Bible. It is hermeneutics that creates the space for both collective and individual negotiating among tradition, experience and culture. Experience refers to the life stories of individuals found within faith communities; experiences are both individual and communal. Culture as a way of life shapes and moulds human experience

for any given time. Culture therefore plays an important role in pastoral reflection which is a major undertaking in this approach of pastoral counselling.

Whitehead and Whitehead's (1995) model requires the pastoral problem at hand to be explicitly identified then attended to, and asserting the situation will articulate an appropriate pastoral response. The key to this approach to pastoral counselling is conversation. The limitation of this model is that the three components of this model—Christian tradition, experience, and culture—do not necessarily intersect with each other all of the time. There may be times when tradition conflicts with culture, thus developing experiences that are not always favourable. The strength of this model specifically for the present project is that Samoans often are accustomed to conversation through *talanoa* so aligning with this approach may prove beneficial.

Another contemporary approach to pastoral counselling is philosophical counselling (Louw, 2011). This approach involves a move away from a cause-and-effect probing and empathic listening as found in other kinds of pastoral counselling, to an approach focused upon meaning and future orientation. Louw suggests that philosophical counselling is the method of transcendent inquiry into the realm of meaning and existential work. Essentially, this approach is less about a technique or skill in counselling methods, but it is more about developing mutual understandings of meaning in an individual's life. Louw's review of literature examining philosophical counselling suggests that this approach is a possible way forward in undertaking pastoral care and counselling.



The limitation of philosophical counselling as an approach for Samoans is that it is highly individualistic. Such an approach requires the individual to self-reflect and evaluate their individual situations to determine meanings behind problematic situations. The individual must be willing to discuss openly certain events in their lives, which is a peculiar practice for some Samoans, who are more familiar with an oratory system where *matai* use more covert messages in their speeches. This openness is a challenge for traditional Samoans, but more contemporary Samoans, who are used to more direct conversation, may find it easier.

Similar to Louw's philosophical counselling approach, Frankl's logotherapy (1959/1992) is another approach that also is highly individualistic. This approach to secular counselling emphasises the meaning of human existence and the troubled person's search for such meaning. Frankl has termed this search as the 'will to meaning' (1959/1992, pp. 104-105). The restriction of such a model for Samoans can be seen in the conceptualisation of what 'meaning' would include. As an historically collective people, many Samoans value an existence based on the larger family and village settings. Meaning therefore would be more attuned towards the inclusion of family and village considerations, rather than solely from an individualistic perspective. However, a changing Samoan self has seen a rise in individualism that may favour such an individualistic approach to pastoral counselling.

Pastoral counselling often involves addressing the spiritual wholeness of the person, as emphasised by the American pastoralist Clinebell in his model known as the *spiritually-centred holistic pastoral care and counselling model* (Clinebell, 2011). The holistic

approach of this model involves nurturing wholeness in individuals as well as in the relationships they have with others from their communities. The aim is to empower people with a fullness of life through emphasising wholeness in unifying the seven dimensions of this model: physical, society/nature, work, play, relational, mental, and spiritual. The challenge of this model is that all seven dimensions need to be considered in order for its holistic nature to come forth. It appears that one of the challenges of contemporary churches is to evidence this commitment to spiritual wholeness—some people leave the church because they do not experience this aspiration of a holistic approach in practice (Taule'ale'ausumai, 2001; Thornton, Kerslake, & Binns, 2010). Such an approach to pastoral counselling that emphasises wholeness would fit readily with Samoans, since the seven dimensions of this model include the collective and social settings in which individuals are situated, not just dimensions that are individualistic.

In countries where pastoral counselling is becoming an integral role of their ministers, many ministers are nevertheless reluctant to claim themselves as practitioners of pastoral counselling (Beaumont, 2011; Young, Griffith, & Williams, 2003). This reticence is largely due to a lack of formal training in counselling. For the most part in Beaumont's (2011) study of Australian clergy, findings indicate that clergy engaged regularly in offering counselling to their parishioners, despite many of them receiving little or no formal counselling training, certification or supervision. In most instances, pastoral counselling encounters commonly involved conversations perceived as counselling in nature by both clergy and those seeking help. The limitation of the above study is that there is no clear distinction between what pastoral counselling entails and what can be identified as informal and formal conversations exploring possible intervention

strategies. Ministers in Samoa today may share a similar position with the Australian clergy in Beaumont's study, by offering pastoral counselling for their parishioners although they are not clinically trained to do so. The exploration undertaken in the present study may assist to develop an understanding of the roles of pastoral counsellors, expected of ministers in Samoa today.

### **2.3.3 *Counselling Pacific and Samoan people***

Specific therapies and strategies have shown to be effective when working with peoples from the Pacific region (Agnew et al., 2004). Some therapies are strength-based and focus on resilience factors (Tedeschi & Kilmer, 2005) while other therapies include both the strengths and any deficits identified as risk factors (Fraser, Richman, & Galinsky, 1999). The success of these approaches for Pacific people is because they use familiar motifs for Pacific people such as talking or *talanoa*. The theory behind talking therapies such as *talanoa* is that through talking, insight and thought change will eventuate. *Talanoa* offers a philosophical position that informs how the therapist shapes the dialogue and how to make sense of people's experiences.

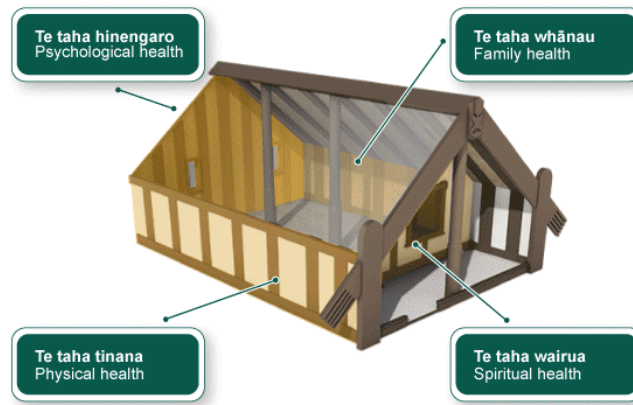
An example of the use of *talanoa* when working with Pacific people is found in a study by Kingi-Uluave and Olo-Whanga (2010). In the attempt to bridge the gap of published research on talking therapies with Pacific Island populations, Kingi-Uluave and Olo-Whanga (2010) carried out a review of literature about talking therapies with indigenous populations. Therapists working with Pacific people in New Zealand were recruited based on a snowball sampling strategy, and interviewed about any successful methods they encountered when working with Pacific people. For the most part, models that held

a holistic approach worked well with many Pacific people (Kingi-Uluave & Olo-Whanga, 2010) and atomising approaches that are highly individualistic were less effective. The larger social and cultural realities and contexts in which Pacific people live determine and locate their identities. The present project of exploring pastoral counselling practices of ministers in Samoa can draw from the success of practitioners working with Pacific people in New Zealand, and use approaches that are holistic and align with *talanoa*. Specifically, atomising *talanoa* to suit individualistic lives of some Pacific people (Culbertson et al., 2007) may prove useful.

Pacific authors and those from the Pacific region such as Culbertson et al. (2007) have documented the challenges faced by Pacific people. These writers identify contributing factors to problematic situations as family members, the church (used here to describe Pacific Island religious congregations of different Christian denominations), and the cultures and traditions of the various Pacific nations represented. Culbertson et al. (2007) use the analogy of building a *fale*—an open Samoan house with no structural walls or doors—to describe the process of bringing about healing for the mental state of Pacific people. The purpose of the *fale* is to offer shelter to its occupants, and in building this *fale*, various contributors share in the building process by bringing their own voices or *talanoa*, into the process. The space within the *fale* can be filled by *talanoa* of each of the contributors thus adding to the on-going conversations, the on-going voices, the on-going *talanoa*, to create a place of refuge and a shelter that is understandable to the participants. The theory behind the metaphor of building *fale* and *talanoa* is that understanding comes through unity and collaboration. It is not enough to simply congregate for *talanoa*; there must be the equal sharing of ideas, experiences,

and life-stories as often found in *talanoa*. It is not enough for people to come together to plan the building of a *fale*; action is needed to materialise the plan. The metaphor of building a *fale* takes time, where many different voices from the Pacific will be heard, and the end product is likened by Culbertson et al. (2007) to a rare and precious gem from the Pacific—the Pacific *penina uliuli* (black pearl).

Methods described above for counselling Pacific peoples' parallel with models such as *Te Wheke* (octopus) for Māori family health (Pere, 1997), and *Te Pae Mahutonga* (Southern Cross Star constellation) a Māori health promotion model (Durie, 1999). The *Te Whare Tapa Whā* Māori model (Durie, 1998) identifies the health of a person as represented by four walls of a house, each one necessary for health and identified with different dimensions of the person: *taha wairua* (spiritual dimension), *taha hinengaro* (thoughts and feelings), *taha tinana* (physical dimension), and *taha whānau* (family dimension). This holistic view of health by Durie draws together four aspects that each stand for more than one entity and collectively make up good health, just as the four walls hold up a house. *Taha tinana* for example includes nutrition and exercise. An important dimension of *Te Whare Tapa Whā model* (Figure 2), in contrast to many other 'Western' models, is the inclusion of the spiritual realm as an important factor for health and wellbeing.

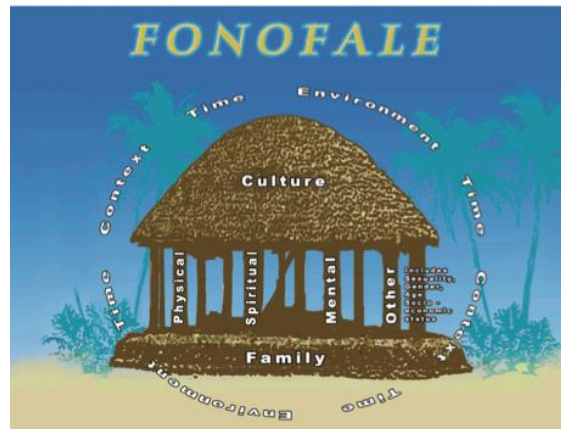


**Figure 2. The Te Whare Tapa Whā Māori model**

(Source: <http://health.tki.org.nz/Teaching-in-HPE/Policy-guidelines/Sexuality-education-a-guide-for-principals-boards-of-trustees-and-teachers/The-place-of-sexuality-education-in-schools>)

The holistic approach in working with Māori as found in *Te Whare Tapa Whā* aligns with a similar approach of working with Pacific peoples in the *Fonofale* model of health. The same metaphor of a house is used for the *Fonofale* model (Pulotu-Endemann, 2009), specifically a Samoan *fale* with its traditional design. Depicted through this model (Figure 3) is the family symbolised as the foundation of the *fale*, a significance that is synonymous across all Pacific peoples. The roof that represents culture shelters all participants of the model. There are four *pou* (posts) that connect the foundation to the roof and hold the *fale* upright, symbolic of four dimensions of the person: physical, spiritual, mental, and other (includes sexuality, gender, age, socio-economic status). As a dynamic model of health applicable to people of the Pacific region, *Fonofale* model is encapsulated in a circle surrounded by environment, time, and context. A limitation of *Fonofale* is that although they provide a metaphoric framework to assess the problematic situation that has developed for the individual, how to resurrect fallen *pou* (posts) still need to be addressed. For this study specifically, *Fonofale* provides a basis

from which the assessment of cases presented for pastoral counselling can be formulated.



**Figure 3. Fonofale model**

(Source: <http://health.tki.org.nz/Teaching-in-HPE/Policy-guidelines/Sexuality-education-a-guide-for-principals-boards-of-trustees-and-teachers/The-place-of-sexuality-education-in-schools>)

In contrast to the situation of few counselling services available in Samoa, practitioners in the fields of counselling and mental health in New Zealand have worked with different Pacific people including Samoan clients (Agee, McIntosh, Culbertson, & Makasiale, 2013). The underlying principles for Samoans in New Zealand are the same as those in the islands sharing the same values and protocols. Samoan clients of drug and alcohol agencies, as well as Samoan probation clients, are most likely the result of neoliberal policies that oppress the poor and leave them limited alternatives but to succumb to drug and alcohol abuse (Lima, 2004). The oppressive social environments of such individuals must be considered as contributing to the need for such agencies, rather than all blame being placed on the individuals in these situations.

In an attempt to weave together Western counselling techniques and modalities with Samoan protocols and cultural understandings, Seiuli (2010) suggests that the Samoan practice of *meaalofa* (a thing to do with love) best sums up what he has termed the ‘gift of counselling’. The counselling process (as found in the West) can be translated as the therapeutic relationship in the Samoan setting, of giving advice and direction by significant others—the minister, *matai*, family elders, or parents—to the troubled and confused member in the family, village, or parish. The synthesis of the Western practice of counselling with something understandable to Samoans is articulated by Seiuli and summed up as *meaalofa*.

#### **2.3.4 Pastoral counselling practices for Samoans at present**

Contemporary practitioners of pastoral counselling in Samoa can learn from concepts that pre-date the missionisation of Samoan people. Taule’ale’ausumai (1997) navigates the reader through many of the facets of pastoral care today from the perspective of a Samoan woman. Occasionally touching upon counselling in the Samoan setting, she identifies the very idea of counselling, especially in the genre of a one-on-one counselling format, as a Western construct that is foreign and alien to Samoans. Due to the dearth of literature concerning pastoral care related to Samoa, Taule’ale’ausumai draws upon her role and experiences in the church, together with interviews with key stakeholders of the Samoan community in Auckland for the desired knowledge.

Taule’ale’ausumai (1997) claims in her essay that the church must become a catalyst for change to bridge the gap in how it offers pastoral care to the Samoan communities. She attempts to separate the *fa’aSamoa* of missionisation from the London Missionary



Society, to try and identify Samoa pre-Christianity. She finds a matriarchal Samoa, with female heroines, and a female prophetess of Samoa named *Nafanua* who coincidentally predicted the arrival of the Christian missionaries. She also finds a primal religion and belief system of Samoa that is focused on curses and blessings, with an emphasis on power, grace, peace, and the spirit realm of Samoa. Even though the essay does not discuss pastoral counselling in its contemporary form at length, the way she establishes an integral component of pastoral care in any setting—Samoan life before Christianity, together with how life is today post-LMS missionary contact—are of great interest to the present study.

Understanding the primal religion of Samoa is valuable to this study, for it shows a matriarchal Samoa prior to any contact with the Protestant missionaries. The early Protestant missionaries who came to Samoa were from the lower middle class of England. These foreigners to Samoa advocated a English way of life that involved a married couple and their children, with the men working for a wage to sustain the family, and the women as the domesticated 'home-makers' organising their households (Meleisea & Schoeffel-Meleisea, 1987). This foreign way of life to Samoa placed women in an inferior position to men, and the consideration of women in this manner was introduced into Samoa. The rise of women in Samoa today that findings from this research signal could be one aspect of a changing Samoan self that values women as the matriarchal Samoa once held.

In order to make the adoption of pastoral counselling by ministers and their wives meaningful to Samoans, it is useful to draw on the interpretations of their titles. The

influence of the rise of the women in the church today may be an underlying contributor to the minister's wife assigned her own title separate to the title assigned to her minister husband. The title *faletua* translated as 'house at the back' is given to the minister's wife. This term does not indicate a belittling view of Samoan women, but more a reflection of her supportive role in accordance to Samoan traditional understanding and function of *tautua* (service) and *aiga*. In the village setting, a large Samoan *fale* serves as a meeting place for guests and important family gatherings. The *fale tele* (large house) is often situated at the front section of the property, which is then surrounded by smaller *fale* that function as the living quarters and working areas for members of that particular *aiga*. When hosting guests, *matai*, family elders, and the extended family gather in the *fale tele*, while food preparations and any accompanying *meaalofa* (gifts for guests) are prepared and sent from the surrounding *fale*. The activities within the surrounding *fale* are often led and managed by the wife of the family *matai* or the most senior woman of that particular *aiga*.

For the case of a minister's house, such activities are led by the *faletua*. The *fale* (house) *tua* (at the back) is often directly situated behind or adjacent to the *fale tele*. When requests for food and *meaalofa* for the guests are sent from *matai* attending to the guests in the *fale tele*, the wife and older women must decide how best to meet and serve the requests considering all available resources at their disposal. The *matai* and elders have complete confidence and trust in the leadership provided by these women in the 'back house' to respond appropriately in order to make such occasions a successful outcome for the *aiga*. It is from this mutual relationship of serving the *aiga*

and vital exchange between the *faletua* and the *fale tele* that the minister's wife is recognised and designated the esteemed title *faletua*.

Although the title *faletua* may appear subsidiary and secondary to that of ministers, it must be stated that in the Samoan context, *faletua* occupy a significant and important role in any ministry. In this regard, the *faletua* should not be considered as holding a minor or not-as-important role to her husband; rather, her role is one that is complimentary and very important to their shared ministry. In relation to pastoral counselling, *faletua* play a significant and important part as findings from this project highlight.

A Samoan proverb that speaks of the relationship between service and the Samoan people is: *o le ala i le pule o le tautua* (the pathway to leadership is through service). One must therefore master the roles of service and all the responsibilities that it entails, before one can profess to become a leader in the mindsets of Samoans. The concept of service is evident in the Samoan term '*faifeau*' that is translated as 'minister'. *Faifeau*, *fa'afeagaiga*, and *fa'afeagaiga taulagi*, are common designations given to a minister in Samoa. *Fa'afeagaiga* and *fa'afeagaiga taulagi* are titles reserved specifically for ministers who are called to parish ministry, those who have covenantal obligations (*feagaiga*) with the village parishes that ministers are called to. *Fa'afeagaiga taulagi* (covenant linked to Heaven) further exemplifies the covenantal obligations that have been established with the village parish, to say that such a covenant is linked to Heaven. Both these titles (*fa'afeagaiga* and *fa'afeagaiga taulagi*) are honourable designations and titles that carry status and esteem. The title *faifeau* (someone who performs chores)

also carries the same status and esteem; however, the title is more linked to the role of service (*tautua*) similar to the concept associated with *faletua*. The *faifeau* title is one that emphasises humility and is a title that I wish to demonstrate the role that ministers in Samoa are involved. Especially considering that as pastoral counsellors, ministers serve their faith communities by supporting parishioners through their troubles. *Faifeau* as a title for ministers is a reminder of *tautua*. For the purpose of this project henceforth, I will use the term 'minister' to refer to the Samoan designations of *faifeau*, *fa'afeagaiga*, and *fa'afeagaiga taulagi*.

### **2.3.5 Presentable and non-presentable issues**

Certain issues are acceptable to be put forth before the Samoan minister for counselling, and these issues I will name as 'presentable'. Some examples of the presentable issues include situations where the minister acts as mediator between inter-family disputes, inter-village disagreements, and encounters between parishioners and the government or the judiciary system. These presentable issues may also include alcohol and drug related incidents, unemployment, and general issues concerning the commitment of parishioners to their responsibilities within the church and to their families.

In contrast to presentable issues, there are issues that remain unspoken and are deliberately kept from the knowledge of the minister (Malifa, 2009), and these issues I name as 'non-presentable'. These non-presentable or 'taboo' issues are deemed inappropriate to bring before the minister, who are holy men that are God-appointed and God-fearing servants of God (Pala'amo, 2010). The traditional conceptualisation of God in Samoan society also would find these topics 'off-limits'. Some examples of these

non-presentable issues include suicide, and generally any issues concerning sex—intercourse, abortion, rape, incest, adultery, and sexual violence against women and children. There is a tendency for ministers in Samoa to only deal with many of the presentable issues, categorised as ceremonial issues because ministers are familiar with such issues, at the neglect of the non-presentable issues. People with non-presentable issues need to consider carefully whether to disclose these types of issues to the minister for discussion, out of fear of being interpreted as disrespectful to talk about taboo topics.

However, contemporary Samoan society encompasses both of these categories of issues and the changing Samoan self means people are now speaking out more and seeking help for the many issues affecting their lives. In part this tendency may be due to the impact of secular organisations, where there is an increasing encouragement of the importance to address issues such as intimate partner violence and sexual abuse (Roguski & Kingi, 2011). The emergence of these organisations initially was in response to these issues, and since its inception into the Samoan society, more and more survivors of abuse are inspired into reporting these problems. One of the key distinctions that has emerged between secular counselling therapies and pastoral counselling in Samoa, is that the former addresses the non-presentable issues, while the latter is still addressing ways how to engage appropriately. A significant challenge is that ministers may consider themselves to be untrained to offer any form of counselling, in order to deal with both the presentable and non-presentable issues faced by those they serve in the congregations. In a number of instances, gender often becomes a barrier to effective pastoral counselling in relation to non-presentable issues.

The challenge for both ministers and parishioners is for ministers to find ways that inspire and encourage troubled persons to come forth with their issues, regardless of being either presentable or non-presentable. Likewise, parishioners must feel safe and courageous to seek help from their ministers if the issue involves sex or abuse. The importance therefore of this study in pastoral counselling is to assist ministers in determining how best they can understand the emerging changing Samoan self, in order to address and support parishioners with their problems, to help parishioners feel safe, and to present themselves as ministers as available for *talanoa* about any matter. The challenge is intensified when the troubled persons are women parishioners seeking counselling from their male ministers, about women's issues.

## **2.4 Summary**

This chapter has laid the theoretical foundation for both pastoral counselling practices, and the concept of a changing Samoan self. The first part of this review has identified the concept and understanding of 'self' from both individualistic and collective perspectives. Individualistic understandings of 'self' include a referential self, that is egocentric and categorised as liberal humanism; collective understandings of 'self' include an indexical self, that is sociocentric and part of a socialist humanism. From such understandings of 'self', the theoretical foundation of the concept of a changing Samoan self has been identified and presented. The second part of this review has identified pastoral counselling from its very beginnings that began as a response of the Christian church to many of the societal changes from the middle of twentieth century. There are individualistic approaches such as a value-based approach, conversation model, and philosophical counselling amongst the models discussed; there are also collective

models that include the spiritually-centred holistic pastoral care and counselling model included in this review. In terms of counselling practices for Samoans, talking therapies such as *talanoa*, as well as holistic models have been documented as having the most success. The second part of this review has established the foundation where an understanding of pastoral counselling practices specifically tailored for Samoans, can be built upon and developed. Collectively, both parts of this review have provided the theoretical foundation of developing a response to the research question: How does understanding a changing Samoan self inform the conceptualisation and delivery of pastoral counselling in Samoa? The next chapter continues to set the landscape for this journey of discovery, by discussing the theoretical methodology and the methods used to answer the underlying research question at the core of this project.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methods and methodology used to answer the research question at the core of this research—how does understanding a changing Samoan self inform the conceptualisation and delivery of pastoral counselling in Samoa? In working towards answering the above question, this project has conceptualised, developed, and proposed a Samoan research methodological framework called *Tafatolu*<sup>5</sup> (three-sides) that has been used herein to assist in the collection and analysis of data. *Tafatolu* methodological framework is presented as an inverted triangle with each of its corners representing three parts that this project considers as valuable to any research—a ‘contemporary academic’ approach to research, a ‘cultural’ approach, and the ‘self’ that represents the researcher’s perspectives and positioning within the project. Collectively, these three parts have assisted this project in the collection and analysis of data that have informed this study. The benefit of using the *Tafatolu* methodological framework as proposed in this project, is that it involves the synthesis of contemporary academic approaches to research (such as a qualitative approach used here in this study), with a cultural approach (a Samoan metaphor *fetu’utu’una’i muniao*—manoeuvring a fisher’s

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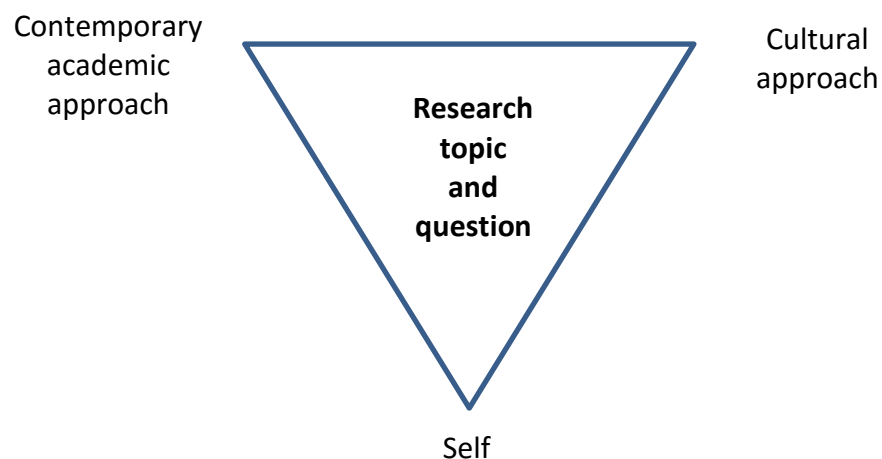
<sup>5</sup> The Samoan word *Tafatolu* has become a symbolic representation for many Samoans of the Holy Trinity: God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *Tafatolu* is also synonymous and unique to the Malua compound, which is the selected training location for ministers and wives and the centre of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS). Since the time of the LMS Missionaries, the word *tafatolu* was used to represent three key landmarks located at the Malua compound: Malua Printing Press (that printed the first Samoan Bible), Malua Theological College, and Leulumoeaga Secondary College. The Malua compound housed both the seminary of the church and its printing press, while Leulumoeaga Secondary College was adjacent to the Malua compound. The Malua Printing Press has since moved to its new location in the township of Apia.



rod), merged with the researcher's own input into 'doing' research (my positioning as an insider/outsider researcher). This chapter presents and discusses how the conceptualisation of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework has guided the way this research has been conducted in its methodology, methods, and the analysis of data.

### 3.2 Methodology

The conceptualisation of the proposed Samoan methodological framework *Tafatolu* as used in this project, is presented as an inverted triangle and illustrated in Figure 4.



**Figure 4. *Tafatolu* methodological framework**

(Source: Author)

The rationale behind the *Tafatolu* methodological framework is to provide a way to understand research from a Samoan perspective, a way that merges a contemporary academic approach to research with a cultural approach. One corner of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework presents a contemporary academic approach to research. By contemporary academic approaches I am referring to quantitative (e.g. Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), qualitative (e.g. Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016) or mixed methods

(e.g. Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). These are the dominant methodologies used in academic research, and so I refer to them as ‘contemporary academic’ approaches.

These contemporary academic approaches are predominantly modelled on liberal humanist cultural values, and the values that inform these approaches may be incompatible with many cultures. Therefore, these contemporary academic approaches need to be infused and adapted to the values for any given culture in order to be relevant to the group being studied. This is part of the rationale for the inclusion of a cultural approach in the *Tafatolu* methodological framework as used in this project.

A cultural approach to the research is another corner of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework. Such an approach includes any indigenous methodology that has been developed and widely used by researchers or communities specifically for the communities being investigated. The cultural component of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework can also be a proverb or metaphor familiar to the group being studied. The proposed inclusion of a cultural dimension to the research methodology is to encourage and attract prospective participants to take part in the research, by using imagery and concepts they are familiar with.

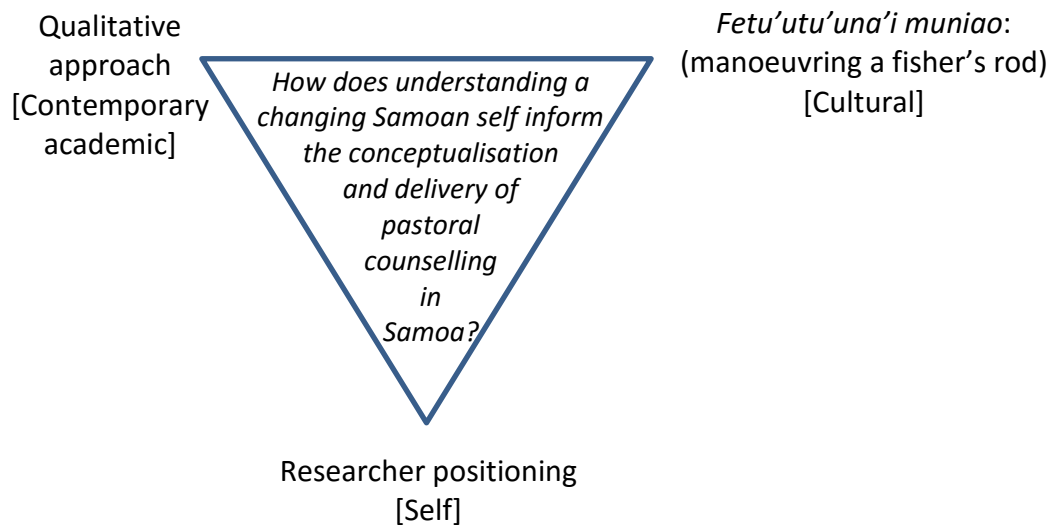
The third and final corner of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework involves the ‘self’ which includes what the researcher brings to the project. More specifically, the self includes the positioning of the researcher along an insider-outsider continuum (Hellawell, 2006), as the research topic often concerns the lived experiences of the researcher to a greater or lesser extent. The movement along an insider-outsider

continuum towards the outsider positioning of the researcher, signals that the researcher is a non-member to the group being studied (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Further, favouring an outsider positioning suggests that the researcher is not *a priori* familiar with the setting and people under investigation (Hellawell, 2006) allowing for objectivity from the researcher. Promoting an insider positioning along such a continuum means the researcher has acceptance by participants that may lead to more open discussions and depth in the data collected (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). As an insider researcher, there will be lived experiences which inform the worldview of the researcher that the researcher brings into the project that need to be acknowledged and addressed. There may be times when the researcher is positioned as both outsider and insider researcher (Hellawell, 2006; Kusow, 2003), during different stages of the project, and shifting from one position to the other is required.

At the centre of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework that is presented as a triangle, is the research topic including its research question. All three corners of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework—the contemporary academic approach, the cultural approach, and the self—each approach contributes to a way of knowing respectively, and collectively these approaches provide a methodology to develop answers to the research question at the core of the project.

Specifically, for this project, the application of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework as its methodology includes taking a qualitative approach (contemporary academic), together with the understanding of a Samoan metaphor *fetu'utu'una'i muniao*

(cultural), from a researcher positioning (self). The presentation of such a methodology is illustrated in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.      *Tafatolu methodological framework applied as the methodology used in this project***

(Source: Author)

The discussion will now explore the three corners of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework when applied to this project.

### **3.2.1 Qualitative approach**

One part of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework applied as the methodology to this research involves the 'Contemporary academic' corner. Central to the research question is to understand people's own understandings and frames of references; qualitative methods are the way to learn about people from within their own frames of reference (Taylor et al., 2016). For this project, it was important to elicit participants' individual understandings about their world, and how they understood counselling. Positivist research is used to test hypotheses, but the purpose of this research was to explore

understanding. Therefore, a qualitative approach was clearly the most appropriate way to elicit these data. In this way, I could listen and work with participants to develop understandings about their experiences of pastoral counselling.

Qualitative research methods involve the collection, analysis, and presentation of narrative information (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). My research decision to use qualitative research methods in this project was the best way to answer my research question—I needed to hear the stories and the narratives of my participants in order to inform my study, and the best way to do this was through qualitative interviews. McLeod (2001) describes qualitative research in the following way:

Qualitative research is a process of careful, rigorous inquiry into aspects of the social world. It produces formal statements or conceptual frameworks that provide new ways of understanding the world, and therefore comprises knowledge that is practically useful for those who work with issues around learning and adjustment to the pressures and demands of the social world. (p. 3)

This methodological approach led me to use one-to-one semi-structured interviews to investigate the social worlds of Samoan ministers and those who used their pastoral counselling services. From these investigations formulating conceptual frameworks to understand pastoral counselling from multiple Samoan perspectives was possible. Interviewing pastoral counsellors and the users of their services provided knowledge into understanding their worldviews.

Samoan epistemology is pragmatic where knowledge and learning are practical phenomena (Tuisuga-le-taaua, 2011) that often are shared through language and

metaphors (Tui Atua, 2003). The theory of knowledge for Samoans is also understood through story-telling (Krämer, 1994) where culture and traditions and knowledge of honorific titles for families, villages and districts are passed onto the following generations through riddles (Tui Atua, 1994), metaphors and proverbs. Understanding how most Samoans share their knowledge is a further rationale behind using qualitative research methods in this study, which includes the use of one-to-one semi-structured interviews. Samoans are an oral people and prefer face-to-face communications about important matters, rather than filling out a survey form as found in quantitative methods.

There are many nuances of the Samoan language that contribute to how Samoans see, understand, and interpret the world. Metaphor and language therefore become important tools of communication for Samoans. Non-verbal communications are also valuable—eye contact, a smile, a handshake, how one walks into a room and how one sits—such non-verbal communication can determine the level of engagement and in this instance, the level of active participation in research. The contextualisation of these concepts for Samoans requires that one-to-one qualitative interviews would be better suited for the participants recruited for this project, developing the best possible data.

Since I was interested in hearing the narratives of participants' experiences about pastoral counselling, I chose to use an interpretive theory of qualitative research known as phenomenology. This theory of interpretation assisted in developing meaning from what participants shared through the interviews. Phenomenology is understood as the search for in-depth knowledge of a phenomenon by reflecting on one's own experiences

(Morse, 1994). The researcher must then work with the data attained through the phenomenological inquiry, to interpret the material that has emerged. Phenomenology as a philosophical approach to qualitative research was founded by the German mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), who understood consciousness as based on the meaning of the individual's experiences (Reiners, 2012).

An example of seeking understanding of the individual's experiences through phenomenology can be linked to Samoans who often make meaning from their lived experiences of *fa'aSamoa*. As some authors have alluded to, understanding the lived experiences of *fa'aSamoa* give meaning to how Samoans behave and interact with each other, as well as differentiating island-born Samoans with New Zealand-born Samoans (Anae, 1998; Mailei, 2003; Tiatia, 1998). This project therefore also takes a phenomenological approach, to assist in the interpretation of participant's experiences about pastoral counselling and a changing Samoan self.

Phenomenology can be one of two types—descriptive or interpretive. Descriptive phenomenology, promoted by Husserl, is defined as the situation where “everyday conscious experiences were described while preconceived opinions were set aside” (Reiners, 2012, p. 1). Although the researcher potentially holds preconceptions and biases about the topic under investigation (Merriam et al., 2001), taking a descriptive phenomenological position requires the researcher to set aside such personal perspectives. Interpretive phenomenology is an approach developed by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) who favoured the concept of being in the world rather than knowing the world (Reiners, 2012). Interpretive phenomenology involves the search to

understand the meaning of the phenomenon being investigated, where the researcher “does not bracket their biases or prior engagement with the question under study” (Reiners, 2012, p. 2). Interpretive phenomenology has two aims—to understand the participants’ world and describe what it is like, and to interpret such understandings in the participants’ larger social and cultural settings (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). In this project I am trying to co-create meaning for Samoans for the phenomena this project investigates, and therefore an interpretive approach is most appropriate. Also, due to my insider-outsider researcher positioning in this project, I must acknowledge the preconceptions and biases that I bring into this study.

The decision to use one-to-one semi-structured qualitative interviews led to another important research decision—which narratives did I need to hear, or more simply, who did I need to interview? The first group of participants I needed to recruit included ministers; traditionally they are pastoral counsellors for Samoans. I also needed to hear from *faletua* for the roles that they played in pastoral counselling. For both these groups, I needed to understand how much time of their ministries they dedicated to counselling parishioners, the tools they used, and how they prepared themselves for these tasks expected of them. I also wanted to hear from parishioners who used the pastoral counselling services of their ministers, together with parishioners who chose not to seek counselling with their ministers. I wanted to understand the expectations parishioners held of their ministers as pastoral counsellors, and the reasons why some parishioners did not seek help with their ministers. I also needed to hear the narratives of parishioners who sought counselling with SVSG, listening to the reasons why they chose SVSG for counselling instead of their parish minister.



In addition to hearing the narratives within the setting of the parish and SVSG, I also wanted to seek any understandings about pastoral counselling held by *matai*. The rationale is that *matai* who often are leaders of their households and extended families, also undertake counselling practices within the family and village settings. I needed to draw knowledge from *matai* to help inform my project. Further, New Zealand-born Samoans are also recipients of pastoral counselling and accentuate the concept of a changing Samoan self—I needed to hear some of these voices. The precise numbers of interviewees from each group of participants mentioned here are presented in Table 1 (see section 3.3.1.3).

### **3.2.2 *Fetu'utu'una'i muniao* (manoeuvring a fisher's rod)**

Another corner of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework involves its cultural component. This is where an understanding of the Samoan metaphor *fetu'utu'una'i muniao* (manoeuvring a fisher's rod) offers a cultural dimension to the methodology to this project. This metaphor explains my use of qualitative interviews to gather and collect data for my research. There are other Samoan metaphors and concepts that I considered. An example of such a concept is *o le tele o sulu e maua ai figota* (the more torches used the more shellfish found) that refers to the more perspectives, the more likelihood of developing knowledge to answer what is being investigated (Fa'alau, 2011). Also, the Samoan practice of *soalaupule* (*to deliberate*) that involves pairing (*soa*) and sharing your authority (*lau pule*) or perspectives with others (Tuisuga-le-taua, 2011), in order to arrive at some consensus regarding an issue. Although these alternative Samoan concepts were appealing, I decided to use *fetu'utu'una'i muniao* for its parallel towards one-to-one interviews.

An elder minister with almost 30 years' experience of working with Samoan parishioners, offered me *fetu'utu'una'i muniao* as a Samoan term that explains counselling (Fa'ae'e, personal communication, August 24, 2013). The phrase itself is derived from the Samoan practice of traditional canoe fishing. For an explanation of *fetu'utu'una'i muniao* as a method for fishing, I decided to seek the understanding of a *matai* who worked as a counsellor with Pacific and *palagi* clients in Auckland, New Zealand. Once I understood this metaphor, I conceptualised *fetu'utu'una'i muniao* as representing the cultural component in the *Tafatolu* methodological framework used in this project.

In the Samoan practice of traditional canoe fishing a bamboo rod is used with the traditionally woven string called *afa* attached with a hook, in search for the Pacific bonito fish known to Samoans as *atu* (Naseri, personal communication, September 12, 2013). Bonito fishing traditionally involves two operators in the canoe who are men; women are involved in other types of fishing (Armstrong, Herdrich, & Levine, 2011). However, roles that previously were gender-specific for Samoans are now no longer clearly defined. Understanding this metaphor is not intended to be gender-specific for men only; women are just as skilful in assuming the roles specified in this method of fishing. Specifically, for this project, re-thinking the value of upholding traditionally gender-specific roles is part of where a changing Samoan self is heading.

Bonito fishing has a rower located in the centre of the canoe, and a fisher at the rear (stern) of the canoe who manipulates the fishing rod. The moment the fisher at the rear anticipates the bonito fish taking the hook, he abruptly manipulates (*fetu'utu'una'i*) the

rod in a forward motion pulling the *afa* out of the sea with the bonito fish attached to its hook, passing over or around the rower in the middle of the canoe. *Muniao* in the metaphor refers to the wooden fishing rod holder attached to the canoe. The fisher's rod must be manipulated precisely for a desirable outcome. The rower in the middle of the canoe must steady the canoe, while simultaneously anticipating the swinging bonito fish so that the fish lands into the middle of the canoe. A successful catch is when the bonito fish lands into the centre of the canoe. The partnership of rower and fisher is necessary for a successful catch—the rower steers the canoe to where the bonito fish may be found, and keeps the boat upright and balanced, while the fisher's primary task is to operate the fishing rod. However, when unsuccessful, the bonito fish will collide with the rower in the centre of the canoe and may fall back into the sea and be lost.

This metaphor explains the use of interviews as a research method in this study. The researcher and participant work together to develop an understanding of pastoral counselling through the interviews, just like the fisher and rower work together in bonito fishing. The researcher is the fisher with the rod; while the participant is the rower who navigates where the discussions lead. A successful interview between researcher and participant is where both co-operated to develop insight and understanding—a successful 'catch' in terms of bonito fishing through *fetu'utu'una'i muniao*.

The interpretation of *fetu'utu'una'i muniao* for Samoans is not unique to bonito fishing—the metaphor can also refer to another traditional Samoan practice known as *seugalupe* or pigeon catching. As a Samoan traditional sport and method for hunting birds that continues in some regions today, to *seu lupe* means to catch pigeons using a

hoop-net. Some of the principal birds caught this way include *lupe* (pigeon), *manutagi* (small species of pigeon), *ve'a* (swamphen), and often decoy birds are used to tire and slow down these hunted birds (Schultz, 1949). The wooden cross-piece (*muniao*) of the hoop-net is manipulated by a sole operator, which differs from bonito fishing that involves co-operation between two people. The same skill is required of the precise manipulation of a tool to result in a successful catch; that links this version to the skill of the researcher to negotiate discussions during the interview process.

Although this project uses *fetu'utu'una'i muniao* in relation to bonito fishing to explain the use of qualitative interviews as a research method, the most common use these days of the metaphor is by *matai* during oratory exchanges. At Samoan gatherings, such as funerals, birthdays, and weddings, as the event approaches its end, the process begins to select a sole representative to speak on behalf of the guests and ministers and *faletua* in attendance to offer a speech of thanksgiving to the host family. This practice is customary for Samoans. Often *matai* and deacons of the church who are present perform this task. From two up to as many as ten *matai* all stand and offer themselves to take on this task. After deliberations, which at times can be quite comical and other times serious and debatable, a speaker is selected. Selection carries honour as well as the receipt of material gifting, which is why *matai* all compete to speak on the day. The selected speaker often is one who is respected by others and given the opportunity to proceed, as well as someone who has a gifted tongue for the occasion. The *matai* chosen often begins his speech (in Samoan) to the effect of: 'We have now completed our process of *fetu'utu'una'i muniao* (manoeuvring/ navigating/negotiating all the possible contenders and their arguments to be chosen to speak) and now I have been selected

to speak on behalf of everyone gathered, to extend our appreciation and thanks.' Again, the skill of manoeuvring and negotiating is alluded to here, this time using language and metaphors, rather than a fishing rod and a wooden cross-piece. The link between *fetu'utu'una'i muniao* as used in bonito fishing to the use of one-to-one qualitative interviews in this study, is that researcher and participant share in the co-creation of knowledge with a shared purpose of developing an understanding of pastoral counselling for Samoans.

### **3.2.3 Positioning as a researcher and as a minister**

The third part of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework involves the self, which refers to my positioning as researcher in this project. One important consideration I needed to make was to position myself as either a colleague to some of my participants, or as a researcher separate to my participants. When considered alongside my participants I was an 'insider'; when perceived as external to my participants as a researcher, I became an 'outsider'.

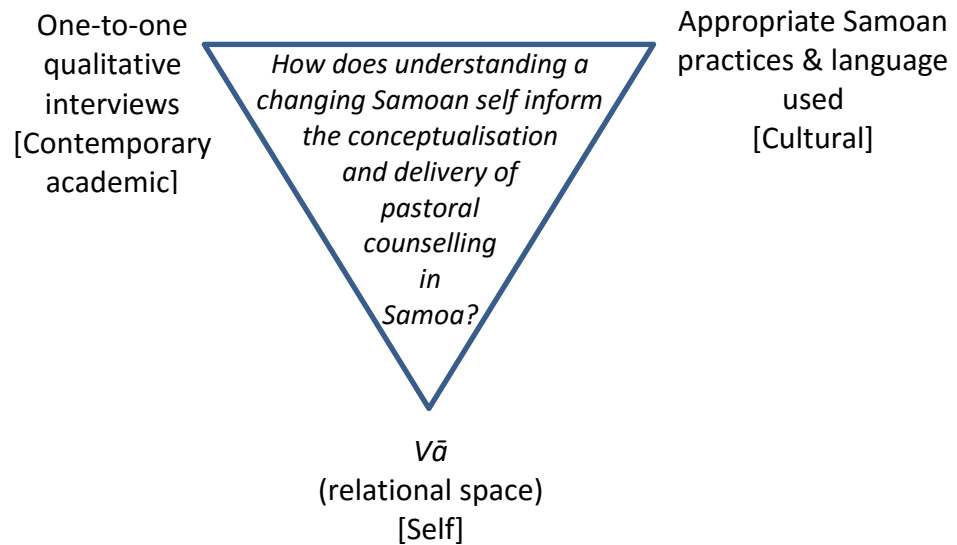
During data collection, I had to consider what would happen when I approached ministerial colleagues, as well as parishioners and non-parishioners. I would be perceived differently by each potential participant, and the power differential would be different for each group. An example occurred where ministers who I interviewed perceived me as their colleague, when I was actually the researcher. Likewise, parishioners viewed me as a minister, where I was clearly present as the researcher. To manage this tension, I explicitly expressed my intentions with the participants recruited of my role as interviewer and researcher. To manage such a differential of how I was

perceived by the different groups of participants as well as any power relation imbalance, I firmly took on an outsider researcher stance. To my participants, I was no longer a colleague minister, or a minister to some, I was a researcher seeking answers. In such a situation, I needed to position my researcher role into the forefront with my colleagues, which required placing my ministerial role into the background. I did not forsake my cultural self as a Samoan researcher since I needed to acknowledge applicable *vā* (relational space) with my ministerial colleagues and seniors, while still leading the process of the investigations. Although it was a challenge to negotiate appropriate *vā* with some of my participants that meant relaxing *vā* in some instances, it was necessary in order to be perceived as a researcher rather than as a minister. I had prior training with my supervisory team to prepare for the possibility of power imbalance during the process of the interviews. Although I took steps towards positioning myself as researcher as viewed by my participants, it is possible that participants may have only partially been able to shift their view from my positioning as a minister.

