MIAMI UNIVERISTY

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We hereby approve the Dissertation

of

Michelle Liulama Carmichael

Candidate for Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Director
(Dr. Sally A. Lloyd)

_____

Reader
(Dr. Kay Snavely)

_____

Reader
(Dr. Raymond Terrell)

_____

Reader
(Dr. Denise Taliaferro-Bazille)

_____

Graduate School Representative
(Dr. Jhan Doughty-Berry)

ABSTRACT

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED:

SAMOANS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

by Michelle Liulama Carmichael

This qualitative study probes into the lives of Samoan college graduates and military members to learn how they ended up making the decision to go into higher education or military service. The subject groups were selected because they are the most popular career paths taken by a Samoan upon completing high school. Twenty-one participants completed narrative interviews wherein they described their career journeys and the many factors that collectively influenced their choice of career. Five themes emerged from the constant comparative analysis of the transcribed interviews: home life, culture, K-12 education experience, role models, and economy. The first theme, home life, was cast as the foundation from where children learn the values they will make their own. The second theme, culture, described how the values instilled in the home life were nurtured. The third theme, K-12 education experience, was the way the Samoan culture was reinforced. Problematic tensions emerged as Samoans attempted to balance the Western views that were taught in the K-12 curriculum and the *faa-Samoa* or Samoan way that is nurtured in the home life. The fourth theme, role models, emerged as the external force(s) that shaped an individual's thinking. The fifth theme, economy, unveiled the looming issues such as poverty, unemployment, and government corruption, that plagued the hearts of the men and women of Samoa and fragment this paradise. Overall, the results of this study revealed a lack of vocational options for Samoans that drove many of them to military service, the best option for an immediate economic recovery, but one that did little to improve the overall health and welfare of the Samoan community.

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED:

SAMOANS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of

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fulfillment of the requirements

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Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Educational Leadership

by

Michelle Liulama Carmichael

Miami University

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Dissertation Chair: Dr. Sally A. Lloyd

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my conscientious husband, Ralph, my artistic son, Tariq, and my competitive daughter, Trianna. Your support and unfailing love during my studies have kept me grounded. Thank you so much for putting up with mood swings, especially in accommodating my need for quietness, for what you all considered to be “all the time”. Thank you for hanging in there when I monopolized the house for my writing, because it seemed like I often got the itch to write at the least opportune time.

I am grateful that you pushed me to complete this study when I wanted to quit. Your encouragement helped me to forge forward so that I could write about this passion I have for a Samoan-centered education. It is my desire that this dissertation will open up more opportunities for Samoans to pursue higher education, as a way to achieve their goals.

I also dedicate this study to the people of American Samoa, especially the participants who offered their valuable time and narratives to help bring a human voice to my dissertation. Malo lava le tapua’i!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I thank “God, from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!” (Howard, #66)

Ever since I was in grade school, I knew I wanted to get my doctorate degree. From an early attraction to reading and a love for learning, I knew that this degree would culminate the pinnacle of my educational endeavor.

In October 2003, I was at the end of my twenty-year career in the military and was pondering the next challenge. My husband, who was enrolled in his graduate program at Miami University, suggested that I apply for the Miami psychology doctorate program, because I enjoyed it. He even put me in contact with Dr. Cheryl B. Evans, who became an advocate for me and many other minority students in their pursuit for educational goals.

I did not apply for the psychology program because I had missed the deadline and because it required that I get a masters degree in psychology. I already had my master’s degree in Management and did not want to pursue that subject further. I ended up in the Family Studies Department, working on a second master’s degree. After two semesters, I felt that this program was taking me away from my passion to research Samoan education, so I met with Dr. Evans again and she told me about the interdisciplinary PhD program that was offered by the Department of Educational Leadership. Since I didn’t know anyone in the EDL Dept, Dr. Evans put me in touch with Dr. Raymond Terrell.

Dr. Terrell listened and gave me hope that my interest in studying Samoan education was feasible. He put me in contact with Dr. Frances Fowler, who was now running the interdisciplinary PhD program. I met with Dr. Fowler and she gave me an indication that my interest was worth pursuing and she referred me to Dr. Sally Lloyd. At first, Dr. Lloyd tried to interest me in one of the current EDL PhD programs: administration or curriculum, but I was not sold and let her know. Dr. Lloyd said that she didn’t think I would fit into the EDL interdisciplinary program and I left her office feeling defeated.

I am not one to give up easily so I contacted Dr. Evans again and cried on her shoulder. She told me not to give up but to go back and talk to Drs Fowler or Terrell. I went back to Dr. Terrell and he, again, told me that my project was doable. He said he would talk to Dr. Fowler.

Dr. Fowler listened to my proposal a second time and said that I should be able to get in to the interdisciplinary program and that she'd talk to Dr. Lloyd.

I was nervous. My first meeting with Dr. Lloyd left me frazzled and now I had to see her again. Dr. Lloyd put me at ease and I explained my proposal again, hoping she'd have a change of heart, and she did. Now, I was getting somewhere, thank you Jesus.

I want to thank my dissertation committee: Dr. Cheryl Evans—for never giving up on me and for seeing my potential the first time I met you. Dr. Raymond Terrell—for believing in me and giving me hope even though you didn't know anything about me when we first met. Dr. Denise Taliaferro-Bazille—for a listening ear and for helping me to see the big picture among all the noise. You go…! Dr. Kay Snavely—when no one else in the Management Dept would help me, you gave me all the time I needed and made me feel important. Thank you. Dr. Jhan Doughty-Berry—for joining my committee on a short notice and providing me an extensive edit of my proposal. Kudos to you. My chair, Dr. Sally Lloyd—for making me a better writer and for reeling me back in from my many writing escapades. You allowed me to share a part of my Samoan history and my desire to help my people academically. I would be finished without your expert guidance and timely support. God bless you.

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I want to thank the Air Force ROTC staff, Colonel Kim Stohry and his crew, for providing me a home away from EDL and for making me a part of the AFROTC family. The lunches were fantastic!

I want to thank my family: my husband and kids—I am nothing without you. My mother, Miriam and sister, Marisa--for your continued belief in me. My spiritual family: the Arlington Church of Christ--for your prayers and support. My good friend: Tara McArthur-Milton--for being such a great friend and always accepting me for who I am. You are a diamond in the rough and I am grateful to have you as a friend.

I want to thank everyone who has touched me and my research in any way—God bless you all.

INTRODUCTION OVER THE RAINBOW

Over the rainbow, beyond the mountainous wilderness of the South Pacific region, and situated five hours southwest of the Hawaiian Island chain, rests the petite, yet distinguishable sanctuary of American Samoa. The atmosphere is tranquil, yet industrious. Growing up on a tropical island that never sees the beauty of winter and that hovers at 80-degree temperatures would seem like a paradise. But inside the 76-square miles of lush greenery, lie issues that are often disregarded. These issues are the hegemonic views brought in by Westerners, who claimed to be spreading the gospel, yet were instilling values that have marginalized the Samoan people. Many writers have penned idyllic images in their memoirs and novels about the pacific islands but seldom do they capture the 'dirty laundry' that plagues this beautiful haven. From problems of widespread government corruption (Chen, 2004) to the unopposed hegemonic practices, this utopia is far from being divine. Instead of focusing on improving the education system so that their children can have a better chance at higher education, where they can thrive academically, emotionally, and physically, most Samoans choose the path of military service (Potter, 2006). Instead of capitalizing on their natural abilities to help improve their economy, most Samoans choose a path that has taken the lives of many of its sons and daughters.

This study was born out of the researcher's experiences as a child, daughter, sister, student, soldier, wife, and mother. It is a study of Samoan natives and their support of a methodology of survival that continues to aid in their oppression. It is a story that needs to be told.

The Problem

"Thus, in either case, prosperity or poverty, if the existing social order and its structural conditions are not challenged, the social order and its power relations are perpetuated" (Shujaa, 1994, p.19).

The island of American Samoa continues to be plagued by low wages, insufficient employment opportunities, and widespread government corruption (Chen, 2004). To counter these complex issues, most Samoans look to the military as the messiah that will help free them from poverty and put their families in a better financial posture. It is not surprising that higher education is the road less traveled by many Samoans when it comes to improving their socio-economic conditions.

I believe that many Samoans have tunnel vision in that they do not see hope for upward mobility without or outside of military service. As a result, military strength increases and many Samoan sons and daughters never make it back alive to their families. It appears to most Samoans that the military is the vehicle that will transport them out of poverty to destinations that they can only dream about, with minimal education and experience prerequisites. Potter (2006) interviewed Samoan recruiters stationed in American Samoa and one of them shared his reason for enlisting in the military. "A lot of it is for the benefits; everything from the health benefits, to the pay to the education benefits [is] why so many people enlist here". But I believe that the opportunity to "get rich quick" is attained at an extremely high price—the sacrifice of Samoa's most precious resources: its people. While many young Samoan men and women are eager to join the military ranks, they do not seem disturbed by the daily news updates of the mounting U.S. casualties, which often include one of their own.

These events raise critical questions for me. How could such tragic developments (i.e. Middle East war) not be a wake-up call for the Samoan community, to perhaps, curb its appetite for military service? Why are fewer Samoans enrolled in higher education and more are listed in the military's database, when the former would never place them

in harm's way? Why has higher education become an anomaly rather than being an ideal option to help many natives achieve a better quality of life? Why aren't other alternative vocations, other than military service, receiving as much publicity and popularity from the Samoan community? What would it take for Samoans to realize that its precious resources should not be sacrificed for economic improvement? How has the Samoan education system aided some natives in succeeding in higher education and still has left so many others behind?

These, and other disturbing questions, ultimately led to my desire for a deeper understanding of why fewer Samoans took the higher education path, instead of military service, to recover from poverty. Ultimately, my primary research questions were 1) "What are the mechanisms that facilitate a view of the military as more desirable than higher education?" and 2) "What are the barriers that keep more Samoans from pursuing higher education?"

Structure of the Dissertation

Throughout this study, I sought to paint a picture of the problem, from my perspective as a Samoan native, a graduate of the Samoan K-12 education system, and a retiree of the U.S. Armed Forces. With the problem revealed, I then sought to interrogate it by gathering the evidence via interviews to determine who, what, why, etc., to help bring some understanding of the problem and why it continues.

In chapter 1, I share my personal story about the numerous life changes that affected me, both good and not so good. My journey begins with our family's relocation to American Samoa, from Texas, when I was a young child, to my grandparents adopting my five siblings and me and immersing us into the Samoan culture. The journey continues through my K-12 colonial education period to the emotional decision to stay within the Samoan tradition and join military service. I conclude the section with my 20+ year odyssey in the U.S. military chasing after a "free education" that I believed was my

ticket to independence. With an advanced education, I believed that I would finally be free to make my own decisions.

In chapter 2, I acquaint the reader with previous literature on the subject. I begin with the history of the Samoan culture, followed by the natives' introduction to a colonial education, by way of religion. Finally, this chapter looks into the experiences that led Samoans to embrace Western ideals that were planted in K-12 schooling and cultivated in infrastructures such as the military.

In chapter 3, I reveal the theories that frame this study. These theories center on post-colonialism and minority education, specifically focusing on the writings of Franz Fanon, Edward Said, John Ogbu, and Marimba Ani. Their theories help to delineate the mechanisms that constrain Samoans in a colonized state of dependence on the U.S. I argue that these practices make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to untangle the chains of oppression that have become a way of life for most Samoans.

In chapter 4, I explain the methodology. Here I provide a statement on my positionality as a researcher, that is, my assumptions and qualifications that will aid in producing relevant knowledge that contributes to the scholarly field. In chapter 5, I explain the methods for data collection. My method involved in-depth interviews with 11 Samoan college graduates and 10 Samoan military members. The aim of this method of data collection was to learn of the experiences of the respondents in making decisions regarding their vocation. These subject groups were selected because they represented the vocations that the majority of Samoans sought. Chapters 6 and 7 present the results and discussion, and concluding thoughts.

Summary

This study probed the problem of why fewer Samoans enter higher education versus enlisting into military service. The study involved interviews with 11 Samoan

college graduates and 10 Samoan military members. Both groups provided clues into the processes that Samoans employed when choosing a vocation. As an added bonus, this study provided valuable insights that are currently not available to Samoans who might be considering higher education as their route to prosperity.

CHAPTER 1 DELVING IN DEEPER

Purpose of the Study

What is my motivation for conducting this study? Why would I spend precious time delving into an archaic issue that does not seem like it will go away because it has been embraced by most of the Samoan community? I believe that someone must interrogate the evidence and provide a much needed explanation and re-education about the colonial experience that keeps most Samoans oppressed, to the point where they do not recognize it as being detrimental. I believe that this study is a testament to the psychological, physical, social, and emotional experiences of the Samoan people, especially those whose voices were silenced by the powerful agents of change that were implanted by the dominant culture. This research is for those living in the margins that are unable to find their own voices and enjoy greater freedom. Why would I believe this? My reasons are deeply rooted in the history of American Samoa, and in my own personal life story.

Folk literature has shown that many Samoans have relied heavily on the U.S. for economic security and social improvements, especially after the arrival of the U.S. Navy in 1872. Samoans have never forgotten how "increased defense measures and more military to the territory…for the first time, [resulted in] significant numbers of Samoans [receiving] opportunities for wage employment" (Rhoads, 1984, p.26). This was a significant time for most Samoans, who were not accustomed to a structured system of wages and employment opportunities. The U.S. brought modern ideas to the island, but this came at a cost of usurping the islanders' way of life. The U.S. territory continues to surrender to the dominant culture, as documented by Faleomavaega (2006) in his letter to the U.S. Decolonization Committee:

> *"AS YOU KNOW, IN 1945, THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) ESTABLISHED THE INTERNATIONAL TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL FOR THE PURPOSE OF REVIEWING AND THEN MAKING*

> *RECOMMENDATIONS BEFORE THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO DECLARE CERTAIN TERRITORIES AS NON-SELF-GOVERNING, OR DEPENDENT ON COLONIAL POWERS. SINCE THE CREATION OF THE UN, MORE THAN 80 COLONIES HAVE GAINED THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND 16 NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES, AS DEFINED BY THE UN, REMAIN TODAY…I AM REQUESTING YOUR ASSISTANCE IN DETERMINING THE OFFICIAL POSITION OF THE US REGARDING AMERICAN SAMOA'S STATUS BEFORE THE UN DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE. AGAIN, THE DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE DEFINES AND CATEGORIZES AMERICAN SAMOA AS A "NON-SELF GOVERNING TERRITORY" (PRESS RELEASE, MARCH 30, WWW.HOUSE.GOV/FALEOMAVAEGA/NEWS-PRESS.SHTML).*

The U.S. appeal in American Samoa is so pervasive that it is not a surprising fact that the island-territory still supplies the most recruits in the region, more than any other Pacific island. According to Potter (2006), "last year, American Samoa and other South Pacific islands supplied more than 400 recruits for the U.S. Army". Despite the negative publicity surrounding the military such as the war in Iraq or the prison abuse scandal in Abu Gharib, based on my experiences, most Samoans are oblivious to the fact that the military just might be at fault for the many lives taken, both friend and foe, in present and past wars. In *Sons for the Return Home,* Samoan author Wendt (1973) described the increase of native migration to the U.S., particularly for military service:

> "The promise of the future and their dreams of lucrative jobs, money, houses, cars, a good education for their children, calmed their fears, gave meaning to their journey into what they all believed would be only a temporary exile from which they would return unharmed, unchanged, rich" (p.216).

Although most Samoans are funneled into the military after high school, a handful of natives have managed to escape the U.S. hegemony and pursued college as a way of improving their living conditions. M.R. Sui (personal communication, March 22, 2006).

The history of American Samoa, particularly the history of its educational system and of U. S. military recruiting on the island, will be elaborated in greater detail in the next chapter. My own personal history has influenced my passion for this research project, and in the following section, I detail why this study is significant to me as a Samoan woman, a retired military member, and an academic scholar.

My Story, My Passion

My family moved to American Samoa when I was only five years old following my parents' divorce. My grandmother was a pre-school teacher and my first instructor in the K-12 education system. I thought pre-school would be easy, being the teacher's grand-daughter, but it was a culture shock. I was laughed at everyday because I did not know the language or the social customs. Once I learned the language, everything else fell into place. I excelled in school because I did not fit in with the Samoan culture. I was a skinny kid, with straight hair, and slanted eyes. These traits are not desirable in the Samoan community so I was teased a lot. I became the black sheep in my family, but a reliable one at that.

Mead (1928) wrote that "children [in Samoa] are seen but not heard" (p. 45) and this was an accurate portrayal of my experience. I was taught to never question adults, even if they were wrong. One experience that scarred me forever was when I was in fifth grade. My teacher, also a distant uncle, told me to read the lesson and I came across the word, *Houston.* Since my family had moved from Dallas, Texas, I was familiar with the pronunciation of Houston. My uncle kept correcting me about the pronunciation, even though he was wrong. By the third time I had pronounced it correctly (incorrectly to him), he told the rest of the class that he always had a smart-aleck in class and that he enjoyed having to set them straight. Before I realized what was happening, he had me come to the front of the classroom where I would get my punishment. I had to stick out my hand, holding my fingers together while he swatted them with a wooden ruler. By the third swat, I felt dizzy and ran to the bathroom, where I passed out. A student found me and told the principal, who was a white lady. The teacher was warned for his actions and I had to return to class the next day. Somehow, the teacher, who was also my uncle, had convinced my mother to tell the principal that it was a misunderstanding so that he could keep his job. I was humiliated further, upon returning to school the next day. My uncle spoke in Samoan to the class so that the principal would not understand any of his words, in case she was listening. He told the

class that I got what I deserved for being disrespectful to him and that he would do it again. I bowed my head but could not control my tears. Crying is a sign of weakness, in the Samoan culture, but it was beyond my control.

In high school, I still did not fit in with the rest of the students because I was still skinny and spent too much time in the books. I excelled academically because that was the only area of my life I felt I could control. I thought that I had received a decent education in American Samoa until I found out twenty years later, that it was (and still is) racially-biased against Samoans and other minority races. This revelation occurred to me after I had graduated high school and then later retired from the military. Ironically, both institutions, high school and the military, promoted this hegemony that favored the dominant culture. It was only after retiring from the military and attending a college that I had chosen, did my awareness of minority injustices come into play. Before I became critically aware of racial biases, I had never thought that I had been discriminated against, when in reality, I had. I had been accepting the way I was treated by other people, no matter how uncomfortable I felt, thinking it was supposed to be that way. For example, when I heard sarcastic remarks from other girls when I entered a room, I thought it was because I did not dress cool or know the lingo. Or if men in the military challenged me for my leadership as a woman, I just thought I needed to be tougher.

During my studies at a Midwestern college that I chose to attend, I learned that an education is meant to be participatory; that everything that was being taught was open to discussion, and that minority groups have so many historical achievements that I had never ever heard about or were taught to me in my K-12 education. I learned that subtle discrimination was an on-going battle for many minorities, and that I was not exempt. For example, the fact that military service is expected of most Samoans and that the community supported it whole-heartedly seemed ironic, given the large number of Samoans who were brought home for military burials. I have never heard a Samoan talk negatively about the military and it dawned on me that, maybe, they had

been hardened to the harsh realities of military service. It was as if they were brainwashed by the dominant culture --someone had just told them that they were going to serve in the military and they just smiled and agreed with it. In high school, most of my peers looked forward to joining the military just because a relative of theirs was in the Armed Forces or because they had heard cool things about the military. Even the smart students, who would have been prime candidates for higher education, began to view military service as an attractive option after high school. Why would I know this?