For this particular project, direct in-person communication by someone from within the cultural context and who understands the cultural context is essential in order to be able to make sense of what is being communicated. Therefore, a non-Samoan researcher and speaker are very unlikely to be able to understand or make meaningful sense of the language and expressions shared by participants. My positioning therefore as insider-outsider (Costley, Elliott, & Gibbs, 2010) is necessary and valuable to this study, to make sense of the full array of meanings presented in the interviews.

### 3.3 Methods

The *Tafatolu* methodological framework is also applied to the methods used in this project. The three corners of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework when applied to the methods (Figure 6) include one-to-one qualitative interviews, appropriate Samoan practices and language used, and the concept of *vā* (relational space):



**Figure 6.** *Tafatolu methodological framework applied to the methods used in this project*

(Source: Author)

#### 3.3.1 One-to-one qualitative interviews

I decided that one-to-one semi-structured qualitative interviews were the most appropriate method to approach this study. This form of interviewing allows flexibility for the researcher to explore issues raised through participants' responses (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2009), rather than following a structured and rigid schedule of explicit questions. The alternative to use focus group interviews was also considered. Focus group interviews are useful when investigating cultural norms and values, or when

the researcher encourages participants to discuss amongst themselves their responses and generate questions for exploration (Kitzinger, 1995). However, group interviews in this instance would not benefit this project, especially when considering that this project seeks the opinions of ministers, *matai*, elders, parents, as well as members within the settings that these leaders govern. The structure of Samoan society deems group interviews as inappropriate as roles will be dominated—the less powerful may not speak out in the presence of the more powerful. By using focus groups, some silent voices amongst the groups are expected (Kitzinger, 1995), even if the groups were aligned for ministers only, *matai* only and so forth—some voices will dominate and overpower others. Culturally, using group interviews may not be the best way to gather knowledge. To avoid this potential tension, one-to-one interviews were used.

#### **3.3.1.1      *Ethical considerations***

As the study involved interviewing human participants, ethics approval was applied for and granted by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (Northern) (refer Appendix 1). In consideration that the focus of this project involved Samoans living in Samoa, an ethics application was also submitted to the Ministry of Health in Samoa. However, after unsuccessful email and telephone communications for months preceding the scheduled data collection, as well as attempted in-person contact upon arrival into Samoa to begin data collection, I was informed that my ethics application was forwarded to the Ministry of Women Community and Social Development in Samoa for consideration. In the interim, official ethics endorsement from the CCCS was granted for my research (refer Appendix 2). At the conclusion of data collection in Samoa, the Ministry of Health staff member who initially reviewed my ethics application informed



me that they had identified no ethical issues with my research. This being the case, ethics approval from both Massey University and the CCCS governed the data collection stage of my research in Samoa, and no objections were offered by the Ministry of Women Community and Social Development in Samoa.

Since this project discusses potentially sensitive issues for some participants, I needed to consider ethical considerations for all my participants. As part of ensuring the safety and comfort of all participants, women who expressed their interest for an interview were offered the option of having my co-interviewer, a woman colleague, conduct the interview alone. It has been documented that gender matching may be required for certain qualitative interviews, especially when the interviews discuss domestic violence with women (Byrne, 2004). It was important to provide a safe environment for participants during the interviews, especially if some felt uneasy speaking to a minister about sensitive issues. Five women participants preferred this arrangement, and were interviewed by my co-interviewer.

In addition to the woman colleague who assisted as my co-interviewer, my wife also assisted as a transcriber of the digital recordings of the interviews. Both my co-interviewer and my wife were selected because of their roles as *faletua*, together with their insights into current church practices and training concerning pastoral counselling. Through consultations via email and telephone with my co-interviewer in the months leading up to my fieldwork in Samoa, my co-interviewer was informed about the project and her role in assisting with data collection. Once I arrived into Samoa we continued with face-to-face weekly consultations identifying potential participants to invite into

this project. From these consultations, I observed her skills as a proficient and capable interviewer. These consultations also provided the opportunity to discuss *fetu'utu'una'i muniao* as a methodological framework, and she agreed to assume the role of 'fisher' in the interviews. She did not require any additional training as an interviewer to the skills she already displayed. We met regularly during the process of her interviews and debriefed about her interviews, where she handed over the audio recordings following each interview. I listened to these recordings immediately, and shared my thoughts if any areas of the interview needed further investigation. There were no problematic issues that emerged from the audio recordings. This procedure was put into place to ensure the quality of the data collected matched the quality of any data that I had collected myself.

#### **3.3.1.2      *Sampling strategy and participant recruitment***

The focus for this research was upon Samoans living in Samoa. I acknowledge that there are second, third, and fourth generation Samoans born abroad (primarily New Zealand, Australia and in the United States), as well as many emigrant Samoans. There are also Samoans who have lived abroad who have returned to Samoa. Findings from this study may become a platform for future studies in pastoral counselling for Samoans living abroad, including the Samoan diaspora. However, for this study I chose to focus on Samoan-resident Samoans because investigating the influences of a changing Samoan self upon pastoral counselling practices would be meaningful from the original location of many Samoans.

There were two locations selected to invite potential participants: a parish in the township of Apia, and a parish in one of the villages on the island of Upolu. Flyers advertising the research were distributed to parishioners following Sunday worship, and during one of their mid-week gatherings. For one of these parishes, I was invited to lead Sunday worship and allowed the opportunity to explain the project at the conclusion of our worship. These particular parishes were selected because both parishes consisted of members who had migrated from around Samoa and settled into these two locations. The first parish located in the township of Apia consisted of members who had migrated to the township for employment and educational reasons. Some were from the island of Savaii, others from the islands of Apolima and Manono, and many were from other areas of Upolu. The second parish was situated in one of the villages in Upolu, and also had members from various regions and islands of Samoa. I recruited 34 participants from different groups within Samoa—the first group being ‘Parishioners’, the second group being ‘SVSG service users’, and the third group called ‘Others’ included ministers and *faletua*, *matai*, and New Zealand-born Samoans who are now living in Samoa. Group One participants (‘Parishioners’) included CCCS members. To maintain anonymity of those who participated in this project including any identifiable information, the names of the two parishes that Group One participants were drawn from, and their precise locations, have been withheld. Participants expressed their interest to participate when they contacted me by email, text, or mobile phone, using my details printed on the flyers that were distributed. Interviews were then scheduled for a suitable time. From Group One ‘Parishioners’, I interviewed nine participants and my co-interviewer conducted two interviews.

Group Two participants ('SVSG service users') included those who had used the services of Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG). The selection of service users of SVSG for this project was based on an understanding that some CCCS members were using the counselling services of SVSG, instead of their parish minister (Pala'amo, 2010). I intended to investigate possible reasons behind this growing trend. Flyers advertising this project were given to the staff of SVSG with the understanding that the flyers would be distributed to their clients. The staff of SVSG arranged possible interview schedules with their clients who showed an interest to participate, then contacted me for confirmation. To maintain anonymity of the service users of SVSG, my initial communication with potential participants was only possible through the staff of SVSG. Interviews were then set up and conducted at the SVSG office in Apia.

The staff of SVSG became mediators between myself and potential Group Two participants. This type of arrangement was necessary for this project, to protect the anonymity of the service users of SVSG. I did not play any active role in the recruitment process of Group Two participants, but instead waited for SVSG staff to notify me that they had participants willing to be interviewed. I had to work with the clients that the staff of SVSG had arranged my interviews with, as this was how I could draw any data from one of my targeted groups of participants. The option for my co-interviewer to conduct the scheduled interview was offered, if the service user preferred a woman interviewer. No one from this group took up this option. It became clear during the interviews a possible reason why those who came forth agreed to participate—many used the opportunity to voice their concerns about the lack of engagement from within

their own contexts including the church, about their issues. From Group Two 'SVSG service users', I interviewed all seven participants recruited.

Group Three participants ('Others') included ministers and *faletua, matai*, and New Zealand-born Samoans who are now living in Samoa. What aligned participants from this group was that they were not solely from Groups One or Two—although several participants from Group Three were also parishioners and SVSG service users, as well as *matai* or New Zealand-born Samoans. Ministers were identified and invited to participate, based on who I considered would best contribute towards answering the research question. The ministers' length of service in the parish was also considered, to determine any link between the length of service and the skills acquired as a pastoral counsellor. There were some long-serving ministers invited to participate (more than six years' service), and most were elder ministers. There were also ministers invited who had served in their parishes for less than six years. I chose the timeframe of six years and more, to align with the long-service term currently observed by the church. Once ministers were identified as potential participants based on the criteria above, I approached each of them in person to discuss the project and invite them to participate.<sup>6</sup> The ministers recruited were issued participant information sheets and had the option to view the question schedule if needed. None of the ministers, neither the other participants wished to view the question schedule prior to their scheduled interviews. Seven ministers requested for their interviews to be done immediately,

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<sup>6</sup> Of the two groups of ministers invited to participate—long-serving and recently appointed—some ministers were hesitant to participate out of respect for the views shared by the more senior ministers for this project. There were some middle-aged parish ministers who agreed to participate and share their perspectives.

when I approached and invited them to participate. I learned after the first incident of this happening to have all my equipment and documentation ready at all times. One minister asked that I return three days later when I approached him the first time, as he was physically unwell during my fieldwork. For all of the elder ministers whom I visited to set up an interview, food (fresh fish) was gifted for the initial contact, which aligned with cultural etiquette of refraining from visiting one's elders empty-handed.

My co-interviewer and I identified *faletua* to approach and invite, based on the same criteria as the ministers. They were then invited to participate by my co-interviewer and interview times were scheduled, the same way that I had done so with the ministers (see Table 1). There were no ministers or *faletua* who dismissed their invitation to participate; many expressed that they felt honoured to have been considered with their opinions being of use for the church. *Matai* and New Zealand-born Samoans were considered and invited to participate in the same way as mentioned for Group Three above. From Group Three 'Others', I interviewed thirteen participants and my co-interviewer conducted three interviews.

### **3.3.1.3 Interviews**

At the beginning of each interview, participants were given the participant information sheets in either English or Samoan, whichever language they preferred. The project was then explained again carefully and participants were asked to sign the consent form to participate in this project. Participants were also asked whether they agreed to have the interviews recorded using a digital audio recorder; no one refused. The interviews lasted between one and two hours and were conducted in the language of the participants'

choice. The majority of the interviews were done in Samoan; my co-interviewer and myself are native speakers. At the conclusion of the interview participants were gifted with a SAT50.00 voucher as a token of appreciation for their time and participation in the project.

A summary of the three groups of participants who were interviewed for this project is given in Table 1:

**Table 1: Groups of participants**

	Group 1 Parishioners		Group 2 SVSG service users *		Group 3 Others: Ministers, <i>Faletua, Matai</i> , New Zealand- born		TOTAL
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Minister					8		8
<i>Faletua</i>						2	2
<i>Matai</i>					3		3
New Zealand- born					2	1	3
Samoa-born	2	9	1	6			18
TOTAL	2	9	1	6	13	3	<b>34</b>

*Note.* \* SVSG=Samoa Victim Support Group (Non-Government Organisation in Samoa)

There were 34 one-to-one semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted with participants recruited for this study. With *fetu'utu'una'i muniao*, the number of interviews conducted was assessed during the phase of data collection. Specifically, the recruitment of participants for this research ceased once data saturation occurred

(Mason, 2010) over a period of eight weeks, where no new relevant information began to emerge.

In designing this research, I needed to make an important decision regarding the anonymity of participants. The consent form participants completed prior to the interview included a section that allowed participants to devise their own pseudonyms if they wished. There were participants who wished for anonymity. Other participants requested for their identities to be used, adding that by doing so would give value and worth to the information they shared. Most participants from Group Three (Others: ministers, *faletua*, *matai*, New Zealand-born Samoans) gave their consent to use their names, while most participants from Groups One (Parishioners) and Two (SVSG service users) wished to remain anonymous. I expected this to happen since Group Three participants were mostly leaders of parishes and families, accustomed to being heard and acknowledged. Likewise, participants from the other groups are often the 'unheard', 'silent' and 'unknown' voices. The request for anonymity by participants from Groups One and Two supports the silence and secrecy of their voices. If I was to reveal the true identities of participants from Group Three who were mostly leaders in their own contexts, these voices may be perceived as carrying more authority and value than the voices of participants from Groups One and Two. More important to this study were the contents of what participants reported, rather than their identities. As a Samoan minister and colleague to some of my participants, I acknowledge those participants who consented for their identities to be made known. To avoid any of the potential tensions mentioned, I decided to assign pseudonyms to all my participants and all identifiable information from segments of their interviews used was also removed.



Although this may be viewed as disrespectful on my part especially from my senior colleagues, this is a decision that I have made from my outsider-researcher position, rather than from an insider-Samoan minister position.

#### **3.3.1.4      *Reliability and validity***

An important area that needs to be addressed for any qualitative research concerns reliability and validity. Both concepts depend largely upon the researcher's ability to design the research with the applicable methods to ensure that reliability and validity are observed in the research (Franklin, Cody, & Ballan, 2010). Aligning with reliability and validity is the notion of rigour that refers to the "quality of qualitative enquiry" (Liamputtong, 2009). Reliability in qualitative research refers to the extent that other researchers observing similar methods would generate similar results; validity in qualitative research refers to the truthfulness of the findings, and the ability of the researcher to present participants' reports that are plausible and credible (Franklin et al., 2010). Validity in qualitative research is a word and concept similar to what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call credibility, in reference to the trustworthiness upheld by the constructors of the realities being studied. In order to ensure that reliability and validity of the research findings from this project prevailed, it was necessary to demonstrate the credibility (Noble & Smith, 2015) and the trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003) of the participants' accounts. This was done by presenting verbatim transcriptions both in the original language the interviews were conducted (mostly Samoan) accompanied with my translations. Further, the thought processes involved during the analysis and interpretation of participants' reports have also been presented.

### **3.3.2 *Appropriate Samoan practices and language used***

In addition to the methods described to this point that were used in this project, there were certain methods that needed to be culturally appropriate for my Samoan participants. These methods allow for appropriate practices when Samoans interact with one another, and fall within the cultural corner of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework when applied to the methods used in this project. The reason for upholding these culturally appropriate methods for Samoans is to develop a comfortable environment for my participants during our interviews, so they become encouraged and feel safe to express their thoughts freely.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, Samoans are an oral people and prefer face-to-face communication rather than self-filling a questionnaire or survey. For this reason, it was culturally appropriate that participants were recruited in-person, rather than through telephone call or text message. Participants were invited to participate in person, at one of the parishes selected. For the other location where participants were recruited, the parish minister invited participants in person on my behalf as he expressed that his parishioners would respond to his invitation rather than to a stranger's invitation that I offered. For ministers and *faletua* recruited, I personally approached ministers to invite their participation, while my co-interviewer did the same for *faletua* participants. For elder ministers who I approached to participate, they were gifted with food at the time of the first initial contact.

Another culturally appropriate method used in this research included the provision of my woman colleague and co-interviewer. Discussions throughout the findings and later

chapters in this thesis allude to the inappropriateness of a minister to discuss certain issues alone with a woman parishioner, especially for matters that involve sex. If such topics were mentioned during the interviews, there would be awkwardness if I had conducted the interview with a woman participant. The availability of a woman colleague to conduct the interviews provided an appropriate platform for dialogue to surface during the interviews, concerning any sensitive issues to woman.

Using the Samoan language in the interviews was a cultural consideration in the methods used. The option was given to participants to decide the language they felt more comfortable with. The reason behind allowing participants to guide the language used in the interviews was to afford them the freedom to speak freely and openly, rather than trying to think up of what to say based on what participants expected myself and my co-interviewer wanted them to say. As the interviews turned out, around 95% of the interviews conducted were in Samoan, which my co-interviewer and I both speak and understand fluently.

There were some interviews that began in prayer and concluded in prayer, at the request of the participant. Again, methodologically this was a cultural provision made during the interviews. Many Samoan practices and gatherings begin in prayer, seeking God's blessings for the event. Events such as sports carnivals, school assemblies, cultural celebrations and festivities—these are examples of events that Samoans seek God's presence and blessings at the start of these events. Prayers also conclude the event, thanking God for His providence during the event and again seeking God's blessings for

dispersing from the event. Interviews that began without a prayer, I often would end in prayer after first seeking permission from the participant.

### **3.3.3 The concept of *Vā* (relational space) for Samoans**

The final corner of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework when applied to the methods used includes the concept of *vā* (relational space) for Samoans. As an oratorical and communal people, relationship-building and the maintenance of relationships are important to ensure harmonious communal living. Members of each household have their assigned responsibilities and duties to perform, and each one understands their part in the larger familial and village setting. *Matai* and elders for example are regarded as leaders of the family, while the young men often are responsible for cooking duties. *Fa'aSamoa* itself assists in keeping such relationships intact, where appropriate practices and behaviours for Samoans have been laid down through the generations, according to the traditions and customs of Samoa.

In terms of how Samoans interact with others, the concept of *vā* can be understood as the space in between people that forms the relationships people are involved. This space that is identified here as relational space, develops from an understanding of self for Samoans as being relational (Tamasese et al., 2005) and communal instead of being an individual self. *Vā* for Samoans is a concept that identifies culturally appropriate and inappropriate behaviours (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009). The manner in how someone sits and walks, the appropriate language used and when to speak are examples of behaviour governed by *vā*. For *vā* between a parishioner and minister, there is a great deal of reverence afforded to the minister by the parishioner. Passing in front of a minister

would see the parishioner often excuse oneself (*tulou*) while walking in a semi-upright position to demonstrate respect. The language from parishioner in addressing one's minister would often use the polite Samoan language, instead of the local colloquial language. These illustrations describe how culturally appropriate behaviours are set by *vā*, and breaching these inherent *vā* would hinder relationships within such contexts.

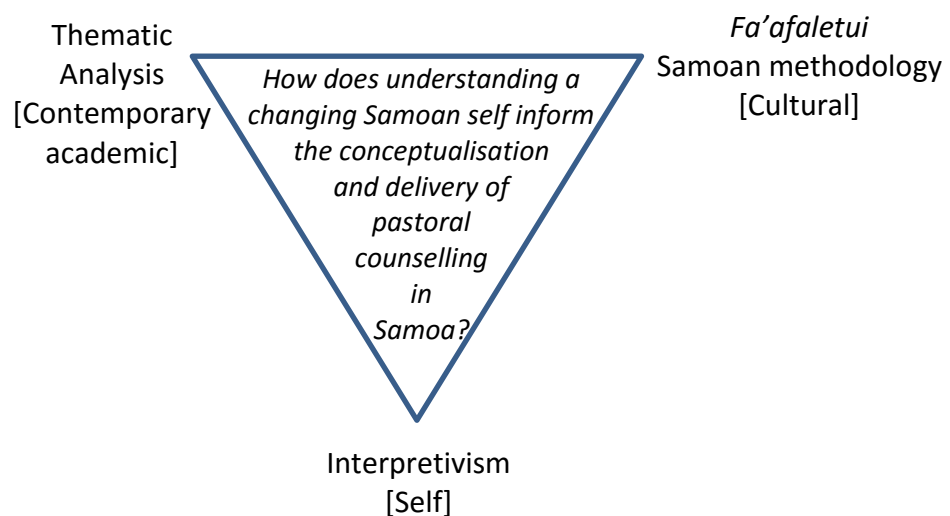
*Vā* as a corner of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework when applied to the methods used in this project, means that certain cultural methods used herein must acknowledge and account for *vā*. *Fa'atūlima*—the sharing of hands (literally)—is a Samoan cultural practice used in this project that addresses *vā* between participants and myself as interviewer. When Samoans meet for any given reason, after the guest has been greeted with a handshake and then seated, the host then welcomes the guest citing honorific titles and designations. If known by the host, the acknowledgement of the guest's village and family titles are also included. The guest responds by addressing any honorific titles and designations held by the host. After such verbal exchanges, only then will the reason for the visit be expressed. *Fa'atūlima* as a Samoan greeting practice extends beyond the literal shaking of hands—it is a practice that sets *vā* between the guest and host through acknowledging titles and designations for both the guest and host. All interactions from that point forward will be guided by *vā* that has been understood through the process of *fa'atūlima*.

*Fa'atūlima* was one of the methods used in this project for each participant recruited. This cultural method set the scene for the interviews, and developed rapport with participants once I understood and acknowledged any titles they held. It was a cultural

practice that assisted in engaging my minister colleagues who participated in this project, being recipients of the respect and honor afforded to them prior to the start of our interviews. *Fa'atūlima* was especially relevant when I interviewed ministers who were my seniors. For women participants that my co-interviewer worked with, *fa'atūlima* also played an important and necessary role towards initial engagement.

### 3.4 Analysis

The application of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework also involved the analysis of data. The three corners of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework when applied to analysis include thematic analysis (contemporary academic), *Fa'afaletui* Samoan methodology (cultural), and interpretivism (self) as illustrated in Figure 7.



**Figure 7.      *Tafatolu methodological framework applied to the analysis used in this project***

(Source: Author)

### **3.4.1 Thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis was the strategy employed for the purpose of data analysis and this strategy occupied the 'contemporary academic' corner of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework. Thematic analysis is the process where both implicit and explicit ideas found in the data are grouped together into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method of analysis identifies key patterns that have come forth from the data collected. Thematic analysis can either be 'inductive' where themes generated are linked to the data, or in a theoretical or 'deductive' way, with a theoretical interest by the researcher in mind (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Specifically, for this project, analysis of the data needs to be dynamic, similar to the way the Samoan self is dynamic. Since a major part of investigations in this project involves the concept of a changing Samoan self, a dynamic approach to analysis aligns with the concept of change. Further, the Samoan language is rich with nuances where the same word can have several interpretations. The variety of interpretations is based on briefings and emphasis given to particular vowels, and how the hearer hears the spoken word. The meanings of certain Samoan words that participants expressed were clarified with participants during the interviews, and also later with a *matai* who proof-read transcriptions for any grammatical corrections to the language reported. Due to these reasons, employing a flexible approach in the analysis of the data was necessary that included an inductive approach to thematic analysis.

One of the initial processes required in this project that preceded any thematic analysis, was transcribing the digital audio recordings of the interviews. Due to the many hours of recordings that I needed to work through, my wife assisted by transcribing approximately 15% of the data collected. I transcribed the remaining 85% of the project.

Verbatim transcripts were developed from the audio recordings of the interviews and since the majority of interviews were done in Samoan, transcripts also were predominantly in Samoan. In order to assist with the analysis of these transcripts, the interviews were numbered and line numbers were also assigned corresponding to the respective speakers. The provision was available for participants to have their interview transcripts returned to them for comment. Several participants expressed they trusted my ability and judgement as a researcher, and my integrity and honesty as a minister, to report accurately what they shared in our interviews. There were no requests to have transcripts returned for review.

An important consideration about the process of analysis for this project is the language used. As mentioned earlier, the interviews and thus the transcriptions mostly were in Samoan. The analysis that led to generated codes and ultimately the themes that emerged from this project were undertaken from the Samoan transcriptions developed. For relevant segments of the interviews that were included in reporting the data, I have translated these excerpts to follow the original text presented. Beginning from the findings chapters that follow this chapter, where the interview was conducted in Samoan a transcribed verbatim is presented, followed with an English translation that I have prepared. Where the interview was conducted in English, only the transcribed verbatim in English is presented.

Assisting the process of grouping common data patterns into themes is the use of coding. Coding is identified as a way to decontextualize text (transcriptions) and formulate useful and meaningful coded material (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Ideas and theories



are identified either inductively, that is driven and generated by the data into codes, or deductively, that begins with theory and the codes formulated either confirm or deny the theory (Hesse-Biber, 2017). OneNote computer software application was then used as a codebook in working with the codes generated.

The benefit of working closely with the data as both the primary interviewer and transcriber of a significant proportion of the data for this project meant that I had several opportunities to identify key areas of interest during the interviews and also during transcribing. Reading the verbatim transcripts added and reviewed notes already documented during the interviewing and transcribing stages. These notes that included the corresponding interview and line numbers were entered into OneNote, under the different tabulations set up as codes. For example, if during transcribing I noticed a segment of an interview referring to 'changes in the family', then the interview segment was noted (for example: Interview 2, line 35) and placed into OneNote under the tabulation 'changes in the family'. Codes that were generated in OneNote were then compared and revised, and similar codes were merged and grouped together to become the underlying themes.

The thematic analysis process used in this study is founded upon thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) and undertaken in four steps: (1) transcribing the digital audio recordings while simultaneously classifying areas of interest; (2) reading the verbatim transcriptions, creating and revising notes previously made; (3) using OneNote as a codebook to group and categorise codes that emerged from the transcriptions; (4) comparing, revising, and merging similar codes into groups that

became the underlying themes from this project. The theoretical models of information that have developed from the process of analysis become the underlying themes, that have designed the findings chapters that follow.

### **3.4.2 *Fa'afaletui: A Samoan research methodology***

Another corner of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework when applied to the analysis of data involves the 'cultural' dimension. In undertaking a cultural approach to analysis, I decided to use the Samoan research methodology *fa'afaletui* (weaving together of knowledge). The rationale behind the use of *fa'afaletui* lay in its strength to intertwine various perspectives from different groups of Samoans as undertaken in this project.

*Fa'afaletui* uses the metaphor of the traditional practice of weaving, the plaiting together of sundried strands of the leaves from the pandanus tree (*laufala*) to create various household items such as *fala* (mat). The most appropriate *laufala* are selected and used in the process of weaving, to generate a *fala* that meets its intended design. *Fa'afaletui* as a Samoan methodology uses the same principle of selecting the best *laufala* by interweaving various perspectives gathered about the 'self' to offer a Samoan perspective of self as being 'relational' (Tamasese et al., 2005). Various components of this methodology have been used by researchers investigating Pacific people including Samoans and issues within the region (McCarthy, Shaban, & Stone, 2011; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014).

The concept of weaving as found in *fa'afaletui* was used for this project. Weaving in the analysis of data for this project involved coding data patterns into groups. These codes

were then categorised into groups based on their similarities with each other, which ultimately became the underlying themes developed from this project.<sup>7</sup>

There are other Samoan research methodologies that were considered for this project, both as a methodology and also as a framework to be used in the analysis of data. An example of other possible approaches include the *Ula* methodology (Sauni, 2011) that accommodates for equal relationship between researcher and participant to allow for the freely expressions of beliefs and values. *Teu le vā* (Anae, 2010a) is a Samoan research methodology that identifies the reciprocal relationships or the space between people as sacred, that need to be nurtured and tidied when these relationships become 'unsacred'. *Talanoa* as a Pacific methodology involves a talk, a conversation and exchange of ideas through face-to-face encounters that are both formal and informal where *talanoa* creates knowledge (Vaiioleti, 2006). *Talanoa* is used for discussions between individuals as well as for group dialogue. Although these Samoan and Pacific methodologies appealed in many ways, each approach had a reason to be dismissed specifically for this project.

*Ula* methodology accentuates equal relationship between researcher and participant, yet there was the potential for an imbalance of power between myself and my participants due to my minister role. *Teu le vā* deals with the concept of maintaining and nursing *vā*. This project however acknowledges *vā* between myself as a researcher/minister, yet *vā* has been re-negotiated during the interviews so as to allow participants

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<sup>7</sup> The use of *fa'afaletui* in the analysis of data involved consultations with my supervisors to determine possible themes generated from the data. Further, a *matai* fluent in the Samoan and English languages was also consulted, concerning the Samoan concepts that emerged from the analysis of data.

to express themselves freely. *Talanoa* invites the sharing of ideas between individuals and for group settings. This methodology was dismissed since I was more interested in hearing the thoughts and ideas of participants about pastoral counselling, rather than sharing any of my thoughts as a minister involved in pastoral counselling.

### **3.4.3 Interpretivism**

The final corner of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework when applied to the analysis of data for this project involves the 'self'. For this corner, I used interpretivism for its link to my insider-researcher positioning. Interpretivism places the story being told and its intended audience at the core of where meaning can be drawn (Geertz, 1973). Interpretivism also identifies the importance of gaining an understanding of peoples' situations within their respective contexts (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Drawing parallels to hermeneutics as the interpretation of meaning from Biblical text (Osmer, 2008), taking the position of interpretivism has been valuable to this project.

My insider-researcher position helps with interpretation on two levels: firstly, as a Samoan who understands the nuances and concepts expressed; and secondly as a minister accustomed to hermeneutics, as a listener developing iterative meaning from my context to the stories expressed from the context of research participants. Understanding participants' stories and their intended audience from the position of interpretivism meant that I needed to clarify meaning from participant's reports during the interviews. By this I mean that based on what I interpreted concerning what participants reported, I would further probe relevant points to this study for clarity and meaning. This is why my insider-researcher positioning of being accustomed to

hermeneutics assisted in the analysis of data. The theory of interpretivism has helped to effectively use the data to inform the development of theoretical understandings about pastoral counselling for Samoans.

### **3.5 Summary**

A Samoan research methodological framework called *Tafatolu* was developed and proposed for this project to assist in the collection and the analysis of data. As a framework that guided the methodology, methods, and analysis of data, the *Tafatolu* methodological framework synthesised a contemporary academic approach to research, a cultural approach, together with the self that included the positioning of the researcher. These three approaches worked collectively to inform this project and answer the research question at the core of all investigations. Specifically, for this project, the *Tafatolu* methodological framework involved taking a qualitative approach. The collection of data for this project used the concept of 'fishing' as found in *fetu'utu'una'i muniao* through the use of one-to-one semi-structured interviews. The analysis of data involved thematic analysis using the concept of 'weaving' as found in *fa'afaletui*. Collectively, through the application of the *Tafatolu* methodological framework into this project, theoretical understandings about pastoral counselling for Samoans have developed as presented in the findings chapters that follow.

## Chapter Four

### A God-centred approach in counselling Samoans

#### 4.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this project is to develop an understanding of pastoral counselling for Samoa. Investigating the rise of individualism in Samoa that has challenged the collectivism of *fa'aSamoa* has engaged with the concept of an emerging and changing Samoan self. Exploring the changing Samoan self is one way this thesis proposes to meet the overall aim of this project. Globalised changes and technological advances such as the use of mobile telephones, the Internet, and computer technologies are impacting the Samoan self. The increasingly easy travel and technologies that impact the ways people communicate, are also becoming noticeable in Samoa. These are some examples of changes that are impacting the attitudes of Samoans towards their traditions, culture, and faith practices.

The research question at the centre of this project is: *How does understanding a changing Samoan self inform the conceptualisation and delivery of pastoral counselling in Samoa?* The findings chapters that follow present the data gathered for this project that answer the research question. Findings presented will first include what participants expressed about the location of God in pastoral counselling practices. Discussions will then focus upon the significant changes that have given rise to individualism as part of an emerging Samoan self. Finally, the conceptualisation of the Samoan concept *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* (navigating relational space) is presented as an applicable and contemporary way of counselling Samoans. Amidst the rapid changes

facing many Samoans today, participants expressed a theocentric emphasis, with God at the centre of their daily lives; it is this emphasis which forms the focus of this chapter.

#### **4.2 Participants' understanding of pastoral counselling**

In order to develop an understanding of what pastoral counselling means to the participant groups, participants were first asked what they understood 'counselling' to mean. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, counselling is a practice that is a relatively new concept to Samoans. Responses to the above question varied amongst the three groups of participants, but can be summed up below by this parishioner:

[Original in Samoan: Orig.] *Ia, o so'u malamalama vaivai lea i ai, i le counselling, i le faifeau, o le, pei o le faatalatalanoaga lea agai i le faifeau, mo ni mataupu o manaomia ai se fesoasoani faaletagata lava ia. I lona soifuaga ma mea o loo mafatia ai, po'o mea foi o, atonu e seāseā tupu, ae po'o ni mea ua ova ona fiafia i ai. Ae, ua manaomia seisi e talanoa i ai, a, ia, ona alu sa'o loa laia i le faifeau pei o i e maua mai ai se fesoasoani. Atonu o la'u foi vaai o le tagata aupito sili lea ona, neutral, would I say, pe a mafai ona ou faaaogaina le upu lea, o la e ia te ia le tali mo se faafitauli foi lea, e mafai ona fesoasoani mai ai. E lē o faapitoautasi i se itu, ia ae la pei e maua mai ia anaia po'o le a le sa'o, ma le tonu a, ma tatau ai.*

[Translation: Trans.] *My little understanding of counselling, by the minister, it is like a conversation I would have with my minister for any personal issues that I may need help with. Or even some things that rarely happen, or some things that I am overly excited about, and I really need someone to talk to. And so if you need someone to talk to, you go straight to the minister for help. In my opinion, he is the best person who is neutral, would I say if I am able to use this word, the answer is there with him for any issue that I may take to him, he can help me. He doesn't favour one side over another, but I can gain from him what the right thing*

*to do is, and the necessary plan of action. (Palemia, young adult man, parishioner)*

Counselling as a general undertaking of the parish minister was a view shared by several participants. As highlighted above, there is an assumption that counselling by the minister will result in specific guidance. Contrary to western concepts where individuals use reflection to uncover their own answers to their issues, the minister here is expected to have the 'correct' answers towards the most appropriate course of action. Interestingly as shared by one *matai*, counselling for Samoans is not something that is usually sought by the troubled person:

*[Orig.] Tatou foi olaga faaSamoa, e tele ina, e te lē fesili i se counselling, e offer mai e faatonu mai oe e lou aiga ma lou tuaoi, i le mea la e vaai mai e sese. O lea la ua nonofo taitoatasi, e lē mafai e seāseā fesili, foi lele e o e su'e se auala e maua mai ai [le fesoasoani]. E tāua ai la le counselling, ona ua leai se, lea ua ola disconnect i laua [mai le aiga lautele]. Ae tāua tele e taumafai, both on a secular level, ma le olaga faaKerisiano.*

*[Trans.] Counselling for us Samoans is not something you ask for, it is offered to you and you are instructed by your family and neighbours, for matters that they see that you are doing wrong. You now have a situation where we are living more as individuals, so you rarely go out and ask for ways how to receive [help]. Counselling is therefore important, because there is now a disconnection [from the larger extended family]. But it is important to seek counselling both at a secular level, and also from the standpoint of Christian living. (Sione, middle-aged man, matai and parishioner)*

The perspective on counselling here emphasises the role that significant others play for the troubled person, especially to alert that person of issues being observed that need to be addressed. Several of the minister participants shared a similar understanding of



counselling, in that counselling involved helping members of their congregations with personal or relationship issues: issues located within their families, in the parish, or within the village itself. A defining characteristic of counselling carried out by ministers is a Christian-based approach that proffers a solution drawn from the Gospel. In contrast to a western humanistic counselling process, the direction and purpose of potential outcomes are intended to position people with the 'righteous' path for any Christian as reported by Reverend Tino:

[Orig.] *Ou te talitonu o le counselling o se auala lea e avatu ai le fesoasoani faafai'feau, poo ai foi seisi, ou te talitonu foi e lē gata [i faifeau] e i ai a isi vaega o le olaga o le tagata latou te faia le mea lea, i uiga eseese o le olaga. Ae mo le counselling a le faifeau, e feagai ma le fesoasoani o se faafitauli. Se mea ua tupu i seisi e manaomia se fesoasoani, o se mea lena e ta'u o le counselling i le galuega faafai'feau, ia tatou te sosolo a i faavae o le olaga faaKerisiano. Tatou te taumafai e faailoa i tagata, ia ma pe ila ai se faafitauli. Ona o tatou nuu ma aiga, e eseese uma a faafitauli. Aemaise i le va faaulugalii, e tele ona o mai e saili mai, se fesoasoani. O le avanoa lea o le faifeau e fai [lona counselling]. O le galuega lena faafai'feau faatalalelei, o le faamafolafolaina o mea ua omoomo ma patupatua o le olaga, i va, o ulugalii, pe faapena foi i totonu o le nuu. Ae pei a o le uiga o le counselling, o se fesoasoani, faaleagaga e ala i le galuega faafai'feau. Ia ma nisi foi mea faaletino e mafai ai ona fesoasoani i se faafitauli ua tupu mai i totonu o le galuega faafai'feau i le va ma tagata. Po'o tagata i leisi tagata.*

[Trans.] *I believe counselling is a way to give help as a minister, or whoever, because I believe [not only ministers] others perform this role as there are other areas in life that some people can do counselling. But specifically for counselling by the minister, this deals with helping someone with an issue. Something that has happened to someone who needs help; that is what we call counselling by ministers, where we follow the pathway of a Christian foundation. Because our villages and families all have different issues. Especially with issues concerning*

*couples who often come [and seek help with me]. That is the work of the minister, sharing the Gospel, and making flat the bumps in life especially between couples, with relationship issues, and also issues within the village. That is the meaning of counselling, offering your help, spiritual help through the work of the minister. As well as any other practical assistance you can offer for issues that have arisen between people in your ministry, or between themselves. (Reverend Tino, long-serving parish minister)*

The role of the minister in the parish is immersed and interchangeable in the complexities of family and village life. Although this is a role that was expressed by several ministers, parishioner Mikaele saw a problem in the Christian agenda maintained by ministers in their role as pastor counsellor:

*I think my general perception is that pastoral counselling from an Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa perspective is basically to tell them, like for example,*

*[orig.] afai o se ulugalii la e pisa, o le fai e faalelei le ulugalii.*

*[trans.] if it's a couple who are arguing, the remedy is to have them make up [end of trans.]*

*You know, rather than explore all the options, they would be more geared to, more geared to the making-up, that would be the priority, you know. So you do have the Christian agenda that would come first, um, which I have no problem with because that's the idea. But, it doesn't give enough emphasis on the other areas like the kids, the safety of the children, and the individual needs. (Mikaele, middle-aged man, NZ-born Samoan and parishioner)*

For Mikaele who had spent a significant amount of time living and studying abroad then returned to Samoa, a theocentric emphasis by the minister in counselling can sometimes omit important factors for consideration. The “Christian agenda” that Mikaele expressed can be explained as a reference to a forgiving God, as alluded to in the

interview segment above. The primary objective when working with couples who are in dispute is to reconcile and to forgive one another, according to the Christian agenda of forgiving others as God forgives. The ideal outcome is reconciliation through forgiveness, rather than an exploration of possible options and interventions.

#### **4.3 Participants' understanding of the role of a minister in pastoral counselling**

Participants suggested that counselling often was involuntarily imposed upon the troubled person by senior family members and ministers. The initiative for input and intervention is minister-initiated or elder-initiated. This is in contrast to person-initiated counselling described as the troubled person seeking counselling out of self-desire for help and healing. Considering that many participants perceived the minister as preserving a Christian-based and God-centred approach to counselling, my questions probed whether participants considered the minister as someone to take their problems. The responses varied amongst participants as reported by parishioner Sina:

[Orig.] *O ia o le leoleo mamoe, e na te leoleo uma ana mamoe, ma tausī uma ana mamoe ia e i totonu o le matou nuu ma le Ekalesia. So, e alagataua lava ona i ai se mea faapea e ta'u o le counselling, e fesoasoani mai le faifeau ia ta ita ma lata tulaga faaletonu lea ua o'o i ai lota aiga, e leai la seisi e tataua ona ou alu i ai, ou te fia manao ou te fia alu i le faifeau. Leaga o le faifeau o le sui vaaia lea o le Atua, i totonu o nuu ma afioaga taitasi, ia ou te manao la ou te fia alu i le Atua pe a tuu, i seisi faaupuga. A tusa o lea ua ta alu i le Atua e fesoasoani mai i lata mataupu lea ta te mafatia ai.*

[Trans.] *[The minister] is a shepherd, who protects and cares for his sheep in our village and in our parish. So it is appropriate that there is something called counselling that the minister helps my family and I with, at times of difficulties in*

*our lives. There is no one else that I should go to; I want to go to the minister with my problems because he is God's representative in our village, and in all villages. If I could put it another way, I really want to take my problems to God. And it is just like going to God to help me with my problems, when I go to the minister.*  
(Sina, mature woman, parishioner)

Sina expected that the minister will provide a degree of certainty, insight, wisdom and direction, with an understanding that these blessings are informed directly from God. This interview suggests that ministers carry a considerable responsibility and expectation to have all the answers; to know and to solve, because he is God's representative on earth.

However, even though the minister may be perceived by some participants as a representative of God in the villages, for some participants the minister is not always the first person that they think of when problems arise. The reasons for the reluctance of participants to seek help with the minister especially when faced with issues about sex including pre-marital intercourse and teenage pregnancy, are because these issues are viewed as culturally inappropriate and disrespectful to discuss with the minister. For a SVSG service user like Susana who found it difficult to share about her problems to her relatives and close friends, the minister occupies a vital role as an intermediary; someone who can intercede and is perceived to be an effective mediator:

[Orig.] *Poo le ā se faafitauli e faigata foi gale mo taita ta te musu e share i ni ata uo, poo lota aiga a, ia pei ā la ta te alu i le faifeau poo le faifeau e faia le vā lea o taita ma ota mātua, a. Auā e leai nisi tala poo ā mea e ita o'u matua ia taita i le mea ua tupu ia taita a, ae pei la a sau loa le faifeau e talatalanoa, ia pei e uma malie atu ai a la lea o lenā lē fiafia ia taita pe a ta iloa o se mea e le fiafia ai ota matua ia taita lea ua ta faia, ma lota aiga a. Ia a ua ta iloa loa e taita ia e leai*

*seisi ta te talanoa i ai, pe la e ta te musu foi taita ia e talanoa atu i ata uo, ia pau la lea o le vaifofo o la ta alu loa i le faifeau faamatala i ai le mea ua tupu, ia e mafai a ona faapea mai, 'la ta o i ou matua tatou talatalanoa ai.'*

[Trans.] *Whatever the issue may be that is difficult for me to share to my friends, or family members, then I may go see the minister. He may be the one to ease the relationship with my parents. Because once the minister comes to talk, there is no more talk about why my parents are upset with me for whatever I had done, and the tension seems to slowly ease off from my parents and also my family. The only solution if there is no-one else I can talk to, not even my friends, then I will go to the minister explain to him what has happened then he may say, 'Come let's go talk to your parents'. (Susana, middle-aged woman, parishioner and SVSG user)*

For some participants, the minister and *faletua* function together to bring about healing. As expressed in the interview that follows, Folole sought help with her minister as well as with SVSG. When Folole's husband physically abused one of their children, she took her situation to SVSG and perceived that they responded effectively. Her minister was also able to help her in the spiritual sense; SVSG dealt with the physical violence in her family, while the minister attended to her spiritual turmoil through prayer. SVSG service user Folole's situation illustrates that although ministers are confident in providing spiritual support, they do not have the training to provide extended pastoral guidance:

[Orig.] *E leai a ma se eseesega o lota alu e ave mea ia i le faifeau ma lata tatalo i le Alii, auā e leai se mea e tutusa uma a. Auā ou te iloa e faigofie atu, auā o leisi mea o le faifeau o la e lelei le faifeau, ta te la'ala'a atu i ai, ma talatalanoa ai i mea ia e tutupu. A'o le Alii e aunoa ma le tatalo. E pei la e faigofie lota alu i i le faifeau e talanoa i ai, o lua ai loa ma le tama lena o le tatalo, ma faatoese i le Alii. Ia pau lena. [...] Na muamua a, ou tatalo i le Alii e fesoasoani mai ia te a'u i la'u sau lea ou te sau ai [i SVSG]. Ou te lē manao e ave le mea lea ma se mea e aafia ai fua leisi uso a tagata. Tasi a le tagata [le mā tama teine] na ou sau ai, e*

*aumai la'u mataupu; leaga foi ua ou vaai, ua matuā leaga faia le fasiga o la'u teineitiiti, o lena na ala ai ona ou sau. [...] Ae peiseai ua ta iloa le agalelei o le Alii i lota sau, ia ae la e tali mai fo'i a, la ta te iloa o la e faatasi le Alii i tagata ia [SVSG].*

*[Trans.] There is no difference between taking my problems to the minister and my praying to God, to me they are both the same. I think it is easier for me to go to the minister because the other thing is that I can physically walk to the minister, he is here in person, and I can talk to him about things that have happened. But for God, it is through prayer. So it is easier for me to go and talk with the minister, and pray, and seek forgiveness from God. That's it. [...] I first prayed to God to help me as I approached here [SVSG]. I didn't want this case to affect any other people. I only had one person in mind [our daughter]; the reason why I have come here to bring my case, because I saw how bad my girl was beaten up. [...] But that is how I know the kindness of God in my coming here, and they have responded effectively. I know God is with the workers here [at SVSG]. (Folole, middle-aged woman, parishioner and SVSG user)*

Several minister participants shared that they dealt primarily with the spiritual realm of the person when it came to their counselling practice. They felt comfortable to offer spiritual healing for the problems people encountered, equipped through their training in theological and Biblical studies. Yet what is being described is that currently ministers do not have the skills to bring their God-centred approach to the fullness of the complexities of people's lives and thus people are beginning to seek out secular services. For some ministers who had formal training in counselling practices and techniques, these skill sets were displayed through various parts of the interviews such as this interview with Reverend Pati:

*[Orig.] A o faapea o saunoa mai ma talanoa mai tagata, ia ma fai foi ni reflections e uiga i le faafitauli o loo i ai, ma taumafai e faamalamalama i le tagata o lea ua*

*e malamalama i mea ia e fai mai ai, ia ona i ai lea o ia provide some guidance foi lele e vaavaai ai ia i le faafitauli, ia ma fesoasoani i ai e formulate a e ia ia ni mea e mafai ona agai ai lona mafaufau e fesoasoani ai i le faafitauli. Auā o le mea a e tāua, ia ‘aia nei avea le mea foi lele pei se dispensary na’o le sau a, alu atu le prescription, ia ona ave laia lea folo e le tagata lea, without a part in it.*

[Trans.] *When people come and talk about their problems, you need to reflect back to them about the problem being discussed, and try and get across to the person that you understand the problem they are telling you about. Then you provide some sort of guidance to them that they can consider, to help them formulate themselves areas they look at to help with their problem. Because the important thing is, so that the process doesn’t become considered as a dispensary where you just come and get a prescription, and go and fix the problem without that person playing a part in it. (Reverend Pati, long-serving parish minister)*

Some ministers expect that they should be the ‘Orator of God’, literally God’s representative, dispensing a single correct solution. However, other ministers have a different orientation to the dispensary approach, and consider that there are contextual issues that require ‘unpacking’ and a flexible response. The role of the minister in counselling is largely in response to seek healing for the spiritual dimension of the person. The expectation by participants that the minister would meet their counselling needs for the most part came from the view that ministers were seen as representing divine succour.

#### **4.4 Participants’ understanding of the role of *faletua* and other women in pastoral counselling**

In addition to identifying the role of the minister in pastoral counselling, exploring the role of *faletua* in pastoral counselling is necessary as several participants expressed that

*faletua* and other women channel God's will as well. Specifically, for this study, participants' views of the role that *faletua* played in pastoral counselling were pursued.

Participants considered that ministers and their *faletua* were most effective in their parishes when they worked together in partnership. *Faletua* hold a powerful position of stature even though they do not have the authority bestowed through ordination. *Faletua* have an 'informal' triage role; undertaking initial empathetic conversations and facilitating the next step of speaking with the minister. *Faletua* were also regarded as more appropriate than ministers in addressing women's gender-related concerns as reported by *matai* Sione:

[Orig.] *Ou te iloa a e tutusa lelei a le role a le faifeau ma le faletua. E i ai le taimi e t̄ua atu ai o le l̄ faaaogā o le faifeau, i issues tau-fafine, a, e sili atu le t̄ua o le talanoa o le faletua i issues na. E open up tagata e talanoa i le faletua. E i ai foi issues e open up le talanoa atu i le faifeau. So to me, they both have the same role, but for different populations. Beyond that, it's one being supportive, afai e lead le faletua, then o le role o le faifeau o le support. A o lead le faifeau, o le role o le faletua o le support, in those areas. Aua ou te iloaina e i ai issues, aemaise i totonu o aiga, o teineiti a, ua mātua l̄, to me, I don't advise e fai e le faifeau ia issues na, a. A o misa foi fafine o le aiga, o le faifeau e tataua ona talanoa i tamaloa, males, but the victims, e t̄ua ia a'u le talanoa i ai, le i ai o le role a le faletua e play iina.*

[Trans.] *I believe the minister and his faletua both share the same role. There are times when it is more important to not use the minister, for issues concerning women, but it is more important for the faletua to talk to about these issues. People will open up talking to a faletua. Likewise, there are issues people will open up more by talking to the minister. So to me, they both have the same role, but for different populations. Beyond that, it's one being supportive; if the faletua*



*leads, then the role of the minister is to support. When the minister leads, the role of his faletua is to support in those areas. Because I know there are issues in our families, especially with girls, I don't advise for the minister to address these type of issues. Also if women of the family fight, the minister needs to talk to their husbands, but for the victims, that is the role to be played by the faletua. (Sione, middle-aged man, matai and parishioner)*

Many participants expressed that they perceived the *faletua* as a gateway to solutions for issues that they faced. People in both the parish and the village setting found it easier to consult with the *faletua* rather than with the minister himself, since some issues like sex are culturally inappropriate and disrespectful for a woman to discuss this with a minister. At the discretion of the *faletua*, the minister was told of issues and problems that people had experienced as expressed by Reverend Alafoti:

*[Orig.] Ia, o leisi taimi i le nuu, o le tele o mataupu e muamua iloa e le faletua i lo le faifeau. Ona o le tulaga foi lele, manatua foi o le faletua a fai ni mafutaga a Tinā, e tele mai ai ia Tinā. Pei foi la o tulaga o Tinā i totonu o aiga, e pei e, e muamua a e sulu i ai le fanau. E lē muamua o mai i Tamā ae muamua sulu i Tinā. E tau faapena foi le uiga o le tulaga o le faletua i totonu o le galuega. Ia ma le faletua a sau e ta'u mai se mea, e sau ai a ma le, 'Oi talofa e,' a, i lea tagata ma lea tagata. O lona uiga, o lona ia lena lagona, ia fai se fesoasoani i lea tagata. O lona uiga o iina le fasitepu muamua e tele ona agai mai ai isi mea i le faitotoa, a.*

*[Trans.] Sometimes in the parish, for many of the issues the faletua finds out first before the minister. This is because when the faletua conducts gatherings for the mothers of the church, many mothers attend. Just like the role of mothers in our families, they are the first ones that the children seek refuge in. They don't come to the father first, but often they seek help with their mothers. That's very similar to the role of the faletua in the parish. The faletua often shows compassion in saying, 'Oh, how sad,' to people who come to her for help. And that is just her nature, to help all those in need. This means that the faletua is the first step for*

*those who come to her, to the door of many possibilities.* (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)

Regardless of a reluctance to seek help with the minister instead of the *faletua*, there was an expectation that together as minister and *faletua* they channel wisdom to address many of the issues that parishioners faced, as parishioner Sarona shared:

[Orig.] *Pei ua tatau ona i ai, ma atoatoa ia i lāua tomāi, o lea foi na o mai foi i taimi faapenei, ma ua lava foi le lāua suesuega ma ua lava foi le lāua iloa i ai i mau faafitauli o le olaga. Aemaise ua leva ona tapenapena ae le'i ō e feagai ma le nuu. Atonu e tali mai ai se mea ta te sulu atu i ai, i se faafitauli faatupulaga.*

[Trans.] *[The minister and faletua] should have between the two of them the wisdom, as they have been through times like these and they should have enough understanding to deal with many of life's problems. Because they have been preparing to face these issues well before they went to face the village and especially their parish. So they should be able to help me with any youth issues that I seek their help.* (Sarona, young adult woman, parishioner)

Several participants expressed the importance of the *faletua* in the pastoral counselling process. This aligns with one of the common responsibilities often assigned to women in the traditional Samoan family, one that stems from the relationship between a brother and his sister. The sister-brother relationship is platonic, and is understood as one of the sacred relationships for Samoans. The male sibling affords a high degree of respect for his sister, often becoming her protector and defender. Any discourse in the presence of women siblings requires careful consideration to exclude matters that are deemed inappropriate. Matters pertaining to sex and language with connotations of sex or reference to intercourse or even the mention of the word 'sex', are highly inappropriate in such a setting. The reverence of such a relationship has been

transferred to now include the minister and his *faletua*. Just as a brother would give the greatest degree of respect for his sister, a parallel extent of respect is now afforded to the minister and his *faletua* by people that surround them. This is not to say that the minister and *faletua* are considered as a brother and his sister; they are still considered as husband and wife. The respect given to them collectively by their families, parishioners, and village members can be equated to the respect of a brother to his sister.

Traditionally gender plays an important role in what is considered appropriate and inappropriate to be discussed. This follows on from the sacred relationship aligned with a Samoan brother to his sister that is now given to the minister and his *faletua*. Topics about sex are considered taboo, even though for couple counselling and young adults' relationship counselling often sexuality is an underlying factor. Gender roles and expectations in the Samoan family dictate what are appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. As one leader of his church, Timoteo, expressed:

[Orig.] *O le tiute lea o mo mea o tamaitai o aiga. O i foi lea sa i ai le mea lea sa ta'u, ua malepe ua le toe maua, o le va feagai ai o le itu o teine ma le itu o tama, itu o fafine, itu o tane. E tutupu a'e ma ola, ua iloa e le tagata le mea e o i ai. E le mafai ona fesopoa'i. Aso nei, e sulu le tama i le ie i le taeao, ae vaai atu ua sulu mai ai lona tuafafine i le afiafi, poo se mitiafu, o fesopoi mea ia, e sa. Sa ona fesopoi mea ia. Ia ona ua pau lava o le mea ua i ai le olaga i ona po nei.*

[Trans.] *This is the duty of women in the family. This is also what once was called, but now has been broken down and cannot be found again, the sacred relationship between a woman and her male counterparts. We grow up and develop, we are made aware and taught of this distance between the two. The person knows where they are situated and what is appropriate and what is not.*

*And this space cannot be violated. These days, the male wears his ie lavalava the morning, and then you see his sister wearing the same ie lavalava in the evening, or a t-shirt. These items have been exchanged with the other but they should not be. But, that is just what the world has become these days. (Susuga Timoteo, long-serving church leader close to retirement age)*

In the above example, the relational space or *vā* between a sister and her brother that is considered as sacred has been breached. As Timoteo continued to express in the interview, the woman sibling in most traditional Samoan families is given all honour and respect from members of her family. She sits in the *fale tele*, the meeting house of that family, and is served by her brothers. She is the *tama'ita'i*, the woman sibling held with the highest regard and respect in the family. She is 'the apple of the eye' or '*i'oimata* of all her brothers. Her brothers prepare her meals; they cook her food contribution and deliver this to the weekly gathering of all *tama'ita'i* in the village. Most often it is the eldest woman sibling who represents her family at the weekly meeting of all *tama'ita'i*, for villages in Samoa that still hold to this tradition. She is considered a high priestess to her brothers and the rest of her family.

The implication of such a relationship between a sister and her brother as Timoteo explained, is that even wearing any item of clothing that either one had worn is considered inappropriate and in breach of this relationship. The t-shirt or even the *ie lavalava* that physically touched the body of the male sibling, a piece of clothing that may have absorbed some of his sweat, must not come into contact with any area of his sister's body. *Vā* as the space in between that distinguishes how one person refers to another is potentially becoming a space that disconnects people (Tui Atua, 2007; Van der Ryn, 2016). An example is a breach in the relational space or *vā* between a sister and

her brother that is considered sacred. The reasons for a diminishing significance as this project will address, involves a rapidly changing Samoan self from the cultures and traditions of Samoa. The link between the sister-brother relationship and an understanding of counselling from a Samoan perspective is that the sacredness of this relationship is afforded to ministers who often undertake counselling in the parishes.

For many Samoans the sacred relationship has now shifted to not only include the sister-brother relationship, but also has been extended to the minister and his family. In line with this sacredness, it is considered culturally inappropriate for a Samoan woman to seek help from a minister alone, in a space that includes only the two of them behind closed doors. Paradoxically, the male minister is seen as both the Orator of God, and also as 'impure'—a potential sexual predator as implied by participants, while the woman seeking help is seen as 'pure' and virginal. However, if the *faletua* is present, then issues about sexual matters are appropriately discussed between all parties. Again, the inappropriateness of a minister to be alone with a woman parishioner seeking help is determined by the sister-brother sacred relationship.

The consideration of gender-specific practices is necessary for pastoral counselling in the Samoan context. Addressing such practices follows on from *vā* that is considered sacred between a brother and sister—this sacredness is transposed to the pastoral relationship between a minister and a woman parishioner seeking help. In traditional Samoa, it is inappropriate for a sister and her brother to be located alone in a private space, regardless of how innocent this occurrence may be. The difficulty for many ministers today is that traditionally there are gender-specific expectations that need to

be considered when counselling women parishioners. Some ministers in recent times have been reprimanded because of allegations of inappropriate behaviour, during private counselling meetings with a woman. In some cases, these allegations have proved false, yet avoiding suspicion could have been managed by observing sacred *vā* between a minister and a woman parishioner. Due to the interweaving of cultural practices and religious practices, *faletua* play a crucial role in the pastoral counselling process. Having the *faletua* present during counselling situations has a two-fold benefit: firstly, the *faletua* acts as chaperone and her presence safeguards any inappropriate behaviour or allegations of inappropriate behaviour to occur; secondly, the presence of the *faletua* generates an atmosphere that invites women parishioners and village members to feel comfortable in the presence of another woman to share her stories. Parishioner Lasi expressed how she perceived the ministry of a minister and a *faletua*:

[Orig.] *Ona e i ai tulaga e le mafai ona alu atu a'u o le teine, a, faasoa atu ia te oe [o le faifeau]. Ae ou te iloa a'u ia, o le galuega faitoalua, o le galuega a le faletua ma le faifeau. Auā e i ai isi tamaitai e o atu [i le faifeau] e matamuli, a o la e mafai ona o atu e lē mafai ona o atu i lau susuga, ae la e alu atu i lou faletua, a. Ona o tulaga faapena, e i ai tulaga tatou o Samoa e ma'ale'ale isi mau mea e tau tamaitai, pe a, but, o le trust o lena ua sasaa atu i le faletua. A oo foi i le taimi e toe deliver ai, deliver mai a i le faletua, with knowing, o lena na faasoa atu le faletua ia oe [le faifeau]. A toe aumai la le [fofo], ia toe sau a le faletua talanoa mai ia te a'u. Ia ou 100% iloa lelei, na'o le faletua la na te iloa a.*

[Trans.] *Because there are situations where I, myself, as a woman cannot come and share to you [the minister]. But in my opinion, it is a joint-ministry by both the faletua, and the minister. Because there are some women who approach [the minister] and become shy. And they come not really to you who is the minister, but rather they approach the faletua for help. This is because of the situation for us Samoans especially with sensitive issues involving women, but, the trust is*

*poured out to the faletua. And then when solutions are delivered they come from the faletua, without knowing that the faletua had discussed the problem with you [the minister]. And when the answer is delivered, this comes from the faletua. I must believe 100% that it is only the faletua who knows. (Lasi, young adult woman, parishioner)*

As emphasised earlier, the inclusion of the *faletua* in the counselling process provides a safer context for pastoral conversations to occur. The *faletua* shares a complementary role to the minister, and she also channels the Gospel and is considered a representative of God in the parishes. Although the *faletua* ministry is informal and formally unqualified, their wisdom is nevertheless considered complementary to that of ministers. In recent years, *faletua* have been given formal training in the seminary to help them in their collective ministries with their husbands.

The *faletua* also adds a maternal element that extends beyond that of any biological mother, but becomes rather an empathetic mother sharing the person's suffering as shared by *faletua* Monika:

*I will bring in the woman aspect, the mother nurturing role and also with the couples, just having that woman support rather than just having the minister talk to the couple, the women were able to talk about their relationships easily. [...] I think we bring that mother role and the women's perspective, I think most of the problems are relationship problems and I think that they do need a women's opinion. [...A role she plays as] a shoulder to cry on and someone to listen while they talk, yeah just someone there to maybe be a friend, support person. (Monika, mature-aged faletua)*

The role of *faletua* in counselling as presented by the participants may suggest playing a subsidiary part. In saying so, several participants noted the importance and value of

having the *faletua* present and sharing her input during the counselling encounter. In specific instances, the role of *faletua* supersedes that of inclusion and becomes central with the minister taking a supportive role. The ministry for both minister and his *faletua* is most effective when they are able to make space for which ever partner is most appropriate for the particular issue presented by parishioners.

By taking into consideration the transference of the reverence of the sister-brother relationship to now occupy the space of both the minister *and* his *faletua*, the role of women in counselling must thus be understood as collaborative. Although *faletua* apparently hold a subsidiary role to the minister, *faletua* share a role in counselling with the minister that is equal but often unrecognised. This collaborative role in counselling for both minister and his *faletua* shall be explored further in a later chapter.

#### **4.5 Pastoral counselling practices by the minister**

‘Meaning-making’ is the common thread that links the participants’ understandings of counselling, together with their understandings of the roles of the minister and women in counselling. This knowledge base functions to help give meaning to peoples’ lives about their personal relationships with each other as well as with God. Several participants shared that the motivation to develop personal relationships with God, was behind the counselling undertaken by ministers and *faletua*. As Reverend Pati expressed:

[Orig.] *Poo le tagata e sau e ma’i ma le a, before go deal with anything else, spiritually, we have to deal with them first. E i ai la isi taimi, e uma atu le faaleagaga, ae ua mou atu isi mea. So we do that, e faamuamua a le faaleagaga,*



*ia ona fai ai loa o isi mea. So, o le mea la lena e te naunau i ai, ou te look forward foi i ai, pe a o'o ina tutupu. Fai a, pei a o la e fai le lauga. Very simple way. E pei o le faiga lena. O le faiga lena e ta te naunau a e, e fesoasoani i ai. A o mai foi, o le mea lena.*

*[Trans.] Whoever comes to me either sick or whatever, before I go deal with anything else, spiritually, we have to deal with them first. Sometimes after dealing with the spiritual, other things get healed as well. So we do that; we deal with the spiritual nature of the person first, then look at other areas. So, I look forward to doing it in this way when things happen. The way I do it is just as if I am preaching a sermon. Very simple way. That is how it is done. That is the method that I am passionate about in helping those who come. When they come, that is what I do. (Reverend Pati, long-serving parish minister)*

The minister's primary concern in counselling is the spiritual dimension of the troubled person. The minister's focus upon the spiritual dimension for parishioners involves his preaching, prayer, scripture reflections, and the practice of faith that all function to enrich and encourage the individual spiritually. By emphasising and working upon the spiritual dimension, other areas of the person's life will result in healing. One important way the minister can ensure attending to the spiritual dimension of those in his flock, is to conduct regular home-visits. The minister's responsibility is to be proactive and to locate himself at the centre of the lives of his parishioners; rather than merely reacting to concerns brought to him. It is the minister's responsibility and role to know the living conditions of his parishioners and to stay up-to-date with potential challenges they face. The presence of the minister amidst a family in turmoil or in conflict at that time can diffuse a potentially unfavourable situation as reported by SVSG user Alice:

*[Orig.] Ae, ia i ai i le polokalame a le faifeau i le vaiaso, ia ni aso foi gale e alu ai i totonu o lana Ekalesia, e asiasi i totonu aemaise lava o lana Ekalesia ia ma nisi*

*foi o faapena o fia maua se fesoasoani i lea itu. Auā ou te iloa, e osofaia pea aiga i le tele o aso e le fili ma le tiapolo. Ae i la’u iloa, a faapea ae alu asiasiga ia a le faifeau, atonu o se auala lena e ala atu lana, pe a alu atu lana asiasiga ae tau atu i se aiga o vevesi mai, ou te iloa e aogā lana galuega lea, o le ā faapea ona fofo ai le faafitauli o lea aiga. Atonu e iloa ai e tagata, o le galuega a le auauna paia a le Atua la e faasolo i lea aso, e lē na’o le Aso Sā. Ae o a’u ia ma lo’u manatu tutoatasi, e tataua ona alu pea asiasiga a le faifeau, i aso o le vaiaso. Pe lua aso i le vaiaso e alu ai lana asiasiga, ou te iloa e tāua tele i le faifeau.*

*[Trans.] It should be included in the weekly programme of the minister, specific days to do home-visits with those especially in his parish, together with others who may need his help. Because I know, many families are tempted by evil every day. And when the minister often does his home-visits, he may turn up at a time that the family are arguing or fighting, and his home-visit will be a way to bring peace to that family at that time. That way people will know that the servant of God works his ministry other days of the week besides Sunday. But in my opinion, the minister should continue to do home-visits during the week, maybe two days during the week; that is very important for the minister. (Alice, young adult woman, parishioner and SVSG user)*

Another important pastoral practice for any minister is his sermon. For several ministers interviewed, they perceived the sermon as a form of counselling to help the troubled people in their parishes, as expressed by Reverend Tino:

*[Orig.] Because o le aotelega o le meaning o le counselling, e aofia ai i mea uma aemaise ai lau lauga, tāua tele. That’s another way i la’u tilotilo tasi lena vaega o le counselling e sili ona lelei. Ia matua sauni, e te lē target-ina mo se tagata a ia real. Ia e muamua e lagona a’o fai lau sailiiliga; e lē mafai ona lē maua tagata [i lou aulotu]. O le tasi lena counselling lelei a, o le vaega o le lauga.*

*[Trans.] Because the overall meaning of counselling it especially includes the minister’s sermon, very important. That’s another way in my view; that is one way of counselling that is important. So you must prepare well, and not target*

*any particular person or group of people, but make it real. You must feel the sermon yourself, as you prepare; how can you then not move the people [in your congregations]? That is one area good for counselling, is the role of the sermon.*  
(Reverend Tino, long-serving parish minister)

The sermon plays an important role to both preacher and hearer, and its relevance to counselling differentiates ministers. There are ministers who reflect on their parishioners' needs and aim to touch their lives, compared to ministers who endeavour a more ceremonial representation of religious teachings. Although several ministers shared a similar view about the importance of the sermon in counselling, parishioner Mikaele gave a different view. When asked if he saw the sermon as a form of counselling by the minister he stated:

*I think, ah it can be. It can be, but the [sermon] itself is not counselling because it is one-way. But the thing is, is that it does provide an opportunity for [the minister] to address what the thoughts should be to the different people who are listening. So parents, their children are here, give them a bit of, thoughts, so the children can get it, you know. But in a certain sense it's opening peoples' minds, but it's not counselling.* (Mikaele, middle-aged man, NZ-born Samoan and parishioner)

The value for Mikaele in counselling is that there needs to be mutual dialogue, rather than a didactic monologue as found in the minister's sermon. This distinction is an important consideration about the minister's sermon; some ministers see the sermon as a form of counselling, yet Mikaele expressed that the sermon is not counselling, since the hearer has no opportunity for expression. Mikaele highlights a valuable attribute that is essential to any Western counselling: listening skills. Traditional Samoan methods of counselling involve a didactic approach where *matai* were 'community counsellors' who knew what was best for the larger community (Schuster, 2001). Another participant

who shared about listening being a key counselling skill even for Samoans, was a retired parish minister who had decades of experience of listening and filtering through the stories people had shared. This minister applied counselling skills he learnt from missionaries of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in the early 1970's, into his many years of service to the people of Samoa:

[Orig.] *O lea a ou te manatu o le tāua lava o le share mai o ō. A ia lava a lata patience foi lenei ma lota atamai e faalogo lelei ai. Po'o fea la e mafuli i ai ia le tagata? Fea la e i ai lagona la e nanā? Ona o la e nanā mea. Faalogologo foi lenei, a lot of things are just there, but are not said, ā. E lē o ta'ua. E aogā foi la lota faalogo lelei i mea la e ta'u mai, e te iloa ai mea la e lē o ta'u mai.*

[Trans.] *I believe that it is very important for the person to share his or her story. But I must have enough patience and wisdom to listen carefully to what is being shared. Where is the person coming from? What are the hidden and underlying emotions involved? Because really the person there in front of me is hiding something. You must listen out for clues, a lot of things are there, but are not said, aye. So it is important that you listen carefully to what is being said, so that you will know all that is not being said. (Reverend Simona, retired minister and church leader)*

There were some ministers who expressed that they considered it important to be an active listener, rather than the passive recipient of words spoken by parishioners. The above example captures the listener taking an active stance, sifting the information spoken to find the unsaid within the conversation, through listening for cues. From this skill of active listening, the minister in this instance would respond. However, some ministers considered their role as primarily to pronounce the course of action for the troubled person to take. Reverend Simona further adds that in addition to patience in listening to peoples' problems, sometimes people need to be summoned to come and

talk about their problems. There appears a reluctance of parishioners to seek help in their minister, so they are then summoned by the minister:

[Orig.] *Auā e lē nofonofo fua le tagata o le aulotu, alu fua i le faifeau. E ala ona alu i ai ia seisi i le faifeau ona ua mana’o ai le faifeau. Ona sau lea.*

[Trans.] *Because people in the parish do not suddenly volunteer themselves to go and see the minister. The reason why someone would go to the minister in the first place, is because the minister has summoned that person. Then the person would come to the minister. (Reverend Simona, retired minister and church leader)*

Another minister shared this same view, and offered his reasoning behind why he would summon people to come and see him for their problems:

[Orig.] *Ia, e tau lē toatele a ni tagata e o mai e fia talanoa mai, i ni o latou faafitauli foi ia. Ae, i le vaai a le faifeau ia i ai, afai lena ta te vaai atu a i le tulaga o le lē tagolima o nisi aiga, e le faatalitali se’iloga e fai mai. Po’o ni mea foi ia tau, fanau, ua tau lē lava ni lavalava, ia latou meaai foi lele ae la e tele meaai a le faifeau. Ia e valaau a i ai, i auala foi lele ia ‘aua ne’i iloa uma e nisi tagata auā o mea foi ia i nuu a vaavaai mai tagata, pe o aisi mai aiga i le faifeau pei e matagā, a. A o le auala a le faifeau ia e mafai ona faapea, ‘Ia, sau se e i ai le mea lea ou te fia talanoa atu ai i lau susuga.’ [...] Ia na uma loa lea, ia e alu ma ave sana taga pepa po’o a mea ta te iloa [o manaomia]. Pe sata faalogo foi i ai o tau, lē aooga nai tamaiti leai se pili.*

[Trans.] *Not many people want to come and talk to the minister, about any issues they may be having. But if the minister sees a problem, for example the financial hardship facing some of his parishioners, he doesn’t wait until they come to him. Or for any matters concerning the children, not enough clothes or food, and yet the minister has plenty of food. So I summon them, in a way that others will not take notice of. The reason for this is that back in the village, it is embarrassing for people to be seen taking food or other items away from the minister’s place. But*

*the way a minister can be subtle in helping out is to summon them, 'Come over, there is a matter I would like to discuss with you.' [...] At the end they leave with a bag of items that I know [they may be in need of]. Even if I hear that the children are rarely attending school because of not paying their school fees. (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)*

The minister together with his *faletua* must not only react to people when they seek help, but at times they must be proactive and summon people who they see may need pastoral counselling. At times the minister can use the guise of spiritual counsel in order to assess and provide practical support. Pastoral counselling appears to have a pre-requisite of sensitivity and discernment of parishioners' needs. Just as some parishioners are reluctant to come to their minister for help, ministers themselves at times find it difficult to offer any help unasked or uninvited. Even though most ministers hold a theocentric emphasis in pastoral counselling and are expected to have all the answers, some ministers acknowledged that at times they are faced with doubt concerning effective intervention. One participant compared such a situation of uncertainty to a rugby player experiencing an unexpected decline in performance. The key for this minister was to take the conversation back to the basics:

*[Orig.] O le faifeau na te vaaia le saogalemu, e lē gata i le saogalemu, pei foi a lele e lē gata i le security, a o le foundation a le tagata, a. Tusa o le tagata atoa e te, e mo'i o matua la e nurture, ae e ō lua foi ma le galuega a le faifeau, spiritual. E lē gata i le a'oa'o foi a lele o le basic e tatau, pei a o le tagata lakapi, a faaletonu, ona faapea, 'Go back to the basic,' a. Pei o le uiga lena o le tala, faapena foi le uiga o le galuega lea [o le counselling]. A i ai se faaletonu, vaai poo le a le mea lea mafua mai ai le faaletonu, go back, go back to basic a. Pei o le uiga lena o la'u tala Sana lau susuga Pala'amo i le counselling, e lē faigofie, ae, ia ta iloa o le faifeau o lea e aafia ai le complete person, tagata atoa lea e lalo o le va'aiga a le faifeau.*

[Trans.] *The minister is the one who looks after the harmony of the person, not only the harmony or otherwise security of the person, but also the foundation of the person. Sort of the whole person; true that parents are responsible for nurturing the person, but it goes together with the work of the minister, the spiritual dimension. You teach them about the necessary basics, sort of like a rugby player, when there is a problem in performance, you say, 'Go back to the basics.' That is what I am trying to say, that the meaning [of counselling] is the same. If there is a problem, look to what is causing the problem or issue. Go back, go back to basics. That is what I am trying to say Alesana, in counselling it is not easy, but I need to understand the minister as being involved with the complete person, who is under the guidance and care of the minister. (Reverend Lameko, mature parish minister)*

As articulated by participants, it appears that there is a spectrum of expectations. At one extreme there is the expectation that ministers, together with their *faletua*, will be God's all-knowing representatives, who will listen to the parishioner and seek God's will through prayer and reflection then pronounce the right course of action. At the other end of the spectrum the minister and his *faletua* need to listen to the individual with openness and flexibility, ready to respond accordingly to each person's particular circumstance. Then there is the tension that traditionally certain areas are seen as the domain for *faletua*. Expanding upon the counselling role of ministers is such that several challenges are foreseen. Firstly, in the context of a changing Samoan self, can ministers retain God-centred counselling practices and use the Gospel flexibly to respond to diverse needs of parishioners? Secondly, how do ministers navigate crossing boundaries into conversations traditionally seen as the domain of their *faletua*? Finally, does a shift in the counselling role of ministers demonstrate a shift in gender expectations of who

can have what sort of conversation? The following sections will work to develop answers to the above questions.

#### **4.6 Crossing boundaries within pastoral counselling practices**

Sometimes a minister may ‘name and shame’ specific behaviours or persons from the pulpit. The minister may have information that could have been made available to him only by his *faletua*. Public naming and shaming from the pulpit together with the *faletua* revealing to her husband any disclosures only made known to her, are examples of the violation of pastoral boundaries. With an emerging changing Samoan self, boundary breaches are illuminated more. Where traditionally Samoans often lived open and public lives, several participants expressed that their lives are more private now by living as smaller nuclear families, and at times even require privacy from the larger extended family and collective setting. Preaching the weekly sermon, the minister sometimes crosses the boundary of maintaining the privacy of peoples’ lives, especially when personal problems individual parishioners have shared are publicly identified and named. A parishioner and SVSG user spoke about how sometimes the minister will refer to specific individuals in his congregation by name in his sermon:

[Orig.] *Ia o le matou ia faifeau, a o’o i le taimi e lauga mai ai, ua ta te’i a le pā mai ai i luga o lana lauga, ia o ai lea ua ā ma ā ma ā. O ai lea ua ō liu lotu, mea uma na. E pei o le isi taofiofiga lena o le tuu taō o ni tagata e share i le faifeau i ni faafitauli, ia pei o le tulaga lena auā e alualu a le lelei, ae te’i ifo i le lauga mai a ua pā mai ai, i mea ia lea tupu ia ai ma ai. Ua lauga mai ai fua i luga o le pulelāa i la tagata.*

[Trans.] *For our minister, when it comes to his sermon, sometimes I’ll be shocked to hear about who is doing what and so forth. People who have left the church*



*and gone to other denominations, and things like that. I suppose that is something that keeps people from sharing to the minister, because things are going good in his sermon then suddenly he mentions things that are happening to whomever. Suddenly he preaches from the pulpit about certain people. (Pua, middle-aged woman, parishioner and SVSG user)*

Many participants shared a similar account of public shaming through the minister's sermon from the pulpit. To them, it gave them little reason to trust the minister with any sensitive personal matters. As Pua expressed in the excerpt above, the fear of being used as a public example and specifically identified have become barriers for many parishioners to seek counselling with their minister at times of need.

Participants appreciated when the minister and his *faletua* were seen to be working together in unison. This unity is important because it creates a comfortable space for women parishioners to easily voice their concerns and issues. However, this perceived unity has a shadow side, because when a husband and *faletua* work together as a cooperative counsellor they also may cross over the boundary of privacy following disclosure from a woman parishioner to the *faletua* alone. As the following *faletua* expressed:

*[Orig.] But I always come to [Mila, her husband] and ask him for advice. And I noticed from there, oka ni o'u mafaufauga i faafitauli o le tagata. But when [Mila] summarises the thing it's just two or three upu. And when I go back, but I never say it is from [Mila] because they always say confidential you know 'aue le ta'ua i le faifeau, a fai atu la manatu a [Mila], that's when I can tell pei ua work. So I think I always get back to [Mila] and ask his advice. And e sili atu sometimes ou te talitonu atu ia [Mila] loo myself. But yeah, I think my big help i le galuega, i le counselling, is [Mila]. Especially i se mea mātuiā. E lē mafai ona maua lo'u loto*

*tele, I always tell them, 'Vaai, can I come to you at your house, because it's better if I come there because o lea e mālōtia matou.' But no it's not really that but it's just getting back to [Mila] and see what he says.'*

*[Trans.] But I always come to [Mila her husband] and ask him for advice. And I noticed from there, wow I have so many ideas about the problems people bring to me. But when [Mila] summarises the thing it's just two or three words. And when I go back, but I never say it is from [Mila] because they always say confidential you know 'don't tell the minister,' but I seek [Mila's] help, that's when I can tell if it will work. So I think I always get back to [Mila] and ask his advice. And sometimes I believe [Mila] more than myself. But yeah, I think my big help in the ministry, in counselling, is [Mila]. Especially for extremely sensitive issues. I find it hard to find the courage, I always tell them, 'Look, can I come to you at your house, because it's better if I come there because we have guests.' But no it's not really that but it's just getting back to [Mila] and see what he says.*  
(Tracey, middle-aged faletua)

The two examples given above may appear controversial and unfavourable practices, and highlight that Samoans may be unhappy about the lack of privacy and the loss of dignity in the process. As Samoans are a communal people with an oral culture implied as being accustomed to 'talking', maintaining parishioners' privacy may be a challenge to some ministers and their *faletua*. Further, ministers may be looking out for the overall betterment of the collective flock in adapting a practice of 'counselling from the pulpit' to discourage others from similar behaviours. In saying so, identifying boundaries that will encourage a safe environment for troubled persons to seek help with their minister and/ or his *faletua* may diminish the reluctance of parishioners to come forth. The challenge is to develop ways how these types of boundaries can be framed and equally as important, upheld.

#### 4.7 Prayer and Scripture as resources for pastoral counselling

Central to many Samoans are their spiritual and faith practices. A common daily worship is the family evening devotion that often happens around dusk and the setting of the sun for that day. It is a time that brings the entire family together, and draws members away from the daily routines that had transpired. It is an opportunity to offer thanksgiving to God for his providence for the day. As expressed by parishioner Eseta, evening devotion has always played a significant and important role in her family:

*[Orig.] Auā e tele foi ona ō tamaiti e koleni i mea nei o lakapi, [ona ou fai atu lea i ai], ‘Aua ne’i fai le lotu e lē o i le tamaititi.’ E lē faia le lotu pe a misi le tamaititi e toatasi, ou te lē o iloa poo fea le mea o kaa ai. Se’i vagana la o fai le meaai, nofo le toatasi i tua i ō e vaai le meaai, ae o mai uma i le lotu. O le mea la lena lea ua i ai. A o i le taimi o le afiafi, faofale uma a, fai le matou lotu fai le matou pese, pese le matou lotu. Ia e faasolo, [ou fai i ai i le taeao], ‘[Nanei], ia tatalo oe.’ Ua fai la lena mea, ma mea ua tele na solasola leisi e le fia sau i le lotu, pe a tuu atu i ai lona tofiga e fai. ‘O ai lea e fai lotu nanai?’ E oo atu i le taimi lena ua leai. Oi leai la, faatoa tofi a i le taimi e fai ai le lotu.*

*[Trans.] My boys often go to rugby training [and I say to them], ‘Make sure you’re back when we do evening devotion tonight.’ Our evening devotion does not begin even if one of my children has not returned home that evening, as I don’t know where they are roaming around. Only one of my children is excused to attend to preparing our food, but everyone else comes to our evening devotion. So when evening draws near, I bring all my children into our house, and sing our praises and conduct our evening worship. They take turns to lead [in the morning I say to my children], ‘[Tonight] you will lead our prayers.’ Come evening devotion time, they are not here for worship because they have chosen to lead. So I have changed this and select the ones to pray during our evening devotion. (Eseta, mature woman, parishioner)*

There is value in the family evening devotion aside from spiritual enrichment, in that it acts as a way of keeping track of members of the family. This is especially helpful in households of two or more nuclear families living together. In raising several children while enduring a chronic medical condition, it is important for Eseta to know the whereabouts of her children when night draws near.

Several participants expressed that the strength and encouragement for any counselling work was seen as divine intervention through prayer. One of the leaders of the collective of churches in Samoa expressed such a reliance on God:

[Orig.] *O le tatou lava galuega faafai feau, ia e leai lava se malosiaga o tatou, o le tatou malosiaga o le tatalo, ma faamoemoe i le Atua e fesoasoani, faaaoga tatou i soo se auala, faatupu ai le filemu, ia ma nofo lelei ai o le fanau lea [a le Atua].*

[Trans.] *Our ministry itself, there is no strength upon ourselves that we can draw from other than through prayer and reliance on God for help. That is our strength. For God to use us in any way he chooses, to bring peace and create peace so that [God's] children will live in harmony.* (Susuga Timoteo, long-serving church leader close to retirement age)

The skill sets developed for the counselling work by ministers and their wives largely has been by way of observing significant others in ones' upbringing. Again, the importance of prayer has come through the interviews: a prayer before the counselling, during the counselling, and at the conclusion of the counselling undertaken by the minister as shared by Reverend Avanoa:

[Orig.] *Ia o le counselling la lea e fai pei ona ou fai atu, tau matau mai mea sa fai e mātua. Ia ona faamaopoopo lea e ita lota iloa, e mafai ona ta fesoasoani atu i*

*ai. Ia a o le aotelega o le malosi e fai ai nei galuega fesoasoani, ia o le tatalo a. Ia mo le silafia, o le mea lava lea ou te faia e a'u. Ia leaga o le mea foi sa ou vaai ai i lo'u Tamā. E ma'ea ona faia se faatalanoaga i se faafitauli, e faaiu a i le tatalo. Fai ai se tatalo mo lē na sau. Ia, pei e manaia foi le, o le mea lea ou te iloa, le taimi e sau ai le tagata o la e matuā atuatuva'e a, a amata le ma session i le tatalo, e faigofie ai ona to'a ai inā, faasoaso mai ai lea o manatu. Afai o le tagata la e sau e to'amalie, ia, ae alualu a le talanoaga masua mai mea ma sau pei tupu ane ai ma le vevesi o le loto. Ia, a uma la ona fai la'u fesoasoani, ia toe faai'u foi la i le tatalo.*

*[Trans.] The counselling that I am explaining, it is largely from observing what my parents had done in their counselling. Add into the equation my own knowledge and understanding and then I am able to offer my help. But the overall strength to undertake this role of counselling in the ministry is through prayer. This is what I do, because this is what I saw my father do. After we have discussed an issue, we close in prayer. Conduct a prayer for the troubled person who came to seek help. It is good practice too that if someone comes who is all upset and troubled, to begin the session in prayer, to calm him or her down, so that the person can easily talk and share. If the person comes to me who is calm, then as we talk he or she discloses sensitive matters and becomes uneasy and troubled, after I offer my help we end our session in prayer. (Reverend Avanoa, long-serving parish minister close to retirement age)*

In addition to reliance on prayer by the minister in counselling, the Bible plays a foundational role as well. Several participants across all three groups shared this view, as expressed by one of the ministers:

*[Orig.] O le Tusi Paia, o lou faavae a lena. E tele a incidents i totonu o le Tusi Paia, e latalata i ai. Ma lou faamoemoe i le Atua, ma lou tatalo. Before ua e alu i counselling, e te tatalo. E te lagona le faaoge o oe, aveese mea ia e te iloa, ae fesoasoani mai le mana o le Alii. E te faitau i le Afioga Paia a le Atua, ma e manatu a i faiga faavae faa-Iesu. Foi lele e lē tuua, e te manatu e faafaigofie ona resolve*

*se mea. A ia tāua ia te oe le mea lea, e tapena i ai lou mafaufau i apoapoaiga a le tatou Alii i mea ua mafai ona maua mai evagelia e fā i le Tusi Paia pei o le faavae a lena o mea uma. [...] O le tele a la o mea e fai, e te lagona ai foi le pa'i mai o le alofa o le Atua, e lē o sou manumalo, a o le manumalo [o le Atua].*

*[Trans.] The Bible, that is the foundation. There are many incidents in the Bible that are close to what counselling is. Together with your reliance on God, and your prayer. Before I undertake counselling, I pray. You can feel the emptying of you by God, take away all things that you may know, and then the Power of the Lord helps you. You read the Holy Scriptures of God, and reflect of the foundations laid down by Jesus. You never forsake these teachings, but dwell on them to help resolve issues easily. And you must see the value and reflect on the Lord's teachings found in the four gospels in the Bible, this is the foundation of all things. [...] For many things that you do, you rely also on being touched by the love of God, that it is not your victory, but the victory [of God]. (Reverend Tino, long-serving parish minister)*

Several participants noted that it is important to remain closely connected to God through prayer and reading the scriptures. In addition, some participants have stated that deviation from these faith practices will bring forth problems. SVSG user and parishioner Alice expressed:

*[Orig.] Ou te iloa e lē lava le ola aoaoina, ma lē lava le mafuta i le Alii i le tatalo, ia poo le nofonofo i se taimi paninoa faitau le Tusi Paia, ou te iloa e a'u ia o le mea lena e ala ai ona tupu faafitauli. Ia auā o la e sau le alii o le lalolagi taumafai e musumusu, musumusu. Ae a mafuta le tagata tuu ifo lona loto i le Alii, sina itula lava mo le Alii, a, ai e silasila mai e le Alii o la e mafuta atu i lona Alii. Ia, ou te iloa poo se auala lena o la e faaosofaia ai e le tiapolo, ona o la e mamao o ia ma le Tamā faalelagi, ae latalata tele le la mafutaga ma le alii o le lalolagi.*

*[Trans.] I think it's a lack of education, and not enough praying to God. Or every now and then during quiet times, read the Bible. I believe these are the reasons*

*behind what creates our problems. Because Satan is forever tempting us to do evil. But if the person has a relationship with God and gives his or her heart to God, just an hour of your time given to God, I am sure will see that you are have made the effort to stay connected to your Lord. I guess that is one way you may be tempted by Satan; becoming distant spiritually with our Heavenly Father, but too close to Satan.* (Alice, young adult woman, parishioner and SVSG user)

Throughout the interviews a theocentric emphasis is expected of the minister, when issues are presented to the minister for counselling. To meet the counselling demands of parishioners, the minister and his *faletua* draw strength and resources from scripture and faith practices. In addition, traditional Samoan households often draw upon the same resources of faith for strength during challenging times in the family. There is a difference here between minister and his *faletua* as mediators, and the more direct connection with that people have through prayer and daily devotions. The interesting part now will be to explore if the rapid changes facing Samoans have made an impact on the theocentric approach to counselling both in its delivery, as well as in its reception.