I know this because I was one of those bookworms who dreamt about going to a prestigious university such as Harvard or Princeton. I don't know why I did not follow the crowd and lust after the military, but it was just not important to me. I had a theory that the only people who joined the military were the ones who could not qualify for college. But in the end, the pressure from all sides of my family, school officials, church members, etc., made the college option an uphill battle. No matter how good my grades were (a member of the National Honor Society for four years straight); I was still pushed to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), which was the military's qualifying exam. In fact, a military recruiter administered the exam to my entire junior high school class, and no one ever questioned why the recruiter was given so much latitude with us. Talk about being brainwashed, that's exactly how it was. The principal and teachers never challenged the recruiter about whether everyone was interested in taking the military exam. It was just expected of us to comply. When I received my test results, I became an instant celebrity because I was considered the ideal recruit: intelligent, physically fit, and with a clean record. I just wanted to scream but it would be disrespectful; the Samoan culture had taught me to obey those in charge without question. That call by the recruiter, telling me I had aced the exam, signified the end of my college quest. The Army's delayed entry program allowed a high school junior to sign a military contract with parental permission, and my mother was ecstatic. She arranged for me to leave for boot camp right after high school graduation. I received an academic scholarship at graduation but it was not enough to get me out of

going to Basic Training. My mother was convinced that any type of scholarship would not be good enough because it couldn't match what the military was providing.

During my junior year in high school, my teachers thought it would be a good idea for me to join the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program, to prepare me for military boot camp. I was defiant and wanted nothing to do with the military, at least not any time soon. I realize now that I was building a critical awareness of U.S. hegemony in Samoa even then, but at that time I had no way to name or make sense of what was happening. From the time I graduated high school and left for military Basic Training, I felt that there was something wrong with so many Samoan people encouraging military service and so few pushing for higher education. I could not put my finger on the problem, but I just felt that there was something wrong. This problem became evident as I met many other Samoans in the military, who had joined the military mainly for financial reasons. I did not meet any Samoans in the military who had joined for the education incentive or were doing it to get a college education.

As time went by and I learned about the events that led to Samoa's colonization, I began to feel uneasy about the education system in Samoa. I began to view my beloved institution for K-12 instruction negatively. The more literature I read about minorities and their injustices in the education systems, the more I was convinced that my own K-12 education structure was in the same league, only ours was accomplishing two tasks: 1) perpetuating White supremacy and 2) preparing docile bodies (Foucault, 1977, p. 112) for military service. Here's my rationale, as I think back on my educational experience:

First, I believe that the Samoan education system taught us about the valuable contributions of white Europeans but glossed over minority achievements. Most Samoan kids knew about Christopher Columbus or John F. Kennedy, but had never heard about Gandhi or Mother Teresa. The Samoan education system spent a lot of time teaching Samoans about the historical contributions of the dominant culture but

rarely, if at all, taught about the accomplishments of countless minorities such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, King Kamehameha, Viktor Frankl, Nelson Mandela, etc. In fact, most Samoans, including me, had never heard of these revolutionaries.

Secondly, the Samoan education system seemed to excel at preparing young men and women for military service, as it was the most popular extracurricular activity in the high schools and certainly the most widely accepted vocation after high school.

On the flip side, there was hardly an effort to encourage and prepare students to go to college. My belief was that most Samoan teachers and administrators did not encourage students to pursue higher education because, maybe, they were not pushed to value higher education themselves. I found out after I graduated from high school how easy it was to become a teacher in Samoa: no college degree or teaching credentials were required. So how could Samoan students ever receive the type of education that could prepare them for college that only an experienced and properly trained teacher can provide?

During my K-12 schooling years in Samoa, the government had contracted with U.S. teachers (white, European-American, college-educated teachers) to work in the schools and to, probably, make up for the Samoan teachers' lack of experience. It showed because the U.S. teachers provided the most interesting classes and it now makes sense why: they had the required education, credentials, and experience. Most Samoan teachers appeared to be there just for the paycheck because many of them were unprepared to teach, unable to articulate the material, or were simply passive. I had one teacher, a white woman, who was my favorite. When I graduated high school, I wanted to be just like her (funny how I don't think like this anymore). She was the epitome of a teacher if there's such a thing. She was the only one who seemed to care about the students because she was able to teach math in a way that connected with us, making us enjoy it. On the other hand, the other subjects taught by Samoan teachers seemed boring, except for the military courses that so many students were gung ho

about. At the end of each school year, many Samoan students were promoted even though they were not ready for the next level. But no one questioned the education system; many blamed the students, saying they were just dumb. Looking back on these experiences has made me believe even more that the Samoan education system was never equipped to prepare students for higher education. Instead, it produced docile bodies, ready-made recruits fresh out of high school. I realize that I was one of the recruits but I feel that I did not have a choice but to join the military. After I had completed my initial training, I was surprised to meet so many Samoans in the military. For a population of 60,000, it sure seemed like my island was a lot bigger.

So while studying at this Midwestern institution, I was introduced to terms like *U.S. hegemony, minority injustices, prejudice, discrimination,* etc. I began to think about all the military men and women who shipped out to fight in battles that clearly had nothing to do with them. I think of all of the wars that have been fought to uphold the dominant culture's values. I started thinking about the Samoan education system and even read about schools perpetuating a system of oppression. In American Samoa, the school system increased consignment into military service. By the time a student reached high school, it was the final phase before they were ready to ship out to boot camp. Based on my experience, this phase was the award of the diplomas, which was their ticket to the military. I often wondered why the Samoan school system continues to produce military bodies, instead of college scholars. Could this mean that the K-12 education system should continue doing what they're doing and 'leave so many kids behind'? Could the Samoan education system do more to encourage and prepare students for higher education? Is college an alternative that more Samoans could pursue as a way to improve their quality of life? I believe the study I am engaged in is crucial in getting Samoans to think about alternative options that would help them attain the quality of life they deserve that are seldom tapped into and are unpopular.

So how can this study contribute to professional knowledge? As Glatthorn and Joyner (2005) stated, "a professional significant study can contribute in one or more of

these ways: test a theory, contribute to the development of theory, extend existing knowledge, change prevailing beliefs, suggest relationships between phenomena, extend a research methodology or instrument, or provide greater depth of knowledge about a previously studied phenomenon" (p.114).

This study is focused on challenging the prevailing belief that the military is the best option for Samoans to improve their economic conditions. Also, my study extends existing knowledge about ways to increase enrollment in higher education. My hope is that this research will expose more Samoans to the knowledge of how they can prepare, enroll, and succeed in college by following the path taken by other Samoans who have succeeded in higher education. I believe there may be more ways than one to reach the goal of higher education and I intend to provide the narratives of these few Samoan college graduates. These native voices will help dispel rumors about the difficulty of pursuing higher education and also provide a compass for others to follow.

I believe that learning about one's history can open up a multitude of emotions. Those who have experienced this feeling understand where I am coming from. For me, the questions that run deep within me are: What are the mechanisms that facilitate a view of the military as being more desirable than higher education? What are the barriers that keep more Samoans from pursuing higher education?

Summary

The chapter shares my deeply personal motivation for conducting this study, and situates me as the researcher. Grounded in this chapter is my personal narrative, or what I consider my colonial journey, which gave birth to the study. This journey has constantly reminded me of how much I have learned about my history, what was not taught or encouraged in my K-12 schooling, why I desire to provide a voice against the hegemony of U. S. culture in American Samoa, why I want to make visible the positive

experiences of my country men and women, and why I want to chart out the pathways to careers other than military service.

In the next chapter, I review the literature related to the study, beginning with material about Samoans and their culture, education, and military service, and transitioning into a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of the research. Key themes found in these reviews are the effects of colonization and minority education, with an examination of material by prominent theorists such as Franz Fanon, Edward Said, John Ogbu, and Marimba Ani.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

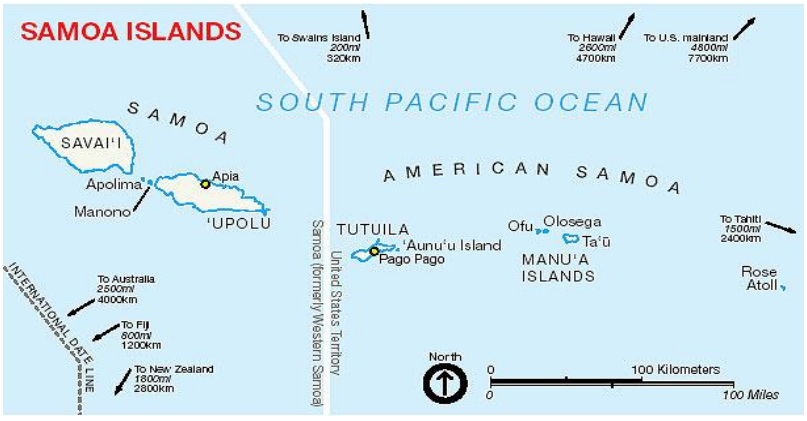
Now I turn to a review of the scholarly literature of Samoan families and culture, their education, and drive for military service. This review will provide a glimpse into the world of Samoans and how they make sense of their lives.

Samoan Families and Culture

"The Samoas arguably represent the largest population of the Polynesian people and they take pride in a strong culture that has survived outside incursions amazingly well" (Keesing, 1934, p. 12).

The islands of the Samoan archipelago lie in the west-central portion of the area of the Pacific Ocean known as the Polynesian Triangle, which is bounded by Hawaii to the north, New Zealand to the southwest, and Easter Island to the southeast (Rhoads, 1984, p.17), and nestled deep within Oceania.

Figure 1: Map of Samoa (American Samoa Government)



Fornander (1885) believed that "Polynesians originated in Central Asia, migrated to India to the Malay Archipelago, then to Fiji and from there as a center they colonized Samoa, Tonga, Hawaii, the Marquesas and Easter Island" (p. 135). Polynesians, unlike Micronesians or Melanesians, are people from the Pacific islands in which there are

many islets. Churchill (1911) wrote that “Samoans, however, consider themselves to be indigenes; except for one village in Savaii that traces its origins to Fiji” (p. 123).

According to Masterman (1934), Jacob Roggewein, a Dutch explorer, visited the Samoan Islands in 1722, when he landed in Manu’a, an entity of today’s American Samoa. Roggewein’s voyage was purely capitalistic, in search of hard-working people who would trade gold, silk, and spices, among many things, to contribute to the wealth of Holland, the Dutch West India Company, and the Roggewein family (pp.23-24).

Later, other European voyagers, like Louis Antoine DeBougainville, J.F. de G. La Perouse, M. DeLangle, and Charles Wilkes, visited the Samoan islands separately; Keesing (1934) described their visits:

> “These early visitors found a group of islands which they were moved to describe variously as ‘1 Eldorado de la Polynesie’, one of the finest countries under heaven, even the most beautiful in the southern ocean, and consequently in the whole world: found a people of colossal physique, living in villages scattered along the coastline; the degree to which they were at home in their canoes caused the group to be known as “1 Archelpel des Navigateurs” (p. 24).

Janes (1990) wrote that “German, British, and to a lesser extent, American entrepreneurs, established trading posts in the islands with the goal of exploring Samoa’s natural and human resources” (p.23). Initially, the Samoans refused to cooperate with the Europeans until the first missionaries arrived in 1828 and collaborated with Samoan ministers to institute a structured educational system that taught children how to read, write, and behave (Masterman, 1934, p. 14). Prior to this time, children learned appropriate behaviors through observation (Mead, 1928, p. 301; Holmes and Holmes, 1992, p.112). Within 30 years of missionary contact, “the Samoans had become wholly and devoutly Christian” (Tiffany, 1974, p.35).

Ellison (1938) wrote that before Christianity was introduced, Samoans had worshipped various war gods and a legend says that Savaii and Upolu (two islets of Samoa) were formed when two stones rolled down from heaven. A different legend said

that Savaii and Upolu were formed from two rocks were drawn up from the bottom of the ocean with a fishhook. When the rocks married the earth, the latter became pregnant. Salevao, the god of the rocks, observed motion in the center of Moa of the earth, thus he named the newborn child Moa, and announced that everything that grew would be sacred to Moa or *sa Moa,* which was later contracted into Samoa (pp. 218-231).

Masterman (1934) reported that in the 1900s Samoa was divided into two separate entities. The U.S took the eastern side of the island group and renamed it American Samoa, while Great Britain occupied the western side and named it Western Samoa. On January 1, 1962, Western Samoa became an independent nation and renamed itself Samoa (p. 128). For efficiency purposes, this study is exclusively about the natives of American Samoa and any mention of Samoa or Samoans is referring to those who lived in American Samoa.

The "ethnic groups in American Samoa are Samoan (Polynesian) 89%, Caucasian 2%, Tongan 4%, other 5%" (Answers.com). In regards to size, American Samoa has a population of 60,000 with a land mass of 76-square miles, about the size of Washington D.C. Western Samoa's population is more than twice its sister island at 160,000, and is 15 times larger, at 1,133 square miles (Janes, 1990, p.12). Other than size, population, and government, both Samoas have the same culture, language, and climate that ranges in the 80's, with occasional rain showers that can bring temperatures down to the low 70's.

Although Samoans reside in both the western and eastern sides of the island chain, this study will focus solely on those residents of American Samoa, who became the victims of U.S. colonization, described by McGrath (2002): "…western Samoans often express pride that they have not been polluted by outside influences to the same degree as has occurred in American Samoa and Hawaii" (p. 324). [Note that the U.S. colonization of Samoa will be covered in greater detail in chapter three.],

Perhaps the most famous literary writer to the Pacific islands was Robert Louis Stevenson who lived in Samoa from 1850 to189, spending the last six years of his life writing in and about the Pacific (Robinson, 2004, p. 12). According to Robinson (2004), Stevenson wrote about "a varied and dynamic region that can be exquisitely beautiful and unpredictably dangerous, of blue water and terrible storms and where cultures that pre-dated the Romans were encountering the energetic immorality of colonialism at its most far-flung" (front jacket of book). One of Stevenson's frustrations with the Samoan people was their naïve belief in the European missionaries' teachings; Stevenson maintained an "interest in indigenous beliefs and distrust of the missionaries who sought to supplant them. His irritation with those who take it for granted that European or Christian beliefs are intrinsically superior or unquestionably right…" was well known (Robinson, 2004, p. 152).

According to Holmes and Holmes (1992), the U.S. had commercial interests in all of the Samoan islands during the mid-nineteenth century, but so did Germany and Britain (p. 20). In 1842, the trade of coconut oil was thriving and the U.S. joined in on this commercial venture; however, its "main interests centered around the harbor at Pago Pago because of its potential as both a commercial depot and a coaling station for commercial steamships and U.S. naval vessels" (p. 21).

Janes (1990) reported that by the 1880's Germany, Britain, and the United States were brewing over Samoa's natural resources and in 1889, a fierce cyclone kept these trading nations from engaging in armed aggression, and provided a cooling-off period (p. 23). Eventually Britain disengaged from the conflict and went on to pursue other interests in the Pacific while Germany colonized the western islands of Upolu and Savai'i, now known as Western Samoa, and the U. S. Navy took possession of the eastern islands of Tutuila and Manu'a, and renamed them American Samoa (p. 25).

American Samoa became the main thoroughfare for U.S. military campaigns during World Wars I and II because its strategic location proved to be the ideal spot for a military landing zone (Wendt, 1980, p. 43).

The U.S. had hoped for an independent Samoa, but found itself charged with the protection and development of five inhabited Samoan islands (Holmes & Holmes, 1992, p. 21). To put the natives at ease, the U.S. made a promise to them:

> "The customs of the Samoans not in conflict with the laws of the U.S. concerning American Samoa shall be preserved. The village, county, and district councils consisting of the hereditary chiefs and their talking chiefs shall retain their own form or forms of meeting together to discuss affairs of the village, county or district according to their own Samoan custom" (Holmes & Holmes, 1992, p. 22).

Janes (1990) reported that "until the beginning of the Second World War, American Samoa was governed by the U.S. Navy with a kind of benign neglect…the Samoans were kept isolated, left largely to go about their own business" (p. 23). Hanson suggested that "a significant contributing factor in Samoa's stability was the relatively long period of independence followed by colonial policies of indirect rule…" (in Rhoads, 1984, p. 9). In other words, the Samoan culture remained strong because the U.S. was hardly involved with its governmental affairs.

At the end of World War II, the U.S. pulled out of American Samoa and took with them most of the jobs that the natives had relied on for economic stability. By then, Samoans had already latched on to Western's ideals and had made them a part of their lives.

This resulted in what Hall called "sixty years of U.S. neglect and apathy...wretched sanitary conditions, poor roads, inadequate water system, …Samoans' increased dependence on imported foods…inadequacies of the medical system…schools with untrained and poorly paid teaching force…teach[ing] 5500 eager

pupils on the lowest budget (less than $50 per pupil) of any U.S. state or territory in the world" (in Rhoads, 1984, p. 7).

Tufa (2003) reported that traditional medicine continues to be used by many American Samoans, with mixed results. There have been no formal attempts to regulate this 'industry' or to determine the safety and efficacy of any of these remedies or practices. There has been no attempt to incorporate traditional healers into the government health system. They continue to operate in a parallel system, without any quality control mechanism (p. 23).

By the early 1960's it was clear that migration was becoming institutionalized as a rite of passage for young Samoans (Janes, 1990, p. 38). Samoans sought employment in the U.S. because jobs on island were limited to the government or the private sector (tuna canneries), which both paid minimum wages (Holmes & Holmes, 1992, p. 20). For example, "minimum wage raged from $2.63 to $4.09. Government employees started at $2.77 per hour. Tuna cannery workers started at $3.26/hour. In 2005, 24% of the 57,000 Samoan population were living below the national poverty line that consisted of those earning $10,000 or less annually" (Office of Insular Affairs, 2007). A teacher's starting pay was $11,000 to $13,000. S. P. Selu (personal communication August 12, 2005). To add insult to injury, government corruption was widespread (Chen, 2004). This corruption resembled Memmi's (1965) notion of the colonized people shifting roles and becoming oppressors to their own people. In this case, the Samoan government oppressed its people by robbing them of U.S. funds that were intended to improve the economy. Tufa (2003) wrote that American Samoa received approximately one half of its entire funding for health promotion, health protection and disease prevention activities from U.S. federal grant sources.

From a family studies perspective, Poasa, Mallinckrodt and Suzuki (2000) reported that Samoans fell under the category of a collectivistic society (p. 14), where group members valued a group consensus over an individual opinion. "Persons who live

in collectivistic cultures tend to base their sense of self on how they fit into a group and are similar to others within that group" (Markus & Kitayam, 1991, p. 17). Dominant values in Samoan culture focused on the family, communal relationships and the church (Mokuau & Chang, 1999, p.151). Linnekin and Poyer's study (cited in Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995) reported that an individual was characterized by social relationships and a shared identity that came from "sharing food, water, land, spirits, knowledge, work and social activities" (p. 56). Mead (1928) attested to the same by saying that a family member may take one's possessions without asking (p. 40). This idea of community property was echoed by Ewalt and Mokuau (1995): "When a non-Samoan friend visited Susan's home and admired a *tapa* wall hanging that covered a large portion of the hallway, Susan went into her bedroom and came back with another large *tapa* product and offered it to her friend" (p.172).