#### **4.8 Summary**

The data presented in this chapter have shown tensions that will be explored further in following chapters. One major area for consideration is the role that gender expectations play in counselling practices in Samoa today. In many counselling situations, the *faletua* are considered to be equal to to the minister, and at times their contribution becomes dominant, with the minister playing more a supportive role. This becomes especially important when gender-related issues are presented by parishioners. The challenge is whether ministers in Samoa today are willing to acknowledge and legitimise the significant roles that their wives hold in their shared

ministry. In addition, does God still hold a central standing in the counselling practices, when considering the many and major changes taking hold in Samoa today? Crossing boundaries within pastoral counselling practices is a concern as shared by participants, where public naming and shaming is used by ministers to discourage repeat offences. Confidentiality is linked to this practice, where there is a clear breach of privacy for parishioners who have disclosed sensitive issues to their minister. Crossing this boundary of privacy, as participants have reported, restricts parishioners from coming forth to their minister to seek help. Upon further consideration of the data collected about the Samoan family and *fa'aSamoa*, data signal an emerging changing Samoan self. The following chapters will discuss the concept of an emerging changing Samoan self, and how such a concept has influenced the conceptualisations of God and the relational space (*vā*) between people.



## **Chapter Five**

### **The emergence of a changing Samoan self encourages individualism**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores participants' understandings about the recent emergence of a changing and more individual Samoan self. These changes in the Samoan self highlight the need for a review of the way counselling is performed and delivered by ministers. As we shall see, these changes are found within Samoan families, in the way Samoans see themselves, and in the Samoan way of life more generally. This chapter will also explore participants' understandings of the impact of some of the changes brought about by technology in Samoa. The emergence of a concept of individuals with individual rights will be addressed, alongside the consequences of broader social changes such as the way the change in daylight savings impacts Samoans. Many of these changes have led to difficult social disruption and family violence which requires a strong social support network in addition to more traditional pastoral counselling.

Many Samoans are accustomed to undergoing change. Samoa has experienced various forms of significant changes throughout its history. An example is the independence of Samoa from New Zealand authority in 1962 that gave autonomy and self-rule to the Samoans. Likewise, the deletion of 'Western' from the name Western Samoa in 1997 signified an identity change for Samoans. In 2009 the switch from left-hand drive to right-hand drive vehicles, and changing the side of the road that vehicles travel demanded major mental re-processing by Samoans in order to remain road-safe. The introduction of daylight savings into Samoa in 2010 changed many of the social

behaviours of Samoans. Extended daylight hours have encroached on evening devotion times for families, substituting the longer evenings with outdoor chores, personal and communal exercise, and extended working hours. In December, 2011 relocating the International dateline to the east in order to have compatible time zones with New Zealand, Australia, and China has been another fundamental change for Samoans. Although these examples of significant changes to Samoans may not directly impact pastoral counselling practices, such changes shape the concept of a changing Samoan self. Understanding the concept of a changing Samoan self helps to understand and develop appropriate pastoral counselling practices that cater for both traditional and contemporary Samoans.

## 5.2 Changes within the family

Multi-generational living within a single space was how many Samoan families functioned in the past. It was common to have several generations living together serving *matai* of the extended family. In this structure there was an ease of access to advice from family members of the generations directly above, as well from the village *fono* or the collective of *matai* in the village. These types of extended family structures are slowly being substituted by smaller nuclear family units living on their own as shared by the following *matai*:

[Orig.] *Ua uma atu aso ia sa maopoopo aiga, a. Sa nonofo faatasi sa i ai fautuaga, sao fautuaga a matua tele i le aso atoa. Galulue faatasi, vaai atu tamaiti, taumulimuli ma faatonu e mātua. O le taimi lenei, ua tele ia individual, ua nuclear families, a. O le tele ai foi la o le taimi, ua lē o toe i ai le, ua lē o toe mafuta ma mātua. Ia ma ua tele foi ina faigaluega, i galuega ia lea, they're young adults, ulugalii laiti, a. Ua lē o i ai la nisi, ua lē o toe nonofo fo'i i nuu i tua. Sa tele ina*

vaavaai ma vaai lautele e le aiga ma le nuu. O le taimi nei, ua nonofo taitoatasi, aiga taitoatasi, ia ua pei o lea ua model ai i luga o mea e matamata ai i le TV, mea e sau i tifaga, a. O habits la ma amioga ia e vaai ai i fafo, e faigofie ona take e tagata, tatou i lenei vaitaimi. Ua seāseā a maua mafutaga ia, ia sa maua mai ai le in term of culturally, lea sa provide le counselling lea. A e i ai foi ni vaivaiga o le ulugalii o la e i ai mātua e mafai ona fesootei i ai. O leisi mea o le tāua, o le suiga foi o le olaga. Ua tele le influence mai fafo, faigofie mediums, different mediums ia e maua mai ai information, ia ma taaiga gofie foi ia tagata, a. Mealelei ma mealeaga, ia o lea ua pei ua tāua ai la ua atili ai pei o le vaega la ia o counselling services, pei pau lea o le avanoa ua mafai ona faato'ai i ai mataupu e manaomia ai le fesoasoani.

[Trans.] Gone are the days when families functioned smoothly. Families lived together and there was advice given from parents to their children, advice that was easily accepted. Everyone worked together; children followed and observed their parents, and were instructed by their parents. In today's times we are more individual, and likewise families have become more nuclear. And most of the time, there is no more connection with one's parents. Also most in the family work, and they are young adults, young couples. They are also not living out in the villages, where they were generally looked after by the extended family and the village itself. Now they are living by themselves as individual families, modelled on families as seen on TV and in the movies. Habits and behaviours from abroad are easily copied by people in Samoa today. Rarely do we get the same connection that we used to, in terms of culturally, that used to provide counselling. Likewise, if the young couple have faults, the parents are right there whom they can consult. These are some significant changes. There are many influences from abroad, easy and different mediums that we get information that easily attract our people. Good things and bad things, that have developed an important need for counselling services, as an opportunity to counter issues that require attention. (Sione, middle-aged man, matai and parishioner)

For many collective communities such as Samoans, family is core and of utmost importance (Cowley-Malcolm, 2013) and becomes the point of reference and significance for individual members of any given family. There appears an idealising of the past by Sione, where the multigenerational household living allowed for access to advice across the generations within the family. This idealising has now changed to an ease of access through the global media and online resources that teach how to live as individuals and independent of the larger family groups.

As parishioner Lasi noted below, it is important for her that parents, as for elders of any family, to be seen working in unison for the general welfare of family members under their care:

[Orig.] *O leisi mea e lelei ai le mea lea o le counselling i lo'u a iloa, e fesoasoani i totonu o aiga. Aemaise lava mo tagata matutua a ia. A faaletonu tagata matua i totonu o se aiga ona o le tele o le pressure i le mafaufau i mea fai ma a, faaletonu uma atu ai le aiga atoa. Leaga la e faaletonu le ulu o le aiga, alu atu uma alu atu ma le toalua ma le fanau, oti uma atu ma na mea uma. Faapena foi i tupulaga talavou. A i ai se mea faaletonu mamafa i tupulaga talavou le mafai ona faasoa, e matua mata'utia ni aafiaga e oo atu i ai i le taimi mulimuli. A o le counselling ia a'u ia ou te iloa o se mea tāua tele, e faasoa ai, a. Aumai ai i fafo mea la e i totonu o le loto, ae fesoasoani mo le tagata i lona faafitauli. Avatu seisi mea lelei i totonu o lona loto a.*

[Trans.] *The other thing that I know counselling is good for, is that it helps in the family setting. Especially for the elders. When the elders of the family are problematic due to lots of stresses on one's mind of everything going on, the entire family will become problematic as well. Because there is a problem at the head of the family, the wife and children will suffer as the stress will filter right through the family. The same goes for the young people. When the youth have*

*issues burdening them and cannot discuss with anyone, the end result are major problems at a later stage. But I see counselling as extremely important, to share about one's problems, to bring out what is inside one's soul, and to help that person with his or her problems. Then fill up the void with all things good. (Lasi, young adult woman, parishioner)*

The key for any family, as alluded to by Lasi, is that the elders in the family need to be able to persevere and manage the many stresses faced. Stability at the head of the family means that the entire family will function effectively. The reference to elders here is seen as the parents for the smaller nuclear unit, and living grandparents in the setting of the wider extended family. The importance of having sturdy leaders in the family is that this encourages the young people in the family to seek counselling with them when needed.

Disunity amongst family leaders has become problematic for some families as shared by Reverend Lameko:

*[Orig.] Ia, telē ia o le galuega a Tinā [i le counselling], telē. O le matou aiga, o a'u ou te lē tautala soo. Atonu o le mea lea e faigata ai le fanau i lenei vaitaimi, ona ua tele leo. Ua lua leo; ese le tala a le Tamā, ese le tala a le Tinā. A fai atu le Tamā le faatonuga i le fanau e 'aia le ō i se mea, a la ua totolo a'e i o, ia lena e silafia a, ia totolo ai i o fai i le Tinā [mo se faatanaga], ia sau lea o le Tinā [tauanau le Tamā]. Ia a lē o lena ia faapea [le Tinā], 'Ia ō,' ia ma le leiloa e le Tamā le mea lea ua fai lea ua ō. Na o mai lea fai atu ae fai mai, 'Ia lea na fai mai Mum matou te ō.' Ia amata ai loa o va ai, fogava'a. Ona e lua loa leo i se mea, confuse loa tamaiti. O le mea lena lea ua tupu i lenei vaitau, lenei vaitau faigata o tupulaga, a, ona e ese le tala a Tamā, ese le tala a [Tinā]. O le faalavelave o Tinā, na e te silafia Alesana, o le alofa faale-Tinā, e faaaliali, expose foi lele, faaaliali. A o le Tamā, e tu'u, e nana [le alofa] i totonu, 'Aia le fai le mea lea, 'aia le fai le mea*

*lea.’ O la e alofa [le Tamā] i ai e alu i le mea lea, ae ua leva ona o’o le mafaufau o le Tamā, i consequence [i le ō]. O le Tinā ia pei na’o luga o le, luga o le skin, pa’u foi a lele. A’o le Tamā, deeper, e alu i totonu. O le uiga o le tala, ua leva ona fo’i mai le mafaufau o le Tamā a ō, o le ā le mea e tupu. O le a le mea e tupu mai tua i ō. [...] Ona ua lua leo, lua leo e fau ai se aiga, ua lē pei o aso la, tasi a le leo. Tautala loa le matai o le aiga, le auaiga, uma loa. Ia a’o nei aso, ia ma nei vaitaimi, la e iloa e Tinā latou role o le fautua, advise.*

*[Trans.] Mothers play a major role [in counselling]. In our family, I don’t talk often. This may be why children are difficult these days, because there are several voices. There are two voices; a different voice from the father, and a different voice from the mother. If the father gives an instruction to the children not to go to a certain event, they then crawl over to the mother [for permission] and then the mother comes [to convince] the father [to re-consider]. If not that, [the mother will say], ‘Go,’ without the father knowing that they have gone. Upon their return the father questions them and they reply, ‘Mum said we can go.’ Then a divide begins like in the deck of a canoe. Because once there are two voices, the children get confused. That is what is happening these difficult days with youth, because there is a different voice from the father to [the mother]. The problem with mothers you may know this, Alesana, a motherly-love is a showing-love, exposing-love, to show. But for fathers, they hold back, and hide [love] inside saying, ‘don’t do this, don’t do that.’ [A father] loves them and wants them to go to the event, but his vision has been back and forth from all consequences [of going]. The mother’s [vision] is only skin-deep; but for the father’s his [vision] goes deeper inside. What I mean is that the father’s mind has gone back and forth to all possibilities that could happen. [...] Because there are two voices that make up the family, but not like in those days when there was only one voice. Once the matai of the family speaks to his entire extended family, that’s it. But these days, mothers need to know their roles as advisors, to give advice. (Reverend Lameko, mature parish minister)*

Reverend Lameko perceives that having two separate voices within an *aiga* confuses the children about which voice of instruction to obey and why. It is perceived by this minister as a result from the difference between an outward-motherly love and inward-fatherly love. This distinction of love used to govern the family can be explained as a firm disciplinary love by the father, with a caring permissive love by the mother.

Rev Lameko appears to point to women gaining an increased sense of entitlement to speak up and speak with their own separate voice from their husbands. This, he feels, has become somewhat problematic in some families, especially families that are heavily patriarchal. However, there is value in the voice from women, as it offers another perspective to issues that have emerged within the family. Sione expressed the value of perspectives from the *faletua*:

[Orig.] *E i ai le taimi e tāua atu ai o le lē faaaogā o le faifeau, i issues tau-fafine, a, e sili atu le tāua o le talanoa o le faletua i issues na. E open up tagata e talanoa i le faletua.*

[Trans.] *There are times when it is more important to not use the minister, for issues concerning women, but it is more important for the faletua to talk to about these issues. People will open up talking to a faletua.* (Sione, middle-aged man, matai and parishioner)

Today the voice of instruction from the mother is considered as significant as the father in the family, which is changing the shape and design of the Samoan family. Women today are increasingly well-educated and are often employed into the workforce. It seems that as well as changes in people's willingness to show respect at any cost, there are also changes happening in terms of a shift in the authority of women's perspectives. Finding ways how to incorporate the voice of women into being accepted into Samoan

families, especially traditional patriarchal families, becomes the challenge. The acceptance of the voice of women in family matters is one direction that the changing Samoan self is heading.

### 5.3 Changes in the mind-sets of Samoans

Several participants shared that Samoans have changed their mind-sets about education. Such a shift in the thinking of Samoans has made a significant impact towards the concept of a changing Samoan self. Understanding such changes highlights the need for a revised way of pastoral counselling to meet a changing Samoan self. As conveyed by a long-serving minister in Samoa, education has been a top priority for many Samoans at the expense of traditions and worship practices that once governed the Samoan young boy and girl:

[Orig.] *Ia, a faaopoopo foi ai ma le tatou aganuu, o le ava ma le faaaloalo ma le usitai, o mea ia e a'oa'o mai e mātua i fanau. Ia e ava i tagata matutua, usitai i ou mātua, mea faapena. Ia a o le taimi la lenei, ua telē a le suiga. Ua maualuga foi le tulaga o aaoaga i lenei vaitaimi, pei ua tau faatalalē ai, mafai foi ona faapea o mātua. Ua tele ina alu le oloomatua i bingo. Tele foi taimi o le toeaina ia i ana galuega fai i le aso. Ia a o tamaiti i le aoga, foi mai, tau lē maua le avanoa lea sa maua. Ala mai a i le lotu i le taeao. Tatala feau o le aso i le tapuaiga i le Atua. Malū mai le afiafi, ia, faapotopoto mai le fanau ma le aiga, faaiu i le tapuaiga i le Atua e viia lona agalelei i le tausiga o le aso. Faapena. E ola ifo a la le tama ma le teine, o le mea lea ua mausalī i lona mafaufau. Ia, a o nei foi aso ma suiga ua i ai, pei o tulaga lena ou te matau e a'u, ua tele suiga o le soifuaga. Ia ua aafia ai mafaufau o le fanau. E o'o foi la i le va o fanau ma matua, ia ua tele a faafitauli tulai mai.*

[Trans.] *When you add in our culture, respect and obedience, these are what parents teach their children. The respect of one's elders, obey your parents and*



*everything related to that. However for nowadays, there are major changes. Education is at a high level at this time, that parents at times have become neglectful in their role. The mother often goes to bingo; the father is busy with his work every day, and the children with their school. When they return from school there is very little opportunity for them with their parents, as it was in the past. Wake up in the morning to family worship. Begin the chores and duties for the day by first worshiping God. The cool breeze of the evening dusk upon us, gather all the children and members of the family to worship and praise God for His providence and protection throughout the day. That's it. The young boy and young girl grow up and this lifestyle has been embedded in their minds. But nowadays with the changes in our lives, these are the sort of things that I have observed. Even in the relationships between parents and their children, many issues have arisen between them. (Reverend Ioane, long-serving parish minister and church leader)*

Busy schedules have become common practice for many fathers and mothers. The shift in the mind-sets of Samoans has been towards education, ensuring access of education for most if not all members of the family. To meet this shift means that working long hours at times leads to lesser available hours to spend time with ones' children. Also impacted from such behaviours are the worship activities within the family. The drive for education has led to a changed routine and emphasis for many families.

Participants have also suggested a change in the mind-sets of Samoan youth especially in regards to popularity, violence, and power, as expressed by Reverend Alafoti:

*[Orig.] A o tagata Samoa tupulaga talavou, pei e fiafia latou i mea ia, pei e tau violent e pei o ni misa, ma ni mea, e tofotofo ai foi le malosi, i na vaitaimi. Sa faapena mai a, ou te iloa a mātau i le tuanai o tupulaga, sa tele ina tauaimisa. A o aso nei ua sui. [...]. Sui foi lele, pei o lea ua, faapea ua malamalama tagata ua lē o toe iloa se malosi i na mea o misa. A ua faaaoga le mafafau ma le atamai i*

*mea lelei, a. Ua lē toe alu le malosi i [misa], ma ua iloa e leai se mea e maua ai, i le faatupu faalavelave. Ae afai e fia ta'uta'ua toaga e aoga ma faaalu lelei le malosi ma le mafaufau.*

[Trans.] *Samoan young people like these sort of things; they are quite violent in such conflicts, situations that challenge their physical strength, in those days. If we were to observe young people in the past that is how they were; often they were involved in fights and conflicts. But these days have changes. [...] Changed in the sense that we no longer understand being strong is having brute force in fights or conflicts. But we use our brains and knowledge for good things. We no longer waste our energies with [fights and conflicts], and we know that causing trouble and fights will amount to no good. But if you want to become famous and well-known, stay committed to your studies and make appropriate use of your strength and knowledge. (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)*

As alluded to by Reverend Alafoti, there appears a psychological shift for Samoan youth, especially for the young men. For many of the youth today popularity in the village has evolved into being determined by success in education or any other chosen field. To be well-known in the village is not solely based on one's physical strength as it was in the past, but is now also based on intelligence and education.

Although the concept of a changing Samoan self has evolved from the impact of major changes to the way of life for Samoans, fundamental values such as *fa'aaloalo* (respect) and *alofa* (love) are still prevalent for many Samoans as expressed by parishioner Ane:

[Orig.] *And I think values foi as a society, a. For Samoa as a society. E aoga ai le upu [a Samoa] foi gale, e sui sui a faiga, but the basic things still remain. O faavae a ia e tumau sui sui faiga. Sui sui how you go about it, ia because pei la o le taimi lenei, tele developments ma mea faapena. But e lē faapea a ua tele au big*

*buildings ma mea na te'i a lea ua e lē faaaloalo ai, no. You still maintain those basic values, a: o le fa'aaloalo, o lou alofa, you know iloa le taimi e savali ai, iloa le taimi e tautala ai, and all of that.*

*[Trans.] And I think values also as a society, aye. For Samoa as a society. The [Samoan] saying is useful here; the practice has changed but the basic things still remain. The foundations themselves remain but the practices have changed. Changes in how you go about it, because for example in this day and age, there are many developments and things like that. But it doesn't mean that if you have big buildings and so forth, then all of a sudden you no longer show respect, no. You still maintain those basic values, aye: respect, love, you know when to walk, you know when to talk, and all of that. (Ane, middle-aged woman, parishioner)*

Ane expressed that the ways of doing things have changed, yet the foundations of Samoan society still remain. Although *fa'aaloalo* (respect) and *alofa* (love) may still be central to many Samoans, these key features are now more aligned with individual rather than collective choices. People are exercising choices that benefit themselves as individuals even if such choices go against parents' wishes. It is possible that Samoans are reconsidering the concept of respecting one's elders and parents, that has contributed to a rise of individualism over the collective.

#### **5.4 Changes in the technology available in Samoa**

A noticeable contributor to the concept of a changing Samoan self is located in the rise of technological advancements in Samoa, as in the rest of the world. The use of mobile telephones by youth, the internet, and developments in computer technologies are examples of some of the technology influences that have become prominent in Samoa which connect Samoans more with the rest of the world. There are many positives of such advancements as well as challenges, as expressed by parishioner Ane:

[Orig.] *Ua vave suiga ma mea faapena, and I think ua vave ai ma le malamalama o tamaiti. I mean for me, I knew how to use a computer when I was 7th form. My kids know how to use it now and they are only 10 and 9 [years of age], a. Ua matuā ā vave le technology. I guess ua telē atu, ua atili atu ai ona telē ma le responsibility a mātua to look out for that, a. Ia autilotilo totoa i mea ia, because e i ai isi tamaiti at that age ua feoai ma telefoni. You see problems caused by technology now, a, that didn't exist back then. So I guess la ua faaopoopoina ai leisi responsibility i mea na, but it all comes down to the individual person and how they manage it with their children.*

[Trans.] *Changes have been fast and things like that, and I think the children pick up their knowledge fast as well. I mean for me, I knew how to use a computer when I was 7th form. My kids know how to use it now and they are only 10 and 9 [years of age], a. The technology is quite fast. I guess there is more technology now that has meant an increased responsibility of parents to look out for that, aye. We need to really look at these [technological advances] because there are children at that age that walk around with mobile phones. You see problems caused by technology now, ah, that didn't exist back then. So I guess it has become an added responsibility for those things, but it all comes down to the individual person and how they manage it with their children. (Ane)*

Accompanying advances in technology is an increasing need for parents to manage these kind of changes making their way into Samoa. However, as Ane continued to express, because of societal changes and changes in the practices of Samoans, socialising for parents today has utilised available technologies to replace family-time:

[Orig.] *O isi matua e manava ō sa'o ō, a. They go with their mates, they drink. Kids are watching their TV and that, their entertainment, their Xbox, leave them at home with the babysitter. O isi a aiga ua matuā taape a; ua lei a.*

[Trans.] *Some parents once they finish work they go straight out. They go with their mates, they drink. Kids are watching their TV and that, their entertainment,*

*their Xbox, leave them at home with the babysitter. Some families have totally broken up; there is no more family. (Ane)*

Ane suggests that technology has taken on the role as pacifier for some families. In addition, because many Samoan households have shifted from being multi-generational to consisting of a couple and their children, minders for children are now being sought.

Many participants shared a similar view about many Samoan youth using mobile phone technologies. Parishioner Palemia shared that the use of mobile phones has become common in Samoan schools both at the secondary and tertiary levels:

*[Orig.] Ia o leisi tulaga, o le mea lea o le telefoni. I aso ia, atonu e maua a tamaiti fai telefoni taitasi tailua. Ia o nei taimi ou te iloa ai e leai ma se tamaiti i totonu o aoga e leai se telefoni. Vagana ai se tamaiti ua leiloa lana telefoni. A o tamaiti uma a ia, e tele foi o le taimi vaai o punonou, a lē o faia ai ni taaloga, poo la e fai text, poo la foi e fai ni meaaoga e fa'aaoga ai le telefoni.*

*[Trans.] Another change is mobile phones. In those days you get one or two young people with a mobile phone. These days, I don't think there are students in school that do not have a phone. Except for those who have lost their mobile phone. But all these students, most of the time you see them head bowed either its games they are playing, or texting, or they are even doing school work using their phones. (Palemia, young adult man, parishioner)*

The technological advances in Samoa are great for the many benefits that they offer, suggests Palemia. However, when some of these tools like mobile phones are used as distractions rather than for the ease of communication they were intended, then participants suggest there are disruptions to a way of life that Samoans were previously accustomed to. Technological advancement in Samoa thus can be seen as contributing to the concept of a changing Samoan self. It is important to understand these changes,

and the influence of technology advances for Samoans, so to conceptualise how contemporary pastoral counselling practices can allow for such advancements.

### 5.5 Changes in the way of life: Samoan way to a *palagi* way

Many participants suggested that a change in the way of life was occurring for many Samoans, towards replicating *palagi* ways of life. Contributing to the concept of a changing Samoan self that is proposed and explored throughout this study, Reverend Alafoti shared a view similar to other participants about how Samoans have now modified their lives to *palagi* ways of life:

[Orig.] *A o le tulaga lautele a ia i mo mea o pulega [o le aiga] foi lele, auā e eseese mamao le aiga faaSamoa ma le aiga faapalagi, a, le family unit foi lele. [O le aiga palagi] na o le ulugalii a ia ma le la fanau; fai le latou flat ma le latou fale, that's all e concern ai. A o nei i aiga, pe nofo mai i i le matai, a o nai aiga ia o lana fanau ma nisi tagata, e nonofo solo a e tautua [le matai] e faalogologo uma i le matai. Pe i ai ni latou fanua e agai e galulue ai. E eseese uma la le faataatiaga o le aiga lautele faaSamoa ma aiga tatou i [abroad]. Pei o le upu foi lele [i Samoa] fai a le mea a le [tagata] latou [e ola ai] a. Ia o mea la na sa sau ai, pei e agai mai ai ona a'o mai ai le faaaloalo ma le onosai, ma le naunau foi lele o le tagata ia i ana mea, ae fai a ma tilotilo i le lelei lautele o le aiga poo o le nuu vaai lautele i mea a aulotu. [...] E ta'u loa se tagata ua le toe alu atu i lona aiga, o le palagi la lena a [chuckles]. Ia poo le uiga o le mea ua le toe fia fai aiga, a. [...] A o le tagata e i o [alu ese atu ma le aiga/nuu] ae la e osiosi atu a, o la e i ai le agaga lena foi lele le agaga faaSamoa. A o le mea a ia, e le mafai foi ona taofia lena lagona o le fia alu atu o le tagata ia e fai foi lana ia mea ma tofo i le olaga o le palagi ia, fai a lana ia a mea foi lele. Ou te iloa la e lagona a i loto o tagata ia faavae i o latou aiga, pei o le upu [a Samoa] foi lele i le toloa, 'e lele a le toloa ae ma'au a i le vai.'*

[Trans.] *In terms of the leadership of [the family], there is a vast difference between a Samoan and a palagi family regarding the family unit. [A palagi*

*family] includes only the couple and their children; they have a flat that houses their household and that's all they are concerned of. But here with the Samoan family, if the matai lives here, other households are located around him who serve and care for [the matai] and listen to the matai. Maybe they may have their own sections of the land to maintain. This is an example of the difference between a Samoan extended family setting with family settings [from abroad]; a saying [in Samoan] comes to mind, the [individual person] searches to meet his needs to survive. So that is where we have come from, and that is where we have learnt principles like respect, and patience, and the motivation for the person to look out for his or her own interests, but still keeping in mind the general well-being of the extended family, the village, and a vision to also include the local parish. [...] When you say that someone does not re-visit their family or village, he or she has become palagi [chuckles]. It means that the person does not want to be associated with his or her family anymore. [...] But the person who moves away [from one's family and village] and still stays connected to the extended family and village, he or she has a heart for being Samoan. But really you cannot resist the desire for a person to experience life as a palagi would, you know, to do his or her own thing. I feel that people know in their hearts to remain founded upon their families, like the [Samoan] proverb about the brown teal duck that flies away, but always returns back to its puddle. (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)*

Many participants considered that family is important for learning foundational values that benefit the extended family, village and even the parish. Deviations from the family are seen by participants like Reverend Alafoti as living more the *palagi* way. The difference in living as Samoans lies in having multiple households living close together in different houses and collectively serving the *matai* of that family. A *palagi* household predominantly would function to meet the needs of a nuclear family involving a couple and their children, which is structured around developing the independence of the children from the parents; Samoans function to meet each household's needs as well as

the general well-being of the extended family, village and parish. Those who become disconnected from the wider family unit and village are considered to have become like *palagi*. The Samoan proverb teaches a parallel lesson: the brown teal duck flies away on its own but always returns to the puddle of water it identifies as home; the Samoan person is nurtured in the family then moves away but occasionally returns home to the pool of resources where his or her life all began. Some Samoans still remain connected to the family. However, the changes emerging within Samoa may have encouraged others to remain disconnected from the source of learning where their lives began. Establishing a balance between a world of empowering the individual, while still acknowledging the significance of the wider family and village settings may be a way forward. Pastoral counselling could become a way forward as a dynamic tool to reconnect Samoans who have adopted *palagi* ways and disengaged themselves from their extended family structures. To do so requires pastoral counselling to be manoeuvrable between different members of the Samoan family, such as *matai* and elders, as well applicable to the younger members. For example, using a bi-lingual approach of the Samoan and English languages in pastoral counselling, would ensure relevance to a wider and mixed Samoan audience.

Cultural diversity is quite noticeable in Samoa now, as parishioner Palemia expressed:

[Orig.] *Ona foi o le taimi nei, ua toatele lava ia le, ou te lē o māua le upu palagi, diverse, diversity, ua, palagi ma le Samoa maua ai le afakasi. Ma le afakasi ma le Samoa, ia ma ua mix up solo le mea. [...] Maua foi lata mea aoga i i pe a sese, a ou tautala tu, te'i ua fai mai, 'Nofo i lalo ma fai mai,' ma mea faapena, a. A o isi la tamaiti, ia manatua o aiga ia a palagi, pe afatasi foi ia, ia tailo i ai ae e tele taimi [a matua] e alu i galuega, a. Atonu e mānava mai ua tuai, ia e tuu a la le*



*tamaititi ia, e tafao a le tamaiti ia foi lele, atonu e lē lava sana mafutaga ma ona matua. Tali pei a o aiga palagi lea ta te vaai ai i luga o documentaries ma ata tifaga foi a, i le latou foi, pei e tele taimi e alu i galuega, mo latou a ia ae laitiiti taimi [ma latou fanau]. [...] Ia, e laitiiti ai foi la le taimi e mafuta ai le tamaititi i ona matua, e maua ai le aoaoina lelei ma, ma le tū ma le aga faaSamoa. Pei o mafuaaga ia [o suiga i Samoa], o le laitiiti o le mafutaga [ma matua], ia ma le mau suiga o lenei olaga. Ua faigofie a le access i luga o le internet, a. [Suiga] uma ia ua maua uma i le internet. Alu atu le tamaititi ia matamata i le YouTube.*

*[Trans.] Because in these times, there are plenty of, I am unsure of the English term, diverse, diversity, palagi and Samoan then you get a half-Samoan half-palagi person. And also you have a half-Samoan half-palagi person together with a Samoan person; you get many different mixes of race in Samoa. [...] In the family you are exposed to many important lessons when you make mistakes. If you stand and talk you are instructed, 'Sit down properly and say what you have to say,' and things like that. But for other children, remembering that some are palagi families or half-caste, don't know but a major part of the time [of parents] is on their jobs. They finish work quite late, and the child is left alone to play around as he or she wishes, with little fellowship with his or her parents. Sort of like palagi families I see in documentaries and in movies where they spend a lot of time with their work and little time [with their children]. [...] There are few opportunities for the child to spend with the parents, to be taught well, and to learn about the traditions and culture of Samoa. These are some of the reasons [for changes in Samoa], the lack of fellowship [with parents] together with the many changes in life. Access to internet has become easy. All these [changes] you get from the internet. The child goes and watches these things on YouTube.*  
(Palemia, young adult man, parishioner)

Several participants articulated that the institution of the traditional family was a place to learn the culture and traditions of Samoa. In the past a close association with parents taught younger family members about cultural protocols and values within the family and village settings. With the increasing diversity in Samoa of mixed races and half-caste

Samoans, the cultural unity of the family has itself become diverse. Participants considered that parents have prioritised work commitments over spending quality time with their children. As Palemia mentioned in the above excerpt, parents often have limited time with their children because of their work commitments, opportunities where children traditionally learned valuable life lessons. This lack of engagement with parents has allowed for unsupervised access of children to learn from online sources and various mediums about global trends. Many of the online sources portray stereotypical families that often are framed on *palagi* middle-class families from the US. It appears there are generational changes that influence both the parents, as well as their children. A different way of life is emerging that highlights a generation gap amongst many Samoans as *matai* Sione shared:

[Orig.] *O le vaega aupito sili lea na ou vaai ai a'u ia, ua ala ai ona telē le manaomia o counselling services i le taimi lenei. Po'o fea lava, a o le vaega tāua foi, ona o le tele o, pei ona ta'ua, o le different way of life, a. O tatou mātua, we can't go back, e ese le olaga na ola ai latou, a. So their counselling advice is totally different to the way of life lea e ola ai tatou [nei], a. E lē pei o aso ia, a faatonu e le matua, o le olaga lena na o mai ai latou, a. O le taimi lenei lea ua tele, a faatonu atu e le matua i mea, ae la ta te mafaufau, 'Se e lē toe aogā ituaiga advice na i aso nei,' a [chuckles]. So we need tagata e train faalelei, that understand the differences between le olaga o tatou mātua, ma le olaga lea e i ai tatou. E o'o foi ia tatou ma tatou fanau, lea foi e faapea tatou lea tatou te alright, ae a tilotilo i ai, matuā tele a le divide foi lele ua i ai, i le lifestyle ma le mea lea e i ai tamaiti, ma tatou. So we can't give all the [answers], so kids can't depend on us, solely, for that advice on counselling and how they live their lives.*

[Trans.] *That is one important area that I have observed, giving reason for the need of counselling services at this time. Whatever the context, the important factor as I have mentioned previously, is the different way of life. For our parents*

*we can't go back, they lived in a different era. So their counselling advice is totally different to the way of life that we are living in [now]. It is not like in those days, when the parent instructs, that is the lifetime that they came from. Nowadays it often is the case that when the parent instructs, yet in my mind I am thinking, 'But that kind of advice is not useful these days,' aye [chuckles]. So we need people to train properly who understand the differences between the lifetimes of our parents, and the life we live in today. Even also for us and our children, we may think that we are alright, but if we really look at it there is a massive division that exists in the lifestyles of our children and ourselves. So we can't give all the [answers], so kids can't depend on us, solely, for that advice on counselling and how they live their lives. (Sione, middle-aged man, matai and parishioner)*

The data presented in this section have highlighted diverse perspectives about how the Samoan way of life has evolved, to include what were understood to be *palagi* ways of life for some Samoans. These perspectives demonstrate an anxiety about change and a longing for old traditional ways. However, change for Samoans appears to be inevitable, and adapting to these changes allows the inclusion of a changing Samoan self within a contemporary Samoan way of life.

## **5.6 Changes in the importance of a common practice for Samoans**

*Lotu afiafi* (evening devotion) is a practice common to many Samoans, and one that has seen some families remodel to conform with a changing Samoan self. Many households partake in devotions around sunset each day, to praise and worship God for the activities of that day. Parishioner Ane expressed a view similar to other participants, that although many families still observe such practice amidst their busy daily routines, a gradual move away from this practice is found in many villages:

[Orig.] *Back in the day, sa matuā maopoopo a faiga o lotu a aiga i afiafi ma mea faapena. Auā o iinei foi sa fai le mea lena, sa ka le sā. Sa mamalu pulega a le nuu. Ka le sā, mamalu le pulega, a. Ae vaai ai la, ta le taimi, faiga lotu loaloa uma a. Seasea a toe faalogo i ai. Ou te lē o faalogo atu foi i nisi fale, matuā leai a. [...] O leisi foi la aspect lena sa mafai ona faatalanoa ai le aiga, a. When [parents], mea foi gale, ave ai le fautuaga. Now, ua seasea ai ni aiga e te faalogo o pepese ni lotu. A o le taimi foi lena lea sa iloa ai e matua, the whereabouts o fanau. Because if you're missing, they know where you are, a. Right now, people are going about doing their own business, ua galo poo fea la e taape solo ai tamaiti. [...] I think that is one aspect of Samoan family living, a, ua tau, tailo i isi nuu, ua tau, mou atu a. Le mea lea o le, le mea lea o le lotu afiafi. Auā o i na, o leisi area lena pei e fai ai foi le informal counselling lea a matua i tamaiti, a.*

[Trans.] *Back in the day, evening devotions were a common practice in families. Because here [in our village] a curfew was put into place [for evening devotions]. The bell would ring and the curfew set in place. It was a practice enforced by the entire village. When the bell was rung, the entire village would honor the curfew [for evening devotions]. So when the time would come there were family evening devotions in every household. Now I rarely hear of this practice anywhere. [...] That was another aspect where the family was able to talk about things. When [parents] you know gave their advice. Now, this rarely happens where you hear families singing praises and doing evening devotions. That is also the time that parents knew the whereabouts of their children. Because if you're missing, they know where you are, aye. Right now, people are going about doing their own business, and forget to find out where their children have wondered to. [...] I think that is one aspect of Samoan family living, that is slowly losing value, but I am unsure about other villages. This is in regards to evening devotions. Because that is an area where informal counselling is carried out by parents for their children.*  
(Ane)

Many participants shared a similar view that the observance of evening devotion is one core aspect of Samoan life that has diminished in importance over the years. Often as

dusk draws near the Samoan family gathers all its family members into their home to begin evening devotion. In some villages a bell is rung and a curfew is enforced by young men of the village for ten to fifteen minutes. During the curfew all moving vehicles on the road are not permitted to enter or exit their intended driveways, pedestrians are instructed to hurry along to their homes for worship, and no loud noises that could disrupt family worship are allowed. A hymn is sung, scriptures are read, and prayers of thanksgiving, confession and intercession wrap up the family gathering.

Following the devotion, the head of the family who in most cases is the father or *matai* of the family, invites family members to talk about any matters that need addressing. As expressed above, the evening devotion becomes a medium for informal counselling, in the closed setting of only family members specifically for any given household. At the conclusion food is served for a family communal dinner. This evening practice ‘rarely happens’ anymore as noted by Ane, in place of work commitments and leisure activities like touch rugby or exercise routines around early evening. In addition, extended daylight hours during daylight savings have pushed out evening devotions even later or not at all, for the same reasons.

## **5.7 Changes towards an emerging individual self with rights**

Several participants suggested that part of the changes to Samoa today involves the conceptualisation of the rights of an individual. This finding is valuable to this study as it signals a rise in individualism for Samoans. Understanding pastoral counselling for Samoans must therefore include allowance for individual ideals, and practices of pastoral counselling need to cater for the increasingly individualised Samoan self.

Reverend Lameko shared that the changing emphasis to the rights of an individual rather than any rights that the individual self may occupy in the family and collective community, is partly behind some of the changes that are taking place in Samoa:

[Orig.] *Pei o le mea lena ua sese ai mea i nei aso. O le lē iloa e le tagata ona faamatala le upu o le aiā tatau. Ua soona fai, ua abuse. A la ua iloa lelei a. A tatou iloa lelei a le aiā tatau faa-Kerisiano, le aiā tatau faa-le Atua, a, o le aiā tatau faa-le Atua o le condemn yourself. 'Aua e te manatu ia oe ae manatu i leisi tagata. Tusa o le uiga lena o le mea. Lata fight a mo taita, i lota ita lelei, ae la taotaomia ai leisi tagata. [...] Ae pei o le mea lena ua faafaigata ai mea i nei aso, o le faaaoga o le right, pe ua e selfish. Pei ua e greedy ai, pei ua e manatu faapito ai.*

[Trans.] *That is what is wrong with these days, people don't know how to explain human rights for the individual. It is abused. If we understand the human right as a Christian, the human right that is God-like, is that you condemn yourself. Don't think about yourself, but think about others. That's what I mean; you are fending for yourself now, things that will benefit you and only you, at the expense of others. [...] But what seems to be happening that makes things difficult these days is that people use the right, as if it makes you selfish. Like you are greedy, and think of yourself only. (Reverend Lameko, mature parish minister)*

Furthermore, Reverend Lameko suggested that the interpretation of the rights of an individual should be based on God's creation of humankind. Biblical literalism continues to shape some people's assumptions about the rights of women compared to the rights of men as noted by this minister:

[Orig.] *Ioe, e o'o foi la i le aiā tatau lea e tau aumai i le aiā tatau lea a Tamā ma Tinā, faalēfiafia a'u ia i ai. A iloa e le Tinā lona faasinomaga lona amataga, iloa e le Tamā lona amataga, leai se pisa. Leai a se faapea, 'Tutusa maua.' O lena e te silafia, lea fai mai le Tusi Paia, na faia e le Atua Atamu. Ona faia laia lea o le*

*fafine mai le ivi asoaso a Atamu. I lo'u a faamatalaina i lo'u a'u a faifeau, ou te lē iloa i lau susuga, o le faiaoga, tusa o le fafine na fai i foliga o Atamu e le'i faia i foliga o le Atua. Le mea lea tau sau nei faapea e tutusa Tinā ma tamaitai ma Tamā. No. O le mea lena o le a sopo ai le [va], pei o le a lē ava ai. A e iloa lelei a e Tinā, o ia e i lalo o le protection a le Tamā, ona na iloa ai lea o lana role e play. Ia malamalama lelei a. A o le faalavelave pei o le mea lele o le Victim support [SVSG], lea sau nei a, pei o leisi vaega lena ua push ia le mea lea.*

*[Trans.] Yes, the same goes for the human right of the individual, say for the father or for the mother, I am not quite happy about this. If the mother understands her heritage, her beginning, the father understands his, then there should be no conflict. No thoughts like, 'We are the same.' You understand this, it says from the Bible that God created Adam. He then created the woman from a rib taken from Adam. My interpretation of this as a minister, I don't know about you a teacher, is that the woman was created in the image of Adam, not created in the image of God. The thinking nowadays that women are equal to men, no. That is the reason this [space] has been breached, as if there is no more respect. If the mother understands that she is under the protection of the father, then she will know her role to play. This needs to be understood well. The problem now though is that this group, Victim Support [SVSG], they are the ones who are pushing the rights of the individual. (Reverend Lameko, mature parish minister)*

It appears that to Rev Lameko, the rights of an individual have actually become a question about whether women have the same rights as men in Samoa. His interpretation of Biblical text is controversial and problematic in a changing Samoa. Reverend Lameko views the work of SVSG as problematic in the Samoan context, as this organisation advocates and promotes the rights of people as individuals. For Reverend Tino however, the issue concerning the rights of an individual lies in its interpretation from a Samoan perspective:

[Orig.] *O a'u ia e o'o mai i le aso nei, ou te lē talia lea mea o rights o tamaiti. O la e faamatala mai a i le faaperetania, o le leaga o le faamatala i i [i le faaSamoa]. O le right la e fai mai ai, e lē iloa e se Samoa se right o se [tamaititi] o le right agai le education. Must be educated, must eat food ma alu i le aoga. Must wear good clothes, that the right. Ae lē faapea o ni rights [a tamaiti e tete'e i o latou mātua]; na ona ta'u, a o le mea e fai e mātua.*

[Trans.] *For me up until now, I do not accept what some call the right of the child. It is explained in the English, it's just a bad interpretation [in Samoan]. The right that it talks about, a Samoan person does not observe the right [of a child], it's a right geared towards education. Must be educated, must eat food and go to school. Must wear good clothes; that's the right. But it's not a right [for the child to go against their parents]; it is only called the right of the child, but it is something that is done by the parents. (Reverend Tino, long-serving parish minister)*

The concept of individual rights is at odds with traditional structures of power and authority. The rights of the young Samoan person today to dress or behave how he or she wishes are expressed as part of the many changes observed by Palemia. A parishioner at his church and lecturer at one of the higher learning institutions in Samoa, when asked about any changes he has observed in his students, Palemia stated:

[Orig.] *Telē suiga. Telē suiga mai la aso taimi foi o ta aoga taita ia. Aemaise a faavasegaina, o faiga o lavalava. Ia, manatua aso ia, e vaai lelei a le matua i lana fanau, ia dress up lelei. O le taimi lenei ia, tailo poo toe, o isi tamaiti foi ua, pei o, o le ala ifo a i le taeao, ia sulu mai le ie, fai le ofu, ia sau i le aoga. O isi foi tamaiti, e fai ofu foi ia, matuā, pei o la e ō e sisiva, pei la e ō i outing. Ia o leisi tulaga, pei o aso la, pei e matamuli le tama ma le teine foi lele e feofeoai as a, tali pei o se ulugalii, pei se couple. A o le mea lea ua i ai, ua pei o laua ni ulugalii, isi tamaiti foi ia.*



[Trans.] *Many changes. There are many changes from back then when I too was at school. Especially if I was to categorise these changes, it would be the clothes. Remember in those days parents looked out for their children, so that they dress up well. Nowadays, I don't think that still happens. Some youth just get up in the morning, put on a lavalava, put on a shirt, and then come to school. Others wear clothes that are inappropriate for school, as if they are going out clubbing. The other situation not like those days, young people were sort of like shy to roam around with their boyfriend or girlfriend behaving like a couple. But these days, it's as if they are already married couples for some of these youth. (Palemia, young adult man, parishioner)*

The issue of rights for individuals in the Samoan context is fundamental to the challenge of a flexible and dynamic pastoral counselling response. If people do not have rights, as some participants have suggested, then people do not participate as equals in a dialogical approach that may be proposed from this project. It is therefore vital for pastoral counselling in the context of Samoans, to allow for a changing Samoan self inclusive of a provision for the rights of an individual, within its practices.

## **5.8 The rise of secular services such as Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG)**

As I have articulated throughout the interviews presented in this chapter, Samoa has undergone many and major changes that have all contributed towards the concept of a changing Samoan self. The family setting has changed; Samoa has become quite diverse; and the rights of the individual to decide as one wishes is becoming popular especially amongst younger Samoans. There are many (*tele*) changes and major (*telē*) changes occurring in Samoa that are unavoidable as Ane articulated:

[Orig.] *Because, um, we can't avoid [how the] Samoa society is now. There are so many problems, crimes; Samoa is facing so many problems. You look at disaster,*

*psycho-social problems we've had in dealing with natural disasters, and you know, displacements of families and [things like that]. And we had to mobilise the pastoral element, [conducted quick training]. O lea la na aumai ai loa, e i ai le fafine palagi na aumai, kope a le training foi gale it was like a refresher training for faifeau that we mobilise mai aulotu eseese, from different religions, a. Lea na aumai faaaoga se'i tau fesoasoani i le psycho-social issues. [...] Tele le influence of technology. [...] But um, telē le suiga. Ua vave atu le malamalama i le taimi lea ua i ai now, compared to back in the days.*

[Trans.] *Because, um, we can't avoid [how the] Samoa society is now. There are so many problems, crimes; Samoa is facing so many problems. You look at disaster, psycho-social problems we've had in dealing with natural disasters, and you know, displacements of families and [things like that]. And we had to mobilise the pastoral element, [conducted quick training]. So we brought in a Westerner woman from New Zealand, quickly conducted training sort of like a refresher training for ministers that we mobilise from different parishes, and from different religions. We brought them in to try to help with the psycho-social issues. [...] There are also many influences of technology. [...] But um, major changes. Knowledge is more advanced now, compared to back in the days. (Ane, middle-aged woman, parishioner)*

In the original text of Ane's interview there is a definitive play on words. The Samoan word *tele* meaning 'many' or 'plenty' is interchangeably used with its variation *telē* referring to 'major', 'large', or 'significant'. The same word in the Samoan language when pronounced with its last vowel sustained, changes its meaning. When translated to English, the play on words becomes *many* changes versus *major* changes as found in Samoa today. From participants' accounts of *tele* and *telē*, the *many* and *major* changes in Samoa today—the intrusion of western attitudes, increasing atomisation of individuals and families, and exercising the right of the individual with the freedom to

act as one desires—all these may play a part in the need for a revised counselling practice for Samoans at this time.

As a response to the many and major changes there is a desire in Samoa at this time for an agency to address these significant changes. SVSG provides such a service that supports and advocates for the victims of domestic and family violence, as reported by Pua, a parishioner and SVSG user:

[Orig.] *Ia e pei la o faafitauli i le vā la lea o le ma ulugalii, lea ua ta iloa la, lea e i ai le [SVSG] i totonu o le tatou atunuu, ta te sau a ou te sau sa’o ou sulufa’i mai ai i ituaiga [faafitauli faapea]. O le tulaga e ala ai ona ou lē o’o i le faifeau a, ia ona e, o lea pe ta te iloa e taita ia, e lē o fetui lota alu i le faifeau i ituaiga faafitauli ia auā e mo’i a e solve mai ma faufautua foi lea, ia ae na’o le fautuaga a lea, ae leai se mea foi lele. Auā e pei o le [SVSG] e ō mai ai, e tau, a, le tau foi lea i le leaga o le tamaloa. [...] Ae pei o lea ua maoti o ni ofisa ia, iinei i le tatou atunuu e mafai a ona tupu faafitauli faapea ta alu lea i le ofisa leoleo auā e sau a le leoleo avatu loka. Ia e pei o itu na, ae e pei e tele vave la le sulufaiga lea, i i [SVSG], a.*

[Trans.] *Issues like the relationship between us as a couple, now I know that there is a service like [SVSG] here in our country that I can access directly with these [type of issues]. The reason why I do not go to the minister with these type of issues because even though he solves it and gives advice, but it is only advice that he gives; but nothing else you know. Because SVSG they come you know, and give justice, for the wrong-doings that the man had done. [...] And it is clear with a service like this, here in our country, issues like these may happen then when I go to the police station the police will come and take [the perpetrator] away to be locked up. But those are the reasons, I get a quicker response and justice if I come here to [SVSG].* (Pua, middle-aged woman, parishioner and SVSG user)

As Pua expressed, justice is what many women seek, and SVSG provides the service for speedy justice to happen. The implication is that with the emergence of a changing Samoan self, there is an emphasis towards the right of the individual being observed and respected. Data suggest that in the Samoan context, the situation is specifically focussed on the rights of women—women are seeking out services such as SVSG where they are treated fully human with equal rights to men. As parishioner Pua shared above, she does not seek help with her minister because although he gives advice, there is limited action to help her problematic situation. The response from the church falls short of the help she seeks, yet she receives adequate action towards justice from services such as SVSG.

Parishioner Mele expressed that when matters arise that violate the rights of an individual, especially women, those affected are beginning to speak out about injustices:

[Orig.] *Po’o le mataupu foi lea i le va o le Tamā ma le afafine, aua e i ai a le ofisa o le toomaga e sulu i ai pe afai ua ta mā ta te alu e fai i le faifeau. Ta te iloa i la aso e leai a ni ofisa faapea [SVSG], a o le taimi lenei lea ua faigofie na ona taufetuli atu a.*

[Trans.] *Or issues between a father and his daughter, because there are services like [SVSG] I can approach if I am too embarrassed to tell my minister. I know back in those days there were no services like [SVSG], but now it’s easy to run to such services. (Mele, young adult woman, parishioner)*

SVSG encourages and empowers victims of abuse to come forth and seek assistance. The challenge is that the troubled woman must find enough courage to take action. However now there is a service that previously did not exist, as many of these issues were dealt with discreetly in the family, parish, and village. In such instances, cases similar to these went undetected and many of the victims remained unsafe:

[Orig.] *Ia, faigata lava i teineiti ona ave ituaiga cases [like rape] ia faapea [i le faifeau]. Ia, auā o lea ua i ai nei le toomaga [SVSG], ia faigofie lava, ua lē popole i seisi mea; alu sa’o a i le mea, i le toomaga auā o la iloa e faigofie ona avatu ai i le toomaga, ia send mai leoleo ia ave loka.*

[Trans.] *It is very difficult for girls to take cases [concerning rape to a minister]. And now that there is [SVSG] it is a lot easier now where one does not worry about other things; go directly to SVSG because [the victims] understand they will get help. The police will be sent and arrest [the perpetrator].* (Esekia, young adult man, parishioner)

Although SVSG has been expressed as being an agency where sensitive issues can be addressed by Samoans, it is also, not unexpectedly, perceived by some people in a negative light such as Reverend Lameko:

[Orig.] *A o le faalavelave pei o le mea lele o le [Samoan] Victim support [group], lea sau nei a, pei o leisi vaega lena ua push-ia le mea lea. [Interviewer asked: O lea e te fai mai i le individual right lea?] Ia, ia. Ia e fetau i [individual rights] mo tamaiti ia e sauaina. A o mea ia o ulugalii, e lē tatau ona aiā tele foi i ai latou, a. Leaga na’o le fafine a ma le Tamā e malamalama lelei i ai. Ae pei o [SVSG] latou, ua o atu tulei le mea lea ua au i ō [side with the victim who often is the woman] ae faafefea la Tamā?*

[Trans.] *But the problem is for services like [SVSG] they have come and pushed things like this. [Interviewer: Are you referring to the individual’s rights?] Yes, yes. [The rights of the individual] are applicable for children that are abused. But for couples, [SVSG] should not interfere too much into a couples’ relationship. Because the woman and the man are the ones who understand completely about their own relationship. But it seems that [SVSG] go and side [with the victim who often is the woman] but what about the man?* (Reverend Lameko, mature parish minister)

While this agency is seen as a problem by some men participants, it is also possible that SVSG is simply responding to the emergence of individuals, and is not a cause, but a response to the emergence of individualism. In most instances, women are the ones who are empowered by the work done by SVSG. However, SVSG functions for all individuals, woman or man, where their rights have been violated by someone else. Collectivity can also respond to counter inter-personal violence. Traditional ways of dealing with issues in the wider collective setting of the village *fono* (meeting) or parish meeting, have served its purpose in the past. Yet with a changing Samoan self and the rise of individualism, agencies such as SVSG cater for individuals who seek assistance.

Participants expressed that in the past similar issues to what are presented today to SVSG had been dealt with differently in the village setting, and also in more private settings. Participants feel that SVSG empowers individuals and from this new-found autonomy, disclosures of sensitive issues are surfacing more often now. It is not the situation of new issues arising for Samoans; these issues had been around in the past just dealt with differently or at times not dealt with at all. When ministers fail to offer help when approached by troubled persons, SVSG becomes a pathway to help as reported by parishioner Tone:

[Orig.] *Na ou sau filemu [i SVSG] e leai seisi mea na ou toe [fai atu ai i le faifeau]—tausi a le filemu. Ae ou suia seisi auala e maua ai seisi mapusaga ma ou sau, lea na ou o’o ai faataunuu le mataupu i le toomaga [SVSG]. Pau la lea o le taimi lea ou te iloa ai, ua lē tali mai le faifeau. Ua ou lagona ai e lē o faatinoina [lana galuega fesoasoani]. [Interviewer asked: Sa maua mai la se tali i le mea lea na e alu i ai i SVSG?] I, na maua mai.*

[Trans.] *I came peacefully [to SVSG] and there was nothing else that I [reported back to the minister]—I kept the peace. But I looked for another way to get help, which is when I took my problem to SVSG. This is the only time that I know of when the minister could not help me with my problem. And I felt that he was not performing [his role as a pastoral counsellor]. [Interviewer asked: Did you get an answer from taking your problem to SVSG?] Yes, I received an answer. (Tone, middle-aged man, parishioner)*

One change that is taking place amongst Samoans is an understanding that SVSG is an agency that can help troubled persons. It becomes an agency that works alongside traditional modes of help as found in the family, the minister, or in the village setting. When the minister failed to provide support through its pastoral counselling, participants like Tone sought assistance from agencies like SVSG. In addition to that feeling that women and children are not being addressed in the pastoral counselling provided by ministers, men have also been subjected to the same treatment. This situation is now leading both women and men to seek assistance for themselves and their children outside of the church. The church will continue to fail this group of troubled people—women, children, and men who are abused physically and sexually—and the church must rethink its ministry to be able to address these people.

There now is another option for troubled persons to seek help from for their problems as stated by Reverend Alafoti:

[Orig.] *O mea foi la ia e uiga i le, fanau foi ia e tutupu ai mea, a. Lea e i ai i i le toomaga o tagata [SVSG], ou te manatu foi e i ai mea faapena e tutupu i totonu o nuu ma fai ai a faasalaga a nuu. [...] A o le mea lea ua tulai mai ua ese le mafauauga foi lele i ai; ona o le, tatou te iloa a le tetelē o faafitauli, taatia atu lena mea o mea tau toomaga (SVSG). [...] A o lena ua taoto atu i lena foi*

*faalapotopotoga [SVSG], ia peiseai o tagata a ua lē mafaia ni fesoasoani ua sulufai loa i na, ma mea na lea aafia ai i totonu o aiga.*

[Trans.] *Then there are issues concerning children, things that happen to children. The SVSG is there for such issues, and I believe that there are similar issues that happen in the villages and are punishable within the villages. [...] But what has happened now is there is a change in thinking about issues; that we all know the severity of certain issues so we leave those issues alone to be dealt with by SVSG. [...] So it has become a responsibility of such an organisation as [SVSG], so it's as if for people who cannot find help elsewhere they seek refuge there [at SVSG] for all issues found in the families.* (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)

Children are being abused sexually and physically in Samoa, as alluded to by Reverend Alafoti. His language reflects language that talks around the issue without any direct reference to it. Abuse and violence are issues that are not talked about, since they are 'non-presentable' issues, yet these are problems that are happening. The church has not taken on the challenge to deal or consider such sensitive issues, and have left the work to agencies such as SVSG to deal with. The implication is that SVSG do a better job than the church at dealing with such issues. Possibly the church may view such issues about violence and abuse (sexual and physical) as taboo and non-presentable and thus overly challenging for the church to address. Yet precisely this is where the church needs to locate itself—to engage and become a safe haven for the neglected, abused, and exploited in the church families. Pastoral counselling practices that address non-presentable issues, such as sexual and physical violence and abuse, will assist in the church to maintain any relevance with the people whom it serves.



## 5.9 Summary

The perspectives disclosed through the interviews and presented in this chapter imply that there appears to be considerable anxiety about change especially by those who hold positions of authority; that change is inevitably negative and will adversely affect Samoan unity. The rise of individualism, as opposed to the traditional collective, is emerging. There have been changes in the family designs, changes in the mind-sets of Samoans, and technological advances that all have contributed to a different way of life emerging for many Samoans. There have also been changes to practices like *lotu afiafi* that Samoans had been accustomed to, accommodating for many of the significant changes as found in Samoa today. The physical and sexual abuse of women and children often are not dealt with in the church, and secular agencies like SVSG have taken on the challenge of advocating for survivors of abuse. Men have also used the services of SVSG when the church has failed to address their needs. The emergence of a changing Samoan self has paved the way for groups like SVSG to be established as a pathway of help for abused people. Such an agency can be identified as a response to contemporary identity shifts for Samoans. The church has a network already in place in the villages designed and ordained to help people through their issues and difficulties. The challenge for the church now becomes one of incorporating these changes and tensions into current pastoral counselling practices, to cater for all issues faced by parishioners that include violence and abuse. The vision is for pastoral counselling to include a dialogical approach in its practices, to begin to understand and respond effectively to a changing Samoan self, and help those in their times of greatest need and desperation.

## Chapter Six

### *Fetu'utu'una'i le vā*—Navigating relational space in counselling Samoans

#### 6.1 Introduction

Several participants reported that *vā* identified as the relational space that connects people, was important in the counselling processes they were involved with. Understanding the presence and significance of *vā* for Samoans leads into the concept of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* (navigating relational space) for Samoans. This chapter will investigate the concept of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* and how this is associated with counselling for Samoans. As we shall see in this chapter, many participants considered the concept of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* as fundamental to preserve key values for Samoans such as respect, obedience, discipline, reciprocity, and to maintain the family organisational structure. Further, *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* helps to sustain the collective responsibilities and uphold cohesive and harmonious relationships amongst Samoans. In addition, this chapter will identify that *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* has also undergone significant changes for the same reasons as the emergence of a changing Samoan self, as discussed in the previous chapter. The enforcement of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* has evolved from the use of physical force to the use of verbal force. Excommunication and punishment as forms of counselling in the village and parish settings will also be discussed herein. At the end of this chapter we will see how the conceptualisation and enforcement of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* has transitioned from the use of physical and verbal force, as well as excommunication and punishment, to now incorporate a dialogical approach.

## 6.2 *Vā* as relationship-making in counselling

Most participants understood counselling as the common practices within their families that maintained intrinsic boundaries. *Aiga* patterns are reflected in counselling relationships, where *vā* exists between the elders and parents as leaders of the family, and the younger generations. With his desire for the younger generations to exhibit morally-acceptable and culturally-appropriate behaviour, Reverend Alafoti reported that firm instructions are given by parents to teach and remind their children of how they should behave in various situations:

[Orig.] *Pei a o le mea e ese ā foi le faiga o fanau a Samoa ia, e pei e foliga mai e lē milimilia. Ae pei e ma'ama'a i ai le leo e avatu le upu foi lele ia 'aia nei faaletonu lana faalogo ma usiusita'i i mea ia, e manatu i ai [mātua]. O le mea foi lena e i ai isi aiga a o mai tagata i le fale o le faifeau e faaaloalo a, e nonofo mai i luga o ma'a.*

[Trans.] *That is what makes the difference between the rearing of Samoan children; it seems that they are not wrapped in cotton wool. But a firm voice is given to ensure that instructions are upheld with no mistakes, to listen and obey to all things as decided upon [by their parents]. That is also why when people from some families come to the minister's house, they show so much respect that they sit outside on the rocks. (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)*

The children in Samoan families are nurtured in a way to minimise becoming overly dependent upon their parents. Especially in situations where two or more *aiga* made of parents and their children live together as an extended family, both households collectively serve the *matai* for that extended family. The younger children commonly are cared for by elder siblings or cousins while their parents attend to the overall well-being and function of the extended family. The children are directed with firm

instructions from their parents, but occasionally may be given instructions from their elder siblings, cousins, *matai* or any members within that extended family who is older to that particular child. This demonstrates the hierarchical organisational structure of the Samoan family that often is age-determinant. From an early age children are taught how to listen to a firm word being instructed, and equally as important is that they are reminded to obey the instructions given. Occasionally as several participants expressed, a smack reinforces the instruction. There may be little room for dialogue between child and care-giver at this early stage in the child's development.

In addition to obedience, children are instructed to show respect to their elders. As Reverend Alafoti expressed, some people show respect for the minister by not even stepping into the minister's house. In this instance, the tacit *vā* demonstrating respect from visitors to the minister's manse has taken on a literal and physical dimension; as an utmost sign of respect for the minister's personal living space, visitors would rather sit outside on the rocks and relay the purpose for their visit.

### **6.3 Physical force in *fetu'utu'una'i le vā***

Enforcing that *vā* is observed at all times between Samoans has been described in the interviews as advocated through the use of physical force at times, and the use of force through these means can sometimes result in violence. *Sauā* is a Samoan word that several participants used to describe what can be translated as someone being 'mean', 'cruel', or even 'violent'. Participants described several examples of physical force: the beatings, striking and smacking of children by their parents, carers, and older siblings. There are also several accounts of verbal force of an authoritarian nature: instructions

that are directed and must be obeyed where authority was absolute, and there was little or no opportunity for discussion. An example of the physical force in dealing with her children is given by Eseta:

[Orig.] *E faapena la la'u faiga o la'u fanau. A te'ite'i ua ou vaai atu o savalivali mai, e te'i a, 'Faafefea na e sau? A'o le ā le mea ua tū ai o le taavale ae lē sau i totonu?' Matua ou sailiilia a. 'Le a le mea ua lē sau ai le taavale i totonu e momoli mai oe i le fale? Ia, faatalitali la pe a toe fai, na e vaai faalelei lea i ai.' Lua loa, fasi loa. Leaga lea ua warn muamua, ae lē usitai, lua loa fasi loa. Ou fai atu loa, 'Leaga lea na ou tautala muamua ia oe, a lea ua e lē usitai, fasi loa la oe.' E lē faapea foi ā o se fasi a, na ou alu atu a sasa i le laupapa ia ona iloa ai lona faalogota. Ae lē faapea o se fasi o le fasi ai ā, o le fasi o le aoai. Ia ona learn-ina lana mea sese.*

[Trans.] *That is how I deal with my children. When I suddenly see them strolling in, they get surprised when I ask, 'How did you come? Why didn't the car that dropped you off come into our driveway?' I ask them many questions. 'Why did the car not escort you into our driveway and to our house? Ok, just wait if you do it again then you will really see.' A second time, I smack them. This is because they have been warned the first time and they did not obey, so when it happens a second time, I smack them. Then I would say to them, 'Because I spoke about this to you before, and yet you still disobeyed; now I am going to smack you.' It's not as if it is a big hitting affair; I will go and smack them with a piece of timber so that they understand their disobedience. But it is not a smack that I will continuously be hitting them, it is a smack to teach them. So that they learn what they did was wrong. (Eseta, mature woman, parishioner)*

It is important to Eseta to know the whereabouts and the friends that her children keep. To be dropped off close to their home rather than at their home suggests secrecy of those who had accompanied this particular child back home. Such actions may have been perceived by Eseta as a show of disrespect from those who brought her child

home, by not acknowledging her as the parent waiting for the child's safe return. Obedience is important to Eseta as with many Samoans, since it is culturally expected to obey and respect one's elders and parents. A warning was issued yet the event re-occurred, showing that the adolescent child disobeyed her instruction. Physical force resulted as a way to discourage repeat offences and to meet the underlying goal of morally-acceptable and culturally-appropriate behaviour displayed by her children. An explanation of why the behaviour was considered inappropriate may have been equally as effective to meet the required outcomes, rather than resorting to physical force.

Litia described her intention to use physical force, then suddenly had a change of heart:

[Orig.] *E i ai la la'u [tama tama], ua lē fiafia e alu i le lotu. Ia, ua uma foi a'u fautuaga faaTinā, pau le lagona na o'o mai ia a'u, o se fasi malosi e ave i ai, ina ia una'ia e alu i le lotu. Ae ua ou nofo ou toe mafaufau, ma ou tatalo foi i le Atua, 'Faamolemole le Atua faasino mai se auala e foia ai le faafitauli o si a'u tama lea.' Ae sa toaga a i le lotu, ae ua te'i a ua lē [alu i le lotu], ina ua leai [le faifeau muamua], ae ua vaai loa e [le faifeau na sosoo mai ai]. Ia ai po'o le auala lea na aumai ai e le Atua, ou te alu i [le faifeau na sosoo mai ai]. Ia, sa ma talatalanoa ma [le faifeau na sosoo mai ai] ma ou fesili i ai. Fai mai loa, 'Sese lau mea lena e fai, o lou tauanau o le tama. Afai a ua musu le tama, tu'u. E tuu avanoa a i ai le Atua e musumusuina lona mafaufau, e i ai a le taimi [e toe lotu ai].'*

[Trans.] *I have a [son] who does not like going to church. And I have exhausted my motherly advice with no success, and the only thought I have now is to give him a big beating to force him to go to church. But then I stop and re-think and pray to God saying, 'Please God show me a way to overcome this problem with my son.' But he used to be committed to the church but then suddenly he stopped [going to church] when [the former minister] was no longer the minister, but the parish was now cared for [by the next minister]. This is probably the way from*

*God to go and see [the next minister]. So I went and talked and asked his advice and he responded saying, 'What you are doing is not right, you're forcing your son. If he doesn't want to go, leave him. God will give him a chance and move him to change his mind; there will come a time [that he will return to church]'. (Litia, elderly widow of a minister)*

Attending church is important for Litia as implied by her reaction to her son's disinterest in attending church. For Litia to give motherly advice to her young adult son to attend church suggests that *not* attending church is a problem that required for her to intervene. Traditionally in many Samoan families, parental authority continues into children's adult lives as demonstrated in the quotation above. Verbal instruction in the form of advice-giving had been exercised with no success. Upon her failure to convert her son to share her understanding of the importance of attending church, Litia considered physical force as a form of intervention. However, through further consideration of another way and reliance upon God through prayer, Litia was able to restrain herself from using physical force, and discovered an alternative intervention.

Historically being a 'good' parent was perceived as one who disciplined their children with physical or verbal force and exercised control over them. Such a description for parents would be epitomised especially when the children obeyed the instructions given. It appears as Lufi reported, that notions of what constitutes a 'good' parent in Samoa today are changing:

[Orig.] *Lea ou te fai atu ai na ou vaai i le pologa. Sauā lo'u Tamā auā foi la lea a sasa atu tamaiti ma o mai i le aoga, ae pei e wild foi pe ata mafaufau atu i le taimi nei. Ae a sasa atu la e ita mātua, fai mai e 'aia le sasa a latou fanau. Ae lea ua ō atu laua i le agaga o le galuega, o le fia aumai, i lotu ma aoga. [...] Ae pei la*

*o iina lea na matou iloa ai le mea lea o le sauā, ae aogā. Auā e o’o a ia matou o lana fanau, e fasi foi matou pe a matou lē faalogo atu ia te ia.*

[Trans.] *I am telling you that I witnessed the hardships. My father was a violent man because the children were smacked as they attended school, and nowadays it would be considered a wild thing to do. If the children are smacked now their parents get angry and say not to smack their children. But [my parents] entered into their ministry to bring people towards the church and to school. [...] But it was there that we understood that being violent is also useful. Because even us his own children, we were smacked when we did not obey what he said. (Lufi, elderly woman, parishioner)*

Lufi’s father was a parish minister and often children of the village would attend *A’oga a le faifeau* otherwise known as ‘pastor’s school’. At these schools children were taught general arithmetic, handwriting, oral and written Samoan grammar and language, as well as Biblical stories. It was at the pastor’s school that Lufi witnessed the violent or *fa’asauā* nature of her father, in addition to herself and siblings being smacked. The ‘wild thing’ as expressed refers to the smacking of children by teachers at any educational institution in Samoa today as a practice that has become unlawful. This suggests a shift in the values of Samoans whereby in the past smacking children was acceptable. Again, changes associated with the emergence of a changing Samoan self have given rise to such a shift.

Lufi’s story of the smacking of children at the pastor’s school is one example of the use of physical force in the villages. Often it was expected by parents that the minister would sometimes use physical force to discipline the children in the parishes. Unless they considered that excessive force was used by the minister, parents would allow such forms of discipline. Physical force in the village setting also includes conflicts between



families that escalate into violent fights where at times the minister steps in as the intervention as expressed by the following minister:

[Orig.] *E i ai taimi e misa ai foi tagata. E eseese foi ia mo mea o mafauauga i ai a faifeau, o isi taimi a alu atu le faifeau e vavao le misa, ua atili misa ai tagata. Pe fia ta'u mai poo ai e malosi. Ia, ae mafauafau foi lea, faapena foi i isi faifeau i latou nuu ua latou iloa, faapea loa lea, 'e le'i sau e alu e vavao ni misa.' Pei ni auala pei ni faamatalaga e faatofotofo ai. Faapea, 'Ia ou te le'i sau e vavao ni misa, na'o le pau a le mea, a faamisa a le tagata o'o ina feoti, pau a la'u galuega o le tanu o le oti.' (chuckles). A o ituaiga faaupuga na, ua learn ai foi tagata. Ia o le mea lena ua faalogologo mai latou, e lē faapea o le agaga o le faifeau e lē, popole atu, a o isi taimi e faapalopalo amio a tagata ma o latou olaga. Ia a la fai atu i ai se mea faapalopalo a le faifeau.*

[Trans.] *There are times when people fight. Ministers hold various opinions about this type of dispute, that sometimes when the minister goes to calm down the situation, he actually adds to the conflict. [These fights] become the case of seeing who is stronger. And when you think about it some ministers hold to an understanding that they were not called to the parish to resolve conflicts. Statements that challenge the people may be useful. Saying things like, 'I did not come to this parish to resolve disputes and fights, but if you continue to fight which may lead to death, then my duty will be to bury your dead' [chuckles]. But this sort of statement the people have learned from, and listened to me. It's not so much that the minister doesn't care about the people, but sometimes peoples' behaviours are inappropriate so the minister must say inappropriate things from time to time. (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)*

Reverend Alafoti recalls that families in the villages often argue and at times this may lead to physical fights and conflicts. The implication is that to be considered powerful within the village in the past, a man had to use brute force and physical strength when conflicts erupted into violence. The minister is often sought as a mediator and peace-

maker when conflicts arise between families, especially when issues result in violence. A possible reason is that the minister today may be considered the most dominant and respected person with official status to calm down violent situations.

Fa'afetai, a *matai*, expressed that he often used physical force to ensure that *vā* was appropriately observed by the youth in their parish, especially when their own parents failed to do so:

[Orig.] *Auā o le mea mo'i a ia Alesana e, e i ai mātua e lē o mafai ona latou, malosi le tautala i a latou fanau. O le faanoanoaga foi lena leaga pei o le ā fefefe mātua e fai le faatonuga e tataua ona fai. Ia, ou te iloa a la le tamaititi e a'itui i lona Tamā ma lona Tinā, ou te maua loa a i le mea e sese ai, fasi loa a e leai a seisi mea e toe tuua i ai [chuckles]. Tusa o lo'u avanoa lena ua maua e, e faasa'o ai loa le laititi lea pe ā ua lē mafai ona faasa'o e lona Tamā.*

[Trans.] *Because the truth is, Alesana, there are parents that cannot talk firmly to their children. It is sad, because it seems that parents are becoming afraid to give instructions that are needed. And I know the type of child that is difficult to his father and mother, if I can fault them with something wrong he or she has done, and then I give them a beating without delay [chuckles]. That is my opportunity received to correct this child whose father has been unsuccessful in correcting him. (Fa'afetai, mature man, matai and parishioner)*

Fa'afetai had taken upon himself the responsibility of most Samoan parents: to instruct their children in morally-acceptable and culturally-appropriate behaviour. Instructions can be verbal but as several participants expressed, physical force is a way to achieve the desired behaviours. As implied by Fa'afetai, parents find that traditional modes of instruction no longer bring about the desired level of parental authority. Fa'afetai laughed as he expressed 'correcting' a child whose father had failed to do so, which

implies that tradition prevailed when a child obeying his or her elders. Yet physical force was used to ensure obedience. In the past, there were little or no opportunities for dialogue; the only acceptable response was passive obedience to parents' instructions. The obedience to parents' instructions today is exposed to an emerging changing Samoan self that now demands explanation and dialogue, rather than the use of physical force.

#### **6.4 A shift towards verbal force in *fetu'utu'una'i le vā***

As we have seen traditionally in Samoa, physical force was often used in the application of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*. However, with societal changes, including the power relations amongst Samoans and the emergence of a changing Samoan self, a transition towards the use of verbal force as enforcement of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* has been observed by participants. Parishioners like Eseta shared that their inherent duties and responsibilities as parents have developed so that they still are strict and instruct their children, but now they do not use physical force. A firm and scolding voice has now taken precedence over the initial reaction of striking a misbehaved child:

[Orig.] *E i ai a le taimi ou te ita ai ua ova le faalogotata, ia e laulogo uma le malae i lo'u oke. Ae ana ou lē oke [i la'u fanau], e lē maopoopo tamaiti ia ma fefefe [ia a'u]. Ia maopoopo uma mai i le taimi lenei o, auā e pei o le taimi lea e mafai ona avatu i ai se upu ma se tala.*

[Trans.] *There are times when I get very angry because the children have been overly disobedient, and neighbouring yards surely can hear my scolding. But if I didn't scold [my children], they wouldn't be disciplined and scared [of me]. They need to be disciplined now, because at this time in their lives I can instruct them with my words and teachings. (Eseta, mature woman, parishioner)*

Verbal force is not necessarily something new for many Samoans, as Reverend Avanoa reported:

[Orig.] *Ae ua malosi a lona aafia o lona mafaufau i le mea lena; [...] ua lē fiafia i lona aiga, faapea la e faigaluega ae ave tupe i ai e fai mea a ona mātua, ae tele ina otegia ia. Sina tama’i mea faasaga atu loa le oke. La foi la ou te taumafai taita e faamatala atu i ai, ‘Faapena uma mātua; nei te’i ua e faapea na’o ou mātua e faapena. Na matou ola fo’i matou i mātua faapena.’*

[Trans.] *And it became a burden on her mind what happened; [...] she became unhappy with her family because she was working and gave all her money to support her parents, yet often she was scolded. Whenever a minor issue would happen she would be scolded. And I try to explain to her, ‘All parents are like that; just in case you think your parents are the only ones who are like that, our parents were like that as well’.* (Reverend Avanoa, long-serving parish minister close to retirement age)

It appears that despite changes, the more familiar approach is directive rather than dialogic. Being scolded by parents is an experience that was common amongst many Samoans as expressed by Reverend Avanoa. In addition, this form of verbal force appears to have no age limitations; even into early adulthood Samoans are still being given stern instructions by their parents as parishioner Sina reported:

[Orig.] *Ia e lē natia foi o le ‘ai mariuana o nisi o le fanau ma o le mea e oso ai lo’u popole ma lo’u lē fiafia ona o fanau teine. [...] O le tele o le fai uo atu i lea ma lea, atonu o le isi tulaga lena e lē faalogo ai, ae lē tuua la’u tautala. O si o’u toalua e faalētautala ana ia. E pei e alofa faavalevalea, alofa faavalevalea [i le mā fanau], faapea [o a’u ua ala ai] ona ō teine. A’o ia sa tatau ona tū malosi e taumafai mai le ma aiga auā o na’o teine la ma fanau. E lē o se alofa la lena mea o le tuu, pei e tuulafoai mai foi lea [...]. E lē fefefe la’u fanau i lo’u toalua, ae ua matuā fefefe a la’u fanau ia te a’u, ona o le tulaga la lea e lē taitai o aso uma, o taimi uma ou*

*te tautala lava; ou te tautala lava e ave a i ai le faamatalaga. Lea ua i’u a ina matutua, e lē o motu a la’u tautala ma la’u sasa ia i latou. Ona o le tulaga la lea o le faalogotata, e lē faalogo.*

[Trans.] *I suppose it is common knowledge that some of my children use marijuana and what worries and upsets me is that these are girls, our daughters. [...] They go here and there and make friends with all sorts of people and that could be why they don’t listen to me, but that doesn’t stop me from instructing them. My husband is rather a quiet guy. It is sort of like he shows a foolish love [to our daughters] and says it is [because of me] that our daughters always go out. But he should be the strong one in our family especially that we only have daughters. It’s not love to leave them alone, sort of neglect them [...]. My children are not scared of my husband but they fear me because I instruct them daily, all the time, I talk to them always and give them instructions. Even now they have become adults, my instructing them has not ceased, neither has my hitting them. Because they are disobedient and do not listen. (Sina, mature woman, parishioner)*

Faced with the issue of her daughters’ use of cannabis, Sina does not back down from instructing her children even into their adult years. The lack of support from her husband in dealing with their daughters nullifies an expectation that fathers need to look out for their children, especially when they have daughters. The contemporary concept of counselling for Samoans is that of a person deemed to hold superior authority knowing what is best for another, more than the person is able to determine for themselves. There is the expectation that both Sina and her husband know what is best for their daughters and by scolding and issuing firm instructions complies with such a belief.

In the above quotation, the silence of Sina’s husband in the affairs of their daughters is *alofa faavalevaea* or a ‘foolish love’. To allow their adult children to decide and function

independently with no instructions given is considered as an act of ‘foolish love’ from parents. Such a concept implies that for collective communities like Samoans, a person is rarely left silently as an individual with no verbal directions offered especially when issues presented can potentially bring shame and dishonour to the family name.

## **6.5 Excommunication and punishment in *fetu’utu’una’i le vā***

Bringing shame upon one’s family is a practice expressed previously as used by some ministers with members of his parish. The objective of public-shaming is to discourage others in following suit by making known certain undertakings that have shamed the family name. In line with bringing shame and dishonour to the family name are excommunications or removal and punishments from the village or the parish, as the following minister shared:

*[Orig.] A faapea ua leva ona pogisa le faiga o lou tofi Aoao a ua taia oe ma faasala, ia a lea sa fai atu a lou loto pei se avega, a lea la ua faasa’o loa ma manino, ua clear foi le mea ua leai se nenefu o le mea a. O le mea a lea in a form of, pei a o se counselling foi lele i tagata o latou lava le mea.*

*[Trans.] If you had been living in darkness for a while in your role as lay preacher and then you are reprimanded and punished, it’s like a burden in your heart has been put straight and made clear with no more uncertainty. So in a way [being punished] it is like a form of counselling for people. (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)*

In the above instance, eviction from the church became the intervention which led to a behavioural change. However, the change in behaviour can be understood as short term and relevant only for the given context that the perpetrator was removed from; the

underlying factors behind the behaviour may still be there, dormant to being evicted from the parish in this case, or from one's family and village in other cases.

Reverend Alafoti reported that in the village setting, *matai* operate within a system of authority that when explicit *vā* have been breached that are also in violation of village laws, penalties are exercised:

[Orig.] *Ia, manatua foi o le tele o nuu, i o latou faiganuu e i ai a latou pulenuu. O inā la e lipoti ai pe a potopoto le nuu, e lipoti uma i ai ia ni mea la e tutupu. Afai foi e lē lipotia ae la e iloa e nisi, ia e lagalaga a i i. Ia a faapea ni soligatulafono ua iloa, pei o le mea lea o le moetolo, solitofaga, poo le mea lea o le gaoi, faamisa, ia ua leva ona fai na amio i totonu o nuu ma ua i ai foi faasalaga ua uma ona fai i lea nuu ma lea nuu i a latou tulafono foi, o le sala i lea mea ma lea mea. A o mea la na pei e aafia ai le solitofaga o mea matuia a lena, ia faapena la na fua latou faasalaga. Ia poo le ā le faia e lea tagata o lea amio faaosoosoina ai e alu e moetolo, tasi a le tuu atu i ai o aumakua e sefulu, e le toe fia moekolo.*

[Trans.] *Remember many villages are governed by the matai system, and each village has a mayor. That is where reports of all things that happen in the village are made, when the village come together. If nothing is reported and others know about issues, then they are raised here [in the village fono]. These are some of the offences: like rape, incest, or theft, causing fights in the village; these sort of things have been happening long ago in the villages, and punishments have been set for such behaviours in this village and that village. And issues like incest and rape those are serious issues, and they are punished accordingly. So whatever temptation someone may have to commit rape, as soon as the person is punished with ten sows, they wouldn't want to commit rape again. (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)*

The *matai* system that governs most Samoan families in the villages has clear punishments for behaviours that breach village protocols. Reverend Alafoti gives

examples of the crimes together with a form of imposed punishment. Deliberations are considered by *matai* who are present at the village *fono* and previous cases act as templates for determining judgements. The culprit is brought forth, advice is given, and judgement passed down. There is no dialogue and there is no opportunity for an appeal.

‘Ten sows’ as punishment by *matai* for a serious crime may seem odd, given the violent nature of the crime. It is quite rare for most *aiga* of parents and their children to have ten sows at their disposal, unless of course that particular *aiga* rears pigs. Often a family may have access to one or two female pigs. Extended family members are then summoned to help supply the ten sows needed to meet the punishment given by the village leaders. For severe cases, the punishment may be up to as many as one hundred sows. It can be seen that many more families are affected in order to honour the punishment of one person. In some cases, following the punishment imposed by the village *fono*, the extended family elders exercise their own internal punishment for one of their own who has brought about financial burdens and shame to the family name. The thinking behind this type of punishment can be explained by a Samoan proverb as expressed by Reverend Tino:

[Orig.] *E i ai le mea sa tupu iinei ua tasi ai le nuu e aveese, ati ma le lau.*

[Trans.] *Something happened here in our village and the village agreed to evict [the culprit], ‘cut off all the leaves’.* (Reverend Tino, long-serving parish minister)

‘*Ati ma le lau*’ (‘cut off all the leaves’) is a common Samoan proverb heard when punishments for serious crimes are handed down at the village *fono*. The idea is that the livelihood of the family is at stake. For any plantation grown by the family of the offender, either taro or banana, ‘cut off all the leaves’ means to destroy that plantation.



The leaves can grow back but it will take time to re-grow and revive the plantation that had previously sustained the family's needs. To 'cut off all the leaves' will leave nothing for the offender's family, and as a result there will be a great financial strain upon the larger family unit. The severity of the crime matches the pain of the punishment because it is not a sole punishment for the individual who committed the crime; usually the extended family members often share the punishment imposed by the village leaders.

The Village *Fono* Act 1990 gave legal recognition to the collective of *matai* in the village *fono*, that acknowledged the exercise of authority of *matai* within the setting of the village (Sapolu, Suaalii-Sauni, Mulitalo, Fuatai, & Temese, 2012). The customary laws enforced in the village *fono* have the purpose of supporting the courts legal system, focused primarily on defending and protecting the collective—family and village. In contrast, the legal system and codes adopted into the courts of Samoa are based on defending and protecting the rights of the individual. For situations where these two frameworks of law conflict—Samoan customary laws that advocate the collective, and the adopted legal court system that advocates the individual, the legal codes that affirm the rights of the individual take precedence over any customary law (Sapolu et al., 2012). As a form of maintaining order and harmony within the village, punishments issued by the village *fono* must be observed and honoured with few opportunities for appeal as reported by Reverend Alafoti:

[Orig.] *E lē tatau la ona faapea, 'Aua tatou te faia na mea, tatou tetee i ai.' A o le sala, o le mea a le tamaalii. Tusa e sese le latou tagata, ae o latou faamalie le nuu. [Interviewer asked: Faamata e i ai foi se avanoa, e apili ai le mea lea?] Ia, a faapea o lea ua aumai se faasalaga, o le mea tāua a, o le taumafai pea e fai. Ia*

*na o mai lea ma aumai ma se talosaga a le matai o le aiga, 'la e faamalie atu, ua leai se mea ua tua i ai lenei aiga, ua leai se mea o totoe.' la e le valea foi ia nai matai, faapea, 'la fa'afetai o le mea taua a, o lea a ua outou faatino le mea lea tou te mafai.' la faapena le fetuunaiga o upu a nai toeaina i luma o le nuu, o la foi e i ai le ava fatafata ma le faaaloalo. A o mea la faapena, e settle ai a nuu latou. A o nuu nei e pei e faaletonu o nuu nei, aai i i le taulaga e leai ni pulega a nuu, lea ua nofonofo solo ai tagata. Lea la e faatupu faalavelave ae le o i ai ni pulega e vaaia ia mea ia. Ae even now, ua taumafai a le malo e tofu a soo se nuu ma o latou pulenuu, e tau fesoasoani e le gata i le atinae ma le manuia lautele o tagata, a o mea foi la e tutupu.*

*[Trans.] You must never say along the lines of, 'Let us not do what [the village] have instructed, we should protest.' Honouring the punishment is to be chief-like. So it is sort of like one of their own has committed the crime, but [the larger family members] satisfy the village. [Interviewer asked: Is there a chance to appeal the punishment?] Ok say a punishment has been given, the important thing is to try and honour the punishment. Then the family come and bring what they have managed to gather together and the matai of that family come and plead with the village saying, 'We apologise but there is nothing left for our family, this is all we have.' The matai of the village are not foolish people and they may say, 'Well thank you, the most important thing is that you have done what you can.' That is how words are negotiated between elders of the village; the elders also show respect and values for others. That is how villages settle issues. But villages that appear to be problematic today are those that are not governed by matai system. Like villages in the town area that have no matai system. They cause a lot of problems. But even now the government is trying to assign every village with a mayor. This may help not only with the general welfare of the village and the people, but also for issues that arise. (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)*

There is great flexibility shown with the village leaders, who display Samoan attributes of respect, love, and holding values for the lives of others. When punishments of the

village are imposed upon parishioners, Reverend Afato expressed that a dilemma arises for the minister in his role as carer for members of his flock:

*One good thing about me and my wife, I don't mind saying it, we were reprimanded for [almost a decade...] and I think that works in our favour because a lot of people know that we've been through years of taunting and of people looking sideways at you [...] So when we came to the [parish] we have really related to families and young people who go through [being excommunicated...] A good example is, the family that got kicked out is also one of your deacons, so where do you stand on something like that? If you go and help out the family that got booted out, it's almost like you have endorsed the offense of the [culprit...] It's hard to get that balance and then [matai] will usually say, 'Leave the village matters to the village; Reverend you should pray and support us'. (Reverend Afato, middle-aged NZ-born Samoan)*

The minister's role is clearly defined and segregated from the leaders of any given village. However in line with a changing Samoan self, the once rigid roles of ministers are shifting to being valued in different ways in the village setting. At times intervention by the minister at the village *fono* may produce a desirable outcome as reported by one minister:

*[Orig.] O le tagata na sau iinei onā ma aafia ai, ua fai le tonu o le a aveese. Ia, na ou toe alu i totonu o le nuu. Ou alu a ma ou faanoi pe mafai ona ou [alu atu]. Ia na fai atu lea o la'u tala i ai i toeaia, 'Vaai o le mea ua tupu e mo'i ua fai so'o, a o le avanoa lenei e liliu ese ai [le tagata lea]. Ou te manumanu, ou te lē manao e aveese se mamoe o le ekalesia ona o ni sese ua tetele. A o le mea ou te manao ai, ina ia mautinoa e le tagata le alofa o le Atua ia te ia. Ua uma ona ou tautala i ai, ua ou aumaia i i (to his place for counselling), a o lea ou te manao, ia toe tuu se avanoa. Ia alofagia le aiga.' E le tele sa'u upu na o le pau lena o a'u upu. 'Ia aumai, e faale-Atua ia outou tōfā e fai ai le galuega lea, ia faamaglo. Ae o le a ou alu ou te faatali mai, a i ai seisi mea ona fai lea.' E le i tele foi ni upu a le nuu. O*

*le mea na ou ofo ai, na toe sui. O le tagata numera tasi lena i le matou lotu i mea e fai lea ua i ai nei.*

[Trans.] *A person migrated here to our village, got drunk and misbehaved, and so a decision was made to evict him. So I went into the village fono [council]. I asked permission to enter then I said to the elders, ‘Look, what has happened yes has happened many times before, but this is a chance for [the offender] to turn his life around. I am very cautious, and I would not want to remove any one of the sheep of my flock because of any wrongs that have magnified. But what I want is for [the offender] to be sure of God’s love for him. I have spoken to him, and I have taken him to my home [for counselling], and I ask that give him one more chance. May you consider his family.’ I didn’t say much as I continued, ‘May you receive God-like wisdom to deliberate on this matter; may you forgive. I am now leaving and await your decision.’ The village council did not say much either. What amazed me was that their decision was reversed. And now [the offender] is the number one member of our parish in all he does. (Reverend Tino, long-serving parish minister)*

In Samoa today, the *matai* council (*fono*) in the village is still strong and plays a pivotal role in governance (So'o & Huffer, 2005) where village laws are enforced by the *fono a matai*. For any dispute resolutions that use a ‘traditional’ approach (*fono a matai*), rulings determined become void when the constitutional rights of individuals are contested through legal proceedings (Macpherson, 2006). Sapolu (1988) writes about Article 2 of the 1962 Constitution of Western Samoa and states that “the Constitution is the paramount law and any law inconsistent with the Constitution is void to the extent of the inconsistency” (p. 61). The courts justice system prevails over the traditional approach of *fono a matai* that governs order in the setting of the village.