Additionally, Ala'ilima (1961) wrote that "in a good Samoan family those below treated those above with deference and respect. Children did not talk loudly in the presence of elders" (pp.28-29). Also, "within the household, age rather than relationship gives disciplinary authority" (Mead, 1928, p. 40). Furthermore, Wetherell (2002) found that most Samoans did not show their true feelings to members of the dominant culture, especially in compromising situations. "Expressions of anger did not mark Samoan exchanges with Europeans. In the presence of white missionaries, the Samoans always maintained a posture of amiable equanimity" (p. 92). Fanon (1967) would argue that Samoans suffered from a dual consciousness, where they must simultaneously embrace two different cultural identities (p. 24) that may contradict one another. In this concept of dual consciousness, the natives welcomed the Western norms, while attempting to stay true to their ancestral origins. Samoans experienced dual consciousness regularly because their cultural traditions oftentimes conflicted with U.S. mandates. For example, a Samoan funeral obligates members from both sides of the family to participate in the preparation and execution of the event, often causing students, teachers, or administrators to miss school or work and possibly receiving admonishment upon returning from higher authorities. Another Samoan custom is

family and village social roles, whereby a teacher or administer who held a large family title was often excused from work to handle social obligations. “One of the best known ritualized practices of Samoan culture is sometimes referred to as ‘trouble’ [*fa’alavelave]*” (Calkins, 1962, p. 67), the practice of mutual support during lifecycle events such as weddings, christenings, and funerals. It is referred to as “trouble” because the constant depletion of resources to support the collective (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995, p. 172).

Despite the tug-of-war between U.S. and Samoan values, “the family is viewed as the most important agency of human interactions” (Territory of American Samoa, Office of the Governor). “Each family member works for the well-being of the entire extended family, which sometimes may be as large as an entire village” (Mokuau & Tauili’ili, 1992, p. 12). Samoan families treated elders, those aged 50 and above, with the utmost respect.

The latest count reported that the average Samoan family numbered 6.24. There were 8,788 families living in urban areas and 1,264 families lived in rural areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Most Samoan parents followed the permissive and/or the authoritarian parenting styles (Rudy & Grusec, 2001, p. 40). This was evident when parents delegated the discipline of younger siblings to the eldest child. Or when a “6-year old is made responsible for the younger siblings by keeping them out of mischief and housebreaking by using both verbal and physical punishment” (Cote, 1994, p. 103). Mead (1928) wrote about the same issue decades earlier. “Samoan children have no dolls, no play houses, no tea sets, and no toy boats. For dolls they have real babies; at six they are expected to sweep up the real house and pick up all the scraps off the floor. Little boys anxious to become boatmen paddle about in real canoes within the safety of the lagoon” (p.301).

Cote (1994) reported that social behaviors are stricter for adolescents, who are raised to withhold pain and anger. As a result, the rate of suicide in this age group is

high, mainly from drinking poison, such as paraquat (weed killer). "The death from this poisoning is agonizing and prolonged (sometimes more than a week), thereby ensuring that the authority figures 'responsible' are made to suffer also" (p. 131).

Writer and director Urale would agree as noted in her film, *O Tamaiti* (The children), which depicted the life of a migrant Samoan family living in New Zealand from the perspective of the children. For a 15-minute film, it covered many themes common in Samoa such as children's powerlessness and subservience to an authoritarian world; that children are seen and not heard; and the respect that children have for their elders. The film's focus is on the burden of responsibility held by Tino, an eleven-year, and the eldest of five children, who becomes a surrogate parent while his parents were away working. Shortly after, a new baby is born, and Tino's overtaxing frame appears exhausted yet never rebels because he is obedient and a model Samoan child (cited in Marsh, 1996).

Another conflicting idea ingrained in Samoans is their obsession for tall and/or large body sizes. "Traditionally, large bodies have had prestige in Polynesian societies, seen as representing high status, power, authority, and wealth" (Brewis, McGarvey, Jones, and Swinburn, 1998, p. 185). This belief has promoted the "super-sized" food preferences in Samoans that contribute to the high mortality rate. "The changing life styles of the Samoan people towards less physical activity and high levels of consumption of sugar, fat, tobacco, and alcohol have led to the growing importance of non-communicable "life style" diseases…" (United Nations).

As previously hinted, patriarchal views are rampant as evidenced by the remark of a Samoan grandmother who was asked what she thought about her son's adulterous affair; her reply was "boys will be boys". H. M. Talanoa (personal communication, February 6, 2003). Or take another incident, wife bashing, that Cribb and Barnett (1999) depicted as a common occurrence in Samoa. "And this face—if you can call it face…beaten to a barely recognizable pulp. And him the doer of this to me laying back

there in bed, my bed —as if nothing happened…The right eye puffed shut, nose broken—again lower lip swollen with a deep cut about midway and leaking blood. Bruises all over. Beth sighed, shook her head in a kind of astonishment" (p.38). Finally, another incident that attests to the patriarchal beliefs that Samoans hold is the custom of "Monday sickness" where a single and/or young male teacher or administrator is excused from work after a weekend of excess. This absence is viewed as a social and developmental stage of their youth (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 1998).

McGrath (2002) reported that "discipline in general is an important topic among Samoan families [but poses a] culture clash over the question of appropriate discipline" (p.312). For example, out of concern a high school teacher noticed and questioned a student about bruises on her arm. The girl said that her mother had thrown her against the wall in their apartment. The teacher reported the incident to Child Protective Services, who paid an unannounced visit to confront the mother. The mother and daughter were shocked by the visit and the mother tried to explain the Samoan custom of discipline. The daughter even told the social worker that she deserved the punishment because she had back-talked her mother (p.312).

The Samoan culture is strong and intact. The *fa'a Samoa* (Samoan way of life) is centered on the *aiga* (family), which consists of the immediate family and extended family members [maternal and paternal] (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 2004). Samoans protect their cultural norms, even if they disagree with them because of their need to "save face" rather than being perceived negatively (Wetherell, 2002, p. 82).

Wendt (1995) summed up the Samoan culture that was interrupted by U.S. encounters: "Colonialism shattered the reefs of our enclosed slowly-changing traditional world, bringing with it a bewildering farrago of new values, attitudes…other

interpretations of reality and the universe, new technologies, doctrines and dogmas, and ever-changing art styles, fad and fashions…"(p.108).

Samoans and Education

In 1911, Samoan formal schooling was instituted by the U.S. Navy and administered by a non-Samoan governor who was appointed by the U.S. Department of Interior. Although the education system was based on "a U.S. model, modified for colonial conditions" (Masterman, 1934, pp. 24-25), it did not accomplish much in securing educational funds from the U.S. government (Rhoads, 1984, p.18) in order to develop multi-cultural educational programs to accommodate the non-English speaking islanders.

Dooley, Exley, and Singh (2000) found that an inequitable education for Samoans and other non-English speaking or indigenous backgrounds stemmed from "the lack of cultural understanding of both students and staff…one of the things that we really hope to get into the curriculum" (p.33). Cheng, Ima, and Labovitz wrote that teachers must develop an awareness of diversity within cultural groups. "Asian American and Pacific Islander populations are very diverse: They speak different languages, practice different religions, and view life differently (cited in Sileo & Prater, 1998). Allen (2004) instigated a solution writing about "research that transforms the empirical knowledge of people needs to be developed, encouraged, and funded, as well as utilized in the classroom as curricular content and critical pedagogical praxis" (p.140).

Woodson (1990) added that mis-education, or post-colonialism, were to blame for minority oppression, referring to the mis-education of the Negro. "The 'educated Negroes' have the attitude of contempt toward their own people because in their own as well as in their mixed schools Negroes are taught to admire the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin and the Teuton and to despise the African" (p.1).

Despite the minimum efforts put forth by the U.S. towards the natives' quality of life programs, such as education, the American Samoa school system managed to make gradual improvements. The Education Regulation Act of 1914, issued by then Governor, U.S. Navy Commander Clark D. Stearns, established the Department of Education and outlined its duties. The Act defined the three different classes for public schools, and duties of the villages to provide suitable structures or buildings for students and teachers and suitable land for playgrounds and school plantations. It also stipulated that "all public schools were to open for instruction for at least 4 hours a day with Fridays, Saturdays, and holidays excluded as school days (American Samoa Department of Education).

The *1957 Report of the Governor of American Samoa on Educational Conditions* stated that "the goals of the system were to conserve the best of Samoan culture and at the same time guide the people in developing social changes which are to their advantage, and to bring them to a better understanding of what is best for their well-being, health, and general improvement" (American Samoa Department of Education). With 20th century educational improvements, the island developed a Department of Education whose:

> "primary mission is to prepare the school age children of American Samoa to be academically, socially, and mentally competent to effectively confront life's many challenges, and to become responsible citizens in any society or community they may choose to live in. Thus, the academic, vocational, professional development, support services and special education programs are the responsibility of this Department" (Keller & Wilkerson, 2004, p. 10).

However, I question the extent to which a colonial education system can truly prepare children of American Samoa in a culturally proficient (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2005) manner. My questioning is based on the work of scholars who have examined minority and immigrant education.

In *Too Much Schooling, Too Little Education,* Shujaa (1994) argued that most school systems perpetuate the oppression of minority groups because the goals and

objectives taught belong to the dominant culture (p. 112). Scott (1985) agreed by saying that "suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization" (p. 120). Freire (1970) would say that this is akin to participating in one's own demise (p. 4).

Foucault (1979) would add that schools run by the dominant culture worked on their behalf and were producing docile bodies, which are molded for control (p.43). Rabinow (1984) would echo Foucault's sentiments adding that the "the human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down, and rearranges it. A political anatomy, which was also a mechanics of power, was being born…thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, docile bodies" (p. 182).

Anderson (1988) further agreed saying that "essentially, this means taking the position that the support given [to] the schooling of African Americans by government and 'philanthropy' is and has historically been intended to serve the interests of the politically dominant members of U.S. society" (p. 122). In the same vein, Singh and Sinclair (2001) argued that "the objective of instructional discourse in terms of equality of educational outcomes is to develop a system that would hoist disadvantaged groups to a standard of social life and educational attainment already reached by the elite" (p.77).

In addition, even the small number of minority students whose families migrated to the U.S. often found it difficult to adjust to their new life. Rong and Preissle (1998) wrote that "on arrival in the U.S., many immigrants must reconstruct their identity to fit the reality of their new home. They must find themselves grouped with people very different from themselves. This has implications for the children of immigrants, who often feel multiple allegiances, yet they must make choices every day that affect their self-identity, their identity vis-à-vis others, and their future" (p. 123).

Still the education system in American Samoa did advance after 40+ years. Through U.S. funding the American Samoa Community College (ASCC) "was established in 1970 to provide post-secondary education opportunities in the liberal arts, teacher training, vocational-technical education and general education to the residents of American Samoa. ASCC offers Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees, as well as Certificate programs in a variety of academic and technical areas" (American Samoa Community College).

Better than that, "the U.S. pays for 76% of Samoa's education. When it comes to public education, American Samoa gets more Federal dollars per student than any other State or Territory. In fact, the Federal government gives American Samoa about $2,800 per student while [the U.S.] get[s] less than $600 per student" (Faleomavaega, 2006).

Mead made a compelling assessment of how Samoan members often aided in their own oppression by adopting Memmi's (1965) phenomenon of the colonized people taking on the role of the colonizer (p. 101). "To be brighter than your age, to stand out conspicuously above other children, this is a sin for which a child is roundly scolded and sometimes whipped" (Mead, 1928, p. 301). In other words, Samoan children are pushed by parents to perform well in school yet they are punished for displays of over-confidence, which is a trait that intellectual scholars exhibit. Perhaps Hereniko and Wilson's (1999) explanation might shed light on understanding why many Samoans feel disempowered by education. "A Western education often results in alienation from the land and the community, an erosion of an identity that is rooted in the indigenous culture. Many Islanders educated overseas discover on their return home the need to learn or relearn traditional skills in order to become part of a community again and re-attain an indigenous identity" (p.147).

Speaking of migrants returning home, the amount of return migration to the Pacific is so small, that the potential for the transfer of human capital seems rather limited (Ahlburg & Brown, 1998, p.127). So it reads like this: Samoan students do not

see education as the pathway towards prosperity because of the seemingly difficult experiences; and, even if a few managed to take the education route, very few have used their acquired education, or social capital, towards improving the American Samoan economy.

Despite such negative attitudes towards education, most Samoan families tried to encourage their children to do well in school. Cluny (2000) wrote that:

> "…Samoans came to value formal education and to believe that it could transform life chances and career prospects. It shows why these convictions about education led people to believe that migration to New Zealand would ensure their children had access to a system of formal education that would improve their life chances" (p. 57).

Consequently, not many families could afford to relocate for education and they became trapped in the Samoan education system that did not have the resources to help students thrive in academia. Oftentimes, these students were just content to graduate from high school because they had little faith in the education system as a way to improve their marginalized conditions. Such views of disempowerment were further exasperated when students had to frequently miss school so they could support the family's obligations. Otsuka (in press) described a Fijian phenomenon that is similar to the way Samoans operate:

> "…Fijian culture encourages children to become good members of their community…one's total commitment to communal activities and requirements are of vital importance. Ethnic Fijians spend a large amount of time and money on making contributions to ceremonies and church, somewhat at the expense of their children's education" (p. 2).

Tsutsumoto (1998) expressed similar sentiments:

> "Given that a college education is commonly regarded as a viable way to maximize one's ability to think critically, gain broader insights and experiences, as well as improve one's chances to better their occupational and employment opportunities, the potential achievement of Samoans, and for that matter, Pacific Islander youth, is not realized. There is very minimal, if any, effort at all on behalf of any educational system to provide information and other services to prepare

them for an education beyond high school. Samoan students who go to college must overcome a multitude of obstacles" (pp.1-2).

Although Samoan scholars understood the power that an education could provide, Samoans who do not have the resources to experience higher education remained uninformed about their future choices. However, in 1955, Albert Wendt arrived on the academic scene and changed this tide when he became "the most prolific and influential contemporary writer of the Pacific Islands—of his native Samoa in particular, but including greater Oceania and New Zealand as well" (Sharrad, 2003, preface).

Wendt wrote that "even before I left training college, when I started writing seriously about Samoa, I realized the Samoa I was creating out of my childhood storehouse of images and memories was one contrary to Mead's attractive but superficial stereotyped paradise. It is a Samoa with all the emotions, problems, hope, and so on, common to humanity (cited in Sharrad, 2003). Not only did Wendt promote higher education, but also he started writing about life in Samoa, which appealed to the island community. Sia Figiel, another accomplished Samoan "novelist and poet whose work is published in New Zealand…is often described as Samoa's first woman novelist" (New Zealand Book Council). These two writers opened doors for many Samoan scholars who had felt intimidated by academic achievement. Their work spoke largely about Samoan issues that natives could identify with in their writings. For the first time, Samoan writers made a hopeful mark in the literary world and this spurred on more islanders to give higher education a second look.

Wendt wrote that "Pacific Islanders should write about their own histories, their own versions of their history. Histories written by outsiders, no matter how fair they've been, are still views of foreigners, still views of other people about us. In many ways, those histories have imposed on us views of ourselves that have added to our colonization" (cited in Hereniko & Wilson, 1999).

The flood of non-native writers became a thing of the past as islanders became more interested in writing about their history, instead of just reading about it. Ihimaera and the editors of *Te Ao Marama: Contemporary Maori Writing* critiqued Western writing saying that "…we wish to look at things from the inside out, not from the outside in…for to know things 'from the inside out' is to know them intimately and in struggle: it is cultural construction as learned inside the ground of community and the body of historical experience as well as through the haunted syntax of the English language" (Hereniko & Wilson, 1999). The natives were "no longer content to remain oppressed, these Western-educated Islanders condemned the injustices within Christianity and Western capitalism in their writings" (Hereniko & Wilson, 1999, p. 25). Their ultimate goal was political and cultural independence as echoed by King:

> When I was in college, people would constantly ask me where I am from and I always used to say 'I'm from Samoa'. I recently returned home to American Samoa after spending ten years in Washington, D.C. and rather than working for the local government, or setting up a law office because I had received my juris doctorate from the George Washington University Law School, I was looking for a career. Most people were looking to me to be a practicing attorney. But that wasn't where my heart was. I decided to do something with children and that's how PICED ... the Pacific Island Center for Educational Development was founded" (in Pacific Island Center for Educational Development, 2005).

Unfortunately, scholars such as Wendt, Figiel, Ihimaera, Hereniko, and others, are rare; many Pacific Islanders were not exposed to their writing. In fact, if you were to ask a Samoan student if he/she knew who these writers were, most would say 'no' because these literary works were not being included in K-12 reading lists. Why these native writers were not promoted in the Samoan community is a mystery. I believe that it was all intended to keep the natives uninformed, to keep their minds 'colonized.'

Writer, teacher, and activist Parker, illuminated this idea of restricted knowledge by posing a question and then providing his insight:

> "How did Mandela, Havel, and Parks decide to 'live divided no more' –especially when they knew they would be severely punished if they acted from their deepest truths? I believe they all came to understand that no external punishment could possibly be greater than the punishment we impose on ourselves by conspiring in our own diminishment" (cited in Rittenhouse, 2001).

Although it will take many more practical initiatives to propel the Samoan education system forward, at least Samoan natives have role model such as Wendt, Figiel, Ihimaera, Hereniko, and others who have shown that the education struggle is worth it. These writers have contributed important texts about their own history. The Samoan education system would serve its people well if they would acknowledge and promote the efforts of its own people so that students could see that nothing is beyond reach, to give students hope. Colonialism has blinded many Samoans to native achievements by denying them access to privileges that would help them succeed, a path that I believe has kept many islanders marginalized.

In conclusion, I believe Wendt eloquently summarizes the dynamics here: "any real understanding of ourselves and our existing culture calls for an attempt to understand colonialism and what it did and is still doing to us…" (in Sharrad, 2003, p. 11).

Samoans and Military Service

> "The soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inept body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each body part, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit" (Rabinow, 1984, p.179).

Samoans are no strangers to military warfare. Prior to the U.S. colonization in 1900, Samoans had been fighting to protect their interests. The Department of the Navy reported that: "In the late 1880s, German intervention in the civil war that broke out in Samoa outraged American public opinion and tensions grew in the islands. By March 1889, three American warships had been sent to Apia, Samoa, there joining three German warships, and one British, in a watchful standoff in the harbor. On 15-16 March

1889, a violent storm struck the islands, destroying or disabling six of the seven warships in Apia Harbor…"(Naval Historical Center, 1889).

Today, most Samoans have accepted their colonized state of being and the military connection has grown in leaps and bounds. Whether one terms it tradition or patriotic fever, most Samoans join the military for one reason: survival. "'It's the benefits,' said Arnold Balisalisa, who took the aptitude test here in late June. Taking a break from his $3.25-an-hour job at a McDonald's, he said: 'It is better than staying on this island. There's nothing going on here' "(Brooke, 2005). "A lot of it is for the benefits; everything from the health benefits, to the pay to the education benefits [is] why so many people enlist here" (Potter, 2006). Other Samoans join because of tradition. "Fuga was born in American Samoa. His father served as an officer in the Navy, so the young Fuga and his 12 siblings lived in various places growing up. By the time he was in high school, Fuga had adopted his father's fierce sense of patriotism. Several of Fuga's relatives have served in the military, including twin brothers, and a cousin who has served in Iraq" (Manu'a Off-island Connection).