Eviction and punishment traditionally have been enforcements of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* in the villages and parishes. These also have undergone considerable changes alongside a changing Samoan self that demands justice. Such enforcement practices are still evident in many villages and parishes, but these forms of enforcement are moving towards being more about understanding and deeper learning. The underlying factors behind behaviours that have resulted in eviction and punishment need to be accessed and processed. To do so, a dialogical approach in *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* has been implied by participants as a possible pathway.

## 6.6 Dialogue as *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*

As we have seen, the enforcement of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* has evolved from the use of physical to verbal force. Enforcement has also involved eviction and other punishments. Participants have implied a further evolution where enforcement of *vā* has now further evolved into a dialogical approach. For dialogue to be possible, the context of the Samoan family plays a pivotal role. Parishioner Lufi shared that it was important that adult children who had left the sanctuary of the family home and started their own families return home occasionally so that dialogue with their parents becomes possible:

[Orig.] *O leisi na mea lea ou te iloa i nei ona po, o lea o la'u taumafai la lea i la'u fanau, ou te manao e 'aia nei ō ese o latou loto mai ia te a'u. Ou te fai i ai ā le upu, 'Tau ā na ō, o mai tilotilo mai ou tilotilo atu, ou malie. loe. Ae 'aia le ō ma ō ai ā.' E o mai ou iloa atu o la e i ai le lagona [mo a'u]. Ou te lē manao foi i ni mea, ae pei ā o le loto la ta te mimita, 'O la'u tama lea, o la'u fanau lea. Poo uā, poo lelei, poo ua lē lolotu ta'u mai poo ua inu beer,' a. Ia o le taimi la lena e te aumaia ai loa, e faatalatalanoa i le fale. [...] Aumai a i le fale, a o lea e lalata mai auā foi o lea e masani, masani i le faapotopoto. Auā foi o la ua iloa, o lea e mālū foi lele auā o la'u tala lena sa fai, 'Ou te lē manao i se mea, ou te manao i le loto*

*maulalo. A ia outou le loto maulalo, tou te malo ai i mea uma. Tou te fiu a e ō i fea ma fea, poo ā suafa tetele, a tou fo'i mai ma faailoga, ou te lē manao i ai; ae foi mai i totonu o le tatou aiga.'*

[Trans.] *That is another thing that I know these days, and I try and remind my children, is that I want them never to lose their heart from me. I constantly remind them saying, 'You may go your own way, but you must come back and see me and then I too can see you, then my heart will be satisfied. Don't go and be gone.' They come back and then I know they still have feelings [for me]. I also don't want anything, but a heart that is proud saying, 'That is my child. I wonder how they are. Are they good? Are they not attending church? Tell me if they are drinking beer?' If so, then that is a good time to bring them home and talk to them. [...] Bring them home, because they often come home and are used to gathering together. Because they already know as I have calmly told them before, 'I don't want anything; I just want a humble heart. If you possess a humble heart, you will triumph over all things. You will travel from place to place, you may have prestigious chiefly titles, you may return with degrees, but I don't want any of those; return back into our family'. (Lufi, elderly woman, parishioner)*

Many participants shared the importance and value of remaining connected to one's family. Family is where the behaviour and values of the children are founded and develop so staying linked to family is fundamental. If issues arise in the lives of adult children who have left home, returning home for their parents to re-engage their teachings and advisory roles becomes desirable. As implied by Lufi, church attendance is important; perhaps the continuation into the 'family' of the church is seen as essential when absent from the safety and sanctuary of one's family. Parishioner Eseta reported that the invitation and opportunity to return home to one's family to talk openly with parents must be extended to all members of the family:

[Orig.] *A foi o le mea lena lea ou te tuu i ai le avanoa [e talanoa ai], 'A i ai le mea e lē fiafia ai leisi tamaititi i leisi tamaititi, poo le uso i le uso, le tuagane i le tuafafine, aumai, aumai i luma i le taimi nei. A i ai foi le mea ou te lē [fiafia ai], e uma ou tautala atu.' Ia e faatonu lava, 'O le mea o le tamaititi e taumamao ma le Alii, o le nā e tupu ai le faalavelave. Nofo ma le tala lena e fai atu. E te taumamao loa ma le Alii, tupu loa le faalavelave ia te oe. O e faalogo mai, aoga, galuega, vaai o le a le mea e faigata ia oe, sōsō i le Alii. O la e tu mai lou fesoasoani. Ae pei e te fiapoto pe a.' Auā e alu ai ā ma le oke, alu atu ā i tua o le mea lea. [Ou fai atu], 'Ia ou iloa le mea la tou te i ai, especially you girls ua e iloa, aemaise a teine la'u fanau teine.' O le a foi le toatele o tamaiti, eseese uma le mea e o mai ai ma teine, a o'o ina tōē, tōē, fai latou meaaoga.*

[Trans.] *That's what I do is give them an opportunity [to talk openly], 'If there is anything that one child is not happy with another, or a brother to his brother, sister to sister, brother to sister, bring it forward now. Also if there is something that I am not [happy] with I will talk about it at the end.' I constantly instruct them, 'When a child becomes distant from the Lord that is where problems begin to happen. Take note of what I am saying. Once you become distant from the Lord, problems will happen to you. Are you listening? Whether in your studies, your job, see what is difficult for you and move closer to the Lord. Your help is standing right there before you. But it seems like you think you know it all.' My teachings go hand-in-hand with my scolding, which seems to be attached to what I instruct them with. I say to them, 'I must know your whereabouts, especially you girls my daughters.' No matter how many children there are, and they all come from different places with the girls as well, they end up laughing and laughing and carrying on and at the same time, they do their schoolwork. (Eseta, mature woman, parishioner)*

Eseta's implication is that dialogue functions well in this particular instance. An open forum is in place for matters concerning any members in the family to be raised and discussed openly. The Samoan concept of *soalaupule* (sharing your authority), meaning an open discussion, can best sum up dialogue in this instance. It refers to the situation

where *matai* or elders gather together to discuss an issue and collectively work towards a consensus. In the excerpt presented, transparency becomes an underlying component for siblings and parents to dialogue openly concerning issues that have been presented. Although it may seem obscure to have open and transparent dialogue where one person exercises power over another, the opportunity allowed for expression aligns with the emergence of a changing Samoan self. Transparency is also sought in the parishes when issues are brought forward for discussion as shared by the following minister:

[Orig.] *Even now, masina taitasi a, end of every month, e fai ai le filifiliga. O la'u mea la e fai e, muamua a o le tautu, ia se'i vagana ua i ai se mea ua ou iloina ona faaali lea, ou fai atu, 'la pe e i ai ni mea?' Faapea, 'la o la'u fanau ua faapouliuli.' Aumai igoa, ia tuuese ma le Ekalesia.' E fiafia tagata i nei mea o filifiliga auā e mo'i e faitatala foi lele, ae i ai le healing o le mea lea o le faitatala. Vave a na uma faapea, 'la, ua uma foi le agasala o sia alii.'*

[Trans.] *Even now on a monthly basis our parishioners gather to discuss various issues. What I do, firstly I announce those who will distribute the Holy Communion. If there is something that I know needs to be discussed, then I will raise it. Otherwise I put the question forward, 'Are there any issues someone would like to bring forth?' It could be in the example of, 'One of my children is living with his or her partner out of wedlock.' Bring their names forward and excommunicate them from the church. People in the church like these monthly gatherings because they get to hear gossip, but there may be healing in gossiping and telling stories. The burden quickly diminishes through talking about it, 'Talking about it ends the sins of this particular person'. (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)*

Dialogue in the parish becomes an opportunity to present issues that may have developed between parishioners to be discussed openly. The minister must be transparent and submit matters that he is aware of for discussion. The punishments for



these actions must also be stated clearly. The reality of this approach implies the possibility that intervention merely is surface level; the deeper root cause has not been addressed. Investigating underlying factors would be an effective practice to assist with any disclosures made in this open forum. However, the issue of openness must also be considered as there is a real risk for public shaming in such an open practice. This type of parish dialogue is conducted after worship a week before the monthly Holy Communion Sunday. Its significance as alluded to by Reverend Alafoti is that once the issues are discussed openly in God's house (the church) the sins of those involved will be forgiven.

It became noticeable through the interviews that troubled people prioritised possible candidates whom they considered able to converse with openly about their problems. This tendency amongst participants suggests an informal triage concerning dialogue as an enforcement of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*. When considered as a continuum, parishioner Esekia expressed that parents by far took precedence for many troubled persons seeking help:

[Orig.] *Pe a tulai mai se faafitauli ia te a'u, ia, muamua lava, o mātua lava le tali ta te alu ai ta te faasoa i ai i lata ita faafitauli lea e i ai, pe a tupu mai se faafitauli. Totonu lava o le aiga ia, e faasoa lava i mātua, auā pei o mātua lea na faafaileleina mai aso o laiti. Ia, talanoa, a talanoa malamalama i mātua, ia e malamalama foi mātua i le tulaga ma le faafitauli o lo'o i ai.*

[Trans.] *When a problem arises for me, firstly, parents are the ones whom I will share to about the problem that has happened. Within the family itself, I will share with my parents because my parents are the ones who had nurtured and raised me from my younger days. Yes talking, talking openly with parents*

*because if there is an open conversation, parents will understand the nature and extent of the problem that has arisen. (Esekia, young adult man, parishioner)*

Parents are again given priority as reported by parishioner Mele, with the possibility for others to help if required:

[Orig.] *A faapea o a'u lea ua tupu ai lea e i ai a'u faafitauli, e tatau la ona ota faasoa i ota matua. A le o ota matua, o lota toalua. A misi mai loa i vaega ia, ia ua ta alu loa i le faifeau. [...] Ia ta te iloa a e taita le taimi e tatau ona ta alu ai i le faifeau, pe a faapea ua tuga a se faafitauli foi lea, pe la ta te fefe ta te alu faapea o le faalavelave ia taita a ia, pe fai atu i ota matua, ia ta alu loa i le faifeau. E aumai ai se fautuaga lelei ma sata gaioiga lelei i ata mea e fai, pe afai o taita lea e tupu ai se mea.*

[Trans.] *If this has happened to me and I am the one who has problems, I should really discuss my problems with my parents. If not my parents, then my husband. If I miss all these people, then I will go to the minister. [...] I know myself the time that I should go to the minister, especially when the problem becomes severe, or the problem is so personal and I am reluctant to tell my parents, and then I would go to the minister. To be given good advice and guidance of what actions I should take, if something has happened to me. (Mele, young adult woman, parishioner)*

The selection process for counselling according to Mele's account, suggests that it is relationally-based dependent upon time, trust, and the severity of the issue. Litea, a minister's widow, also expressed those she considered for help when she encountered problems:

[Orig.] *Ou te saili fesoasoani i le, muamua, ou te saili fesoasoani, i ota mātua; i lota Tamā ma lota Tinā. A faapea a e siliga, e lē o faamalieina lota tagata ia ua ou saili fesoasoani loa i le faifeau. A alualu foi le galuega a le faifeau e lē o ma suiga malie ai a lota mafaufau i se mea mata'utia o aafia ai lota olaga, ia ma ta*

*taumafai a lea e saili fesoasoani i le Atua e ala i le tatalo. Ia lē mapu le tatalo, i le Atua e fesoasoani mai, fesoasoani mai.*

[Trans.] *I seek help first, with my parents; my father and also my mother. If I look beyond them and if do not feel satisfied with the help given, then I would seek help with the minister. So if the minister's work continues with no or little success to bring about positive change in the issue that has burdened me, then I will seek help to God through prayer. Praying to God must never stop, praying that God may help me. (Litia, elderly widow of a minister)*

Self-help is also a possibility through prayer. In addition to the minister being a probable source of help, parishioner Sarona identified the *faletua* as playing a role in the process of healing:

[Orig.] *O muamua o o'u mātua, muamua o ou mātua. A fai atu e lē tali [i le faafitauli], e lē maua ai se tali o lota faafitauli, ia, o le faifeau ma lona faletua, a. Pei a o le faifeau ma le faletua e o i ai tagata e faafesili mo faafitauli.*

[Trans.] *First of all are my parents, my parents. If I do and they don't answer [my problem] that I don't get an answer for my problem, then it becomes the minister and his faletua. It's often the minister and his faletua that people go and question about their problems. (Sarona, young adult woman, parishioner)*

The value of having a minister and *faletua* team willing to talk openly with parish and village members becomes a platform for dialogue, as reported by Reverend Afato:

*I don't try and solve anything but basically we umm talk through a lot of problems with the parishioners and also with the villagers, because I have a lot of people who don't attend my parish, who seek advice and counsel. They just want someone just to bounce some ideas off, usually counselling for me to some extremes I don't even talk. Me and my wife most of the time 90% of the problems we are both in there together. [...] Especially when it involves women and young girls, because a lot of problems in counselling for us involves speaking and*

*advising and comforting and empowering and sympathising also with young women who are probably pregnant. (Reverend Afato, middle-aged NZ-born Samoan)*

Numerous participants such as parishioner Lagi, expressed the role that close friends played when considering persons to dialogue with about issues:

*[Orig.] E muamua a, o mātua, saili muamua a i mātua. O leisi tagata ou te iloa e a’u ia, o sau uo mamae. O le tagata ua malamalama lelei ia te oe, malamalama i ou faafitauli, o le background o le ituaiga aiga e te sau ai. Ma o se tagata foi e lē mafai ona faasoa atu i isi ou lagona e pei ona e faasoa atu ia te ia.*

*[Trans.] First of all, parents. Seek first with your parents. The other person that I know of, is your closest friend. Someone who understands you well; understands your problems, your background and the kind of family you come from. Also this person is someone who will not go and share to other people your feelings that you have shared to him or her. (Lagi, young adult woman, parishioner)*

The importance of friends in the dialogical process depends largely upon how safe one feels with somebody located outside of their circle of family members, minister, and *faletua*. Confidentiality becomes a contributing factor into the selection of friends one would consider trustworthy to confide in. Knowing that information disclosed will not be shared unwillingly has only become an issue because individuals are now beginning to converse. However, friends are not always a source of healing. In such a situation, parishioner and SVSG user Pua expressed that returning to family members for healing works well:

*[Orig.] [Faafitauli] i lo’u aiga, i le vā lea ma lo’u toalua, ia pe ā ma ā, lea ou te alu foi lele i a’u uo la e i ai. E toe end ifo a, ou te toe alu a e talanoa i lo’u Tinā. Ia ona maua uma ai lea, solve le faafitauli, ia ma iloa ai le isi auala e tatau ona alu e fai. E mo’i i a’u uo ia ou te alu i ai nei, ia auā o le faafiafia foi lele ma talatalanoa, ae*

*pei a la o i i le Tinā o le aiga [e maua ai le fesoasoani]. E tele a la ona fesoasoani tele foi, auā ou te malosi a ou te alu i mea ia a le mafutaga a le matou autalavou, pese foi ia, e ese mai foi lota alu, pei e break mai foi lota mafaufau [mai faafitauli].*

[Trans.] *[Issues] within my family, or my relationship with my spouse, or whatever, I go to the friends that I have. But then in the end, I return back and talk to my mother. And then I find the solution to my problem, and other paths that I could take. A variety of ways that I should pursue. Even though I often go to the friends whom I keep now, to make me happy and feel better and to talk to, but it is more here with the mother of our family [that I get help]. It also helps for me quite a lot, that I am committed to our Youth group, church choir, and my attendance becomes a bit of a break in my mind [from my problems].* (Pua, middle-aged woman, parishioner and SVSG user)

Pua notes that friends play a rather different role in the healing process; they become an opportunity for temporary happiness and fulfilment. However by returning to family members, and in particular one's mother, lifelong solutions can be achieved. Healing from Pua's problems also is found in her commitment to church affairs, emphasising the importance of God and her faith practices in her life.

For participants, dialogue is considered an effective application of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* for Samoans. The rise of individualism has seen the use of dialogue in place of physical and verbal force as forms of enforcement with different possibilities for the troubled person of someone to converse with. Parents are given priority as those who the troubled person could dialogue with, as well as the minister and his *faletua* within the parish and village setting. Regardless of whomever the individual with the problem wishes to talk to about his or her problems, dialogue has become more desirable as *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* than any form of force.

It is worth noting that mostly women participants suggested a process of triage concerning dialogue when faced with issues, with parents, and in particular their mothers, given first priority. The implication of this is that men participants saw less value in talking about their problems with their parents. Instead they attempted to deal with their problems themselves. A possible explanation for this genderedness amongst Samoans in disclosing their problems to others may be patriarchal in origin. Traditionally for Samoans, men are often considered the leaders of the families, villages, and the parishes. Men participants would most likely be reluctant to acknowledge problems within their contexts to avoid being identified as incompetent leaders, parents, *matai*, and in some cases, ministers. Alongside the emergence of a changing Samoan self, roles that were traditionally established are now being re-aligned to recognise whoever is better skilled for the different tasks involved in various leading roles.

## **6.7 Summary**

As we have seen throughout this chapter, *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* has undergone considerable evolution for Samoans. The emergence of a changing Samoan self has shaped the need and transitional changes to this concept for Samoan counselling. Having an imbalance of power concurrently with maintaining harmonious order and Samoan values by those with lesser authority, led to the preservation of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* in the past. The emergence of a changing Samoan self now demands a new way of counselling that incorporates the rise of individualism for Samoans. As articulated throughout this chapter, a dialogical approach to counselling unites a changing Samoan self with a compatible enforcer of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* today. Specifically for this project, pastoral counselling for Samoa today must acknowledge ways *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* was

managed in the past, and incorporate enforcers relevant today. This includes a dialogical approach as an enforcer of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*. A challenge for ministers is that current counselling practices must transition from an approach that is predominantly theocentric, towards an approach that also includes *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*. Even more challenging is the move towards the application of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* that is dialogical rather than instructional.

## Chapter Seven

### A discussion of research findings

#### 7.1 Introduction

Prior to any discussion of key findings, some necessary acknowledgements on my part as a Samoan minister and more importantly as a researcher need to be made. The reason is because as an indigenous researcher addressing a current practice of ministers in Samoa, I need to position myself cautiously within the context of pastoral counselling that this project investigates. Aligning with the concept of 'insider research positioning' that involves a closeness of the researcher with familiar people considered as their 'own' (Voloder, 2014), I have insider knowledge and easy access to people who can enhance such understanding (Costley et al., 2010). Further, from an insider researcher position, I have accepted responsibility and accountability for the impact (Weber-Pillwax, 2004) that this research will have upon the lives of the church communities that I am involved with. An outsider position suggests that I am not a member of the group I am investigating. For this study, the challenge becomes one of manoeuvring between the *insider* researcher position (as a minister) and as an *outsider* researcher position, simply, a researcher being informed by the data gathered for this project. From an insider researcher position, I acknowledge the challenge of investigating a practice shared with my colleagues in the church. From such a standpoint, I must take an outsider researcher stance.



I also acknowledge the outsider researcher position in relation to the experiences of parishioners. In particular to the experiences of women, there are challenges in engaging with this group of participants given my position of privilege as a man and as a minister, in the Samoan context. To alleviate the impact of such power, the provision of a women co-interviewer was implemented for this purpose. For women participants who wished against this arrangement, I took on an outsider researcher stance as best I could. Moving between the two positions has been referred to as the 'space between' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) such as in this project, considering that I am positioned as both insider *and* outsider.

A key feature of *fa'aSamoa* that governs most Samoans is *fa'aaloalo* or the respect shown to others, especially elders who often are *matai* (Mulitalo-Lautā, 2000). Ministers and their *faletua* are also treated with respect being considered as God's representatives. Upholding *fa'aaloalo* is a tradition to which I also belong. As a Samoan researcher it is important to demonstrate that respecting my elders is evident throughout my discussions. Any critique and contradictions implied about the current practices of ministers and elders have the potential to impede my role within the church, perceived as a minister who has disrespected the relational space or *vā* with my peers and elders. A significant tension has developed from my research: the tension of my role as a Samoan minister who is required to respect the elders of the church and communities. Yet my role as a Samoan researcher is to critically evaluate the findings from this project to offer an understanding of pastoral counselling for Samoans.

From the outset of this project I endeavoured to position myself as a researcher, looking in on pastoral counselling practices of ministers in Samoa. Yet there was always a risk of taking a safe approach in any discussion of findings from this research. A safe approach involves summarising participants' perspectives and to develop key themes, with minimal critical input from my part as a researcher. However, taking such an approach does not do justice to the views shared by participants in this study, and undermines my role as researcher adding any input to what has developed from this project. To alleviate the tension between my insider/outsider researcher positioning roles, recalling the Samoan proverb that began Chapter One will help. *E lē a'oaia e Laupuā Tamafaigā* ('A servant does not instruct nor counsel the king'). Acknowledging this proverb seeks my path into a transitional *vā* (relational space) with Samoan elders and peers, to be understood and accepted as a researcher seeking knowledge in order to contribute to current practices of pastoral counselling for Samoans.

This chapter is designed using motifs that are familiar to many Pacific peoples including Samoans—*talanoa* and journey. *Talanoa* that simply means talking (Vaka, Brannelly, & Huntington, 2016) is used here to tell a story of a journey (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2015). Specifically, discussions in this chapter will be presented by telling a story of a metaphoric journey about what and why participants have reported what they have. The genre of story-telling is common for many Samoans and is used as a way to transfer valuable insights and teachings from story-tellers to their hearers. The same motivation for the transfer of knowledge is behind presenting discussions of key findings in this manner.

Most journeys begin from a specific starting point and travel towards a desired destination; some journeys however end up a long way from their intended destinations. For the journey told in this chapter, the starting point is the research question at the core of this project: *how does understanding a changing Samoan self inform the conceptualisation and delivery of pastoral counselling in Samoa?* The desired destination where the journey ends, is the development of understanding effective pastoral counselling practices for Samoans today, derived from insights and findings from this study. The significant sections in-between (labelled in this story as *waves*) from the starting point to its desired destination, are the underlying themes developed from this research.

The setting of any journey must also be considered, whether travelling through different terrain on land, across oceans, or through the sky. The setting of this journey is the Pacific Ocean in connection with the Samoan proverb about traditional canoe fishing *fetu'utu'una'i muniao* (manoeuvring a fisherman's rod), that is used as a cultural concept underpinning the methodology to this study. As a reference to the type of canoe used in Samoan traditional canoe fishing, I have named the story in this chapter the '*Va'aalo* (bonito canoe) journey'.

As with most journeys that travel across oceans, understanding the sea helps to navigate successfully through the different waves that may formulate from time to time. The *Va'aalo* journey is no exception and must navigate through various waves that influence and shape its course. The first wave in the *Va'aalo* journey is a 'God-centred' approach from a Samoan understanding and practice of counselling. The second wave is the

emergence of a changing Samoan self that has impacted how Samoans expect to be counselled. Such changes have seen the rise of individualism and the decline of collectivity. The third and final wave is labelled *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* (navigating relational space) for Samoans.

Each of the three waves that have influenced the *Va'aalo* journey will interpret the key findings from this research, drawing from data and demonstrating any resonance with the literature already considered in Chapter Two. I have also included additional literature to support and help explain some key findings that were not anticipated at the start of this project. The critical evaluations of the key findings include my perceptions about why these findings have emerged and what they mean. My experiences as a Samoan minister and also as a temporary parishioner living in New Zealand for the duration of this project, have added understandings of the voices of many Samoans who participated in this study. Further, the analysis of the data collected for this project has been from within the context of Samoans in diaspora, who represent a realisation of a changing Samoan self. As a theologian, the critical evaluations presented in this chapter become an exegesis (interpretation) of reading the data and literature reviewed against the historical and changing contexts that Samoans are located. At the conclusion of this chapter we shall see how the story told of the *Va'aalo* journey has embarked upon a new course of direction, yet still moving towards its desired destination of developing effective pastoral counselling practices for Samoans today.

## **7.2 First wave in the *Va'aalo* journey—A God-centred approach in counselling Samoans**

In the Holy Name of God, The Almighty, The Ever-loving.

Whereas sovereignty over the Universe belongs to the Omnipresent God alone, the authority to be exercised by the people of Western Samoa within the limits prescribed by His commandments is a sacred heritage;

Whereas the Leaders of Western Samoa have declared that Western Samoa should be an Independent State based on Christian principles and Samoan custom and tradition;

...Now therefore, we the people of Western Samoa in our Constitutional Convention, this 28<sup>th</sup> day of October 1960, do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution.

Preamble to the Constitution of the Independent State of Western Samoa, 1960 (Va'ai, 2012, p. 77).

From the preamble to the Constitution of Western Samoa (later amended to 'Samoa'), the emphasis on God and Christian principles governing Samoans are clear. The centrality of God in the lives and counselling practices of Samoans becomes the first wave in the *Va'aalo* journey. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two found that pastoral counselling is grounded in God. As a movement that began in the US, and which is different to traditional Samoan practices, pastoral counselling places doctrines about God and theology at the forefront of modes of therapy (Foskett, 2001). Such an approach unites the key findings that were presented in Chapter Four. The first wave of findings in the *Va'aalo* journey is presented in Table 2:

**Table 2: First wave in the *Va'aalo* journey (underlying theme 1)**  
**God-centred approach to counselling and its key findings**

First wave in the <i>Va'aalo</i> journey (underlying theme 1)		
God-centred approach to counselling		
<b>Key findings</b>	(a)	Counselling is undertaken by elders and ministers
	(b)	Ministers are God's representatives
	(c)	<i>Faletua</i> are important in counselling
	(d)	Counselling practices as 'meaning-making'
	(e)	Confidentiality a concern
	(f)	Prayer and scripture as resources

### **7.2.1 *Counselling is undertaken by elders and ministers***

Many participants had varied understandings of 'counselling', ranging from Western understandings of counselling to a traditional practice centred on God and often undertaken by elders and ministers. Elders commonly are *matai* who are either *matai alii* (chiefly title-holders) or *tulāfale* (oratory title-holders) who speak on behalf of *matai alii* (Meleisea, 1992). *Matai* can be either a man or a woman (Le Tagaloa, 1992). Elders can also include grandparents and great-grandparents, also the eldest living members of the larger extended family. Considering an understanding of pastoral counselling from a Western perspective, the minister and troubled parishioner collectively seek spiritual direction for any problematic situation. From a Samoan perspective, pastoral counselling involves a three-way encounter between the minister, the parishioner, and God. The minister thus becomes a mediator and the voice of God for the troubled person as reported by parishioner Lasi:

[Orig.] *Pei o le mea foi lele, pei o le triangle. Alu atu a'u faasoa i le counsellor, counsellor ave i le Atua, le Atua fesoasoani i le tagata lea e i ai le faafitauli. [...]*  
*Pei a na ou fai atu o le tafatolu lena, le triangle, e ave i le faifeau [your problems].*

[Trans.] *It's like, you know, like a triangle. I go and share with the counsellor, the counsellor takes [the problem] to God, and then God helps the person with the problem. [...] Like I said, that is the three-sides, the triangle, and you take [your problems] to the minister.* (Lasi, young adult woman, parishioner)

Several participants said that counselling for Samoans is involuntarily imposed and initiated by elders and ministers, who give their guidance and advice to troubled persons. However, counselling Samoans in this project must be understood to supersede any advice and guidance given by elders and ministers, but involves a collaborative approach that is inclusive of troubled persons in the search for help. *Matai* Sione expressed:

[Orig.] *Tatou foi olaga fa'aSamoa, e tele ina, e te lē fesili i se counselling, e offer mai e faatonu mai oe e lou aiga ma lou tuaoi, i le mea la e vaai mai e sese.*

[Trans.] *Counselling for us Samoans is not something you ask for, it is offered to you and you are instructed by your family and neighbours, for matters that they see that you are doing wrong.* (Sione, middle-aged man, *matai* and parishioner)

Many participants shared a similar view that traditionally ministers consider themselves as the sole agents to discern the will of God. Further, there is no expectation from ministers that the discernment of God's will is to be a collaborative endeavour. Pastoral counselling from a Samoan perspective is differentiated from any Western perspective through the expectations of Samoans that ministers are the most suitable mediators to discern the will of God.

When determining the underlying reasons participants held a God-centred approach to counselling and why elders and ministers provide this service, the notion of 'authority' comes into play. For participants to expect that someone of a higher status will know

what is best when trouble arises, is consistent with the hierarchical nature of Samoan traditions and culture known as *fa'aSamoa* (Mulitalo-Lautā, 2000; Va'ai, 2011). *Fa'aSamoa* stems from a system that demonstrates the exercise of authority from those with authority upon subordinate family members who have minimal authority. An example is the *matai* system of *matai alii* and *tulāfale*.

In terms of counselling Samoans, the hierarchical nature of *fa'aSamoa* is such that family and community leaders are expected to know what is best for others, as demonstrated in Chapter Four. Such a context means elders and ministers are expected to fit into the role of counsellor because of their status in the communities (Schuster, 2001; Seiuli, 2010). Associated with positions of authority potentially means that God can sometimes be conflated with ministers and it becomes a challenge to differentiate between the two in the eyes of the people. It follows that counselling is offered to troubled persons by those in a more senior position, but as we shall continue to see, compliance with the instructions and directions given is not always the case.

### **7.2.2 Ministers as God's representatives**

The second key finding is the view of participants towards ministers as God's representatives. Just as counsellors in the Samoan context say that they rely upon God for strength and tools to perform their tasks, recipients of counselling said they also place faith in God to provide healing through God's servants as reported by parishioner Sina:

[Orig.] *E leai la seisi e tatau ona ou alu ai, ou te fia manao ou te fia alu i le faifeau. Leaga o le faifeau o le sui vaaia lea o le Atua, i totonu o nuu ma afioaga taitasi,*



*ia ou te manao la ou te fia alu i le Atua pe a tuu i seisi, i seisi faaupuga. A tusa o lea ua ta alu i le Atua e fesoasoani mai i lota mataupu lea ta te mafatia ai.*

[Trans.] *There is no one else that I should go to; I want to go to the minister with my problems because he is God's representative in our village, and in all villages. If I could put it another way, I really want to take my problems to God. And it just like going to God to help me with my problems, when I go to the minister. (Sina, mature woman, parishioner)*

Parishioners place ministers in positions of authority and privilege because they perceive ministers as earthly representatives of God. Ministers are thus expected to have the 'correct' answers, and any deviations from the instructions given by ministers are considered going against God's directions for action. As we shall see later, this construction of ministers is contested by some parishioners. There also is an expectation by some ministers that they should be the 'Mouth of God' dispensing the correct solution for the troubled person as expressed by Reverend Tino:

[Orig.] *Ona o le counselling, e ō faatasi ma le status o le faifeau i le vaai a tagata. E lē o se status o le mamalu, a o le status o la e i ai le alofa i totonu taavili ai. [...] A o le avanoa lea when people look up at you, [...] o le avanoa tonu a lena, e te elia ai fatu o tagata ina ia matala mai.*

[Trans.] *Because counselling goes hand-in-hand with the status of the minister in the eyes of people. It is not a status of being dignified, but a status where love is present and circulates within. [...] But this is your opportunity when people look up to you, that is when you try to open up their hearts to you. (Reverend Tino, long-serving parish minister)*

Since ministers are afforded positions of respect and favour, there appears an obligation by some ministers to undertake counselling as a duty of care for their parishioners. This duty of care becomes the opportunity for ministers to draw the hearts of people to

them, and by doing so ministers are indirectly opening the hearts of people to God. However other ministers like Reverend Pati avoid a dispensary or directive approach to counselling where the minister is expected to dispense solutions, in favour of helping others ‘unpack’ and process personal and relationship issues in the search for appropriate plans of action:

[Orig.] *Ia ona i ai lea o ia provide some guidance foi lele e vaavaai ai ia i le faafitauli, ia ma fesoasoani i ai e formulate a e ia ia ni mea e mafai ona agai ai lona mafaufau e fesoasoani ai i le faafitauli. Auā o le mea a e tāua, ia ‘aua nei ave le mea foi lele pei se dispensary na’o le sau a, alu atu le prescription, ia ona ave laia lea folo e le tagata lea, without a part in it.*

[Trans.] *Then you provide some sort of guidance to them that they can consider, to help them formulate themselves areas they can look at to help with their problem. Because the important thing is, so that the process doesn’t become considered as a dispensary where you just come and get a prescription, and go and fix the problem without that person playing a part in it. (Reverend Pati, long-serving parish minister)*

Regardless of either approach, spiritual healing is an outcome expected of ministers through pastoral counselling, since they are considered as God’s representatives in the villages.

Understanding Samoan indigenous belief systems may help explain why Samoans perceive ministers as representing God. Traditionally, Samoans believed in a Creator God called *Tagaloaalagi* who resided on the tenth and supreme heaven (*Lagi*) and the separation of *Lagi* and *Papa* (rock) created all living things on earth: humans, animals, plants, sea, land, cosmos, and so on (Tui Atua, 2009). In a pre-Christian Samoa where cultural leaders and *matai* governed the family and village settings, reverence was given

to the Creator God *Tagaloaalagi*. Once Samoans were converted to Christianity by the LMS Missionaries however, reverence was then afforded to the Christian God worshipped by the missionaries (Liuaana, 2004). Considered as representing God by the locals, missionaries were treated with great esteem at the birth of Christianity in Samoa, and as participants have said, this view has continued to the present day.

It is a great responsibility for ministers to meet the expectation that they represent God to the people as expressed by the following minister:

[Orig.] *The expectation [a tagata lotu] o le faifeau o le sui vaaia o le Atua.*

[Trans.] *The expectation [by parishioners] that the minister is representative of God.* (Reverend Tino, long-serving parish minister)

Some ministers have found it difficult to comprehend such an expectation by the people, displayed in a misappropriation of the authority given to them by parishioners. Such misuse of authority is demonstrated by ministers preaching against immorality and disclosing sensitive information publicly, as expressed by several participants. Ministers are considered with high regard by people and represent a divine order, so knowing the difference between representing God and acting as if one *is* God, can at times be overlooked by some ministers.

### **7.2.3 *Faletua* are important in counselling**

As the story of the *Va'aalo* journey unfolds, the third key finding is the important role that the *faletua* plays in counselling. Although ministers primarily receive theological and Biblical training that include approaches to pastoral counselling, participants such as Reverend Afato expressed that *faletua* share an important and crucial role as well:

*Usually counselling for me to some extremes, I don't even talk; me and my wife most of the time, 90% of the problems we are both in there together. You know that 90% of my life was in New Zealand, so she not only gives me that help with the Samoan side of things, especially when it involves women and young girls. 'Cause a lot of problems in counselling for us involves speaking, and advising, and comforting, and empowering, and sympathising, also with young women who are probably pregnant. (Reverend Afato, middle-aged NZ-born Samoan)*

Specifically, *faletua* become gateways to solutions for issues. Some participants said that they found the *faletua* more approachable than ministers when help is required. This is especially the case for issues that involve sex, where it is culturally inappropriate and disrespectful, and possibly dangerous, for a woman to discuss such matters alone with a minister as reported by parishioner Lasi:

*[Orig.] Ona e i ai tulaga e le mafai ona alu atu a'u o le teine, a, faasoa atu ia te oe [o le faifeau]. [...] Auā e i ai isi tamaitai e o atu [i le faifeau] e matamuli, a o la e mafai ona o atu e lē mafai ona o atu i lau susuga, ae la e alu atu i lou faletua, a. Ona o tulaga faapena, e i ai tulaga tatou o Samoa e ma'ale'ale isi mau mea e tau tamaitai, pe a, but, o le trust o lena ua sasaa atu i le faletua. [...] A toe aumai la le [fofo], ia toe sau a le faletua talanoa mai ia te a'u. Ia ou 100% iloa lelei, na'o le faletua la na te iloa a.*

*[Trans.] Because there are situations where myself as a woman cannot come and share to you [the minister]. [...] And they come not really to you who is the minister, but rather they approach the faletua for help. This is because of the situation for us Samoans especially with sensitive issues involving women, but, the trust is poured out to the faletua. [...] And when the answer is delivered, this comes from the faletua. I must believe 100% that it is only the faletua who knows. (Lasi, young adult woman, parishioner)*

Participants implied that although *faletua* share the ministries with their husbands in an informal and unqualified capacity, the Gospel is still channelled through the

complementary work of *faletua*. For this reason, *faletua* were perceived by participants such as Sione as co-representatives of God alongside their husbands:

[Orig.] *Ou te iloa a e tutusa lelei a le role a le faifeau ma le faletua. E i ai le taimi e tātua atu ai o le lē faaaogā o le faifeau, i issues tau-fafine, a, e sili atu le tātua o le talanoa o le faletua i issues na. E open up tagata e talanoa i le faletua. [...] So to me, they both have the same role, but for different populations. [...] Auā ou te iloaia e i ai issues, aemaise i totonu o aiga, o teineiti a, ua mātua lē, to me, I don't advise e fai e le faifeau ia issues na, a.*

[Trans.] *I believe the minister and his faletua both share the same role. There are times when it is more important to not use the minister, for issues concerning women, but it is more important for the faletua to talk to about these issues. People will open up talking to a faletua. [...] So to me, they both have the same role, but for different populations. [...] Because I know there are issues in our families, especially with girls, I don't advise for the minister to address these type of issues. (Sione, middle-aged man, matai and parishioner)*

Reluctance for women to seek help from male ministers is common for sensitive issues. This is where *fa'aSamoa* often determines what are considered as appropriate and inappropriate matters to put before the minister. *Faletua* provide opportunities for some people, especially troubled women, to bring their issues forth and seek help. Placing value on the role of women in the ministry through the status conferred by the husband's ministerial position draws upon the value of women in Samoa. The importance of women in the family and village settings is demonstrated through their access to land entitlements (Le Tagaloa, 1986), providing for their households in several ways (Sua'ali'i, 2001), and that women can be *matai*.

In pre-Christian matriarchal Samoa, women were heroines and leaders of their communities (Taule'ale'ausumai, 1997). However the Christianisation of Samoa from 1830 by the LMS missionaries meant that the roles of Samoan women were modelled upon the subordinate, inferior, and domesticated roles of the missionary wives who were from the European Victorian era (Latai, 2015). Although women in parishes today occupy subsidiary roles to their husbands, women are acknowledged as having important and crucial roles together with their husbands (Siers & Ah Siu-Maliko, 2003). The crucial role of women in the contemporary church is therefore entirely dependent on their marital status, as women do not hold such authority independent of their husbands.

When this research project began I had little expectation that women played such a significant role in pastoral counselling as has been discovered. The lack of such an expectation highlights the challenge of my insider researcher position—that I was so close to the situation of pastoral counselling in the Samoan context, that I was unaware of the role that women played in pastoral counselling. Considering that ministers predominantly took on pastoral counselling duties within the shared ministries with their *faletua* could be a reason why I held such an expectation. However, women throughout Samoa's history have occupied significant and important roles. Samoa before Christianity arrived encountered regional warfare to occupy the four paramount titles of Samoa—*Tuia'ana*, *Tuiatua*, *Gatoaitele* and *Tamasoali'i*—collectively known as the *Tafa'ifā*, translated as 'four-sided' or 'one supported by four' (Meleisea, 1992). Samoan oral tradition locates a chiefly woman named Salamasina who is considered to

have lived in the sixteenth century as the first ever successor to *Tafa'ifā* (Meleisea, 1992).

Contemporary ministers occupy important roles in the shared ministries with *faletua*, but equally important, as findings from this project have disclosed, the role of *faletua* should not be discounted and warrants further exploration. It is important for the church to acknowledge the value and importance that women occupy at present in Samoa. The findings from this project show a changing Samoan self that values women today just as historically Samoa was accustomed to, before any influence from foreigners including Europeans and the missionaries of the nineteenth century. The lesser value assigned to women in the church suggests that the subordination of women was an artefact of colonial missionaries, rather than a longstanding 'tradition' of Samoans.

Since the independence of Samoa in 1962 from foreign domination, the importance of women is slowly emerging in Samoa once again. In an historical event for Samoa and an indication of the changing Samoan self, the first woman to become Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa was one the significant outcomes the 2016 national elections (Tupufia, 2016). The church has been slow to follow suit in appointing any of its top official roles to women, as these positions are dominated by male ministers. Although findings from this project suggest the importance of women in the pastoral counselling process for Samoans, such an instrumental finding has the potential to become a catalyst towards the ordination of women ministers in the church. It also has the potential to be a significant challenge to the contemporary church leadership.

#### **7.2.4 Counselling practices as ‘meaning-making’**

The fourth key finding is that the counselling practices of ministers are seen as ‘meaning-making’. Participants like Reverend Simona shared some of the practices that gave meaning to their counselling work:

[Orig.] *O lea a ou te manatu o le tāua lava o le share mai o ō. A ia lava a lata patience foi lenei ma lota atamai e faalogo lelei ai. Po’o fea la e mafuli i ai ia le tagata? Fea la e i ai lagona la e nanā? Ona o la e nanā mea.*

[Trans.] *I believe that it is very important for the person to share his or her story. But I must have enough patience and wisdom to listen carefully to what is being shared. Where is the person coming from? What are the hidden and underlying emotions involved? Because really the person there in front of me is hiding something.* (Reverend Simona, retired minister and church leader)

Listening played an important role in the counselling practices as shared by the following minister:

*I do a lot more of active listening than I do actually giving out advice. Probably a little bit you know, listening with empathy to people and their problems. I don’t try and solve anything but basically we, ummm, talk through a lot of problems with the parishioners and also with the villagers.* (Reverend Afato, middle-aged NZ-born Samoan)

It appears that some of the language of western therapeutic conversation has made its way into the language some ministers use. This is expected as part of a minister’s training presently includes various counselling techniques. When there appeared reluctance by parishioners to seek help with their minister, these parishioners were summoned by the minister as expressed by Reverend Avanoa:



[Orig.] *O leisi la lea mea e masani ona ou fai pei ona ou fai atu, le mea lea sa ou vaai o fai e lo'u Tamā, o cases faapea o la iloa o le tagata o la e i ai mea e lē o taoto lelei i lona olaga e alu ai le feau, a.*

[Trans.] *The other thing I normally do as I have said, something that I saw my father do, cases that I know there are issues that do not sit right with a certain person I will summon him or her to come and see me.* (Reverend Avanoa, long-serving parish minister close to retirement age)

One reason participants reported being reluctant to approach the minister or his *faletua* for help was the fear of being noticed by fellow parish and village members. There is stigma associated with help-seeking, and avoiding being categorised in a negative way limits the openness of people to seek help. A possible explanation may be the idea that if people do *good* things they will be blessed accordingly by God. Further, if people do wrong they will be punished by God for their sin. The belief that God punishes people because of their actions (Fouché et al., 2011) parallels a traditional belief that when people misappropriate any sacred traditions of Samoa they will be punished by the spirits of the ancestral gods (Tofaeono, 2000). If people are observed seeking help, parishioner Sina expressed that the implication is that they have been punished by God for their actions:

[Orig.] *Auā na aami mai e [le faifeau], ia alu atu loa lea fai ai le galuega a [le faifeau ma lona faletua] E le'i atoa se masina na e vaaia ai ua i ai le suiga, ae toe fo'i ifo a, toe foi ifo a i le mea tuai. Ua ou le toe alu loa la ia, ua faapea nei faapea si toaina o si matou faifeau i le alu atu soo. Ua ou le toe alu loa lea [i le faifeau], ae o lea la ua ou tago a a'u ia, fai fai, fai fai lemu, i i a, i i le matou fale.*

[Trans.] *Because the minister summoned [my daughter], then she went and was counselled [by the minister and his faletua]. After about a month you could see some positive changes [in my daughter], but then she returned to how she was*

*initially. So I don't seek help again with [the minister], in case my minister thinks that I go over too often to him for help. So I don't go to minister anymore [for help], but I try to deal with my problem myself here at my home. (Sina, mature woman, parishioner)*

Help-seeking from the minister and his *faletua* carries the stigma of imposing extra work upon them, for personal issues that the troubled person was unable to solve. Frequently seeking continuing help from the minister and his *faletua* implies that the work done earlier was ineffective, shown by the continuation of undesirable behaviours.