MSNBC news correspondent Potter reported that "American Samoa has paid a heavy price…it has the highest per capita death rate of any U.S. state or territory" (2006). Samoans joining the military have not decreased their numbers despite the negative consequences of extended or multiple tours in the Middle East military conflicts.

Despite the mounting casualties, poverty and patriotism fuel enlistment. "I buried at least one myself, but it hasn't stopped the number of recruits going in," said the Rev. J. Quinn Weitzel, bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Samoa-Pago Pago. "They still feel like they want to do something special for the United States" (Brooke, 2005). Unlike in Palau where there were widespread protests against increasing U.S. military involvement in their islands, American Samoans have been reluctant to disconnect from the United States despite their militarized history. The U.S. military is today a significant

source of employment and a pathway of migration for American Samoans (Pacific Islanders in Communications).

In addition, the Samoan economy is struggling; the 2005 statistics revealed that unemployment was at 30%. Ninety percent of the land was communally owned in 2005, due to the traditional Polynesian economy. Economic activity was strongly linked to the U.S. with which American Samoa conducted most of its foreign trade. Tuna fishing and tuna processing plants are the backbone of the private sector, with canned tuna the primary export. Holmes & Holmes (1992) wrote that working "with the [American Samoan] government and the tuna canneries employs about 70 percent of the workers. The remaining 30 percent work for increasing numbers of retail outlets, small manufacturers, and service-related businesses, including tourism" (p.112). Transfers from the U.S. Government add substantially to American Samoa's economic well being. Attempts by the government to develop a larger and broader economy are restrained by Samoa's remote location, its limited transportation, and it's devastating hurricanes (CIA: The World Fact book).

With minimum job opportunities, "the Army has found fertile ground in the poverty pockets of the Pacific. The per capita income is $8,000 in American Samoa, $12,500 in the Northern Marianas and $21,000 in Guam, all United States territories. In the Marshalls and Micronesia, former trust territories, per capita incomes are about $2,000. The Army minimum signing bonus is $5,000. Starting pay for a private first class is $17,472" (Brooke, 2005).

Foucault (1979) would say that Samoans had become "docile bodies, that were subjected, used, transformed and improved" (p.136) for the military's objectives. Foucault's phenomenon of docile bodies was accomplished through discipline as Smart (1985) pointed out. "Discipline not only operates through punishment but in addition through gratification, with rewards and privileges for good conduct and practices and punishments and penances for bad behavior" (p. 86). Samoans, like most human beings,

sought gratification and they had an advantage from the military's perspective because of their "aggressive, physically large [bodies] who make great football players but fearsome gang members" (McGrath, 2002, p.324).

In light of this information, Rabinow (1984) would say that Samoans are ideal recruits: "The signs for recognizing those most suited to this profession are a lively, alert manner…because a man of such figure could not fail to be agile and strong…when he becomes a pike-bearer, the soldier will have to march in step in order to have as much grace and gravity as possible…" (p. 179).

Furthermore, American Samoans' magnetism towards military service had become an anomaly as described by its congressman, Faleomavaega: "I shared with Mr. Potter of USA Today about the article he published titled *From tiny Pacific islands comes outsized sacrifice* and noted that the Iraq war death rate per 1 million population is almost as high for American Samoa as for the 10 highest states combined. I also briefed him about American Samoa's proud military tradition and our association with the U.S. for some 100 years" (MNSBC, 2006).

Other Samoans, like me, joined the military in hopes of getting an education that would open up many more doors of opportunity since "education benefits can be as much as $70,000" (Brooke, 2005). Little did I know that most of the colleges and universities offered by the military are for-profit institutions, such as the University of Phoenix, DeVry University, Strayer College, etc? My concerns about the quality of these institutions were shared by others. "I cannot necessarily compare military education to a top-ranked college as I have not attended any of these…my biggest concern is how the business world views a military education...many times degree programs were limited to management and information technology…to compromise, I would pursue a degree that was not my first choice" F. S. Ross (personal communication, September 1, 2005). Another example along the same lines was voiced by another student when asked about her choice for a college: "I would pick a college that focuses on my job direction and of

course that I can afford. Harvard and Yale are out due to expenses, but a college that [for example] would get recognized in the medical field as a reputable educational institution" T. R. Livingston (personal communication, October 6, 2005). One final example was provided by a third student when asked if he would recommend the military's civilian education to a loved one. His simple response was "civilian first choice" S. N. Stanton (personal communication, October 22, 2005). Military members are not the only ones concerned about the military's educational offerings. Kirp (2003) wrote that "the core complaint leveled against schools like DeVry and Phoenix [both online colleges] is that they are operated as businesses that emphasize profits at the expense of learning" (p.4).

While education *could* be a solid foundation for a Samoan family's upward mobility, taking the route of non-military higher education poses greater risks, such as being physically and emotionally disconnected from loved ones. In other words, the college route offers no guarantee that a Samoan family could have a better quality of life or that the son/daughter would be able to contribute to the family's welfare. A Samoan member's career options on island are limited to the private sector, mainly the tuna canneries, the government, or the military. Out of these options, the military has been the most lucrative option for Samoans and their families towards achieving better living conditions. But that's not all; salaries in American Samoa are mostly minimum wage. So it made sense for Samoans to join the military because it offered more opportunities for better wages. By joining the military, economic success was within greater reach for Samoans, who could feel good about providing for the needs of their families.

Many Samoan families viewed the armed services as the answer to their pressing needs because many former and current military members had achieved success as expressed by Tia, an Army reservist who had just returned from a year in Iraq. "[I] signed up for the military pay…we use it to take care of our families, buy food, pay the electricity bill, the water bill" (in Potter, 2006). The military provided more than basic

needs, free of cost (i.e., medical and dental insurance, tuition, etc.). Out of all of the free military benefits, the education incentive has been the bait commonly used on Samoans and other minority groups, especially targeting the few college-bound natives who might have considered higher education as a pathway leading to success.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on Samoan History, Families and Culture, Education, and Military Service. This review provided a cultural and historical context for the research study I have conducted. Another important context is the theoretical underpinnings of the study, and this is the topic that will be covered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Chapter 3 provides the theoretical grounding for the study. The chapter begins with an analysis of post-colonialism, followed by the examination of minority education. I argue that both sets of theories help to elucidate the U.S. hegemony that has continued to dominate the Samoan way of life.

Post-Colonialism

According to Kipling (1899), "colonialism is the extension of a nation's sovereignty over territory and people outside its own boundaries, often to facilitate economic domination over their resources, labor, and often markets" (p. 21). The term also refers to a set of beliefs used to legitimize or promote this system, especially the belief that the mores of the colonizer are superior to those of the colonized (p.26). "Although colonialism is often used interchangeably with imperialism, the latter is broader as it covers control exercised informally as well as formally" (Fanon, 1961, p.32). I believe that this colonialism, and its aftermath, is the mechanisms that kept most Samoans from living up to their potential, void from European influence.

Kipling (1899) reported that "the age of colonization or imperialism began in the 15th century with the initiation of the vast Portuguese Empire and also the Spanish Empire in the Americas and lasted until the mid-20th century with the dismantling of the British Empire" (p. 101). In response to European and American colonialism, leading theorists including Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Albert Memmi, and Michel Foucault, scrutinized the provocative actions of the colonizer and developed what became known as post-colonial theory.

Post-colonialism (also known as post-colonial theory or post-oriental theory) refers to a set of theories in continental philosophy and literature that grapple with the legacy of 19th century British and French colonial rule (Said, 1978, p.110). As a literary

theory or critical approach, post-colonialism deals with literature produced in countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries. It may also deal with literature written in or by citizens of colonizing countries that takes colonies or their peoples as its subject matter (Memmi, 1965, p. 34). Post-colonial theory became part of the critical toolbox in the 1970s, and many practitioners credit Edward Said's book *Orientalism* as the theory's founding work (Memmi, 1965; Said, 1978).

Shujaa (1994) wrote that post-colonialism brought to light many issues for societies that had undergone colonialism. He provided four examples that present a clearer picture about the paradoxes of post-colonialism:

1. The dilemmas of developing a national identity in the wake of colonial rule.

2. The ways in which writers from colonized countries attempt to articulate and even celebrate their cultural identities and reclaim them from the colonizers.

3. The ways that the knowledge of colonized people has served the interests of colonizers, and how knowledge of subordinate people is produced and used.

4. The ways in which the literature of the colonial powers is used to justify colonialism through the perpetuation of images of the colonized as inferior (p. 18).

I have chosen to elaborate the problems posed by colonialism with the works of Franz Fanon and Edward Said, whose writings can be used to articulate how colonialism bulldozed Samoans to the point where they could not “resist all power structures that erode self-respect and sap the power to determine for oneself and in one’s own place what one might be” (Sharrad, 2003, p. 30).

Fanon and Post-colonialism

Fanon described three key themes that I used to illuminate this study: 1) dual consciousness, 2) nationalism, and 3) decolonization. First, I explain each theme and then I describe how it applies to the situation in American Samoa.

In *Black Skins, White Masks,* Fanon (1967) formulated the concept of *dual-consciousness*, or the nature of colonized subjects, and the way in which they must simultaneously embrace two different cultural identities. Fanon referred to the Black man as being the colonized subject who had to portray a different persona depending on who he/she was interacting with. For example, interaction with a white person was quite different than it was with a black person because of cultural traditions. Fanon inferred that it was critical for the Black man to be heard, whether verbally, socially, or physically, particularly in the white European environment. The Black man spoke the white man's language so he could fit in with the dominant culture but he could not use his cultural lingo around white people if he wanted to be taken seriously. Fanon rejected these hegemonic views and blamed white supremacists for the continual attempts at silencing minority voices and perpetuating oppression. "For it is implicit that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other. The black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with another Negro. This self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation beyond question" (Fanon, 1967, p. 17). So how might the concept of dual-consciousness fit into the Samoan situation?

Like the Algerians in *Black Skins, White Masks*, I believe that Samoans were also forced to accept the colonial rule imposed on them by the United States while also trying to maintain their own customs and traditions. For example, Samoans accepted the U.S. model of curriculum taught in their schools, while at the same time, they tried to stay true to their cultural mores. The situation becomes convoluted because competing interests between the U.S. and Samoa created a culture clash. Samoans were

in a predicament to appease to both the U.S. and the Samoan culture, which were often at opposite poles and had become a burden for the Samoan people. A Samoan would usually do what they were familiar with, which was to follow their own customs and traditions, instead of complying with the dominant culture's precepts, which were sermonized in the school system.

Such ethical dilemmas resulted in missed opportunities and a poor quality of life for many Samoans. For example, the Research and Development Cadre of the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), based in Honolulu, Hawaii, reported that Samoan customs were "a key factor in teacher and school administrator absenteeism, attrition, and stress/burnout in the Pacific region. Samoan customs included cultural events, family and village social roles, and culturally sanctioned time-off" (PREL, 1998, p. 3).

For example, a Samoan funeral obligates its members to participate in every minute detail, which often causes family members, who may also be students or government employees, to miss school or work. A funeral wake normally encompasses the entire evening and ends around noon the following day. Food is prepared in advance for the attendees and it must be replenished for the post evening and breakfast meals. Both families of the deceased contribute food products, preparation time for meals, and grave digging duties but a certain number of people remain behind to host the wake attendees. A funeral, like all Samoan events, is labor intensive.

Another Samoan custom is family and village social roles, whereby a teacher or administrator may hold a large family title and his/her absenteeism is overlooked because he/she is required to be present at the event. It is customary for the adult children to carry on the family traditional roles, such as high chief, high talking chief, taupou (a chief's virgin daughter who prepares the ceremonial *ava* drink), etc. The christening of these titles requires much preparation by local family members and is attended by members from all over the world. Food preparations fill up most of the

time for such an event and Samoans often show gratitude with food or other material things.

In essence, Fanon's dual consciousness is evident in the disjuncture that Samoans experienced which was similar to what happened in Algerian society. Fanon (1967) further articulated the idea of dual consciousness through the use of language. He said that speaking French meant the acceptance, coercion into accepting, the collective consciousness of the French, which identifies blackness with evil and sin. In an attempt to escape the association of blackness with evil, the black man dons a white mask, or thinks of himself as a universal subject equally participating in a society that advocates an equality that is supposedly abstracted from personal appearance (p. 98). Dual consciousness forces an individual, in this case, a Samoan, to choose allegiance between two competing cultures, where the sacrifice of one culture could result in missed opportunities from the other culture.

The second theme emphasized by Fanon (1961) is *nationalism*, an ideology which holds that the nation, ethnicity or national identity is a "fundamental unit" of human social life, and makes certain cultural and political claims based upon that belief; in particular, the claim that the nation is "the only legitimate basis for the state", and that "each nation is entitled to its own state" (p. 101). Fanon argued against such tyranny by saying that a new world order must be created, one that doesn't favor the Black over the White race, but rather, a utopia that embraces freedom. Fanon (1961) objected to the white supremacists' views yet he also rejected the politics and greed of the Black nationalists. He felt that the peasants could more adequately advance the new concept of freedom which could only be represented by the masses, or lower class, and only through the use of physical violence; he felt that "violence purifies." Later, Fanon would leave his prestigious job working for the French to champion the Algerian independence movement and further its cause against colonial domination. His works influenced post-colonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Edward Said. So how might nationalism unveil itself in American Samoa?

In the Samoan culture, nationalism emerged when the U.S. colonized American Samoa in the 1900s, immediately indoctrinating them with U.S. views. Fanon (1961) articulated it best as he described how colonialism affected Black people. Cultural values are internalized, or "epidermalized" into consciousness, creating a fundamental disjuncture between the black man's consciousness and his body. Under these conditions, the black man is necessarily alienated from himself (p. 101). The same could be said for Samoans. While colonization had placed the onus on an external entity for Samoan successes and failures, colonialism removed the sense of pride and ownership of Samoans of their own successes and hardships, and infected them with the belief that natives could not survive without U.S. assistance.

Another hegemonic example of nationalism that has infected Samoa is the mishandling of government funds, a fiasco that has shattered many lives, similar to the Enron scandal, but on a smaller scale. For example, every department head, such as the Directors of Education, Parks and Recreation, etc., have expensive, top of the line, government vehicles yet schools lack teacher credentials and training. Directors make more money than the most senior educators and can afford their own transportation. There are so many public facilities that need funding, such as a swimming pool, a youth center, a crisis center, a woman/man's shelter, an animal kennel, etc. and the list of facilities that need repairs and maintenance is even longer.

Although U.S. tyranny had provided material wealth, i.e., financial aid, technological advances, and social improvements, etc., the U.S., through the media had provided a mold that Samoans leaders have latched on to in carrying out their duties. A month does not go by without CNN reporting about an official in power who has embezzled the establishment's monies and this idea has infected even the best leaders, who see the opportunity for instant wealth. There is not enough funding to create programs that could increase the quality of life of Samoans, so how in the world could there be money to splurge on unnecessary expenditures? It appears that Samoan leaders had misplaced their priorities, they had forgotten why they were in office, and as a result, the Samoan community has suffered.

For example, on July 29, 2005, American Samoa was approved for a $16 million grant for road improvement and an additional $23 million for transportation needs. Governor Tulafono stated that "the American Samoan Government receives direct operating grants from the Department of Interior of $22 million per year" (in House Committee on Natural Resources, 2007). American Samoa is heavily funded by the U.S. so it is hard to believe that one-third of the population (60,000, 2006 estimate) are living in poverty, meaning these families make less than $10,000 annually.

I believe the U.S. government knows full well that American Samoa depends on them so much for their economy. They have gotten so comfortable exploiting the natives and they know that Samoans will never sever their U.S. ties.

Fanon's third theme is *decolonization,* the process in which a colony gains its independence from a colonial power. Fanon (1961) was adamant that the Algerians be released from the white supremacists' tyranny and he advocated that it could only be accomplished through violence. Fanon wrote that "the naked truth of decolonization evokes for us the searing bullets and bloodstained knives which emanate from it" (1961, p. 67). Although I don't agree with Fanon's use of violence in order to gain independence, I do agree that an entity should be free to decide how to govern its own people. The U.S. has made it very difficult for American Samoa to become independent with the dangling of U.S. funding and military services that have increased their presence on the island, enabling a greater dependency on Western commodities.

On February 8, 2006, the Samoan delegate to congress, Honorable Faleomavaega announced that this island of about 60,000, will receive an increase of $2 million for fiscal years 2006 and $4 million for 2007 (Faleomavaega, Delegate at Large). With so much funding aimed at keeping American Samoa reliant on the U.S., the idea of decolonization is far removed from the Samoan mindset. After all, American Samoa has helped the U.S. reach its monthly military quota and consistently supplied a steady number of Samoan pro-football players that have increased U.S. capital.

So how would *decolonization* fit into the situation in American Samoa? I believe that Samoans have long accepted marginal treatment from the U.S. because they have conditioned themselves to see only the positive aspects of Western intrusion. If you were to visit American Samoa, you might not readily recognize poverty conditions. For a long time, I also believed American Samoa was blessed to be connected to the U.S. yet I often wondered why the government facilities were sub-par compared to what I saw in Hawaii. As an insider who left American Samoa after high school to join the U.S. military, I began to see that American Samoa was a far cry from paradise. Symbols of oppression are evident all around: the school system lacks qualified teachers, there is shortage of teaching materials, down-trodden facilities abound, antiquated sanitation systems spoil the hospitality, public roads are filled with potholes, and the list goes on.

Overall, Fanon's work has helped me to view my homeland in a very different way. Competing interests between the Samoan and U.S. culture have put Samoans in a quandary. On the one hand, Samoan customs and traditions are sacred to its people and way of life; and on the other hand, American Samoa enjoyed the material wealth made possible through federal aid and military service. The U.S. enticed Samoans with its modern conveniences that have often been at odds with the native culture. Even if Samoan voices are silenced in U.S. history books or their children are funneled into the U.S. military, with no guarantee of returning, Samoans have bought into the dominant culture's mores and have lusted after the lure of material wealth and instant gratification, which was made possible through the strong ties with the U.S.

Said and Post-colonialism

Edward Said is often seen as the father of post-colonial theory. His work emphasizes three concepts that are particularly relevant for the present study: 1) Orientalism, 2) binationalism, and 3) exile.

Orientalism is a term Said created to describe how the Arab-Islamic people and their culture (later to include most minority races) were affected by "deep-rooted and

illusive discrimination by Western ideology" (Said, 1980, p. 21). Said was relentless in exposing the prejudice encountered by his people. He expressed his feelings as such: "So far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Moslems and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have instead is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression" (1980, p. 88).

Orientalism could be viewed as aiding in the Samoan people's oppression because Samoans have come to believe that they are inferior, especially to the white man. Even though most Samoans portray a rugged, impenetrable disposition, Orientalism had seeped into the culture by way of the church and continues to be maintained in the K-12 setting. This attitude is reflected in the humbleness of many Samoans who are taught not to brag about themselves and to be meek, particularly with those who they feel are superior to them, such as government officials, the elderly, white people, etc. There is also common belief that because white folks appear to be better off than Samoans, they must be smarter, better, or in a higher class.

Additionally, men of the clergy are no better. They are elevated to a much higher level just by their mere title. Wendt wrote that "our admirable belief in God is being used by our churches and our church leaders (who in some countries are heads of government as well) to keep themselves kings in castles. Our churches are obese…to this gloomy day, our churches have remained colonial in thought and action and, like other elite groups, have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, in keeping us meek and unquestioning" (cited in Sharrad, 2003). McGrath (2002) reported that Samoans "all share an understanding in the importance of family, the part that land plays in [their] lives, the strength of [their] belief in God" (p. 315).

Tiffany (1974) added that the white supremacists used Bibles that were translated for the native tongue (p. 35) to win over the natives. This evasive and methodical system that was employed by the architects of U.S. hegemony planted seeds in the natives' minds that led to the production of "docile bodies", which were obedient to the task required of them (Foucault, 1979, p. 28). Marsh wrote: "prescribed… [with] the roles of domestic animal, amoral phallus, the lackey, the comic and lazy and happy-go lucky fuzzy-haired boy…the sexual servant, dusky maiden, the exotic native, the innocent savage…" (in Hereniko and Wilson, 1999). Thompson added: [natives] "do not question the status quo because the culture prevents them from doing so" (in Hereniko and Wilson, 1999). All these sentiments subscribe to the idea of Orientalism because they portray Samoans as being controlled beings, who cannot think for themselves.

Schoeffel (2001) summed it up by saying that "under the colonial regimes, little investment was made in infrastructure or in educating Islanders to participate in modern government, commerce and technology" (p. 21). This was exactly what the white supremacists had intended: to control the information that Samoans received so that they would rely on the U.S.

Still, there are points of resistance; Wood reported that "on many islands, indigenous creative writing is being encouraged as a supplement to and even as a replacement for the Euro-American writing that the Pacific Islands students have been forced to read for too long (in Hereniko and Wilson, 1999). Post-colonial theorists such as Sharrad (2003) speak to the importance of such reclamation: "…the circle of tradition [that] has been broken open by the incursion of the West: it cannot be reconstructed, but it has to be reclaimed in its very brokenness to refuse the new complacent and complicit circle…" (p. 29) that Orientalism endorsed.

Said's second concept is *binationalism.* This theory further underscores the problems posed by *Orientalism.* Said's solution to this Palestinian / Israeli issue was to create separate governments to prevent recurring violence (Said, 2003, p. 98). Said

(2003) wrote that “Americans are sufficiently blind that when a Middle Eastern leader emerges whom our leaders like -- the Shah of Iran or Anwar Sadat -- it is assumed that he is a visionary who does things our way not because he understands the game of imperial power (which is to survive by humoring the regent authority) but because he is moved by principles that we share” (p. 6).

However, Said’s theory on binationalism is not a solution to colonization in American Samoan. I believe the information was beneficial to me in understanding how two nation states could co-exist, when both have valid reasons for their claims, i.e. family history, land ownership, etc. American Samoa may well be under U.S. control, but thankfully, Samoans still have dominion over their land. It is one piece of the culture that had not been monopolized by the Westerners.

The last theme that Said contributed is *exile*. Said (1999) wrote that “…exile therefore exists in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting not fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another” (p. 49).

In Representations of the Intellectual, Said (1994) described the secular critic's global predicament of continual transition and an ongoing negotiation of competing allegiance (p.50). This idea of competing allegiances is similar to Fanon’s view of dual-consciousness discussed earlier. Samoans are constantly in a predicament to honor their cultural traditions, which oftentimes contradict U.S. views (i.e. missing work to support ceremonial events) yet they are infatuated with U.S. goods and services.

Nevertheless, Said’s (1999) notion of exile is about more than just competing allegiances. He wrote that “there is a popular but wholly mistaken assumption that being exiled is to be totally cut off, isolated, hopelessly separated from your place of origin" (p. 48). By contrast, “Said portrays the secular intellectual as a border-crosser who occupies a luminal space that mediates between nations, political organizations,

and academic affiliations -- as well as between ‘culture’ and ‘imperialism’; ‘text’ and ‘world’; past and present” (in Graves, 1998, p.51). Said’s notion of exile and particularly being a crosser of borders can be applied to American Samoa; Samoans who have surrendered completely to U.S. values are often exiled from their own communities. Many educated Samoans do not support corporal punishment or patriarchy, which are normalized in American Samoa. They have chosen to be different from their families of origin, especially when they marry outside of their race. It is difficult to visit one’s homeland where hegemonic views persist.

Minority Education

While colonialism (now post-colonialism) had planted the seed that produced the Samoan problem, it is the second concept, labeled minority education that has cultivated and ensured that the status quo is not challenged. In this section, I will analyze the education system in Samoa, drawing on Ogbu's (1974, 1977, & 1987a) phenomenon of 'minority education.' Two scholars, John Ogbu and Marimba Ani, have supplied critical pieces of research that helped illustrate how minority education impacts its members. Ogbu and Ani's research in the area of minority education has provided a broader understanding for many about the issue of institutional racism faced by countless minority races like the Samoan people.

Ogbu and Minority Education

Ogbu's themes that inform this study are the *achievement gap, voluntary/involuntary minorities, and cultural inversion.* The *achievement gap* refers to the observed disparity on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. It most often described the issue of low-income/minority education in the United States; that is, that Blacks and Latinos and students from poor families performed worse in school than their well-off White and Asian peers. The achievement gap can be observed on a variety of measures, including standardized test scores, grade point average, dropout rates, and college enrollment and completion rates. "Explanations for the phenomenon -- and levels of concern over its existence -- vary widely, and are the source of much controversy, especially since the effort to 'close the achievement gap' has become some of the more politically prominent education reform issue" (Wikipedia, 2007, para 1). As a result, Samoan students lagged behind in educational achievement as reflected on the high percentage of low-achieving students. The statistics showed that:

> "Over 97% of American Samoan students receive Limited English Proficiency services, and although not reported by American Samoa, it is estimated that over 15,000 students are eligible for free- or reduced-price meals" (NCES, 2000, 2001).

Further, Keller and Wilkerson (2004) reported that "American Samoa serves about 3,000 students through private schools… The only entity-wide assessment is the SAT-9, but the local curriculum is not aligned to it. Approximately half of all teachers in American Samoa have an associate's degree and about one-quarter have a bachelor's degree. The community college offers a two-year associate level program in education. Bachelor's level training is provided through a University of Hawaii distance learning program" (para 3). The achievement gap has been perpetuated by the lack of qualified teachers and the marginal standards of achievement.

Ogbu's (1990) second theme has to do with three types of minority groups: *autonomous, immigrant and involuntary;* he claimed that "each experience and respond to schooling differently" (p. 46). Autonomous minorities (i.e., Jews and U.S. Mormons) "may be victims of prejudice and pillory but not of stratification…they usually occupy a cultural frame of reference, which demonstrates and encourages academic success" (p. 54). Samoans are not in this category.

The second type of minorities is immigrants. Immigrants are characterized as moving away from their homelands to places they felt would provide them a better way of life (Ogbu, 1990, p. 62). Ogbu contended that "these immigrants usually experienced initial problems with adjustment in school, but their problems were not characterized by persistent adjustment difficulties or low academic performance" (p. 67). Samoans who left the island to go to the U.S. fell under this classification.

The third status of minorities that Ogbu (1990) defined is the involuntary, or those who did not choose, but were forced to become part of another society as a result of slavery, conquest, or colonization. Ogbu maintained that involuntary minorities believed that "an improved economic well-being, better overall opportunities, and

political freedom would result only through the collective struggle against the dominant group" (in Shack, 1970, p.33). Samoans could also be a part of this minority group.

Additionally, Ogbu (1990) argued that the last two minority groups, the immigrants and involuntary minorities, have been, and continue to be, the victims of unequal educational opportunities. He cited three ways that educational injustice continued:

> 1) Unequal access to desirable jobs and positions (i.e., job ceilings) in adult life which required a good education.
>
> 2) Unequal access to a good education, meaning inferior education that "ensured that these groups would fail to qualify for desirable jobs or other positions in adult life that required a good education" (Ogbu, 1990, p. 50).
>
> 3) "Lowered teacher expectations and the labeling of minority children as educationally handicapped, which has resulted in the disproportionate channeling of a number of minority children into Special Education, which some believe was inferior education" (p. 42).

Cultural inversion, the final theme from Ogbu, is the tendency for members of one population (e.g. involuntary minorities) to regard certain forms of behaviors, certain events, symbols, and meanings as not appropriate for them because they are characteristic of members of another population (e.g. white Americans); at the same time, the minorities claim other (often the opposite) forms of behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings as appropriate for them because these are not characteristic of the white American (Ogbu, 1987b).

Hereniko and Wilson (1999) wrote that "once colonized, the mind can never be truly decolonized. Education continues to be the language of the colonizer (because it is the only way to progress)…many parents, teachers, and others in a position to influence still believe that what is foreign is best" (p. 148). Interestingly, this comment aligns with Ogbu's (1994) assessment of involuntary minorities: "involuntary minorities possess a negative dual-status, limited mobility frame of reference that does not encourage striving for school success…the role of education in…self improvement is ambiguous…

have not been adequately rewarded for their educational achievement. Therefore, they have come to view the inadequate and unequal reward of education as a part of the institutionalized discrimination structure which getting an education cannot eliminate" (p. 70). McGrath (2002) found this phenomenon to be true during her research about Samoans:

> "Another student, who is a senior in high school, complained that no one seems to care if he has homework to do or a big exam the next day. If a [Samoan] family function is being planned, he is expected to drop everything to help out" (p.323).

Consequently educational outcomes tell the same story, as reported by the Seattle Public Schools. "…in both middle and high schools, Samoans have the highest rate of expulsions and suspensions, the poorest daily attendance, the lowest mean high school grade point average, and a high school dropout rate of 25 percent" (in McGrath, 2002).

Ani and Minority Education

Marimba Ani's observations are also critically important in framing the present study. Marimba Ani, born Dona Richards, is an active organizer in the Afrikaans Community. She conducted the Rites of Passage programs for Afrikaans youth and young adults. She travels frequently to Ghana, West Africa, where she continues her study and support of Afrikaans traditional healing concept and practices. Ani's work has exposed me to two other themes: rhetorical ethic and cultural other, which have helped me to critically think about the Samoan situation.

Rhetorical ethic: The European rhetorical ethic is "a mechanism that works to favor the dominant culture in their political and intercultural activities. It creates an image that prevents others from successfully anticipating European behavior, and its objective is to encourage non-strategic (i.e., naive, rather than successful) political behavior on the part of others" (Shujaa, 1994, p. 26). In other words, Samoan students

practiced rhetorical ethic every day in school, by accepting whatever was taught to them, never questioning the source or motive because it went against the Samoan culture. Also, educators contributed to a rhetorical ethic by participating in instilling Western pedagogy in Samoan students, even though they knew that it did not uplift the minority races and it lacked a culturally proficient focus. This cycle of apathy has resulted in the low achievement scores of students in the Samoan K-12 school system and the low percentage of those meeting higher educational requirements.

"Rhetorical ethics are designed to sell, to dupe, to promote the European nationalistic objectives. It 'packages' European cultural imperialism in a wrapping that makes it appear more attractive and less harmful." This is quite evident in the reading materials given to students. Samoan language arts materials are black and white pamphlets that are worn out and almost unreadable whereas European textbooks are the fancy, colorful, hard bound materials. "None of these features represents what can culturally be referred to as an 'ideal' in any sense" (Shujaa, 1994, p. 45) because they do not represent the Samoan culture.

Keller and Wilkerson (2004) reported that "…culture affects all areas of American Samoan education. It can be seen in the approach to teaching strategies and educational decision making" (para 7). According to Samoan culture, teachers are authority figures and students are docile learners. These actions result in a very teacher-centered approach to instruction where students do not feel free to express their opinions. This is the colonial mindset or the rhetorical ethic view that has brainwashed students into being passive learners. The Samoan culture also aided in native oppression by allowing the status quo to go unchallenged. Take for example a Samoan tradition where village chiefs or elders do not solicit input or advice from younger family members. "In the context of education, elders working in the school system tend to make decisions independently without consulting younger staff members or students" (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, para 3).

Ani's second theme that contributed to the present study is *cultural other. "*By creating the concept of the 'cultural other,' Europeans have declared most things primitive that they could not understand. Through misuse of the Bible and racial religious imagery, they taught people to laugh at the gods of their ancestors and accept the gods of their conqueror. Many non-European cultures have been taught to reject the religion of their ancestors. They represent the 'battered souls' left in the wake of the European intellectual and cultural imperialism promoted by the militarists and missionaries" (Ani, 1994, p. 64). Before missionaries arrived in Samoa, the natives:

> "…had various legends, creative of their Samoan world and of themselves as mankind, and they worshipped many high war and village gods and many lesser gods of the house-hold. These they considered became in most case incarnate in fish and animals or embodied in plants - to which visible object there was then attached a sacred prohibition against user by me under the care (and control) of the particular god. Over all was Tagaloa of the Skies the Samoan Jove, chief of the gods, creator of the universe, progenitor of other gods and of mankind. The office of priesthood was greatly hereditary and the priests had large powers. They fixed feast days for the gods, received the offerings of the people, and even decided the commencement of war. The people lived in great dread of the wrath of the gods, and the priests of their heathenry were exacting and avaricious" (Samoan Sensation, Chap III).

After the missionaries convinced Samoans to adopt Christianity, it was almost like the previous idols had not existed. Watson wrote about the conversion:

> "…was greatly, if agreeably, astonished to find the natives claiming the new religion and clamoring for a teacher. The extraordinary conversions, on Tutuila, Upolu and Savaii were merely a corollary" (Samoan Sensation, Chap III).

Ani (1994) added:

> Like many cultures affected by colonialism, minority minds are 'still crowded with the image of Europeans as superior beings' as they tenaciously cling to the church commissioned anthropomorphic images of Leonardo Da Vinci, Raphael and others" (p. 11).

Ani's work has been focused on a partial solution to this condition that Professor Clarke calls "the imprisonment of a people to image" (in Ani, 1994). This was the same reality that Samoans experienced. Further, Ani (1994) suggested that minorities:

> "…should also be aware of what Molefi Asante meant by the term 'indivisibility of freedom.' We received our physical freedom in the 19th century, our legal freedom in the 20th century and yet without our psychological freedom, minority cultures are still slaves" (p. 26).

Summary

In this chapter, I argued that colonialism is the mastermind behind the Samoan peoples' oppression, and minority education is the conduit that cultivated this hegemonic practice. I believe that in order for Samoans to be released from the racist chains, U.S. hegemony must be dismantled or harnessed in a way that does not marginalize the Samoan people. I do not believe that it is too late for Samoans to shore up their assets so that they can "preserve those aspects of Samoan culture that work best in the American context" (McGrath, 2002, p. 314). Subsequently, Gegeo wrote that this is especially important for those "Pacific scholars who live abroad and write about their cultures yet find they must defend their indigenous status or Nativeness" (in McGrath, 2002).

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research study was to describe the processes that might have influenced a Samoan's choice of entering the military versus enrolling in college. In order to get a better understanding of these dynamics, I interviewed 11 Samoan college graduates who pursued higher education (without military assistance) and 10 Samoans who went into military service (and either received or did not receive a college degree). The study design employed qualitative research methods consisting of in-depth interviews that examined the experiences of Samoans in K-12 schooling, post-high education, and/or their vocations. Qualitative research "is a way of knowing that assumes that the researcher gathers, organizes, and interprets information (usually in words or in pictures) with his or her eyes and ears as filters" (Lichtman, 2006, p. 22). I believed that by capturing the experiences of my informants, it helped me to understand the many inter-related factors that influenced Samoans as they chose their vocation.

My Positionality as a Researcher

Collecting data is one piece of the study, but other important aspects included the researcher's positionality and qualifications. There were two criteria which I felt qualified me for this study. First, I am a Samoan native, raised in American Samoa ever since I was five years old, receiving my K-12 education there. I am fluent in the language and understand the culture very well.

Second, I am a U.S. military retiree, who served 20+ years in the U.S. Army, attaining an undergraduate and a graduate degree while on Active Duty. I am very familiar with military philosophy because all military branches fall under the Department of Defense, and follow the same Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Right off the bat, this study carried personal meaning for me because I have experienced everything that I am about to study; however, I wanted to know whether my experiences were the same or different than other Samoans. Krathwohl and Smith (2005) wrote that it is important for the researcher to find "a problem within his competencies with a reasonable and feasible approach, yet significant enough that he is not just content to work on it, but sufficiently committed to following it through the end" (p.47).

Additionally, Hubbard and Power (1999) who wrote that "insiders studying their own cultures offer new angles of vision and depths of understanding" (p. 201). I believed that my inside knowledge of the Samoan culture and military service, coupled with my passion for social justice, qualified me to embark on this study. This study represented a significant part of my life that I believed would help me to find closure or an understanding of the idea of "unfinishedness" that Freire (1994) talked about concerning hollow spaces in people's lives that cause them to question its meaning (p. 85). For me, I often think about how my life would have turned out if I was not forced to join the military.

Nevertheless, this study can do the same thing for other Samoans, in and out of the military, on active duty or former military members, and other minority groups, as far as providing answers. Also, no other study was available to learn why more Samoans were not pursuing higher education yet there did not seem to be an issue with them going into military service. I just found that quite odd that so many students went into the military without even giving it a second thought.

Additionally, I believe that U.S. hegemony had a tight rein on many Samoans who could not unravel the belief that military service has cost so many human lives and that upward mobility that the military provided could never bring a loved one back from death. I felt that Samoans are not given enough alternative options for a vocation, nor are they nurtured to value education and see it as a way to improve their quality of life.

I realize that this study may fall on deaf ears, like so many other studies, but at least it will be available for anyone to use, and if anything, it provides the raw data that helped me to understand Freire's (1970) "pedagogy of the oppressed" as it applied to the Samoan culture. I believe that American Samoa is in dire need of a "revolution of values" (hooks, 1994, p. 12).

Objectivity/Subjectivity

Lichtman (2006) wrote that "…an understanding of the other does not come about without an understanding of the self and how the self and other connect. I believe that each is transformed through this research process" (p. 192). I agree with Lichtman and believe that this study might reveal things about Samoa or me that I did not know about beforehand. There was also the feeling that I might not learn anything new and that the study would just confirm my own thoughts about Samoa, and I was fine with that.

My biological father is a white man from Newark, Ohio whom I don't remember and who never sent a dime to help raise me and my siblings. Ironically, my mother and grandparents had nothing but good things to say about him. So I was taught that white people were superior.

On the other hand, the things that my family and countless other Samoans have never before experienced, but have been conditioned to believe, are the very things that they bad mouth. For example, I grew up being taught that Black folks are an abomination. Since there aren't any Black relatives in my family, I don't know how this myth is passed on from one generation to the next. My military life taught me otherwise, that Black people were just like me, that they had feelings and made mistakes, but nothing that would make them abominable. I started befriending many Black folks and even married one. I share these stories to say that I have been on both sides of the fence: one, where I tried to imitate the actions of white folks in order to be

liked; and the other, where I became critically aware that I was a member of a minority race, and that no matter what I perceived or how much I aspired to be like a white person, it would never happen.

I am not a member of the dominant culture, even if I did marry a white man and more importantly, I cannot live my life as I was taught: to discriminate against certain people. I learned that I could be that person who was being oppressed. I became critically aware that my identity is tied to my experiences of having lived in at least three different cultures: Samoan, U.S., and military. I also learned about numerous cultures from traveling all over the world as a military member. These collective experiences have influenced the way I see all the influences in my life: the Samoan culture that raised me, the military culture that reformed my thinking about Black folks, and the U.S. that I now understand to be the dominant culture. This interwoven tapestry has formed my identity and has oftentimes created tensions and struggles that I did not understand, but I believe it was a process that was inescapable as a result of having many cultures tied up in my identity. But the best thing I learned was that I had a choice: accept or deny it.