Pastoral counselling practices of ministers not only function to offer guidance and support for persons experiencing distress or personal problems, these practices also work to give meaning to people's relationships with God and with each other. 'Meaning-making' links participants' understandings of a theocentric approach to counselling, together with their understandings of the roles of the minister and women in counselling. Meaning-making from within the experiences of life-changing and traumatic events, encourages troubled persons to seek help, and gives hope and purpose to their lives (Henrickson et al., 2013). Potentially, meaning-making can function as coping for troubled people, with God central in their lives and the source of meanings for their situations. Placing God at the centre for the lives of Samoans where meaning-making is possible, fits in with attitudes that consider religion as the response to life's challenges and the pathway towards coping and making sense of situations (Hamilton, 2001).

### 7.2.5 Confidentiality a concern

The fifth key finding concerns confidentiality, or more specifically, the lack of confidentiality. As a Western concept, the notion of an individual, separate self who is entitled to privacy can become problematic for Samoans and the collective nature of society. Yet in line with a changing Samoan self, confidentiality is expected by the person seeking help. As mentioned earlier, the lack of confidentiality was expressed by parishioner and SVSG user Pua as a reason why parishioners are sometimes reluctant to seek help with their minister:

[Orig.] *Ia o le matou ia faifeau, a o'o i le taimi e lauga mai ai, ua ta te'i a le pā mai ai i luga o lana lauga, ia o ai lea ua ā ma ā ma ā. O ai lea ua ō liu lotu, mea uma na. E pei o le isi taofiofiga lena o le tuu taō o ni tagata e share i le faifeau i ni faafitauli, ia pei o le tulaga lena auā e alualu a le lelei, ae te'i ifo i le lauga mai a ua pā mai ai, i mea ia lea tupu ia ai ma ai. Ua lauga mai ai fua i luga o le pulelaa i la tagata.*

[Trans.] *For our minister, when it comes to his sermon, sometimes I'll be shocked to hear about who is doing what and so forth. People who have left the church and gone to other denominations, and things like that. I suppose that is something that keeps people from sharing to the minister, because things are going good in his sermon then suddenly he mentions things that are happening to whomever. Suddenly he preaches from the pulpit about certain people. (Pua, middle-aged woman, parishioner and SVSG user)*

The approach to the sermon in a pastoral role as a tool for counselling is both unique to and differentiates ministers. Some ministers see value in applying religious teachings to the needs of parishioners. Other ministers use the sermon as a means for public 'naming and shaming' from the pulpit to discourage others from transgressive behaviours. However, when used as a way for public naming and shaming from the pulpit, the

sermon diminishes trust from parishioners to disclose personal and sensitive matters to their minister.

Participants said that confidentiality was important in the work of ministers, but they had little faith in sensitive matters disclosed to ministers not being shared to others as reported by one *matai*:

[Orig.] *Um, to me there are certain situations where confidentiality is important. When you get to real intimate issues, but, o tatou lea e nonofo i Samoa. Po’o le a le mea e nana i i, e fai nei ae iloa uma e le lalolagi atoa. So, yes [confidentiality] is important, but I don’t hold too much hope in that being the case. E tāua, mo faifeau a ia, i lo’u iloa o le tautoga a le faifeau, confidentiality comes with it, it’s part of your role. [...] You don’t need a paper to sign to say, on that, a. [...] But also understand that, [breach of confidentiality] it’s going to happen.*

[Trans.] *Um, to me there are certain situations where confidentiality is important. When you get to real intimate issues, but, we live in Samoa. Whatever you try and keep private here, you do it today and then the whole world will find out. So, yes [confidentiality] is important, but I don’t hold too much hope in that being the case. It’s important for ministers, the oath of ministers, confidentiality comes with it; it’s part of your role. [...] You don’t need a paper to sign to say, on that, a. [...] But also understand that, [breach of confidentiality] it’s going to happen.*  
(Sione, middle-aged man, *matai* and parishioner)

Confidentiality is a concept aligned with Western counselling, that is now expected in pastoral counselling practices for Samoans. The emerging changing Samoan self possibly has played a part in confidentiality being expected into current Samoan practices of pastoral counselling. A tension has emerged where the role of the minister is expected to be sealed in his oath with God, and signed confidentiality agreements are unnecessary between the minister and anyone seeking help. Yet there is another

expectation by participants like Sione that a breach in confidentiality will most likely occur. Exploring such a paradox suggests the deliberate exercise of authority. The human nature of the minister and his representation of God are tested, by respecting the privacy of parishioners who have disclosed information to them. However, when personal matters are named and exposed deliberately through the sermon, the minister has indicated through such actions that he has the authority to disseminate private information as he sees fit. If by revealing certain matters publicly the minister thinks he can discourage others from behaving in such manner, then he shows no importance in upholding the Western concept of confidentiality to his practice of pastoral counselling specifically for Samoans. Seen as an example of 'collective counselling' by using the woes of some to guide others away from repeat behaviour, public-shaming is both punitive and the deliberate exercise of one's authority over others.

Further, any breach in confidentiality by ministers is expressed as contextually-based. 'Living in Samoa' is a reference to an understanding that the non-disclosures of personal and private matters by others in the communities are not always guaranteed. As a communal people accustomed to an oral tradition, talking and sharing stories is a common practice. Disclosures can be deliberate but commonly become the topic of everyday conversations. Together with social media and mobile phone technologies, privacy and confidentiality become even more challenging to uphold. The ease of access in sharing information with the technology advancements in Samoa highlights the need for ministers to emphasise confidentiality in their practices of counselling they are involved.

### **7.2.6 Prayer and scripture as resources for counselling Samoans**

The sixth and final key finding of the first wave in the *Va'aalo* journey is that prayer and scripture are considered resources for counselling Samoans. Several participants like the following minister said that prayer gave them strength and encouragement in undertaking counselling:

[Orig.] *Ia a o le aotelega o le malosi e fai ai nei galuega fesoasoani, ia o le tatalo a. Ia mo le silafia, o le mea lava lea ou te faia e a'u. Ia leaga o le mea foi sa ou vaai ai i lo'u Tamā. E ma'ea ona faia se faatalanoaga i se faafitauli, e faaiu a i le tatalo.*

[Trans.] *But the overall strength to undertake this role of counselling in the ministry is through prayer. This is what I do, because this is what I saw my father do. After we have discussed an issue, we close in prayer.* (Reverend Avanoa, long-serving parish minister close to retirement age)

Some participants such as parishioner and SVSG user Alice reported that prayer and scriptures are important to combat issues that may arise:

[Orig.] *Ou te iloa e lē lava le ola aoaoina, ma lē lava le mafuta i le Alii i le tatalo, ia poo le nofonofo i se taimi paninoa faitau le Tusi Paia, ou te iloa e a'u ia o le mea lena e ala ai ona tupu faafitauli.*

[Trans.] *I think it's a lack of education, and not enough praying to God. Or every now and then during quiet times, read the Bible. I believe these are the reasons behind what creates our problems.* (Alice, young adult woman, parishioner and SVSG user)

Counselling practices for ministers are founded upon scriptures, and prayer provides the spiritual link to God necessary to become effective in their roles as expressed by Reverend Tino:

[Orig.] *O le Tusi Paia, o lou faavae a lena. E tele a incidents i totonu o le Tusi Paia, e latatala i ai. Ma lou faamoemoe i le Atua, ma lou tatalo. Before ua e alu i counselling, e te tatalo. E te lagona le faaoge o oe, aveese mea ia e te iloa, ae fesoasoani mai le mana o le Alii. E te faitau i le Afioga Paia a le Atua, ma e manatu a i faiga faavae faa-Iesu.*

[Trans.] *The Bible that is the foundation. There are many incidents in the Bible that are close to what counselling is. Together with your reliance on God, and your prayer. Before I undertake counselling, I pray. You can feel the emptying of you by God, take away all things that you may know, and then the Power of the Lord helps you. You read the Holy Scriptures of God, and reflect upon the foundations laid down by Jesus.* (Reverend Tino, long-serving parish minister)

Prayer and scripture provide the foundation and strength for ministers to undertake pastoral counselling. Although the infallible word of God traditionally was expected to emanate from the minister as representative, access to the will of God is now understood as divinely and directly attainable. This has become possible through the development of the education system in Samoa which has generated greater opportunities and access to education for people in the villages (Afamasaga, 2003). People are now better informed than in the past, and understand that the will of God can be sought through personal reflections in addition to any ceremonial undertakings by the minister.

### **7.3 Second wave in the *Va'aalo* journey—the rise of individualism and the decline of collectivity**

Chapter Five demonstrated that Samoa has undergone several changes throughout its history. The most recent significant changes upon Samoa have influenced an emergence of a changing Samoan self leading to the decline of collectivity in favour of individualism.

Simply put, values and importance that were focused around the collective and communal organisation of Samoans are now dominated by Western values of individualism for many. There are seven key findings in this second wave of the *Va'aalo* journey, within the underlying theme of the rise of individualism and the decline of collectivity as shown in Table 3:

**Table 3: Second wave in the *Va'aalo* journey (underlying theme 2)**  
**Rise of individualism and the decline of collectivity and its key findings**

Second wave in the <i>Va'aalo</i> journey (underlying theme 2)		
Rise of individualism and the decline of collectivity		
<b>Key findings</b>	(a)	Changes in the structure of the Samoan family
	(b)	Economies driving changes for Samoans
	(c)	Technological changes in Samoa
	(d)	Increasing dominance of <i>palagi</i> or Westerners' ways
	(e)	Diminished importance for a common practice
	(f)	Individual rights of Samoans
	(g)	Samoa Victim Support Group

### **7.3.1 Changes in the structure of the Samoan family**

The first key finding relates to changes in the structure of the Samoan family. Traditionally Samoan families often lived as multi-generational households serving their elders who often were *matai* of the extended family. It was a context where 'advice-giving' was available and imposed across the different levels, especially from the elders to family members of later generations (Tamasese, Parsons, & Waldegrave, 2014). Several participants articulated that the traditional Samoan family was a place to learn *fa'aSamoa*. The traditional Samoan family was once the place where younger members



observed, were taught, and directed by older members of earlier generations as expressed by parishioner Lufi:

[Orig.] *O i [i le matou aiga] lea e faavae atu ai le ola o la'u tama lea. Ese le manaia i o, o le alofagia ia o le teine. Fai foi le alofagia i la'u fanau, a o tagata o le matou aulotu. Ioe, le agaga la lea o le loto maulalo [a lana tama teine].*

[Trans.] *It is here [in our family], that is the foundation for my daughter. It is so good how she is blessed. She is loved alongside my other children, especially by people in our church. Yes, the spirit of humility [that she has].* (Lufi, elderly woman, parishioner)

The significant change for many Samoan families is that these multi-generational households that once taught values like humility have been replaced by smaller family units living separate from larger family units. Changes in working patterns and employment opportunities, together with striving for economic stability, have meant that living with grandparents at times is not really a feasible option. Grandparents, who most commonly are the elders in any given family, are cared for by non-working family members out in the villages or the homestead homes of the larger extended families. In contrast, the smaller *aiga* setting of parents and their children often settle into their own homes. Regular access to teachings from the extended and sometimes elder family members has now been restricted to special events when the larger extended family congregates together. These significant changes mean that the minister and his *faletua* are looked to for pastoral counselling guidance that previously was not at the foreground of either of their roles.

Aligning with changes to the structure of the Samoan family is a duality of voices from the father and mother who lead the family. The emergence of multiple voices of

instruction in the upbringing of the children requires younger family members to now consider perspectives from both father *and* mother. Traditionally, the father's voice was the sole and absolute instruction for younger family members. At times, voices of instruction from elders who govern the larger extended family also need to be considered. Participants such as the following minister have distinguished between parenting practices of father and mother, based on an inward-fatherly love and an outward-motherly love as we saw:

[Orig.] *O le faalavelave o Tinā, na e te silafia Alesana, o le alofa faale-Tinā, e faaaliali, expose foi lele, faaaliali. A o le Tamā, e tu'u, e nana [le alofa] i totonu, 'Aua le fai le mea lea, 'aua le fai le mea lea.'*

[Trans.] *The problem with mothers you may know this, Alesana, a motherly-love is a showing-love, exposing-love, to show. But for fathers, they hold back, and hide [love] inside saying, 'don't do this, don't do that'. (Reverend Lameko, mature parish minister)*

The implications of these changing authority relations in the voice of instruction have had implications for the rise pastoral counselling. The father keeps his emotions hidden and unknown to their children, while the mother displays affection and love openly to their children. Discerning 'hidden' nuances amongst *matai* during verbal exchanges can help explain why some Samoan fathers safeguard their emotions from public display.

*Matai* are expected to be competent leaders with the ability to successfully protect and govern members of their families (Le Tagaloa, 1992; Thornton et al., 2010) and represent the general interests of the extended family (Meleisea, 2005). In addition to being strong leaders who uphold and continue Samoan principles and practices of governance (So'o & Huffer, 2005), *matai* are often expected to outwit their fellow *matai* especially during

oratory exchanges at public gatherings. The hidden and subtle nuances of words and phrases deliberately selected for these exchanges become a task for hearers to interpret and only then be able to counter. *Matai* who are considered superior during these public debates that use hidden messages, are the ones who are chosen at the time to carry out oratory duties for the given occasion. Selection brings about honour to speak on behalf of *matai alii*, as well as financial and material gifting for their involvement. Keeping matters hidden with the task for others to guess their meanings is common for many Samoan men including fathers, especially for those who hold *matai* titles.

The changing dynamics of the traditional Samoan family has seen an increasing authority of women's perspectives within the family. For instance, the voice of instruction from the mother is now considered as important as the father. Such a significant transition can be linked to the fact that *all* women in Samoa have been allowed to vote in the national elections since 1991. Before such time, the Samoan way of voting referred to by the United Nations Trusteeship Council as Samoan suffrage (Le Tagaloa, 1992) was in effect, that allowed only *matai* (who mostly were men) the rights to vote. The introduction of universal suffrage in Samoa in 1991 gave voting rights to Samoan men *and* women who were 21 years and over, inclusion into deciding the governance of Samoa (Sapolu et al., 2012). The significance and importance of the instructions given by both mother and father compares with the expectation that any help given by the minister or his *faletua* are the same, as expressed by parishioner Sarona:

[Orig.] *E tutusa uma i lāua [le faifeau ma lona faletua], i lo'u manatu i ai, pe a ou fia alu i ai e faasoa ia laua mo se fesoasoani i se faafitauli.*

[Trans.] *I believe that [the minister and faletua] are both the same, when I go to them for help and share my problems.* (Sarona, young adult woman, parishioner)

A commanding shift towards the value of women in ministry has occurred, where *faletua* are considered as important as ministers. The implication for pastoral counselling suggests that a role previously occupied predominantly by ministers alone, has now opened up and included *faletua* to share this role as well.

### **7.3.2 Economies driving changes for Samoans**

The second key finding is about economies driving changes for Samoans, specifically, changes in Samoa directed towards economic development and wealth. An important change for many Samoans has been in the way they think about education, success, and piety. Participants expressed that striving for better education has become important and emphasised in many families. With the diaspora of Samoans, there is the expectation that prosperity and wealth can be earned in places like New Zealand, Australia, and the US. The mindsets of Samoans have aligned with the ambition to succeed in education, in order to have greater access to prosperity, financial, and economic viability. Samoans perceived migration as the opportunity to higher and safer wages, as well as greater access to pathways towards education (Macpherson, Bedford, & Spoonley, 2000).

Practices, traditions, and daily routines have been reshaped to accommodate the changing emphasis of Samoans towards education. Family members who are employed are working long hours to become financially secure to provide opportunities for education for others in the family. Some of the long working hours have crossed-over

into timeslots allocated to family evening devotion. Quality time between children and their parents have also diminished from overloaded work commitments as reported by Reverend Ioane:

[Orig.] *Ia a o le taimi la lenei, ua telē a le suiga. Ua maualuga foi le tulaga o aoaoga i lenei vaitaimi, pei ua tau faatalalē ai, mafai foi ona faapea o mātua. Ua tele ina alu le oloomatua i bingo. Tele foi taimi o le toeaina ia i ana galuega fai i le aso. Ia a o tamaiti i le aoga, foi mai, tau lē maua le avanoa lea sa maua.*

[Trans.] *However for nowadays, there are major changes. Education is at a high level at this time, that parents at times have become neglectful in their role. The mother often goes to bingo; the father is busy with his work every day, and the children with their school. When they return from school there is very little opportunity for them with their parents, as it was in the past. (Reverend Ioane, long-serving parish minister and church leader)*

The emphasis of Samoan youth, especially young men, has also changed what they consider to determine success. The following minister reported that popularity nowadays is based upon intelligence rather than physical strength, as displayed through success in education or any other chosen field:

[Orig.] *Sa faapena mai a, ou te iloa a mātua i le tuanai o tupulaga, sa tele ina tauaimisa. A o aso nei ua sui. [...] Sui foi lele, pei o lea ua, faapea ua malamalama tagata ua lē o toe iloa se malosi i na mea o misa. A ua faaaoga le mafau fau ma le atamai i mea lelei, a.*

[Trans.] *If we were to observe young people in the past that is how they were; often they were involved in fights and conflicts. But these days have changes. [...] Changed in the sense that we no longer understand being strong is having brute force in fights or conflicts. But we use our brains and knowledge for good things. (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)*

The increase in education in Samoa means that youth and parishioners have reconsidered what demonstrates success for Samoans, together with what pastoral counselling should involve. The expectation is that rather than the work of ministers involving only the reiteration of God's Word from the Bible, deep reflection and critique are also to be expected.

### **7.3.3 Technological changes in Samoa**

The third key finding concerns technological changes in Samoa. The Internet, computers, and mobile phone technologies are just some of the technological advancements that have become prominent in Samoa (Chan Mow, 2014; Sao & Andrade, 2013; Spoonley, 2001; Ualesi, Ozawa, & Minato, 2014). Participants such as parishioner Palemia expressed that many Samoan youth use the available mobile phone technologies in Samoa for various purposes:

*[Orig.] Ia o leisi tulaga, o le mea lea o le telefoni. I aso ia, atonu e maua a tamaiti fai telefoni taitasi tailua. Ia o nei taimi ou te iloa ai e leai ma se tamaiti i totonu o aoga e leai se telefoni. Vagana ai se tamaiti ua leiloa lana telefoni. A o tamaiti uma a ia, e tele foi o le taimi vaai o punonou, a lē o faia ai ni taaloga, poo la e fai text, poo la foi e fai ni meaaoga e fa'aaoga ai le telefoni.*

*[Trans.] Another change is mobile phones. In those days you get one or two young people with a mobile phone. These days, I don't think there are students in school that do not have a phone. Except for those who have lost their mobile phone. But all these students, most of the time you see them head bowed either its games they are playing, or texting, or they are even doing school work using their phones. (Palemia, young adult man, parishioner)*

There are several benefits and advantages that these technological developments have for Samoa. For example the availability and access to modern forms of information and

communication technologies (ICT) in Samoa have had a positive effect upon the economy (Vaa, Vaa, Fuatai, Chan Mow, & Amosa, 2012). However, if modern ICT devices disrupt the daily functions within the family, school, parish, or village settings, then community and family leaders must address how best to manage such technological developments in Samoa as reported by parishioner Ane:

[Orig.] *I guess ua telē atu, ua atili atu ai ona telē ma le responsibility a mātua to look out for that, a. [...] You see problems caused by technology now, a, that didn't exist back then. So I guess la ua faaopoopoina ai leisi responsibility i mea na, but it all comes down to the individual person and how they manage it with their children.*

[Trans.] *I guess there is more technology now that has meant an increased responsibility of parents to look out for that, aye. [...] You see problems caused by technology now, a, that didn't exist back then. So I guess it has become an added responsibility for those things, but it all comes down to the individual person and how they manage it with their children. (Ane, middle-aged woman, parishioner)*

Technological advancement in Samoa has provided easier access for locals to model their lifestyles on Westerners' ideals and values. The tension is that often these templates encourage individualism with a declining significance placed upon collectivity that Samoans were accustomed to.

#### **7.3.4 Increasing dominance of palagi or Westerners' ways**

The fourth key finding in the second wave of the *Va'aalo* journey is an increasing dominance of *palagi* or Westerners' ways. Participants including Reverend Alafoti articulated that many of the changes seen in the Samoan lifestyle today are replicating *palagi* or Westerners' ways of living:

[Orig.] *A o le tulaga lautele a ia i mo mea o pulega [o le aiga] foi lele, auā e eseese mamao le aiga fa'aSamoa ma le aiga faapalagi, a, le family unit foi lele. [O le aiga palagi] na o le ulugalii a ia ma le la fanau; fai le latou flat ma le latou fale, that's all e concern ai. A o nei i aiga, pe nofo mai i i le matai, a o nai aiga ia o lana fanau ma nisi tagata, e nonofo solo a e tautua [le matai] e faalogologo uma i le matai. [...] E ta'u loa se tagata ua lē toe alu atu i lona aiga, o le palagi la lena a [chuckles]. Ia poo le uiga o le mea ua le toe fia fai aiga, a.*

[Trans.] *In terms of the leadership of [the family], there is a vast difference between a Samoan and a palagi family regarding the family unit. [A palagi family] includes only the couple and their children; they have a flat that houses their household and that's all they are concerned of. But here with the Samoan family, if the matai lives here, other households are located around him who serve and care for [the matai] and listen to the matai. [...] When you say that someone does not re-visit their family or village, he or she has become palagi [chuckles]. It means that the person does not want to be associated with his or her family anymore. (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)*

Kinship relations for Samoans in the past determined access to land and protection from *matai* upon members of the larger extended family (Macpherson, 1999). However with a new way of living for Samoans aligned and modelled upon Western perspectives, this has created an opportunity for the rise of individualism (Bush et al., 2005). The changing family systems of the Western world towards solo-parent families (Hereniko & Hanlon, 1999) have also impacted the kinship relations of similar Samoan family systems.

The rise of individualism and the decline of collectivity occurred at the same time as the diaspora and return migration of Samoans to the islands. Migration to countries abroad including New Zealand have generated communities or 'homes abroad' that have



impacted Samoa in the strategic use of resources in their new locations (Spoonley, 2001). Samoan values and practices are observed in these communities, as many have taken with them their strong religious faith (Tiatia, 1998) and key features of *fa'aSamoa* in their *malaga* or journeys to and from Samoa (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2015).

### **7.3.5 Diminished importance of a common practice for Samoans**

The fifth key finding is a diminished importance of a common practice for Samoans—*lotu afiafi*. The changing lifestyles of Samoans have affected family evening devotions in many households. In the past, sunset marked a time for households to gather together to worship and reflect on the day that had just ended. It was quiet time for families. Following the devotion was a time for informal and open discussions about any issues that needed addressing. This practice that once was common in many households has slowly diminished its value and importance as shared by parishioner Ane:

[Orig.] *Back in the day, sa matuā maopoopo a faiga o lotu a aiga i afiafi ma mea faapena. Auā o iinei foi sa fai le mea lena, sa ka le sā. Sa mamalu pulega a le nuu. Ka le sā, mamalu le pulega, a. Ae vaai ai la, ta le taimi, faiga lotu loaloo uma a. Seasea a toe faalogo i ai. Ou te lē o faalogo atu foi i nisi fale, matuā leai a.*

[Trans.] *Back in the day, evening devotions were a common practice in families. Because here [in our village] a curfew was put into place [for evening devotions]. The bell would ring and the curfew set in place. [...] So when the time would come there were family evening devotions in every household. Now I rarely hear of this practice anywhere. (Ane, middle-aged woman, parishioner)*

The significant shift for many Samoans by striving for economic development and wealth through education and extended working hours, has contributed to the decline of a religious practice that was once important to many families in the past. Together with

the changing lifestyles modelled on *palagi* or Westerners' ways, family evening devotions are becoming less frequent for many Samoan households.

### **7.3.6 Individual rights of Samoans**

The sixth key finding concerns the individual rights of Samoans. An *individual* with rights is acknowledged in Samoa today and has changed the way people of status deal with others in their care as articulated by the following minister:

[Orig.] *O le mea lena ua ou fai atu, i le galuega foi ia e pei ona ma'ea i le taimi nei ua ou malamalama i suiga na, e lē toe mafai foi ona ou toe sasa se tamaiti. Pau a le mea o le faatonu a.*

[Trans.] *That is what I am saying, the role that I worked in previously I have an understanding on the changes now, that I cannot smack a child again. The only action is to instruct them.* (Reverend Mataio, middle-aged parish minister)

Understanding the basic human rights for individuals (United Nations, 1948) has changed the response of ministers towards people they believe have misbehaved. Sione reported that this knowledge has also changed the reactions of people when their rights have been violated:

[Orig.] *As I said, ua eseese ia [aso]. E lē pei o aso ia o le counselling sa fai sa tele ina fue i le fusi pa'u povi a le faifeau ia le tamaititi e ulavale, 'Faalogo!' A toe fue atu le tamaititi pe otegia atu e le matai i le taimi nei, o, e puna mai, lē toe sau foi i le lotu! So [ministers] need a different set of skills, to perform those duties.*

[Trans.] *As I said, these [days] are different. It is not like those days in the way how counselling was done, often the children who misbehaved were struck with the minister's cowhide leather belt, 'Listen!' Now when a child is struck or scolded by matai these days, oh, they react and retaliate, and don't return to church! So*

*[ministers] need a different set of skills, to perform those duties. (Sione, middle-aged man, matai and parishioner)*

The universal access to human rights was challenged by some male participants, such as Reverend Lameko, who contended that literal Biblical understandings of male authority over women and children have contemporary relevance:

*[Orig.] Ioe, e o'o foi la i le aiā tatau lea e tau aumai i le aiā tatau lea a Tamā ma Tinā, faalēfiafia a'u ia i ai. [...] O lena e te silafia, lea fai mai le Tusi Paia, na faia e le Atua Atamu. Ona faia laia lea o le fafine mai le ivi asoaso a Atamu. I lo'u a faamatalaina i lo'u a'u a faifeau, ou te lē iloa i lau susuga, o le faiaoga, tusa o le fafine na fai i foliga o Atamu e le'i faia i foliga o le Atua.*

*[Trans.] Yes, the same goes for the human right of the individual, say for the father or for the mother, I am not quite happy about this. [...] You understand this, it says from the Bible that God created Adam. He then created the woman from a rib taken from Adam. My interpretation of this as a minister, I don't know about you a teacher, is that the woman was created in the image of Adam, not created in the image of God. (Reverend Lameko, mature parish minister)*

Due to a rise of individualism in Samoa, some Samoans are finding courage to speak out about issues affecting their lives. In order to support individuals faced with difficulties, not-for-profit agencies in Samoa have been set up.

### **7.3.7 Samoa Victim Support Group**

The seventh and final key finding in the second wave of the *Va'aalo* journey sees the emergence of a civil society sector that draws upon the importance of agencies such as Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) to Samoans. SVSG is such an agency that provides a service to help Samoans who have been physically and sexually abused. It is an agency that supports and advocates for the victims of domestic and family violence. SVSG

empowers individuals who mostly are women to come forth and seek help, and some participants have accused this agency as a reason why sensitive issues have now become public. In the past, similar cases to those that have now come out in the open often went undetected with the victims remaining at risk.

SVSG encourages and advocates victims of their basic human rights that are consistent with the 30 articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* drafted and proclaimed by the United Nations in 1948. Some examples of key articles from the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* as advocated by SVSG include article 19 *the right to freedom of opinion and expression*; article 25.1 *the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family*; and article 26.1 *the right to education* (United Nations, 1948). It is important to acknowledge that SVSG advocates fundamental human rights for Samoans and their work empowers individuals to speak up against injustices that violate their rights as reported by parishioner and SVSG user Pua:

[Orig.] *Ia e pei la o faafitauli i le vā la lea o le ma ulugalii, lea ua ta iloa la, lea e i ai le [SVSG] i totonu o le tatou atunuu, ta te sau a ou te sau sa’o ou sulufa’i mai ai i ituaiga [faafitauli faapea]. O le tulaga e ala ai ona ou lē o’o i le faifeau a, ia ona e, o lea pe ta te iloa e taita ia, e lē o fetui lota alu i le faifeau i ituaiga faafitauli ia auā e mo’i a e solve mai ma faufautua foi lea, ia ae na’o le fautuaga a lea, ae leai se mea foi lele. Auā e pei o le [SVSG] e ō mai ai, e tau, a, le tau foi lea i le leaga o le tamaloa.*

[Trans.] *Issues like the relationship between us as a couple, now I know that there is a service like [SVSG] here in our country that I can access directly with these [type of issues]. The reason why I do not go to the minister with these type of issues because even though he solves it and gives advice, but it is only advice that*

*he gives; but nothing else you know. Because SVSG they come you know, and give justice, for the wrong-doings that the man had done.* (Pua, middle-aged woman, parishioner and SVSG user)

SVSG has highlighted the inability or unwillingness of the church to address and attend to the physical and sexual safety of mainly its women members. These victims are seeking solace and support in secular agencies outside of the church. The challenge now is for church leaders and parish ministers to be informed by these findings, and develop ways how to offer services within the church to provide the necessary support for its men and women members.

It is important to acknowledge that just as the Samoan person is changing in significant ways, as demonstrated through the first two waves of findings, the minister and *faletua* are also subject to the same forces of change. A Samoan proverb '*e leai se niu e falala fua e falala lava ona o le matagi*' ('There is no coconut tree that sways by chance but is swayed by the wind') speaks of being influenced by an 'external force'. The meaning of this proverb is that there are reasons for events as they just do not happen without reason (Tauiliili, 2010); the coconut tree sways towards the ocean because of the wind. Parishioners and ministers as well as the contexts in which they are located have been influenced by forces of significant changes. Pastoral counselling therefore must be seen as a dynamic response by the church, to meet the many significant changes impacting the lives of its parishioners. This leads the story of the *Va'aalo* journey into its third and final wave, that involves the navigation of *vā* translated as relational space for Samoans.

#### 7.4 Third wave in the *Va'aalo* journey—*Fetu'utu'una'i le vā* (navigating relational space)—for Samoans

Presenting the discussions about key findings from this study by telling a story of a journey, has led me to a fundamental discovery. In addition to *talanoa* and journeys that are both familiar to many Pacific peoples, the observance and management of *vā* is also important for many Samoans. The concept of *vā* and how Samoans manage *vā* developed as an underpinning factor behind this entire project as implied by Reverend Tino:

[Orig.] *[Pastoral counselling o] nisi foi mea faaletino e mafai ai ona fesoasoani i se faafitauli ua tupu mai i totonu o le galuega faafaifeau i le vā ma tagata. Po'o tagata i leisi tagata. [...] Pei le faataitaiga, o le vā [o le faifeau] ma le nuu auā o le counselling, pei ona ou fai atu o se fesoasoani ua mafai ona maua. [...] Tago a le tagata ia eli lona ia a mea ua mafai i lona vā ma le Atua.*

[Trans.] *[Pastoral counselling is] also other practical assistance that can help towards an issue that has developed within the ministry concerning relationships with others. Or even relationships between people. [...] For example, the relationship between [a minister] and the village, because counselling, just as I have said, it is a form of help that is available. [...] The person is responsible for digging what she or he can in one's personal relationship with God. (Reverend Tino, long-serving parish minister)*

Relationships are at the forefront of pastoral counselling for Samoans, and involve connecting persons across relational space or *vā* that exist between them. It became clear that how *vā* are dealt with in different contexts are fundamental to Samoans and to pastoral counselling practices. *Fetu'utu'una'i le vā* translated as 'navigating relational space' has emerged as an important concept for many Samoans. The key findings of the third and final wave in the *Va'aalo* journey are listed in Table 4:

**Table 4: Third wave in the *Va'aalo* journey (underlying theme 3)**

***Fetu'utu'una'i le vā* (navigating relational space) for Samoans and its key findings**

<b>Third wave in the <i>Va'aalo</i> journey (underlying theme 3)</b>		
<i>Fetu'utu'una'i le vā</i> (navigating relational space) for Samoans		
<b>Key findings</b>	(a)	<i>Vā</i> as relationship-making
	(b)	Physical force in <i>fetu'utu'una'i le vā</i>
	(c)	A shift towards verbal force in <i>fetu'utu'una'i le vā</i>
	(d)	Excommunication and punishment in <i>fetu'utu'una'i le vā</i>
	(e)	Dialogue as <i>fetu'utu'una'i le vā</i>

#### **7.4.1 *Vā* as relationship-making**

*Vā* as a valuable and fundamental concept for Samoans can be explained as the relational space between people (Tuagalu, 2008) that connects individuals to each other, to one's *aiga* (family), to one's village, to one's minister, and to God. In short, *vā* can be understood as the space in between people that form the relationships Samoans are involved in the different contexts they are located. *Vā* as relationship-making is the first key finding in the third wave of the *Va'aalo* journey.

The importance of *vā* for Samoans is defined by local and international poet and scholar Mauaiaivao Albert Wendt:

Important to the Samoan view of reality is the concept of *Va* or *Wa* in Maori and Japanese. *Va* is the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates, but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things. The meanings change as the relationships and the contexts change.... A well-known Samoan expression is "la teu le va"- cherish, nurse, care for the *va*, the relationship. This is crucial in communal cultures that value group unity more

than individualism, that perceive the individual person, or creature, or thing in terms of group, in terms of *va*, relationships. (Wendt, 1999, p. 402)

A parallel can be drawn between pastoral counselling practices and the space that relates and unites one person to another. Specifically, pastoral counselling practices acknowledge that for the person who seeks help and also for the minister, *vā* exists between them in the minister-parishioner relationship. The appropriate management of the relational space between them identified as *vā*, will be a determining factor towards a positive outcome from the process of seeking help.

*Vā* as the space between people has developed further into '*teu le vā*' cultural reference, explained as 'looking after' the space between persons to uphold the moral, ethical, and spiritual dimensions for persons involved in keeping social relationships (Anae, 2010b). *Teu le vā* is a similar concept to *tauhi vā* for Tongans that refers to the maintenance of space or relationships between two or more parties (Tu'itahi, 2009; Vaka'uta, 2015). In terms of relationship-building for Māori between counsellor and the person seeking help, boundaries between generations, gender, and between the living and the dead warrant respect (Durie, 2006). This project extends upon '*teu le vā*' referred to as nursing, caring, and looking after the space that builds relationships between people, by proposing '*fetu'utu'una'i le vā*' as a process specific to pastoral counselling. The act of manoeuvring or negotiating can be translated from the Samoan word *fetu'utu'una'i*. In order to align with the oceanic setting of the *Va'aalo* journey told in this chapter, *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* is therefore translated as 'navigating relational space'. Simply, *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* is the process of pastoral counselling where the parties involved must



navigate (*fetu'utu'una'i*) relational space (*vā*). A successful outcome from this process ultimately demands the appropriate application of '*fetu'utu'una'i le vā*'.

The concept of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* is not about *vā* being nursed, cared, or maintained as in the cultural reference of *teu le vā*, but rather the navigation of *vā*. For instance, the relationship formed between a minister and one of his parishioners seeking help is such that the appropriate movement around *vā* must be considered. It becomes the task of both minister and parishioner to navigate *vā*, so that the relational space between them is appropriate and inviting to stimulate discussions. Proper navigation of *vā* has the potential to encourage engagement and stimulate discussions. The opposite can also result. Success therefore in pastoral counselling relies upon cautious and appropriate movement around *vā*.

The impact of culture upon *vā* must be navigated by both minister *and* the person seeking help as articulated by Reverend Mataio:

[Orig.] *But e faigata ona open up tagata i nuu ona o le aganuu. Ona o le aganuu ma le, tradition, a. So sei vagana a ua mafai ona tau suisui le aganuu, faatoa [open up tagata]. But ou te prefer a e tatau a ona open uma a tagata latou. E ui a i tamaiti, e tatau ona aumai latou problems i luma, leai se mea e taofiofi ai.*

[Trans.] *But it is difficult for the people in the village to open up because of the culture. Because of the culture and traditions. So only when the culture is able to change a bit, then only [will people open up]. But I prefer everyone to be open. Even though they may be children, they need to bring their problems forth with nothing holding them back. (Reverend Mataio, middle-aged parish minister)*

Culture affects both *vā* as well as the process of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*. As an important component to the lives of many Samoans, culture can become a barrier for open discussions about certain issues. *Vā* that connects people also has the potential to disconnect people (Van der Ryn, 2016) when not dealt with appropriately. When this happens the possibility of *vā* that separates people becomes a reality as reported by the following minister:

[Orig.] *O le mea foi lena e i ai isi aiga a o mai tagata i le fale o le faifeau e faaaloalo a, e nonofo mai i luga o ma'a.*

[Trans.] *That is also why when people from some families come to the minister's house, they show so much respect that they sit outside on the rocks.* (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)

Age and kinship relations also influence *vā*. The observance of *vā* for Samoans carries the expectation that members of the younger generations must honour and respect those from the generations above. In terms of kinship relations, age becomes secondary to kinship as a determining factor in the observance of *vā*. For the situation where one has a younger uncle, the older nephew is required to respect his younger uncle. This demonstrates that *vā* based of kin lineage supersedes any *vā* that is determined by age.

The language used in pastoral counselling when Samoans come into relation with each other, is also determined by *vā*. Similarly, *matai* use different language sets depending on the given situation (Shore, 2014), either polite and respectful or poetic. In the context of a minister working alongside a troubled youth member of his parish, the language used by the youth member requires to be formal and polite. In contrast, everyday conversational language would often be used amongst young people themselves. The

different forms of *vā*, between a minister and youth member and between two young people engaging in conversation, would determine the type of language used in each context.

There are rules that govern *vā* for Samoans, and therefore also affect how *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* is carried out. A similar understanding of the role played by rules is held by Māori of Aotearoa New Zealand where *kaupapa* (principles) and *tikanga* (norms of right and proper conduct) are closely linked together (Tate, 2010). *Tikanga* function for the orderliness of the cosmos (Shore, 1989) and ensure that *kaupapa* are passed down through the generations. For Samoans, rules that are informed by *fa'aSamoa* are in place to ensure that *vā* are respected by persons who come into relation with each other. In addition, these rules are in place to ensure that the process of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* is conducted appropriately for any given situation.

*Vā* is considered *tapu* for many Samoans (Tamasese et al., 2005). *Vā fealoaloa'i* or the sacred space within relationships (Autagavaia, 2001), must be treated with care and respect. Rules are set in place to uphold the sacredness of *vā*, and thus the harmonious living of Samoans. These rules can be linked to *aga* (conduct) to ensure appropriate social conduct for any given situation or person (Shore, 1989) and that *vā* is recognised. However, when *vā* has been breached, then interventions to return *vā* to their desired positioning are needed. This is precisely where the process of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* comes into effect in its various forms, that includes the use of physical force.

#### **7.4.2 Physical force in *fetu'utu'una'i le vā***

The second key finding is the use of physical force in *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*. It has been established previously that the family serves as a platform where values are taught and addressed for many Samoans. When these values are disrespected and disobeyed, physical force as *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* is used to ensure the adherence to these values. Observing the teachings received in the family are important, as expressed by parishioner Esekia:

[Orig.] *Faasoa mai fo'i le faifeau, ia, e leai lava se measili nai lo'o le faalogo ma usitai, i mātua. Maimau le taimi tatou te lē [obey parents]; ae a lē usitai i mātua ma ava i mātua, pau lea o le tulafono o lo'o aumai i le Tusi Paia o lo'o i ai lona tau.*

[Trans.] *The minister shared to me, and really there is nothing greater than listening and obeying your parents. We waste our time [when we don't obey our parents]; when you don't obey and respect your parents, well this is the only commandment in the Bible that has a reward. (Esekia, young adult man, parishioner)*

The outward display of *fa'a'aloalo* (respect) illustrates that boundaries or *vā* are upheld (Autagavaia, 2001) between the different hierarchical structures in the family. Through a conceptual understanding and acknowledgement of *vā*, key components of Samoan culture such as discipline, values, respect, and obedience are upheld. Such teachings are taught from family leaders (elders) and parents to their household members as reported by Reverend Ioane:

[Orig.] *Ia, a faaopoopo foi ai ma le tatou aganuu, o le ava ma le faaaloalo ma le usitai, o mea ia e a'oa'o mai e mātua i fanau. Ia e ava i tagata matutua, usitai i*

*ou mātua, mea faapena. [...] Ma e telē foi ma le tāua o le aganuu lea a tatou, le ava fatafata ma le vā fealoai.*

[Trans.] *When you add in our culture, respect and obedience, these are what parents teach their children. The respect of one’s elders, obey your parents and everything related to that. [...] And there is a great importance of our culture, respecting others with rightful etiquette.* (Reverend Ioane, long-serving parish minister and church leader)

When teachings from elders and parents were disobeyed, the use of physical force as enforcement resulted. Further, parishioner Eseta reported that when people behaved inappropriately while in the relational space with others, physical force was used as a means to ensure the correct observance of vā:

[Orig.] *Leaga lea ua warn muamua, ae lē usitai, lua loa fasi loa. [...] Ae lē faapea o se fasi o le fasi ai ā, o le fasi o le aoai.*

[Trans.] *This is because they have been warned the first time and they did not obey, so when it happens a second time, I smack them. [...] But it is not a smack that I will continuously be hitting them, it is a smack to teach them.* (Eseta, mature woman, parishioner)

Traditionally a ‘good parent’ meant one who disciplined their children to uphold vā in different contexts. For parents that failed to carry out their role as a ‘good parent’, others in the community stepped in to encourage that vā was appropriately observed. For non-family members to share responsibility for other peoples’ children demonstrates that raising children for Samoans is not solely dependent upon any immediate blood kin relations—it is considered a collective and village responsibility as expressed by the following *matai*:

[Orig.] *Auā o le mea mo'i a ia Alesana e, e i ai mātua e lē o mafai ona latou, malosi le tautala i a latou fanau. O le faanoanoaga foi lena leaga pei o le ā fefefe mātua e fai le faatonuga e tataua ona fai. Ia, ou te iloa a la le tamaititi e a'itui i lona Tamā ma lona Tinā, ou te maua loa a i le mea e sese ai, fasi loa a e leai a seisi mea e toe tuua i ai [chuckles]. Tusa o lo'u avanoa lena ua maua e, e faasa'o ai loa le laititi lea pe ā ua lē mafai ona faasa'o e lona Tamā.*

[Trans.] *Because the truth is, Alesana, there are parents that cannot talk firmly to their children. It is sad, because it seems that parents are becoming afraid to give instructions that are needed. And I know the type of child that is difficult to his father and mother, if I can fault them with something wrong he or she has done, and then I give them a beating without delay [chuckles]. That is my opportunity received to correct this child whose father has been unsuccessful in correcting him. (Fa'afetai, mature man, matai and parishioner)*

Reverend Tino shared that the use of physical force in the process of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* was only actioned as a last resort after repeated instructions failed:

[Orig.] *I la'u vaai faa-Samoa, tuaia ia le faafafo, la'u vaai faa-Samoa ma le faa-Kerisiano ou te discipline a tamaiti i le 3, 4, 5, 6, o fai atu le faatonuga e leai, e tuu i ai le [smack]. E lē o se mea e leaga tele.*

[Trans.] *My view as a Samoan, forget about how people do it overseas, but my view as a Samoan and as a Christian, I discipline the children when 3, 4, 5, 6 times I instruct them and they don't obey, then I give them [a smack]. That's not too much of a bad thing. (Reverend Tino, long-serving parish minister)*

In line with a changing Samoan self discussed at length in Chapter Five, *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* has also undergone significant shifts.