Lichtman (2006) wrote that "researchers should not strive to be objective and look for ways to reduce bias. Rather, they need to face head on the subjective nature of their role" (pp. 202-203). I believe that this point is compelling because I was involved in research that was almost too close for comfort. I could not help but be involved in how the data were developed and interpreted. Lichtman went on to say that "[the researcher] cannot and should not take the position that [he/] she wants to remain objective. It is really not desirable or expected" (p. 206).

I wanted to understand why things were the way they were concerning the Samoan economic situation. I was not vying for any specific outcome. I just wanted to understand why things had not changed much after so much monetary support from the U.S. and an increase of modern technology. I also believe that by understanding the

experiences that have shaped my views, it may provide experiences of other Samoans that are different from mine, and this could be helpful.

Still another important area that I considered is my reflexivity. According to Russell and Kelly (2002), reflexivity is "a process of self-examination primarily informed by thoughts and actions of the researcher" (p. 23). Ahern (1999) says that we put this into operation by using diaries, by reflecting on our own assumptions, and by clarifying our own belief systems. As I disclosed earlier, I knew that my childhood growing up in American Samoa and my military experience may "affect various aspects of the research, especially the interpretation of meanings" (Lichtman, 2006, p. 207) so I was aware that I must take into account my experiences as I sought to learn the experiences of my informants. Pillow wrote that "reflexivity is not only a recognition of the self, it is also the recognition of the other" (cited in Down, Garrety & Badham, 2006).

For the time being, I am a "situated actor" according to Devault (cited in Feighery, 2006) and "this study is as much about my informants and what they reveal as it is about me and my life experiences… I am the instrument through which all meaning comes and that shapes the research and is shaped by it" (Lichtman, 2006, p. 207).

Risks and Ethical Dilemmas

Although this study is necessary for me and could be beneficial to other Samoans, I found it unsettling to embark on this journey because I believe that my views about the Samoan education system and military service would not be welcome by Samoans. I would be a minority voice within my own culture and it was an uncomfortable feeling.

I believe that I have grown as a person and have experienced things that have made me aware that my early beliefs about Samoa's education system and the U.S. military were naïve, if not misinformed. And I felt that many other natives and/or

military members were experiencing the same ordeal, and chose to remain quiet, to leave the status quo as it is. I have been away from American Samoa for many years even though I recently visited in 2006 to conduct this study. My social, spiritual and cultural views (or lack thereof) are different, or almost the opposite than when I was growing up. I realize that we all eventually grow old and die but somehow I wanted to believe that the Samoan culture was not to blame; they were highly misinformed. I reminisced on my years growing up in American Samoa and a lot of it was good. I just never realized how much my home was so restrictive, culturally, educationally, and socially. I felt that I needed to do something to address these issues.

In addition, I felt that I would experience the pressure to leave the status quo as is and to accept U.S. hegemony, but I knew, from the moment I conceptualized this study, it was something I needed to do, as a researcher and as a Samoan trying to understand her heritage.

As I stated earlier, my identity is a combination of three different cultures, where I grew up: Samoan, U.S., and the military. Quite frankly, it could be overwhelming thinking about the different expectations that each culture places on me but I continue to remind myself of the integrity that must accompany this study. In other words, I would not make the data speak something that is not there.

Additionally, I never intended to offend anyone. I am grateful for the all benefits I have received from the Samoan education system and the U.S. military because I have gained so much. However, I am concerned that this study could cause controversy among Samoans, both living in Samoa and those who are serving in the military or living abroad, because they would be incensed to read my study and might even feel that I am "biting the hand that fed" me and/or that I have "aired our dirty laundry." Some might even say that I am a traitor, am confused, and too smart for my own good. Other than that, the one thing that worries me the most is that my study might cause more controversy against the very folks I intended to help.

I felt strongly about the critical awakening that had reshaped my thinking because it fueled the desire to launch this study so that other minority groups, who might be experiencing similar issues, could benefit from hearing a voice that they, themselves, could not find. This voice is the one silenced by the dominant culture, according to Va'ai who emphasized: "…especially in the educational curriculum, which emphasized for so long a Eurocentric worldview, relegating the indigenous and migrant languages and productions to an inferior place" (in Hereniko and Wilson, 1999). I strongly believed that I had received my critical awakening, at this time in my life, for a reason. I believe that I am more mature and better prepared to handle these tough issues than I would have been 10 years ago.

Thiong'o called it "decolonizing [of] the mind" (in Hereniko and Wilson, 1999). Marsh wrote that "the first step in our mental decolonization is to recognize the effects of colonialism…the largest weapon of imperialism" (in Hereniko & Wilson, 1999).

CHAPTER 5 METHODS

Selection of Participants

This study entailed narrative interviews of American Samoa natives who had attended college and/or joined the military. Forty potential participants were recruited; interviews with 11 military members and 10 college graduates were used as data for the study. I used purposive, non-probability sampling and the two groups were called college and military.

College Group

For the college group, I contacted the American Samoa Community College and asked to speak to the college president. The island is quite small so I knew this president, although it was purely from a distance. She was out of the office so I was transferred to another administrator, to whom I gave my speech about the study. I asked her if she was interested in participating and she agreed; we set an appointment for the next day. Since I was familiar with the Samoan environment, I decided to use the local telephone directory and contact my prospective participants. My sister, also a college graduate also recommended people who she knew were college graduates. This method worked out well because sometimes I was given a referral, but since I started accumulating more than enough names, I stopped asking for recommendations. Each time I set up an appointment, I arrived with the consent forms and had it filled out prior to the start of the interview. The criteria for participation were:

1) must volunteer and sign a form that explained his/her rights.

2) must not have received any assistance from the U.S. military while he/she pursued his/her post-high school education.

3) must have a minimum of seven years of K-12 education in American Samoa. This criterion was crucial so that I would receive the viewpoints of natives who attended school in a colonial setting.

4) must be a college graduate of a U.S. institution.

5) must be a resident of and employed in American Samoa. This criterion was meant to recruit natives who lived most of their lives in a colonial setting.

I interspersed the interviews, meaning I interviewed a college graduate and then a military member, but it started becoming that way by default because I interviewed whoever agreed to participate, who met the requirements. I also believed this method helped me refine my interview guide because a respondent from one group triggered new questions that I had not thought about before and vice versa.

Military Group

For the military group, I contacted the local U.S. Army Reserve unit and depending on whether the individual identified him/herself as a military member, would I give my speech about the study and ask if he/she wanted to volunteer. If a non-military person answered the telephone, I would ask for the person in charge, which I had already known from the telephone directory, if he/she was a military member. Again, I was very comfortable contacting people because I already knew how military organizations operated so I knew when they had physical training, which meant they were not in the office, or when they had Sergeant's Time Training, which meant the entire unit was conducting military training and would not be available. Almost all of my military study participants were from the Army Reserve unit because I asked and received referrals. All volunteers were given the forms that explained the purpose of the study and the criteria for participation. The criteria for participation were:

1) must volunteer and sign a form that explained his/her rights.

2) must have a minimum of seven years of K-12 education in American Samoa. This criterion was crucial in getting the viewpoints of natives who received most of their education in a colonial setting.

3) must be a resident of and employed in American Samoa. This criterion was meant to recruit natives who lived most of their lives in a colonial setting.

Procedures

Each interview lasted between one to two hours. I conducted between one to four interviews per day, depending on the participants' availability, using the Interview Guide (see Table 2). Some interviews were back to back, while others had hours of time in between. I obtained the respondents' permission to tape record the interviews but I did not transcribe any material until I returned to Ohio because my transcription software was not operational. I never thought to transcribe it manually since I had interviews almost every day, including weekends.

Most of the participants did not care to review their interviews, except for a few interested ones, who told me that the study sounded fascinating. I did inform all respondents that it was not a requirement to review their transcriptions. The respondents were briefed on all study procedures before the start of the interview and consent forms were signed.

Coding and Triangulation

I used Lichtman's (2006) narrative analysis approach where "you concentrate on the gathered stories and analysis and look for epiphanies" (p. 163). "The meaning is in the story and the interpretation of the story by the researcher" (Lichtman, p. 165). I also looked for metaphors because Koro-Ljunberg wrote that "metaphors….connect different layers of text even by telling different stories… (in Lichtman, 2006). I read each transcript multiple times and looked for broad, very narrow, and recurring themes. With the help of my dissertation chair, I grouped together common themes, giving them a brief code, until all transcribed material was completed.

All phases of coding were done in collaboration with my dissertation chair. She read the transcripts, and checked my emerging coding scheme, and worked with me on refining the coding of the data

Confidentiality of the Data

Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their interviews. In order to preserve confidentiality, participants chose a pseudonym of their own, or one that I listed, to use during the interview and on the interview transcript. Participants' names did not appear on the transcript, or in any documents described in the study (such as this dissertation). I locked all interview transcripts in a briefcase and secured the briefcase in a drawer at my residence. I was the only person with keys to both, the briefcase and drawer. The signed consent forms were kept in a separate, locked location at my dissertation chair's office.

CHAPTER 6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Twenty-one Samoans were interviewed for this study. Half of the respondents, or the first ten listed, were current/former military members. The remaining 11 were college graduates. Figure 2 provides the pseudonyms, gender and group of each participant.

Figure 2: The Interviewees

NAME	GROUP/GENDER	NAME	GROUP/GENDER
1.Faleula	Military/Male	11.Niua	College/Female
2.Litaea	Military/Male	12.Moliga	College/Female
3.Sanele	Military/Male	13.Matalasi	College/Female
4.Taua	Military/Male	14.Maleifua	College/Female
5.Pulotu	Military/Female	15.Galuega	College/Female
6.Tupua	Military/Male	16.Vailia	College/Female
7.Liona	Military/Male	17.Elia	College/Male
8.Remo	Military/Male	18.Pule	College/Male
9.Tutu'a	Military/Male	19.Ipulani	College/Female
10.Salanoa	Military/Male	20.Ofeila	College/Female

		21.Uiagalelei	College/Female

The demographics of this sample were as follows:

- 21 participants
- 11 college, 10 military
- 10 males (4 college, 6 military)
- 11 females (9 college, 2 military)

- Out of 21 participants, 3 opened their own businesses (1 military, 2 college)
- Out of 11 college graduates, 6 work in the education system (5 in public, 1 in private; all females)
- Out of 10 military, 6 work for the military (1 as a retiree; 5 in active duty)

- 5 Master's degree holders (2 military, 3 college)
- 1 Juris Doc degree holder : college
- 12 Bachelor's degree holders (5 military, 7 college)

- Ages 30-39: 5 (all military)
- Ages 40-49: 10 (7 college, 3 military)
- Ages 50+: 6 (3 college, 3 military)

- 6 siblings or less: 10 (6 college, 4 military)
- 7 siblings or more: 11 (6 college, 6 military)

I have chosen to tell the stories of my interviewees in two different ways. First, I share four "case studies" – a specific description of the interview and information learned from four specific participants, Salanoa, Niua, Faleula, and Herene. Then I turn to a description of the analysis of all 21 interviews. In this section, I present a framework that emphasizes contexts of home life, education, culture and the economy, as well as the career decisions made by those who joined the military versus those who went to college.

The Journeys of Four Samoans

Salanoa

I had just interviewed a college group member and wanted to look at some historical books on a bookshelf that I noticed on my way in to the interview. As I perused the titles, a short-stocky male approached me and asked if I needed any help. I politely told him that I was just admiring their references but something told me to keep talking to this guy. Although I had been calling prospective interviewees ahead of time, I asked this gentleman if he was interested in participating in my research. He smiled and asked "what type of research?" I explained my research to him and he lit up. He introduced himself as "Salanoa" and then invited me to his corner office, but not before he introduced me to his co-workers. Salanoa was an assistant librarian who worked at the public library. His office space was an 8 x 8-foot square corner that was separated by a partition cordoned off from another co-worker's space. Another partition separated the last space, where five workers, three females and a male, seemed to be on an extended lunch-hour shooting the breeze and sharing buttered crackers. Salanoa introduced me to all of them and then we proceeded back to his corner office.

Salanoa seemed well liked by the others and as we sat in his office, he apologized for not having any refreshments to offer me. In the Samoan custom, hospitality is very important. I smiled and told him it was no problem. Salanoa was dressed in a colorful printed *lavalava,* the customary Samoan wrap-around attire, with a plain white collared shirt that was tucked inside his *lavalava* and secured with a belt. His tiny office housed a desk, two chairs, and a bookshelf, filled with all sorts of reading materials. He had family pictures displayed on his desk among the stacks of files scattered about. Salanoa apologized for his messiness and asked me to have a seat in the chair facing his desk. He attempted to organize his desk before we started our interview. I provided him the consent form and interview guide. He skimmed through it,

signed and dated the form, and tore off the bottom copy to return to me. He put his copies in his desk drawer. I started the digital recorder for our 90-minute interview.

Salanoa is a graduate of the K-12 education system in American Samoa and is the seventh child of nine siblings. He's married with seven children and his wife is a high school administrator. Salanoa is the oldest boy among his siblings with two older sisters but spoke as if he were the eldest child. He said his father was very protective of the girls so he assumed responsibility of his siblings whenever his parents were away from home.

Salanoa enjoyed his childhood but he said food and money were tight, and both his parents worked. As soon as he graduated high school Salanoa joined the Air Force, with his parents' blessings. He enjoyed the military and sent a monthly allowance home to help his parents. Salanoa spoke with confidence and pride about the military, but his face softened when he talked about three siblings who passed away while he was in the military. He felt bad that he was away during that time, although he did attend the funerals. I asked Salanoa what happened, as if my concern would make it any easier, and he told me they had all died from complications of flu-like symptoms. He told me that his family could not afford to send his siblings to Hawaii for better medical care. I told him I was sorry for his loss and we proceeded with the interview.

Salanoa did not reenlist in the military at the end of his six-year term. Instead, he came home, found his current job, and contributed towards his family's financial burdens. Salanoa told me that his family often contributed large sums of money towards Samoan customary functions and that he wished our culture was not such a burden. Salanoa met his wife at one of the Samoan functions and they dated for a short time before getting married. He ended up moving to his wife's village but often returned to his village to help his parents with family affairs.

Salanoa did not have a role model but always tried to be a decent person. His parents were religious and their family attended church every Sunday. Salanoa completed his associate's degree while he was in the military. He started taking classes towards a bachelor's degree twice a week in the evenings and slowly worked his way up to completing a master's degree. Salanoa told me that education was very important to him and that his wife also had a graduate degree. Salanoa and his wife try to be role models for their children and he noticed some positive things happening. For example, Salanoa's children are all planning on going to college, and two of his sons want to go to college through the military.

Salanoa talked about the low education standards in American Samoa and how unprepared Samoan students are to enter U. S. colleges. When asked about his college experience, Salanoa told me that he was lucky that two other Samoans were taking college classes and they encouraged one another, but it was difficult. Salanoa told me that his family was blessed that his parents were still alive, that he and his wife had completed their graduate degrees, and that his children were healthy. He thanked God everyday for blessing him.

Salanoa turned bad experiences of growing up in poverty and losing three siblings, into a positive outlook on life. He ended his military obligation so that he could return home and help his parents. He completed both an undergraduate and graduate degrees, all while working and supporting his family and he became a role model to his children. Not all my respondents had such a neat story to tell.

Niua

Niua came from a family that valued education, although both parents did not complete college. She is the fourth of her parent's five children. Niua has three brothers and a sister. She was born in Samoa and is a product of the K-12 education system. She had very nurturing parents and a positive education experience. She felt that her

stimulating home life contributed to her strong work ethic because her parents were both passionate people who believed in social justice. Niua believed her strong character is a result of the moral investment that her parents instilled in their children.

I found out about Niua from a previous interviewee, who felt that Niua would be ideal for the study because she was a strong advocate for educational reform in American Samoa. I called the telephone number that was given to me and Niua answered. I expected either a secretary or an answering machine since I was told that this new school was doing well and Niua was the principal. I quickly remembered hearing about this new school and thought that maybe she hadn't fully organized her team. Her website had revealed a five-person staff, including her, but it was still in progress even though it had been operational since 2004.

Niua immediately agreed to an interview although she was leaving for a conference in New Zealand later that evening and had lots to do before her trip. I was impressed that she would meet me on such short notice. I arrived at her office right after lunchtime and Niua greeted me at the door. She was casually dressed in Capri pants, a polo shirt and sandals. Niua told me that this was a new office location and the remodeling was on-going. In a room across from her office was a classroom that had some of her students engaged in the assignment for the day. Niua told me she could spare 30 minutes for the interview because she had to return to her class.

After the human subjects items were completed, I turned on the tape and we started. Niua spoke passionately about the work she did, and excused herself twice to answer two cell phone calls, without ever leaving our interview. After each call, she picked right back up where she left off and our 30-minute interview turned into an hour and a half interview. I noticed that she was aware that we had gone over time but she had so much to share with me and didn't seem to want to quit.

Niua felt that she did not have a role model, even though she came from a family with a strong worth ethic. Her father owned a bookstore and her mother was active in her own local causes. Niua excelled in school. I believe that role models often fill the void presented by the missing element in the emotional, mental, social, physical, or spiritual realm. Niua lamented that she wished she had a role model to help her with her college decisions. She wasn't even sure she wanted to go to college, much less the program of major she entered. She didn't say how she settled on engineering but it seemed to suit her. Since the lack of a role model was a prominent recollection of Niua's early formative years, this became a lifelong mission for her because she decided to become a role model to mentor young adults.

Niua's parents were involved in her education and prepared her to become an independent thinker by slowly allowing her to make decisions that would ultimately affect her, such as what to do after high school. At her high school graduation, where she was valedictorian, Niua was filled with mixed emotions. Although she enjoyed her childhood and had a good educational experience, she was skeptical about college. She spoke of the encouragement that her had parents provided throughout grade school before she left home for college.

College life turned out to be better than Niua expected and she even spent a short stint in the Navy. Upon completing graduate studies in engineering, Niua returned home. Most people who knew her thought she would remain in her field and start her own construction company, but Niua had other plans. She wanted to mentor students so that they would be better prepared for their careers so she opened a private school for K-12 scholars.

Additionally, Niua volunteered annually at the high schools to help educate high school students about career decisions, by sharing her college and career journeys. She administered career assessments to help students identify career options based on their interests, values, and abilities. Niua's work complemented the high school counselor's

work in that she set up a shadowing program so that students can learn first-hand about a job to see if it will be a match for them. Students get a chance to follow a professional employee around for a day (e.g., education director) in order to get a 'taste' of the job. Niua told me that the Samoan community liked what she is doing but many could not afford her services, so she volunteered some of her time. Niua had hoped that the Samoan government would see how much better students could learn when they are provided the right tools. Niua believed that many students were suffering academically because the public school system didn't have qualified teachers and because the curriculum standards were lower than the purported benchmarks. At the end of the interview, I promised to stay in touch and we hugged good-bye.

Faleula

I met Faleula through a high school friend who I had met for lunch. I told my friend about trying to get interviews with military members and she told me about Faleula, who had retired from the military. I called him up and he agreed to meet me the next day. Faleula is a Marine-retiree who worked as a logistician at the local Army Reserve Center. When I called to set up the interview, he told me that he could get me more military members from his office, if I needed them. I was excited and took him up on his offer. I ended up with one additional interview and four more leads. Faleula was a man of his word.

As I drove to the interview site, I reminisced about my military days and how I used to talk so much about it. Lately, I never mentioned it until I was around other military members because of the backlash from the war in Iraq. As I suspected, I felt an immediate bond with Faleula even before I met him. The reason was because I knew he had served in the military up until retirement, which meant he served at least 20 years. It still amazes me when I think about how long so many military members put their lives on the line, put their lives on hold, sacrificing everything for what they believed was

necessary. I just cannot believe I was one of those who sacrificed most of my adult years for something I no longer believe in. I came back to reality as I saw Faleula approach.

Faleula was physically fit, slender, still sporting a military haircut, wearing neatly creased pants and a form-fitting dress shirt. He had a friendly demeanor although I could tell would snap back into the stoic military Drill Sergeant, if the situation warranted it. Faleula had served in the infantry and was a former drill sergeant and paratrooper who had served in both Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He was what people would fondly call “a soldier’s soldier”, much like Colin Powell, who served proudly for 30 years in the Armed Forces and made being in the military the place to be.

Faleula shared his passion for the military, which he said, happened by chance. He came from a village on the western side of Samoa, where he attended all 12 years of grade school. He is the youngest of eleven siblings and the only one who retired from the military. He didn’t have any idea what he wanted to do after high school, so he went to college. He spent two years at a college on the east coast and then returned home. He had not completed his degree but decided that it was enough. He ended up teaching math at the local high school.

When asked why he didn’t finish college, he said he just decided to quit. Before he went to college, he just wanted to get out of Samoa. At that time, military recruiters were not congregating in the high schools, as they are now, so he never heard about the military. He received an academic scholarship from the government, which was his ticket off the island.

Faleula spoke about his role model, a former math teacher who is now a politician. He said that his teacher got him interested in math, which was his major in college. Faleula heard an announcement on the radio that military recruiters were looking for “a few good men” so he called them up.

Faleula took the entrance exam, passed, and joined the military. He said the military was hard during the first three years but after that, he started liking it. He ended up staying for 30 years and his eyes lit up with pride over this fact. Faleula remained motivated even after he retired from the military and finished his undergraduate degree and has started work on his master's degree.

Faleula told me that the military exam was not hard for him but these days; students are having a hard time passing it. He told me that the biggest hurdle for Samoan students was reading comprehension and that our schools needed to make reading a priority, starting in the early grade levels.

When asked about the best thing he learned from the military, he said it was 'discipline.' He said that discipline made him understand his life goals and it made him grow up faster. When asked what he missed about the military, his response was 'the camaraderie.' The word 'camaraderie' alone took me back down memory lane. A common thread that many former military members spoke about was the bonds that they formed in the military that crossed through race, class, and gender. No matter which side of the planet one came from, no matter their color, socioeconomic status, or whether they are male or female, military members are trained to be a cohesive unit and 'teamwork' becomes the watchword. Teams, not individuals, fail, therefore everyone failed or everyone won. This concept is similar to the Samoan culture in that the greater good of the family is more important than individual goals. I agreed with Faleula that the camaraderie fostered in the military made being in the military a lot more tolerable.

Faleula has spent many hours talking to students about their choices after high school. He stressed the need to educate students about being able to get a college degree in the military such as going full-time at a military academy or going part-time as an option and not limiting themselves to the first available job or what the recruiter offered because there are many that the recruiter will never mention. The reason is that

recruiters have a quota to fill certain job specialties, such as infantry, supply, petroleum, etc. and these jobs are not the most requested ones but they happen to be the most needed to fill according to military needs. One thing a military member learns early on is that the military's needs are always first.

Faleula also placed calls to the military recruiters for students who seemed to be getting the run-around. He said many students and their families believed that the military was their only option for a better life. He said that the lack of jobs in Samoa left many students with no other choice but to join the military. He also said that a lack of career assessments in the high schools opened doors for military recruiters, who were out to fill quotas. Military recruiters offered free career assessments and backed them up with signing bonuses. The career assessment was the tool that alerted recruiters to their target candidates. Although high school counselors offered a career assessment, it was unpopular among students, who had to initiate it, and it was not pushed by the administrators. Students were left to their own devices.

Faleula believed that many students are 'left behind' in the school system because a lot of them cannot read, others miss school often to attend to family obligations, and teachers are unable to 'catch them back up'. Faleula spoke of the Samoan culture being a hindrance to the educational needs of its people and the reality that many students graduate high school when they should be retained. He empathized with students who took the military exam and could not relate to the diagrams shown because they were never exposed to such things. For example, tractors and trailers are uncommon in Samoa, and trains and speedboats are non-existent; therefore, the lack of culturally proficient (Lindsey, Robins & Terrell, 2005, p. 97) or the need for teaching materials applicable to the Samoan culture, was a factor not taken into consideration by testing proctors. Although this cultural proficiency was lacking, Samoans seemed to tolerate the military exams better than the college entrance tests.

Faleula ended our interview by saying that our education system needed to re-look the curriculum because it was not helping Samoan children to be successful.

Herene

Herene works for the judicial branch of the Samoan government, having majored in pre-law. She had not passed the entrance examination and was pondering a change of careers. We met for lunch and had our interview afterwards. She had been working long hours and was overdue time off; she welcomed a lunch away from the office.

Herene came from a small family and was the middle child, with a brother and a sister. She lived in American Samoa most of her life, except for when she was away at college. Her recollection of pre-school was mainly playing games and counting with seashells or pebbles, which she said was not really educational.

Herene didn't begin to enjoy school until she was in fifth grade when they started learning about different cultures in other parts of the world. She said it was then that things started to make sense. For example, when she learned about the U.S. Constitution and saw pictures of the White House and the Capital Building, she connected it to learning about the location of Washington, D.C. and where laws were passed and how Congress operated. She started enjoying science and learned how the rain started and how water evaporated. It was an exciting time for her and she relished this period of her life.

By the time she was in high school, science and math had become her favorite subjects and she excelled in both of them. She won the math award in her junior year of high school and one of her teachers started inquiring her about career fields that involved math. Ultimately, she majored in pre-law because she recalled being an avid fan of the detective show, *Columbo.* Columbo was a private investigator who always

won his cases and Herene decided that was what she wanted to do: put bad people away.

Herene received a government scholarship and decided to go to college in Washington state. Her decision was based on being away from home, but not being too far away, in case she got homesick. She said her parents had always told her that going to college was a serious decision and that she needed to get away from the familiar so that she could become independent and focused.

On her first day in college, she received the shock of her life. The classroom was full to capacity with over 100 students and the professor walked around lecturing. There were two assistants but the class was so large that it was impossible to have a close relationship with the instructor. Herene was the only Samoan and she felt isolated. The college was much larger than she imagined and the atmosphere was frightening. Although there were minority groups on campus, Herene did not feel comfortable befriending them so she stayed to herself, studying on her own. This proved to be ruinous as her grades dropped. By the end of her first year, she had a C average and was too embarrassed to tell her parents or seek academic guidance. What made matters worse was she failed her first attempt at the law school admissions test (LSAT). Herene thought she was just homesick and unfocused so she decided to take a break and go home.

At home, she finally broke down and shared the bad news with her parents. They were supportive and told her to do what she felt was best. After a much-needed break, Herene returned to the classroom. She didn't improve her grades and she started receiving notices that her funding would be curtailed until she improved her grades. By the end of the second year, she had not made progress and decided to quit. Before she left Washington, she took the entrance exam again and failed. This must be a sign, she thought, that her law dream was not meant to be.

Herene's mother told her about a cousin who was attending college in Phoenix, Arizona and thought that Herene should go visit her. This news lifted Herene's spirits as she planned her next trip to visit cousin, Alma. Alma was also a pre-law major and suggested that Herene apply there and be her roommate. It was a great idea so Herene applied to the college and was accepted.

It was great to be around family and this was just what Herene needed. Her grades shot up and she felt that she had redeemed herself. Her goal to become a lawyer was back on again. Although Herene's grades improved dramatically, she had failed, a third time, on the entrance exam for law school. She finished her undergraduate program and decided to go back home.

College advisors suggested that she stay the summer and get help with her exam, but Herene was humiliated and thought it was best to go home. By the time Herene settled back in to her old bedroom, she started thinking about changing careers. An aunt offered her a job as a bookkeeper at the family's hardware store and Herene accepted.

Working as a bookkeeper was not bad but it was not something Herene wanted to do for the rest of her life. Herene recalled a law program that she heard about in high school that was offered to minority students. She looked it up online. This program was not a law student's first choice because it was not regionally accredited but Herene decided that she had no other options so she applied and got accepted. The college program did not follow U.S. standards of proficiency and did not require the law school entrance examination. Herene completed the program and started practicing law locally, although she wasn't considered by fellow partners as a full-fledged attorney.

Herene manages to keep a smile on her face as she goes about her work, representing low-income clients and others who could not afford legal representation. Although this path had led Herene to her career destination, she felt that somehow

things could have been different. I asked her what she could have done differently and she said: “I should have asked for help in college. I should have stayed the summer of my second year and studied with other students.” It was a learning experience for Herene but she shares her story with high school relatives so that they won’t make the same mistakes she made.

The four stories I had just presented served as an anchor for my detailed analysis. These stories elucidated the ‘whole journey’ of an individual which set the tone for an understanding of the context that surrounded my participants, and the pathways that unfolded throughout their lives.

Understanding the Context of American Samoa

The journeys of Salanoa, Niua, Faleula, and Herene illustrate the complexity of life in Samoa, and the multiple influences on educational and career paths. I believe that the journeys that Samoan people make as they choose their careers and make life altering decisions, such as whether to enter the military or go to college, can best be understood by beginning with contextualizing the respondent’s lives. Such contextualizing allows us to understand the powerful impact of family, culture, and K-12 schooling on career decisions. All study participants elaborated on their experiences and as a result, five contextual areas emerged that provide the anchor for understanding the narratives of the rest of the respondents.

The five contextual areas that emerged are interconnected and clearly reflected in the career journeys described by the respondents in the four case studies mentioned earlier and further illustrate the impact each variable has on a Samoan member’s career decision. These five areas are: home life, culture, educational experience, role models, and the economy.

Home Life

The home life for a Samoan is basically the same in most families. The system operates on a patriarchal model where men are responsible for major decisions. The 76 square-mile island is divided into "66 villages and each had a council led by a *matai* (chief)" (Office of Insular Affairs, 2006, p.41). The council consists of men who are responsible for maintaining order in the village, such as deciding punishment for a thief, molester, slanderer, etc. (Pritchard, 2000). The council's *matai* keeps the villagers abreast of policies by walking the village road and making his announcements. On average, a village covers about a mile and includes about 30 households. "Each household averages six children" (CIA The World Fact book, 2007, p. 105) and this number is higher in rural areas. In most cases, both parents work in order to support their large families, as well as the numerous cultural obligations that seemed to soak up the paycheck as soon as it was cashed. The most popular jobs held by Samoans are located within the government and teaching was the top of the list. Although religion is not a part of the government, Samoan families believe that the pastoral vocation is the most respectable job for a male.

Religion is very important to the Samoan family and most activities center on it. For example, at dusk, not a soul is seen outside of the confines of the home because each member is participating in the family's ritual to give thanks to God for blessings of the day. This ritual is enforced by the village council, who ensure that no one is out and about or else they will suffer a penalty. As Vailia explained "at the end of each day, our family gathers together for evening prayer."

Most of the respondent's parents had limited education and wanted their children to have better lives so that their own families would not "struggle to put food on the table" (Ofeila). "Mom and dad did not have past a high school education" (Vailia).

Despite the parents' limited education they expected their children to do well in school. As Galuega put it:

> "If I had stayed [in college], maybe I would have gotten a better office in return and I wouldn't be teaching and I wouldn't be able to help out my parents so ever since I came back, I've been helping my parents. That's such an important part of our culture."

Ipulani added:

> "My parents have both very limited educations. They both have not gone to high school but my father has some education, and he was one of those Samoan chiefs."

One of the characteristics of home life that has a pervasive influence on children and youth is the patriarchal nature of the family. Several participants noted the important and dominant role of the father in making most major family decisions. For example, Vailia reported:

> "When I told my husband about the Air Force recruits, my husband said that our son was going to college to whatever school that he qualifies, but hopefully it's one of the military academies. His dad has a lot of influence on him, not to take the liberal arts college route [but] to take this [military] route…"

Maleifua added: "My father was a teacher…so our upbringing was disciplined."

This patriarchal structure is also reflected in the organization of the typical town council in Samoa, which is composed of men who are responsible for maintaining order in the village. Family values for children emphasized compliance, etiquette, and a regard for elders. Ofeila stated that children "learn to do chores at an early age" and Vailia noted that:

> "Dad [was a] strict disciplinarian…he also did not allow us to work while we were in school…values [were] instilled and we became good and obedient."

Participants also emphasized the many ways that Samoan families care for their children. Since Samoan families tend to be large because grandparents and other relatives may live in the same household, physical and economic care for children can be all-encompassing for some parents. Although in most cases both parents worked, there were a few cases where families that could not afford for both parents to work as described by Galuega:

> "I guess my father because he was a teacher...you know mothers, they stay home and take care of the kids. Since there are eleven of us, she has to stay and take care of the kids."

Many participants also entered the paid labor force at an early age in order to help support the family as Tupua related:

> "I didn't want to put the burden on my parents…so I thought I needed to take my future in my own hands…and the U.S. Armed Forces would take care of me, protect me, and I would grow up."

Grandparents, relatives, and in most cases, older siblings, became responsible for the younger children, while parents were away working. Litaea had this to say:

> "I have niece and her mom is in Fiji. I don't know where her dad is. I take care of her part-time and the grandmother is always on her about school and about seeing other people [especially boys] and not giving her an opportunity to breathe, to be a kid."

This cultural mandate of caring for the family draws many Samoans back to the island when family members need them. Samoans who return home normally do so because they feel obligated to help take care of their ailing parents and to support the family's cultural commitments as communicated by several respondents.

Ultimately, these family structures and dynamics brought particular pressures to bear on adolescents as they were thinking about their career futures. Often, Samoan youth were urged by their families to enter careers that would provide monetary support quickly in order to be able to provide funds for their families of origin:

> "I did not finish at Hawaii Pacific College. Actually I did not have a degree then. I came back to teach U.S. history. I just didn't finish college. I decided to quit." (Faleula)

> "I wanted to make my family proud. I went into the military right after high school. I joined for four years and I was a Navy clerk." (Tupua)

> "I am the eldest of five siblings and I wanted to come home and care for my parents. I was homesick. First I taught at the local high school before I got this job…" (Matalasi)

> "I went to college in the Northwest for one year…my mom was getting old so I needed to return home to take care of her." (Pulotu)

> "I'm gonna go home because you…when I came back…there's certain jobs that require that degree…so I got a job teaching and I'm helping my parents." (Moliga)

The home life is the foundation where children learn family values and what is expected of them. The family is the support system for Samoans and in the next section; I will describe how family values are shaped by culture.

Culture

The Samoan culture plays a huge role in shaping the lives of its members, from education and career choices to where to live and taking care of parents. The culture drives Samoans to make decisions based on the welfare of the family unit rather than individual preferences. Although many Samoans have been exposed to Western thinking through the formal education system, most try to hold on to the *faa-Samoa* as explained by Remo:

> "I would teach them early on to value their culture and to try to improve our way of life. I think we need to hold on to our culture and our rituals but to instill a system that treats people fairly. Our Samoan system is based on title and land ownership and we need to change. But I know our elders are afraid to change, we are content on being average."

This idea of being average goes against what most Samoans are taught, which is to be the best that they can be as indicated by Liona:

> "Yes, as a matter of fact, I wanted to be an astronaut. I wanted to be the first Samoan astronaut. I didn't do well in science and math so it became out of the question."

Science and math were subjects my respondents seemed to mention as being a weak area in their education. Take a look at Vailia's thoughts on this subject:

> "Yes, I think if I had better math teachers, that knew how to teach math, abstract math, which I don't understand. I would do anything to get out and take classes in business. How to do numbers, how to multiply and subtract…business math would be kind of the path I would take out of algebra, geometry and trigonometry. So I would say if I had a good grounding in math, I think I would have stayed in that track. In the math field, engineering or accountancy. So I think it would really have to do with the variability in the expertise of the teachers…well, I definitely would have wanted to [go into] engineering so that I could be an astronaut. I would be the first one…and a woman at that. The hard sciences, physics and chemistry. I was the only one interested in math. There was no mentoring. No one to look up to, who said, this is something you ought to look into. It was always the more practical field for me. English, language arts, the business classes, typing, economics…"

Additionally, more than 50% of the study participants reported that the Samoan culture had a huge effect on their outlook on life and their career journey, although I believed this figure could be higher. For example, it was difficult to understand if the respondents viewed the culture as having a positive or negative effect on their career decisions because on the one hand they would say that the culture was a hindrance and in the next sentence, retract the former statement. Let's take Niua's case. She believed that the U.S. and Samoan culture could co-exist side by side but later in the interview, she tossed the idea out saying that the two cultures clashed with one another. It was almost like Niua did not want to say anything negative about the Samoan culture for fear of reprisal, but at the same time, she was adamant when she spoke of the culture clash in Samoa. This feeling was the same vibe I got from other study participants who voiced strong opinions about the Samoan culture indicating that it often hindered educational growth. However, these same respondents have praised the strong Samoan culture that has survived foreign influences.

In most cases, Samoans are taught to hold on to their strong culture but to also be competitive in all areas. Oftentimes, competition between U.S. and Samoan values collided with one another and leads one to lament that 'something's got to give'. A case in point: a student who misses school to attend to cultural obligations versus missing the cultural function in order to compete in a Speech Festival that will increase her/his academic achievement. This, and similar ethical dilemmas, are faced by many Samoans who have to live in a world that has two competing cultural paradigms.

Salanoa, a college graduate, provided valuable insight on this issue:

> "I don't think critical thinking is taught to our kids because our elders have taught us that that's not good to be brighter than your age and that hinders our children's education."

However, Samoan children are not to act boastfully or disrespectfully. Mead's (1928) groundbreaking work *Coming of Age in Samoa* depicted the social development of young Samoan girls and that "to be brighter than one's age was a sign of disrespect" (p. 24). For example, it was foolish to correct an adult. In the Samoan culture, such issues are handled behind closed doors but are often left alone as a way to save face. Faleula summed up my respondents' feelings about the Samoan culture:

> "The family life contributes a lot to the education of the student…but I think our culture hinders our students' educational learning."

On the other hand, Samoans have endured U.S. colonization and have adopted many of the Western ways into their culture; in some ways, to their detriment. Nevertheless, they continually try to incorporate both cultures as reported by Niua:

> "….there's a total clash [in] the way we were supposed to, and the way mainstream American students have been nurtured, so that in itself, the culture is oppressive in that way, and umm, it's umm, two paradigms, cultures have the same values, taking our culture and trying to apply our principles and cultural norms into this Western model of education doesn't work…a lot of times."

In *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress,* Harrison and Huntington (2000) "examined the impact of culture in business transactions: whereas the West relies on the rule of law backed up by a judiciary, Asia has tended to rely on personal, often family-based, relationships…any institutional practice can work if economic development takes off -- but rule-based systems will increasingly prove superior" (p. 34).