### 7.4.3 A shift towards verbal force in *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*

The third key finding is the shift towards verbal force in *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*. Verbal force instead of physical force has become the more appropriate way of undertaking *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* for many Samoans as reported by parishioner Eseta:

[Orig.] *E i ai a le taimi ou te ita ai ua ova le faalogotata, ia e laulogo uma le malae i lo'u oke. Ae ana ou lē oke [i la'u fanau], e lē maopoopo tamaiti ia ma fefefe [ia a'u]. Ia maopoopo uma mai i le taimi lenei o, auā e pei o le taimi lea e mafai ona avatu i ai se upu ma se tala.*

[Trans.] *There are times when I get very angry because the children have been overly disobedient, and neighbouring yards surely can hear my scolding. But if I didn't scold [my children], they wouldn't be disciplined and scared [of me]. They need to be disciplined now, because at this time in their lives I can instruct them with my words and teachings. (Eseta, mature woman, parishioner)*

Significant changes to the Samoan society, psyche, and authority relations amongst its people as discussed at length in Chapter Five about a changing Samoan self, have crafted a more appropriate method for some parents in managing *vā* for Samoans as alluded to by the following minister:

[Orig.] *Sina tama'i mea faasaga atu loa le oke. La foi la ou te taumafai taita e faamatala atu i ai, 'Faapena uma mātua; nei te'i ua e faapea na'o ou mātua e faapena. Na matou ola fo'i matou i mātua faapena.'*

[Trans.] *Whenever a minor issue would happen she would be scolded. And I try to explain to her, 'All parents are like that; just in case you think your parents are the only ones who are like that, our parents were like that as well'. (Reverend Avanoa, long-serving parish minister close to retirement age)*

A social shift in Samoa concerning perspectives about the use of physical force gradually changed the application of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*. One possible event amongst others that

prompted the shift away from the use of violence is the periodical review of Article 14 of the Infants Ordinance 1961 that confirms ‘the right of any parent, teacher, or other person having the lawful control or charge of a child to administer reasonable punishment to such child’ (Ministry of Women Community and Social Development, 2013). The Education Act 2009, Article 23, prohibits corporal punishment in government schools for children aged 5-14 years, and the Law Reform Commission acknowledges that private schools are not covered under the Act and the recommendation is for inclusion (Samoa Law Reform Commission, 2009). Further, people who are returning from the diaspora of Samoans bring with them ideologies that discourage the use of physical force in parenting practices.

The major shift with pastoral counselling in Samoa is being a movement away from a fear-based obedience and respect to forging a different shared understanding between parents and their children. This movement acknowledges that the management of *vā* has transitioned away from the use of physical force towards approaches that include input and understanding from others included in the relational space labelled here as *vā*.

#### **7.4.4 Excommunication and punishment in *fetu’utu’una’i le vā***

The fourth key finding is excommunication and punishment as the application of *fetu’utu’una’i le vā*. Many participants including Reverend Alafoti said that public-shaming and punishment are ways that elders and ministers administer *fetu’utu’una’i le vā*:



[Orig.] *A faapea ua leva ona pogisa le faiga o lou tofi Aoao a ua taia oe ma faasala, ia a lea sa fai atu a lou loto pei se avega, a lea la ua faasa'o loa ma manino, ua clear foi le mea ua leai se nenefu o le mea a. O le mea a lea in a form of, pei a o se counselling foi lele i tagata o latou lava le mea.*

[Trans.] *If you had been living in darkness for a while in your role as lay preacher and then you are reprimanded and punished, it's like a burden in your heart has been put straight and made clear with no more uncertainty. So in a way [being punished] it is like a form of counselling for people.* (Reverend Alafoti, long-serving parish minister and church leader)

In the setting of the village, *matai* function in a system where explicit moral and cultural boundaries are in place and when these boundaries are violated, offenders are punished. In some cases, eviction from one's village can result. Excommunication, punishment, and public-shaming (Tiatia, 2003), are developments that have transitioned away from the use of physical force as the management of *vā*. However, although the concept of *vā* for Samoans are enforced through excommunication, punishment, and public-shaming, the trade-off is that trust is diminished between village and parish leaders and those whom they govern.

The Samoan word *amana'ia* (to be acknowledged) leads into the concept of *lē amana'ia* (not to be acknowledged) which in itself is punishment for most Samoans. The Samoan family has pre-determined roles for members found within. From family elders who often are *matai alii* or *tulāfale* who have oratory duties, to the wives of *matai* and the untitled men and women, including the youth and young children of the family, everyone has a role to play (Va'ai, 2011) towards the harmonious functioning of the family. *Amana'ia* commonly are voiced during family gatherings like evening devotions,

showing that one's role is considered worthy and valued in the family. To not be acknowledged in the family is an undesirable occasion, considering how valuable *aiga* is to most Samoans (Tofaeono, 2000).

#### **7.4.5 Dialogue as *fetu'utu'una'i le vā***

The fifth and final key finding in the third wave of the *Va'aalo* journey is dialogue as *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*. Dialogue involves *talanoa* (talking) that incorporates conversations between two or more people. *Talanoa* as a 'talking practice' is a term and concept familiar to many Pacific nations:

Talanoa is a word used in several of the native languages in Oceania (also known as the Pacific Islands) to refer to three interconnected events: *story*, the act of *telling* (of memories, stories, longings and more), and occasion of *conversation* (teasingly and critically, and usually informally). [...] Each of these events – story, telling, conversation – is not talanoa without the other two. (Havea, 2010, p. 11)

Dialogue can be understood in its reference to *talanoa* – the combination of all three events in the story, the telling of the story, and the conversation about the story being told. By using dialogue as a way for *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*, develops a relational space that invites discussion by all parties involved to listen and reflect on the troubled person's story being told. Participants like parishioner Eseta reported that allowing family members the opportunity to talk openly functions well in the family:

[Orig.] *A foi o le mea lena lea ou te tuu i ai le avanoa [e talanoa ai], 'A i ai le mea e lē fiafia ai leisi tamaititi i leisi tamaititi, poo le uso i le uso, le tuagane i le tuafafine, aumai, aumai i luma i le taimi nei. A i ai foi le mea ou te lē [fiafia ai], e uma ou tautala atu.'*

[Trans.] *That's what I do is give them an opportunity [to talk openly], 'If there is anything that one child is not happy with another, or a brother to his brother, sister to sister, brother to sister, bring it forward now. Also if there is something that I am not [happy] with I will talk about it at the end'. (Eseta, mature woman, parishioner)*

The rise of individualism for Samoans has seen dialogue develop as an applicable way of undertaking *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*. As an individual with rights it is necessary to be allowed the opportunity to voice one's concerns and equally as important, to be heard. Samoans traditionally have been an oratorical people, where mostly elders and ministers do the majority of the talking while others in their care listen. Dialogue in this instance encourages that all parties in conversation have the opportunities to talk freely and express any concerns. The challenge for elders and ministers who have mostly been the talkers, a reversal of roles is required where they are now expected to also listen as well as implied by Reverend Simona:

[Orig.] *Faalogologo foi lenei, a lot of things are just there, but are not said, ā. E lē o ta'ua. E aogā foi la lota faalogo lelei i mea la e ta'u mai, e te iloa ai mea la e lē o ta'u mai.*

[Trans.] *You must listen out for clues, a lot of things are there, but are not said, aye. So it is important that you listen carefully to what is being said, so that you will know all that is not being said. (Reverend Simona, retired minister and church leader)*

Further, participants said there were certain people they felt comfortable in talking openly about their problems. Some participants like parishioner Sarona said they found it easier to talk to their parents, others their minister, some the *faletua*, or their friends:

[Orig.] *O muamua o o'u mātua, muamua o ou mātua. A fai atu e lē tali [i le faafitauli], e lē maua ai se tali o lota faafitauli, ia, o le faifeau ma lona faletua, a. Pei a o le faifeau ma le faletua e o i ai tagata e faafesili mo faafitauli.*

[Trans.] *First of all are my parents, my parents. If I do and they don't answer [my problem] that I don't get an answer for my problem, then it becomes the minister and his faletua. It's often the minister and his faletua that people go and question about their problems. (Sarona, young adult woman, parishioner)*

Mostly women participants reported they considered a variety of people who they trusted and with whom they felt comfortable in sharing their problems. There appears reluctance amongst some Samoan men to admit problems in their households, possibly out of the fear of being viewed by others as incompetent leaders of their family. However, aligning with a changing Samoan self, roles that once were traditionally determined are now being assigned based on abilities and skills. For instance, if the minister was considered competent in his role as counsellor, he would be selected by the troubled person. However, if the *faletua* was equally as competent yet more approachable and relevant to the issue at hand, then she would be the more credible candidate to dialogue with. Sometimes the minister and his *faletua* collectively could offer perspectives beneficial for the specific situation at hand.

The use of dialogue in *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* requires that appropriate relational space exist for all those involved in the conversation, otherwise dialogue would not be possible. This is where the conceptual understanding of *vā* and the process of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* for Samoans becomes important. When *vā* has been acknowledged and navigated effectively, discussions towards possible plans of action can result.

## 7.5 Summary

The story told in this chapter of the *Va'aalo* journey has discussed the key findings from this research, of what participants have reported and the reasons why. In summary, three *waves* or underlying themes of data were presented. Firstly, God is central in the counselling practices and expectations of Samoans. The value of having God central in the process of counselling functions to locate the minister alongside the troubled person rather than above, searching for avenues to offer support and help. The *faletua* plays a vital role in the process of counselling, and the combined minister and *faletua* counselling team has the potential to address issues that otherwise would have gone undetected. Confidentiality is required to ensure that counselling practices by ministers are viewed as 'meaning-making' for parishioners. Secondly, the rise of individualism has seen the decline of collectivity in Samoa. Significant changes in the family structures, economies led by the drive for education and wealth, accentuated by technological changes, have all seen the individual rights of Samoans take precedence. Agencies like SVSG have emerged to address some of the social issues developing from such changes. Finally, *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* as navigating relational space is a conceptualisation of pastoral counselling practices for Samoans that has come forth from this research. *Vā* as the relational space that connects persons to each other must be handled appropriately. The process of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* is dynamic and has shifted away from the use of physical and verbal force to excommunication and punishment, to now be a process that includes dialogue. Understanding these waves of knowledge collectively extends the *Va'aalo* journey closer to its targeted destination of developing understandings of effective pastoral counselling practices for ministers in Samoa today. However, the closer the *Va'aalo* journey appears to approach its end, the greater

realisation that new directions in the journey are beginning to develop. This leads into the final and concluding chapter of this project that will present the key theoretical frameworks that this thesis offers to better understand pastoral counselling practices for Samoans. In addition, approaches of pastoral counselling for Samoans are proposed that allow for a dynamic and changing Samoan self.

## Chapter Eight

### Conclusion

#### 8.1 Introduction

This thesis has identified several tensions that have emerged from the analysis and discussions of findings. These tensions firstly include a differential of power relations between ministers and people seeking help from their ministers. Secondly, tension about the positioning of the *faletua* within the counselling process has been identified. Thirdly, tensions between *vā* as the relational space for Samoans and *fa'aSamoa* have come into focus, where *vā* must be negotiated for any given situation. Pastoral counselling largely involves the development of coping and relational skills (Collins, 2007) to enhance relationship-building for all persons involved; in *fa'aSamoa* relationships are governed by *vā* which is why the appropriate observance of *vā* is fundamental for Samoans. The final tension concerns counselling practices that comprise the negotiation of *vā*, that have traditionally used physical force as enforcement. A shift has occurred towards the use of verbal force, excommunication, and punishment as forms of enforcement. Although these methods as used in the enforcement of *vā* still exist to a certain extent today, these approaches are diminishing in value and applicability for contemporary Samoans. Dialogue has emerged as a contemporary and applicable way to negotiate *vā* in counselling today. The tensions mentioned above signal a fundamental and underlying tension in the 'changing Samoan self', between the traditional and contemporary self. The observance of *fa'aSamoa* links all four tensions, including the underlying tension between the traditional and contemporary Samoan self. How then does this thesis provide a theoretical framework

to understand such tensions? The metaphor of the *Va'aalo* journey of the previous chapter has laid the foundation for the theoretical understandings that address such tensions concerning pastoral counselling for Samoans.

At the start of this thesis I proposed a definition of pastoral counselling to be used in this study, as the discussions between ministers and parishioners to *talanoa* about personal crises, losses, and problematic situations. I have also proposed *fetufaā'iga* as a Samoan word that explains pastoral counselling. *Fetufaā'iga* is a process of sharing perspectives through conversations between ministers and *faletua*, with people who seek their help. Revisiting these definitions of pastoral counselling from a Samoan perspective in this chapter, extends upon the definitions presented earlier, and integrates the findings that this project has developed.

The objective therefore in this final and closing chapter is to acknowledge and use *what* we found from this project (Chapters Four to Six), theorise *why* these occurred (Chapter Seven), and then answer the research question at the core of this project: *How does understanding a changing Samoan self inform the conceptualisation and delivery of pastoral counselling in Samoa?* The answer to this question has emerged from the exploration of traditional and contemporary pastoral counselling practices for Samoans. Understanding the concept of a changing Samoan self has led to three theoretical contributions that this thesis offers: the conceptualisations of God, Change, and Space, as understandings that inform and determine appropriate pastoral counselling practices for Samoans today. Firstly, the conceptualisation of God for Samoans falls along a continuum between traditional and contemporary understandings. Secondly, *E sui faiga*



*ae tumau fa'avae* [Practices change yet foundations remain]—although the Samoan self has undergone change and continues to change, some foundational principles and values held by Samoans such as love, respect, and reciprocity remain. Finally, the conceptualisation and delivery of pastoral counselling applicable to Samoans today requires navigating relational space—*fetu'utu'una'i le vā*. The conceptualisations of God, Change, and Space are necessary for Samoans today, so that contemporary pastoral counselling practices have relevance for those who seek help with their minister and *faletua*.

## **8.2 A conceptualisation of God as punitive and merciful**

Traditional understandings of God as authoritative, parental and punitive and which were based in Old Testament and missionary understandings are evolving to a more contemporary New Testament understanding of God as merciful, loving and forgiving. This contemporary God is more accommodating of the human failings and foibles of God's people, and are informed by their own life and faith experiences:

[Orig.] *E i ai foi le matou outreach ministry. Ia ma mea eseese ia, hospital ministry, o le prison ministry. A o le mea foi lele e faavae a i luga o le Tusi Paia, Mataio 25:31-40, la e talanoa ai lesu i le mea foi lele, na ou fia ai, tou o mai e aumai meaai. Sa ou falepuipui, tou o e asiasi, sa ou ma'i, tou o asiasi, it's the same thing [matou te faia]. Sa ou fia lavalava, tou aumai lavalava. So we are trying more or less, taumafai e mulimulita'i ai [i aoaoga a lesu].*

[Trans.] *We also have our outreach ministry. Such as our hospital ministry, and our prison ministry. And we base these upon the Bible, Matthew 25:31-40, where Jesus talks about, things like, 'I was hungry, then you brought me food. I was imprisoned, you came and visited me; I was sick, and you visited.' It's the same*

*thing [that we do]. 'I was naked, and you clothed me.' We are trying more or less, to follow [Jesus' teachings]. (Reverend Pati, long-serving parish minister)*

Contemporary parishioners appear to have endorsed this more compassionate contemporary God, which means that ministers who were trained in and hold onto more traditional punitive concepts need to reconsider their understandings if they wish to remain engaged with their parishes and communities. Members in the congregations are undergoing significant societal changes impacting their lives as individuals and as communities. Understanding a changing Samoan self can help inform ministers how to engage with their parish and community members.

For the more traditional and older Samoans, God is perceived as disciplinary and punitive and this aspect of God forms the basis of the counselling work they are involved:

*[Orig.] As I said, ua eseese ia [aso]. E lē pei o aso ia o le counselling sa fai sa tele ina fue i le fusi pa'u povi a le faifeau ia le tamaititi e ulavale, 'Faalogo!'*

*[Trans.] As I said, these [days] are different. It is not like those days in the way how counselling was done, often the children who misbehaved were struck with the minister's cowhide leather belt, 'Listen!' (Sione, middle-aged man, matai and parishioner)*

Such an understanding of God has its foundation within the Scriptures:

Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them. (Proverbs 13:24)

The first strand of a theoretical framework to understand contemporary pastoral counselling for Samoans is a reconceptualisation of *God*. Although data suggests that God is viewed as central in the lives of several participants, the conceptualisation of God

differentiates the traditional and older group of ministers and their wives, elders, and *matai*, from the group of contemporary and often younger parishioners.

Certain parallels can be drawn between these understandings of God and the situation for many Samoans, such as the importance of collectivity found in ancient Israel compared to the significance of communal life held by many Samoans today:

[Orig.] *Pei a o le mea foi lele, lea e tau faamatalaina i le Tusi Paia, o le upu aiga, family. Auā lea e fai mai [i le Tusi Paia] o le family o le, o le nation. O le family e aofoa'i ai, e lē gata i le house, e lē gata i le aiga family, house, a, a o le household.*

[Trans.] *It's like what the Bible is trying to explain, the word 'family'. Because it is said [in the Bible] family is a nation. Family includes not only the actual house, but also household. (Reverend Lameko, mature-aged parish minister)*

When looking through a theological lens, the transition from a traditional understanding of God as punitive and disciplinary to a contemporary face of God as merciful and flexible aligns with a changing Samoan self. The Old Testament face of God is a rigid and stern Patriarch:

Because the Lord your God, who is present with you, is a jealous God. The anger of the Lord your God would be kindled against you and he would destroy you from the face of the earth. (Deuteronomy 6:15)

Yet for some participants, the Christ of the New Testament represents a face of God that is positioned alongside his people:

[Orig.] *E te faitau i le Afioga Paia a le Atua, ma e manatu i faiga faavae faa-Iesu. [...] A ia tāua ia te oe le mea lea, e tapena i ai lou mafaufau i apoapoiga a le tatou Alii i mea ua mafai ona maua mai Evagelia e 4 i le Tusi Paia; pei o le faavae*

*a lena o mea uma [...] le olaga o le loto fealofani, le olaga o le 'aia le tau ma sui, o le olaga o le loto faamagalo.*

*[Trans.] You read the Holy Scriptures of God and consider the 'Jesus-like' foundations. [...] And you must place importance and prepare your thinking for all of our Lord's teachings as found in the four Gospels; that is the foundation of all things. [...] A life of loving one another, free from revenge, and having a forgiving heart. (Reverend Tino, long-serving parish minister)*

For traditionalists, God is perceived as a figure of authority who is punitive and disciplinary, and they locate God at the top of a clearly defined hierarchy. The will of God emanates from the uppermost position, down to the people who are at the bottom. When both ministers and parishioners place the minister near to God at the top of the hierarchy as representing God, the minister assumes for himself the authority given and expected from God. However, for those contemporary faithful who position God alongside the people, this face of God is represented by Christ as a shepherd who advocates peace guiding his people:

*[Orig.] Maimau pe ana maua uma e fai lotu le amio lena a Iesu. O le amio a Iesu i le Evagelia [a Ioane], ma lona ata i le matau i ai, faifai malie. E le'i faapea mai upu a le fafine ona ita lea o Iesu. E tatau ona ita. [...] Leaga o la e iloa e le fafine, o Iesu o le lutaia, a o ia o le Samaria. [...] O le ala foi lena lea na sui ai le ola o le fafine lea, e faifai malie, mogomogo malie atu a e Iesu, le auala ina e mafai ona malūlū ai le loto o le fafine. [...] Ua lavea lona loto ma ua tu'ia lona loto faigata, lona ma'ema'eā ma lona māteletele, ae faifai lemu a e Iesu le auala se'i sui ai. O se auala manaia tele lea ia te a'u ia, o se auala faafai'ea.*

*[Trans.] If only all [ministers] behaved like Jesus. Jesus' actions in the Gospel [of John], that I recall, involve taking a peaceful approach. It's not as if when the woman spoke [impolitely] to Jesus then he got mad. He should've been mad. [...] Because the woman knew that Jesus was a Jew, and she a Samaritan. [...] That's*

*how this woman found life; a peaceful approach [by Jesus] was able to soften her heart. [...] Jesus' peaceful approach crippled her stubborn heart, and overturned her anger and impatience. I found such an approach appealing, an approach for ministers.* (Susuga Timoteo, long-serving church leader close to retirement age)

Conceptualising God in these ways forges an approach of pastoral counselling that moves along a continuum of traditional and contemporary understandings.

### **8.3 *E sui faiga ae tumau fa'avae*—Practices change yet foundations remain**

The second strand of a theoretical framework in understanding contemporary pastoral counselling involves a conceptualisation of change for Samoans. This strand is summed up by the Samoan saying *E sui faiga ae tumau fa'avae* [Practices change yet foundations remain]. A major part of this research involved exploring participants' understandings of a changing Samoan self. As mentioned in various parts of this project, Samoans have undergone several significant changes throughout the history of their land and people. Regardless of compelling changes faced by its people, some key and foundational values for Samoans remain:

[Orig.] *And I think values foi as a society, a. For Samoa as a society. E aoga ai le upu [a Samoa] foi gale, e sui sui a faiga, but the basic things still remain. O faavae a ia e tumau sui sui faiga. Sui sui how you go about it, ia because pei la o le taimi lenei, tele developments ma mea faapena. But e lē faapea a ua tele au big buildings ma mea na te'i a lea ua e lē faaaloalo ai, no. You still maintain those basic values, a: o le fa'aaloalo, o lou alofa, you know iloa le taimi e savali ai, iloa le taimi e tautala ai, and all of that.*

[Trans.] *And I think values also as a society, aye. For Samoa as a society. The [Samoan] saying is useful here; the practice has changed but the basic things still remain. The foundations themselves remain but the practices have changed.*

*Changes in how you go about it, because for example in this day and age, there are many developments and things like that. But it doesn't mean that if you have big buildings and so forth, then all of a sudden you no longer show respect, no. You still maintain those basic values, aye: respect, love, you know when to walk, you know when to talk, and all of that. (Ane, middle-aged woman, parishioner)*

This study has found that Samoan understandings of the Samoan self are changing. *E sui faiga ae tumau fa'avae* resonates in the impact that a changing Samoan self has made upon the culture and traditions of Samoa otherwise known as *fa'aSamoa*. This is not to suggest that *fa'aSamoa* and its key values have changed; rather the lived experiences of *fa'aSamoa* have changed. Key values such as love, respect, and reciprocity are the foundations of *fa'aSamoa* that remain.

The conceptualisation of God as either a patriarchal, punitive Old Testament disciplinary figure, or as the more egalitarian, compassionate New Testament figure represented by Jesus Christ, forms one of the key values observed through *fa'aSamoa*. Even though the understanding and perception of God have changed in line with a changing Samoan self, significance allocated to God is preserved for many Samoans as this project has found:

[Orig.] *Ia lā e i le fa'avae o le, fai mai a 'e sui faiga ae tumau fa'avae', ia ou te lē o mautinoa po'o fa'avae o aiga lenei e tautala ai. Ia ma le fa'avae o le tatou atunuu auā o le fa'avae lena o Samoa, 'E fa'avae i le Atua Samoa'. Fa'afetai i toeaina [o le atunuu] na latou faia le constitution a Samoa. O le fa'ailoga o le fa'atāua o le Atua ma lana tulaga - found i le Atua, le foundation o Samoa.*

[Trans.] *It's there in the constitution, the common saying 'practices change yet foundations remain', and I am not certain whether the saying refers to the foundation of families. And that is the foundation of Samoa, 'Samoa is founded upon God'. We give thanks to the elders [of Samoa] that set the constitution of*

*Samoa. That shows the importance given to God and where God is placed for Samoa – as the foundation of Samoa.* (Reverend Ioane, long-serving parish minister and church leader)

A conceptualisation of the change and evolution in *fa'aSamoa* found in this project is that the lived experiences of *fa'aSamoa* may have changed (*e sui faiga*), yet the foundational principles have remained (*ae tumau fa'avae*). The lived experience of *fa'aSamoa* may be different, yet the foundational principles and values such as love, respect, and reciprocity that identify Samoans endure in both traditional and contemporary understandings.

An example of a practice of *fa'aSamoa* that has changed yet the foundation remains is the *sua*, one of the highest occasions of gifting for Samoans during special gatherings like birthdays, building dedications, and funerals. *Sua* involves the gifting practices of fine mats (*ie toga*) together with money and various food items from the hosts of special occasions to people of rank in attendance. The practice of *sua* has changed in recent times (Fuata'i, 2007) with the gifting of cartons of tinned herrings and corned beef, rather than gifting pigs as done so in the past. The practice of *sua* has changed yet the foundation of 'gifting' out of love and respect for people of rank remains.

However, *e sui faiga ae tumau fa'avae* has been contested where both practices and foundations of *fa'aSamoa* have changed. Before the arrival of Christianity, the practices of Samoans were founded upon its indigenous belief systems. A shift occurred at the time of *aso o le pouliuli* (days of darkness), where the foundation of these practices was shifted to the new religion of the missionaries (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2009).

#### 8.4 *Fetu'utu'una'i le vā*—Navigating relational space for Samoans

The third and final strand of a theoretical framework to understand contemporary pastoral counselling for Samoans is the conceptualisation of space, specifically, the relational space called *vā* that connects Samoans to and disconnects Samoans from each other.

*Vā* as the relational space that connects Samoans is considered one of the foundational principles of *fa'aSamoa* that remains. The way that *vā* is managed, manoeuvred, or navigated, labelled in this project as *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*, has changed for many Samoans. *Fetu'utu'una'i le vā* corresponds to a dynamic and changing practice of *fa'aSamoa* that aligns with a changing Samoan self. There has been a notable evolution in the process of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* from the use of physical force as the means to enforce *vā*, to verbal force, to now include a dialogical approach. When *vā* is managed incorrectly in relation to values associated with *fa'aSamoa* like *alofa* (love) and *fa'aaloalo* (respect), *vā* has the potential to disconnect Samoans from each other:

*[Ministers] are just missing the whole thing, completely missing. I think [pastoral] counselling can help change that. Because it will then, get [parishioners] re-engaged again.* (Mikaele, middle-aged man, NZ-born Samoan and parishioner)

As Mikaele stated, managing *vā* appropriately in pastoral counselling may be one way to re-engage parishioners who have become disengaged.

The revised understanding of God has resulted in the reconceptualisation of relational space for Samoans, where both parishioners *and* ministers have needed to reconsider *vā*. *Vā* that is determined by *fa'aSamoa* situates the minister in a position of authority



as representative and channelling the will of God. The negotiation of *vā* must therefore also involve ministers to reconceptualise and ground themselves as people, rather than solely being ‘voices of God’. For Samoans with contemporary understandings of God and self, only when ministers and parishioners are on level terms with each other, can the process of discovering possibilities towards help begin.

The conceptualisation of *vā* is such that although some ministers may relax *vā* to enhance relationship-building with their parishioners, upholding values of *fa’a Samoa* such as *fa’aaloalo* (respect) leads some parishioners to maintain relational distance from the minister by preserving *vā*. Although the minister may attempt to alleviate barriers that *vā* could create with his parishioners, such barriers can be recreated by parishioners themselves out of a desire or habit of keeping a respectful relational distance from ministers. *Fetu’utu’una’i le vā* therefore is a concept that is required of all parties involved in pastoral counselling: not just ministers who are attempting to navigate relational space, but also for people seeking help to navigate the same space. *Fetu’utu’una’i le vā* plays an important part in ensuring that current pastoral counselling practices have meaning and relevance for all those that it aims to help. Conceptualising space for Samoans through *fetu’utu’una’i le vā* contributes towards an approach of pastoral counselling that alternates between traditional and contemporary understandings of God and of self.

One important and undeniable finding in conclusion derived from the data, concerns the role that the *faletua* plays in pastoral counselling. In order to sustain the relevance of the church for men and women parishioners, the wives of ministers need to be involved

formally and actively in pastoral counselling. At present, women are given authority by the church only as an 'attachment' and subsidiary to their minister husbands. For women to be considered as occupying pastoral counselling roles that traditionally are assigned to ordained men, such an option may be difficult for the church to accept at this time. The reason is that only men are ordained as ministers according to Section IV (2).1. of the Constitution of the Church, where ministers traditionally are tasked with pastoral counselling:

The Ordained Ministry: The Church in every generation includes those who are appointed and specially called within the Church. They are those who are ordained to be servants of the Word and Sacrament to serve the Church through Jesus Christ the great Minister. *His* [emphasis added] true work is to bring sinners to repentance; lead the people of God in worship, prayer, the preaching of the Gospel, and the celebration of the Sacraments (all these things should be done in and with faith); assist people so that they may receive truly all the blessings of salvation and sanctification in Christ; and to prepare them to serve others. (Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa, 2011a, p. 10)

The masculine pronoun emphasised above is one of the limited indications that the ordained ministry is solely a responsibility assigned to men. Pronouns, as found in the original draft of the Constitution of the church<sup>8</sup> are not gender-specific (Schmidt, 2005).

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<sup>8</sup> The original draft in 1928 of the Constitution of the church in Samoa (LMS) is believed to be in the vernacular language of the Samoans, then translated into English by the LMS missionaries (Latai and Tuiai, personal communication, October 26, 2016). The Samoan version of the above section uses the pronoun '*o lana*' that means belonging to either a 'man' or 'woman' not specifically to be translated as a masculine pronoun. Likewise in other sections of the Constitution relating to the ordained ministry, the use of the Samoan pronoun '*o lē*' that means 'someone' with no specific reference to either a man or woman, yet it is translated in the Constitution as a masculine pronoun (Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Samoa, 2011a, p. 7). The English translation using a masculine pronoun aligns with the use of masculine pronouns for any generic reference, at the time the original Constitution of the church was drafted in Samoan.

The Samoan version of the Constitution of the church does not signal that only men can be ordained as minister. Yet as it stands today in the church, men alone are ordained as ministers demonstrating the preservation of a practice put into place by the LMS Missionaries. Any suggestion to change this practice of the ordination of men only and allow women equal status in the church will disrupt the status quo of men in the church. However, this is precisely where the concept of *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* and the conceptualisation of God, change, and relational space fits in: to offer and position the role of women in the church in line with a changing Samoan self.

Upon consideration of the official role of *faletua* as stipulated by the Constitution against the unofficial role played in pastoral counselling as reported by participants, what then can be concluded about the role of the *faletua* now? What should this role look like at this time in the church? As some participants have reported, the minister shares a similar role with his *faletua* in their collective ministry yet his *faletua* is implicitly assigned an unpaid role of proving ministry to about 50% of the congregation:

[Orig.] *Ou te iloa a e tutusa lelei a le role a le faifeau ma le faletua. E i ai le taimi e tāua atu ai o le lē faaaogā o le faifeau, i issues tau-fafine, a, e sili atu le tāua o le talanoa o le faletua i issues na. [...]* So to me, they both have the same role, but for different populations.

[Trans.] *I believe the minister and his faletua both share the same role. There are times when it is more important to not use the minister, for issues concerning women, but it is more important for the faletua to talk to about these issues. [...]* So to me, they both have the same role, but for different populations. (Sione, middle-aged man, *matai* and parishioner)

A conceptualisation of God, change, and space in relation to the role of women in the ordained ministry, suggests the evolution of roles that once were undertaken solely by men; in particular, the informal roles of pastoral counsellors employed by *faletua* warrant examination. As it stands, the role of the *faletua* is adjunct and subsidiary to the role occupied by her husband. Yet as data from this study has shown, insight and participation from the *faletua* is required especially when working with women members of the congregations. Formally addressing the contribution of women in the church may assist the process of the church continuing to have relevance for men and women parishioners. The changing Samoan self as described by the data in this study appears to acknowledge the evolving role of women in the church, and may one day even expect the ordination of ministers who are women in the church. In the meantime, training is required for the wives of ministers for their central yet unofficial roles as pastoral counsellors.

#### **8.4.1 Samoa and the Samoan church at a crossroads**

It is clear then from the data on which these conclusions are based that ministry and pastoral counselling in Samoa is at a crossroads. The challenge becomes one of negotiating between traditional and contemporary understandings of pastoral counselling:

*You know it's the traditional, you know you are going against tradition, and old school. Which is, [the traditional and old school] have their strengths so I guess the difficulty, the challenge here, [reconsider how we do things] toe fetu'unai. How do you mould the two together so that [all people are satisfied] e malilie uma ai tagata? (Mikaele, middle-aged man, NZ-born Samoan and parishioner)*

The male minister is faced with an approach of pastoral counselling that involves movement along a linear continuum. At each end of the continuum are the contrasting perspectives that have emerged from this thesis: traditional and contemporary understandings of pastoral counselling for Samoans. Traditional understandings are rooted in the past, and seek to preserve a traditional understanding of *vā*, the location of the minister, and sets out a clearly authoritarian relationship between the minister and his parishioners and the minister and the community. Contemporary understandings take into account changing understandings of self, church and even God, and while these understandings maintain *vā* as relational space for all involved, *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* relocates the minister and reconstructs the relationship between the minister, parishioners and community. The continuum of traditional and contemporary understandings of pastoral counselling for Samoans is illustrated in Figure 8, and will now be explored further.



**Figure 8.**      ***Continuum of traditional and contemporary understandings of pastoral counselling for Samoans***

(Source: Author)

#### **8.4.1.1      *Traditional understandings of pastoral counselling for Samoans***

Traditional understandings of pastoral counselling involve the exercise of authority from one person to another, often by elders and family leaders to members of the generations below. Within the parish setting, a minister instructs with guidance what he considers best as directed to him by God, and encourages the person seeking help to act accordingly.

This conceptualisation of pastoral counselling by Samoans is centred on the transfer of authority. A patriarchal missionary-inspired understanding of God overarches the process of pastoral counselling where God is positioned at the uppermost position. Traditional understandings propose that God delegates authority to the minister, who then informs the person seeking help with perspectives to 'fix' the pastoral issue at the core of the problem by 'fixing' the person. Findings from this study recognise this process as a directive approach that emanates from God. Through the minister, God directs the appropriate course of action to the person seeking help. The supplicant understands that the minister is authorised by God to disseminate perspectives that will bring forth positive outcomes. The problem is located in the person, and the solution rests with the advice of the minister. This advice usually involves changing something about the person.

A key feature of traditional understandings is the conceptualisation of a unitary authority directed through one voice, a monologue. The minister claims to speak on behalf of God to the person seeking help. There are few if any opportunities for

discussion, and since this voice is believed to have emanated from God, it has authority over any other possibilities for action.

#### **8.4.1.2            *Contemporary understandings of pastoral counselling***

The other end of the continuum (Figure 8) situates contemporary understandings of pastoral counselling for Samoans. These perspectives propose that there will be less emphasis upon hierarchy, but focus will be allocated to the sharing of authority and perspectives through dialogue and a collaborative approach.

God continues to overarch the entire pastoral counselling process; yet God is now conceptualised as located alongside and inspiring the minister and parishioner, rather than understood as absolute and directing those found within the pastoral counselling encounter. This shift aligns with a conceptualisation of God as positioned alongside the people, a face of God that is represented by Christ who understands what suffering is and looks with compassion from the Cross (John 19:25-26). Components that differentiate the contemporary from traditional understandings, are the metaphorical location of God, dialogue, and shared exploration. In this context, the problem is not located only in the individual, but in the individual's relationships and context.

Since the positioning of God has shifted and the self is susceptible to being inspired directly by God, there is now room for input from multiple sources, not just from the minister alone. Dialogue occurs between God, the minister (and *faletua*), and the self, specifically the person seeking help. The compassion of God embraces the entire pastoral counselling process and everyone involved in it. From a contemporary

approach, the *faletua* is a collaborative partner in the dialogical encounter, especially when the pastoral issues involve women members of the congregation. The collection of perspectives developed through dialogue unites to offer an understanding to help everyone involved to address the pastoral issue. A key feature here is the sharing of authority and perspectives that sees the minister, the *faletua* and parishioner working collaboratively.

Data from this study found that contemporary understandings of pastoral counselling for Samoans underscore the importance of dialogue. Such perspectives require the full and equal inclusion of the person seeking help into discussions concerning the pastoral issues in question. Data also found that mostly ministers and family leaders enforced traditional understandings of pastoral counselling, while other participants favoured more contemporary understandings. The changing Samoan self as this study has shown requires a shift from traditional understandings of pastoral counselling towards the contemporary understandings presented herein. Doing so will sustain the relevance of the church for most members of its congregations. However, ministers and parishioners must still navigate between traditional and contemporary understandings of pastoral counselling, since parishes consist of members who favour both sides of the continuum. By ministers knowing whether parishioners adhere to traditional or contemporary understandings, the most relevant approach of support can be proposed.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Recent conference presentations in Auckland (CCCS Auckland district, Auckland, 2016) and Wellington (*Woven together* conference, Victoria University, Wellington, 2016) have both reflected upon and discussed the traditional and contemporary understandings of pastoral counselling developed from this study. The conference held in Auckland included approximately 200 attendees of parishioners, ministers, and ministers' wives of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa. Many identified with both understandings of pastoral counselling for Samoans. The conference held in Wellington included academics from Samoa, the Pacific, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Australia. Several attendees voiced the



## **8.5 Limitations of the Study**

The limitations to this study can potentially provide directions for future studies. One of the limitations is to concede that these findings represent the participants who took part in this project; these findings are not conclusively, nor do they suggest that all Samoans share these perspectives. However, with the selection criteria and scope of those who volunteered to share their thoughts concerning counselling practices of their ministers and others, these key research findings offer possible considerations for many others in similar situations.

Another limitation is that participants for this project were recruited from within the context of Samoa, and excluded diasporic Samoans in places like Aotearoa New Zealand. Although the Samoan Church and its pastoral counselling models have extended into such countries, the focus of this project was upon those living in Samoa. The reason for the scope of this project is to provide a platform where future studies concerning Samoans and pastoral counselling can be compared.

The theoretical framework for understanding pastoral counselling developed from this study, may be considered as limited and restricted only for Samoans. However, for various Pacific peoples who share similar conditions to Samoans this study can become meaningful. Especially how other cultures and traditions from the Pacific have evolved

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benefits to ministers, their wives, and parishioners, with the traditional and contemporary understandings of pastoral counselling for Samoans developed from this study.

and interact with their own church practices, findings and developments from this thesis can be considered useful.

## **8.6 Recommendations for Future Research**

Upon the consideration of future research about pastoral counselling for Samoans, attention needs to focus on investigating contexts outside of Samoa where its people have migrated. The scope of this project has focused upon Samoans living in Samoa; the scope of future research should include Samoans living in countries like Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. Such a scope will incorporate the generations of Samoans who have been born and raised in these countries. A comparative study between the discoveries made from this study with findings developed from future studies, will enhance the theoretical framework this project has developed that includes traditional and contemporary understandings of pastoral counselling for Samoans.

This research set out as an exploratory study to understand pastoral counselling practices for Samoans. The theoretical framework developed from this study offers such an understanding. In doing so, this research also becomes a signpost for future action research studies, to extend upon the areas of interest and concepts developed from this study. An important development this thesis has signalled that requires the attention of future studies is the evolving role of women in the changing ministry of the church.

A major part of this study has been investigating the concept of a changing Samoan self. This exploratory journey has identified where the Samoan person has changed from, and where such changes are leading the Samoan person towards. Future research

should investigate the intensity and the frequency of significant changes impacting Samoans, in comparison or as an extension to many of the changes to the Samoan self - discovered and outlined in this study.

## **8.7 Concluding thoughts**

### **The Walk to Emmaus**

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. (Luke 24:13-16)

The above Biblical text speaks to this project in several ways. The passage explains a journey that involved exploration and dialogue. As discovered by the people mentioned in the story, understanding comes through both the journey and with the use of dialogue. In this story, Jesus is faithful, and allows his companions to see him in their own time, in their own way. The faithfulness of Jesus and his consideration of others aligns with the contemporary construction of the compassionate God in Christ proposed herein.

The journey to Emmaus travelled across land, yet the metaphor of the *Va'aalo* journey used in the discussion chapter of this project is across the ocean. Both journeys may be different in context, but similar in using a dialogical approach through conversation to develop understanding. Jesus was not recognised at first by those who embarked upon the journey with him in the given text; the parallel to this study is that whether or not ministers choose to recognise and engage with change, regardless, the landscape of the

Samoa ministry is changing as this thesis has signalled. For both scenarios, Jesus' time and for contemporary Samoa, dialogue brings forth understanding.

When this project began from its birth as an idea and concept, to formulating a research question and the submission of the ethics application, I had minimal understanding of how comprehensive an undertaking this journey would be. The academic journey itself towards developing pastoral counselling practices for Samoans that acknowledge a changing Samoan self was influenced by a series of waves that the journey encountered. From its early beginnings, the journey that began from Samoa had relocated my family and me from our homeland to embark on our own journey of discovery here in Aotearoa.

One significant wave that has influenced this journey has been living in the context as an Auckland-Samoan for the duration of this project. Participating at our local Samoan parish has added the experience of working through this project amongst diasporic Samoans living in Auckland. Several of these Samoans represent aspects of a changing Samoan self. Returning to Samoa for the data collection, transcribing, then translating these transcripts, have kept a close and intimate relationship with the data-set that ultimately have informed this research. The experience of participating in the Three Minute Thesis competition at the Trans-Tasman finals in Perth has added another dimension to the journey. Different waves undertaken of the same journey have exemplified lived experiences and added to the knowledge-base needed to analyse and develop key understandings from this study.

Most journeys either come to an end or link or continue onto other journeys. So it has been with this particular journey of discovery, in the development of a theoretical framework that has highlighted the traditional and contemporary understandings of pastoral counselling for Samoans. The concept of a changing Samoan self has also given rise to the conceptualisations of God, Change, and Space necessary for applicable pastoral counselling practices today. As the project developed and evolved over its course, the scope of the potential influence that this study aims to reach is far beyond the walls of any church building in Samoa; the aim is to assist the work of ministers and *faletua* to deal with issues faced in Samoan families and communities. The development of appropriate pastoral counselling practices inclusive of a changing Samoan self, equips parishioners with the necessary tools to successfully cope with many of life's challenges. Revised pastoral counselling practices have the potential to encourage and empower traditional *and* contemporary Samoans in the family, village, and parishes, to re-engage with each other and ultimately with God.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Ethical Approval



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
ALBANY

11 March 2014

Alesana Pala'amo  
c/- Associate-Professor M Henrickson  
School of Health and Social Services  
Massey University  
Albany

Dear Alesana

**HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION – MUHECN 14/004**  
**Pastoral Counselling in Samoa: Exploring effective practices for ministers**

Thank you for your application. It has been fully considered, and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, a reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Andrew Chrystall  
Acting Chair  
Human Ethics Committee: Northern

cc Associate-Professor M Henrickson

## Appendix 2: Ethical endorsement—CCCS—SAMOA

	<b>CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF SAMOA</b> <b>EKALESIA FAAPOTOPOTOGA KERISIANO SAMOA</b>
P. O. Box 468 Apia SAMOA	Phone: (685) 24 414 * Fax (685) 20 429 Email: <a href="mailto:jsalevao@cccs.org.ws">jsalevao@cccs.org.ws</a> General Secretary Phone: (685) 22 279 Treasurer Phone: (685) 20 440

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27 January 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

**ETHICAL ENDORSEMENT BY THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH SAMOA (CCCS)  
FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECT:**

PhD research project:	Pastoral counselling in Samoa: exploring effective practices for ministers
Researcher:	Reverend Alesana Fosi Pala'amo

This letter is in support of the above-mentioned study. The CCCS has endorsed and is committed to financially sponsor Reverend Alesana Fosi Pala'amo, for PhD studies through Massey University New Zealand. In doing so, the CCCS hereby endorses any ethical considerations for this research project, which may include the participation of selected ministers and key stakeholders across its parishes in Samoa and abroad. Enclosed herein is a 'participant information' document provided by the researcher that discloses details about this study.

I am pleased to confirm this letter at above mentioned contacts. Meanwhile I commend Alesana and his project to you, and thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

  
Dr Rev Iutisone Salevao  
GENERAL SECRETARY

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