In the Samoan setting, culture is everything. It is what has allowed Samoans to maintain their traditions despite outside influences. In the first section I described the Samoan's home life as the catalyst that cultivated the culture. In the next section, I will describe how the culture is maintained. Although the culture had been in place before any Westerner ever heard about Samoa, it all began in the home and extended into the K-12 education system. The next section will detail how the academic setting, which is the third element, has reinforced the Samoan culture.

Education

Education has always been emphasized in Samoan families as being important in providing windows of opportunity that could elevate their economic conditions. Ofeila's comments explained this concept:

> "In elementary, there was this one lady, she was the best teacher because if you didn't do your work, she would say 'you know what's gonna happen to you if you don't do your work? You're not gonna get anywhere, you know. You're gonna get lazy and other kids are gonna get better than you, so she's not…the education part and the motivation part which really makes you work. If you don't do your homework, she really gets on your case. So there was this one teacher…she was my 5th grade, then 7th grade, and she helped me in my 8th grade."

Although the 21 respondents in this study had mixed feelings about education, more than 50% of their comments could be summed up with Sanele's response: "school was OK". Early childhood education (ECE) was the first formal setting a Samoan child entered, usually when they were three or four years of age. These experiences, good or

bad, created the social behaviors in most students. The interviewees offered a very mixed picture of the education system in Samoa, from describing teachers who were very nurturing to describing a system that did not support advanced thinking:

> "There was a teacher I had for first through third grades; she was very good to me. During the summers, I went to the pastor's school and it reinforced the things I was learning at school, only it was all taught in Samoan." (Salanoa)

> "I went to Fia Iloa elementary and this was a school which took Samoan bi-lingual students, who were fluent in English…I had a very good teacher who taught me to value education…" (Pulotu)

> "TV was rare in a Samoan home but we had it at school and we learned from it. It was taught in the English language. Being a fluent English teacher was rare, so the E-TV helped a lot. I learned early on that good readers were praised, such as in the church youth groups, so I wanted to be a good reader. I did become a good reader, so much so, that I skipped third and seventh grades. In high school I had a good science teacher who taught me how to sift through the dirt for gold. I remember wondering how the ocean became saltwater and our teacher showed us how it happened. I learned all kinds of things that can still be applied to everyday living, such as using distilled water for a car battery, when you can't start a car." (Maleifua)

> "I did like school a lot so I went to college to become an elementary teacher and graduated at Pomona Community College with my bachelor's degree." (Remo)

> "…our school had the best teachers…there weren't a lot of teachers in those days, so e-TV became our teacher but it didn't impact learning much…I had to speak English the entire time I was at school…when my family moved to San Diego and I started fifth grade, I was not too far behind from the U.S. students…I guess my elementary school prepared me…" (Elia)

> "…you're just sent information, you know like you learn how to add one and one and when you look at our school system, there's so little in it that supports the nurturing and fostering of critical skills." (Niua)

> "…mostly because Early Childhood Education teachers are not certified and I don't know how they select them to teach…so what we did was mainly playing, counting from one to ten, using blocks, just a playtime…not so much education…after two years there, then they put us in the first grade at the elementary school." (Ofeila)

> "…in elementary, they were not helpful. They were totally dependent on us to pay attention…that was the advice I was given at home. I was told if I came home with less than a C, I was getting a spanking. So we studied hard and we did listen to the teachers." (Vailia)

> "We had E-TV in the classroom to help teach the classes…and we learned from it. It was taught in English language. Being a fluent English teacher was rare, so the E-TV helped a lot." (Maleifua)

The education experience that began in the home life and then layered with the culture produced the *faa-Samoa* or Samoan way of life. Although Samoans model their curriculum from the U.S., I believe that they are receiving what Ogbu (1999) coined as *minority education.* Ogbu argued that often minorities received an education that perpetuated White supremacist views and added to their oppression. I believe the same thing is happening in the Samoa education system because the system does not prepare students for academic rigor.

One reason that Samoan schools are not doing well has to do with under-prepared teachers. Some people are allowed to teach in the education system without a college degree and teaching certification because someone with connections called in a favor to give a family member a job, and pretty soon, too many unqualified teachers had flooded the education system.

Niua shared a glaring example:

> "And then you look at the quality of the teachers in our school system, so many, especially in their formative years…you take a look at the qualifications of the teachers in the elementary schools…there's less than 25% who actually have bachelor's degrees. And that's a requirement in the national…you know NCLB, they don't really…that's not enforced. They talk about it but they don't do it. So you got kids who are graduating out of the two-year college trying to nurture a love of learning for children who are in their formative years. And how can you take someone whose minds…they don't even develop, you know, two years of college to nurture children who will grow up to be problem solvers, critical thinkers….it's not gonna happen because there you…their education is so limited in itself."

Although there qualified teachers in the Samoan education system, there are more untrained instructors who lack the education and experience to be in the classroom.

Under-qualified teachers and low pay are not the only issues plaguing the Samoan education system; the system is not currently meeting standards for achievement. One Samoan administrator shared how the U.S. curriculum is modified for Samoans; for example, when asked about the SAT-9 standards, this administrator told me that the curriculum was the same one that was administered in the U.S. Conversely, the cadre at the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) in Honolulu, Hawaii told a different story:

> "The only entity-wide assessment is the SAT-9, but the local curriculum is not aligned to it. The department would like to develop a local assessment that is culturally appropriate for American Samoan students and aligned with the local curriculum" (in Keller & Wilkerson, 2004).

Niua added:

> "If you look at the academic assessments, umm, the SAT-9, which is pretty…accepted…our schools are failing. They are scoring as low as four levels lower than their grade level. So when you have 12th graders reading at the 8th grade level and then going to the two-year colleges and becoming teachers and teaching at the elementary schools, that's not good. It's just not a good thing."

Additionally, other factors are involved in the maintenance of the *faa-Samoa* that is instilled in the home life and cultivated in the K-12 setting. The next section will cover the fourth factor: role models. Role models or mentors have been influential in molding the children of Samoa as they prepare to enter adulthood.

Role Models

A role model is defined as "someone who is regarded as somebody to look up to and often as an example to emulate." (Encarta Dictionary, 2006, p. 167) More than half of the 21 study participants had positive feedback concerning a role model, who was a person or a group of people who displayed the character traits that he/she admired and aspired to be. Faleula said my "history teacher was the role model" whereas Litaea recalled that his "role model was his oldest brother."

Other respondents talked about being a role model and each person felt that it was important to have one because the young people of Samoa needed them. Liona described it this way:

> "I see our young kids and they need a lot of guidance so I'm using what I know to help them. I volunteer to coach high school football because this is my way of giving back to the community. If they need help in applying for college or for grants, I volunteer to help them with their paperwork."

Salanoa added:

> "I hold baseball clinics to help kids develop their athletic skills but I tie it into their education by constantly applying the connection with learning a skill to practicing it to become proficient."

Niua, another college graduate, told a different story:

> "…I wish I had a mentor and a role model and to help me with academics and to make decisions for my life because my parents both went to college. I wish I had someone tell me my college options because I didn't want to go to college."

One respondent, Uiagalelei, was fortunate to have an intimate relationship with her role model. She related:

> "My husband persuaded me to go for my master's degree so that's what I'm doing. I like it. I want to be a leader for our young kids. I am working with teachers, doing home visits, to improve the learning needs, especially for our disabled students."

Moliga, another college graduate described her role models as a shared responsibility within the Samoan community:

> "I think it was the collaborative work between my parents, the *faifeau* (minister), and the teachers. And I think that they have that bond and in those days, everything you do here, you are going to be aware of…they will straighten you out."

In the next section, the fifth and last component that frames the context of this study will be explained. That component is the Samoan economy.

Economy

In 2005, American Samoa was at a "29.8% unemployment rate. Its revenues totaled $121 million: 37% in local revenue and 63% in U.S. grants" (CIA: The World Fact book, 2007, p. 34). American Samoa's minimum wages for 2006 were $2.63 - $4.09. Government employees started at $2.91, while the tuna cannery workers made $3.26 an hour (Office of Insular Affairs, 2006, p. 79). "Attempts by the government to develop a larger and broader economy are restrained by Samoa's remote location, its limited transportation, and its devastating hurricanes. Tourism is a promising developing sector" (Office of Insular Affairs, 2006, p. 91).

Elia, a college graduate and a former teacher, reported that "teachers' starting pay was $11,000 - $13,000 annually," a figure quite low when compared to other government jobs, even with an undergraduate degree. Many teachers stayed in the teaching field despite meager wages, as reported by Elia:

> "Yes, I graduated and returned home to teach. Back then, the pay was better, even better than working at the bank, which would have been a suitable job for me. I taught accounting at Manu'a High School and after four months of teaching, I figured that any other job would not be for me. I mean I knew there were other government jobs that might pay higher wages but money was no longer important to me. I knew our schools needed quality teachers and I wanted to stay to help."

Elia, a dedicated government worker for 30 years, had seen it all and still wanted to invest in the students so he kept teaching. As mentioned in previous sections, the teaching profession was the most popular occupation in American Samoa and this was especially true for natives who left and returned to the island seeking employment. The Samoan economy is fortunate to have college graduates return home to work for dismal

pay but I believe they really didn't have a choice, given their deep sense of obligation to the island and supporting their elderly parents.

On the other hand, many high school graduates never left Samoa for military service or higher education but floundered around looking for employment. The result was a large number of untrained employees in the workforce who were unqualified for higher education. Many of these K-12 graduates did not want to work in the tuna canneries, even though the starting salary of $3.91 was higher than that for a government employee ($2.77). Western influences that portrayed tuna cannery work as "dirty", drove many Samoans away from the only employer that had the most job openings.

My use of the word "dirty" is not intended to degrade the tuna industry or to infer that it was an awful place to work. I described the collective experiences of my respondents. When I grew up in Samoa over 20 years ago, the tuna cannery was not the place any academically inclined person wanted to work. When I returned home for three different visits, this sentiment had not changed the way Samoans viewed work at the tuna cannery. As soon as you begin to approach the vicinity of the tuna canneries, the distinct and powerful smell of dead fish overwhelms you. Many employees who did not have any formal education, except for the management team and a few who overlooked the foul odor, had secured employment at the tuna canneries. Since the military requires a high school diploma, the only other employer offering jobs on a consistent basis was the tuna canneries.

The shortage of jobs is not the only problem that plagues the Samoan economy, as described by Niua and Elia, respectively:

> "…you go to a company and they are all hiring…builders…getting a building license…the government…there is so much corruption. The licensing department…you can give them whatever money and they'll write you a license…"

> "I blame our culture for not making our leaders more accountable. We have so much corruption so the money that is supposed to be used for school improvements is gone. I think if Samoans worked together, Samoa would improve. They are just so territorial; everyone is looking out for their own good."

In summary, my interviewees described five factors that form the context of a young person's decisions about future careers: home life, culture, educational experience, role models, and the economy. These five are certainly intertwined and mutually influencing, for example, the family, culture and role models all emphasize caring for family members, and giving back to the community, and this strong cultural value is further necessitated by an economy that is characterized by low wages and high unemployment as well as a sub-par educational system.

In the next section, I lay out the vocational journeys embarked upon by this group of interviewees. This section looks both at the career paths of those who went into the military, as well as those who went to college; throughout these descriptions, I loop back to the context of family, culture and economy.

Career Journeys

The experiences within home life, K-12 education, and the economy often craft the likely vocation for a Samoan. One word could best describe the reason that led them to their choice: survival. Before Samoa was introduced to U.S. conveniences, the land and sea provided the means for survival, and they still could. Nowadays, Western influences have taken the driver's seat in Samoa as native traditions are slowly eroding. Out of the 58,000 people in Samoa, the most popular routes of choice for economic prosperity were military service and/or higher education. This is not to say that half of the Samoan population took one of the two paths mentioned. Conversely, these two vocations were the most appealing choices, among all choices in Samoa, for upward mobility. In the next section, I will explain, using the narratives of my study participants, how the prevailing mood or tone of the atmosphere set the stage for the two most

popular choices of a Samoan for upward mobility. I will begin with the impact of the military.

Military Members

It's no joke that Samoa is a military recruiter's dream assignment. This may be true also in other Pacific islands but Samoa has steadily produced more recruits for the military than any other island in the Pacific region. If you met a Samoan, nine times out of ten, someone in their family was or is in the military. T. F. Kapeteni (personal communication, November 12, 2006). Somehow, Samoans have never forgotten how drastic economic improvements to the island began with the arrival of the U.S. Navy in 1900, so it has become somewhat of a tradition as relayed by Litaea:

> "My brother went to…the military. So I thought I could do that too…to me, I think they're heroes for what they did and what they fought for, what they stood for…I think they're proud to call themselves citizens of the U.S…the opportunity to join and be in the military, and be part of a team…that's what drove me, that's what's driving the students."

Moliga agreed:

> "Oh, I guess my father had too many brothers in the military and they retired and even on my mom's side…there were quite a few people, like the older siblings were the ones that left for the military…"

All ten of the military members interviewed attested to their satisfaction in choosing military service as a career. Sanele reported:

> "The first thing that came through my mind was I wanted to go see what's out there. The only way I can do that is to join the military."

Pulotu added:

> "Well, if it weren't for my mother, I would have pursued more college. But I do like the military because I like to stay in shape. They also provide a way to get your college degree and have a

career. But there are some downfalls to the military such as low pay, harassment, being away from home. I would recommend the military for discipline and college, sooner for males and later for females."

The lack of employment opportunities in American Samoa leads many folks to view military service as the most lucrative option, especially since it requires little education or previous training. With unemployment at 29.8% (Office of Insular Affairs, 2006, p. 38), Samoans are left with limited options; the military is appealing because it provides good employment so that they can contribute to the family's welfare. Liona attested to this issue:

"I completed my bachelor's degree…and returned home. There were not many jobs so I became a teacher. They don't pay well so I decided to join the Army. My parents did not want me to join but in the end, I did."

Faleula and Pule explained it this way:

"Yes, they want to go because they think it is one of their only options. Because what options do we have for students here in American Samoa? Work for the government? Work for the Star Kist tuna cannery? Go into the military? Not every one of them can afford college."

"No. I didn't have any idea of what to study. There were no career life planning classes so I took what was available."

Litaea, a military member, added:

"When you see money, it's something. When you get a paycheck, like I did when I first got my first paycheck, I sent money home to mom and dad because I'm doing something. I'm by myself, earning money on my own and I'm living on my own. I guess when they look at kids; their parents are in the military so they have material things. But why not join the military? It's like people [in the military] drive better car, live in better houses."

Samoan natives are further attracted to the military because of the numerous benefits. This attraction is also reinforced by the perceived higher quality of life enjoyed by current and former military members. Out of the 21 respondents interviewed, only

three indicated that he/she had no interest in the Armed Forces. The majority viewpoint of the respondents was related by Tupua:

> "I went into the military right after high school…it may sound ridiculous now, but it really is not, this idea of patriotism. Our military are fighting for the rights and freedoms…I felt that when I was young."

Litaea detailed his account:

> "My brother went to college through the military. So I thought I could do that too…influence in the military from back then to now is greater. There are more opportunities. They offer more college money…like an enlistment bonus for $3000 and up to $7500. So that kind of entices the applicant in joining straight from high school…where [else] can you get free money…[my] parents always said one day you will move on. That's what's driving the students."

Along with the attractiveness of the military, and the need to help support families, there were real barriers to college entrance for many of the interviewees. Probably the most important of these was the lack of a good elementary and secondary education. Faleula testified that:

> "…it seems like to me like, they're graduating when they should not be graduating…that's why higher education is a long shot for them…I have 300 students and probably 75% of them are still reading at the third or fourth grade level. They memorize stuff and quote from memorization but when you ask them to apply the concepts or something, they don't understand. They have been seniors. You can still give them a book and they still cannot read."

Yet, despite the pull of the military, and the barriers to going into higher education, many students pursued their dreams of a college education. The next section explores the journey to college.

College Graduates

In Samoa, there is an allure of college attainment. Many bright Samoan students were in tune with the notion of prestige and could quickly connect it to universities like Harvard or Stanford. Although college is not as popular as military service and is often

seen as the road less traveled, some Samoans see higher education as the viable option. In this section, I will explain how the few Samoans kept their hope alive and chose the road less traveled.

A Samoan who chose the college route was in the minority group because higher education was seen as a long-term solution to a pressing problem. The temptation to "have it now" rather than later and to live in the moment is often why the college path is the road less traveled by many Samoans. Another reason for forgoing the college choice was that it seemed unattainable or too difficult a process. The language barrier and the mounting entrance paperwork were enough to curtail this option. Additionally, the risks were high: failing in college seemed greater than failing in the military. In other words, Samoans are naturally physically adept, a trait required in the military, and so the Armed Forces appears to be a no-brainer for them. On the other hand, mental toughness in academics is not nurtured very well in the Samoan education system making higher education a long shot. Nevertheless, Samoans understand the power of education from being trained by the early missionaries and adopted by the churches. Today, most Christian congregations hold summer school, run by the minister and his wife that teaches Samoan language arts, religious matters, and sewing. Samoans know that most degree-holding individuals occupy the highest seats in the government. For example, Samoan novelist Figiel described this phenomenon in her best-selling book, *Where We Once Belonged*:

> "Siniva tore up the B.A. certificate. She burned the M.A. in front of her mother's and the taulasea (Gods) were called up from all over Samoa to find out who the angry ghost was, and to exorcise it from Siniva so that she could use her palagi (white) knowledge to secure a job in the government or private sector" (p. 11).

In rare cases, Samoans who could afford to take their time in finding employment enrolled in the local community college. Many of them felt that they could succeed in higher education and they didn't want to waste the 12 years that they had spent in school only to end up at the canneries. Although they were skeptical about

higher education, they believed that the local community college could ease their transition into the college atmosphere. Moliga explained:

> "That was really fortunate for me to do because I went off-island for school. I really didn't have that much of a problem finding my way around college like other students do. I could immediately identify…the only sad thing is I had to take some other courses because of the prerequisites that I had not taken at the American Samoa Community College, but other than that, the experience itself was worthwhile."

The local college experience does not work for everyone. Ofeila completed her two-year study at the American Samoa Community College before getting an off-island scholarship at a West Coast university. She described her unfortunate encounter:

> "So my first semester, I figured I'd just see how big the school is and maybe I can do better. And I never got used to the thing…that's when I finally told my parents what's going on. I wanted to leave. If I stay there, I would flunk out. I would never graduate because it's such a big school. People are in their own thing. After a year there, I couldn't make it. My grades were not good; I was a C average. And the Department of Education said they're gonna cut me off from my scholarship if I don't do well. I think it was the culture shock and having no support system. I thought if I was the only Samoan in the school, I would do better. But I found out that I can't do it. And I took the LSAT. I didn't have anyone to study with. The test is so big and I had to study on my own. My scores weren't that good. There were a lot of international students and all kinds of students but I really didn't take that route. I really didn't seek them out or the counselors on how I could get some help with the LSAT. I still wanted to do my own thing but there were some help available but I really didn't pursue it. So I came back my second year and I didn't make it. They asked me to stay there so they could counsel me and help to steer me somewhere else to go but I think after that, I was kinda down, maybe upset and really sad. I thought this is it. This is the end of the road."

It appeared that a lack of a support system and not allowing others to help her with her studies resulted in Ofeila's downfall at the U.S. institution. She returned home and has not been able to get back on the educational track that she had pursued. Ofeila works at the court house as a paralegal, although her dream of becoming a lawyer is not completely dashed.

Moliga, another college graduate, told a different story. She is in the breed of die-hard college candidates who would not rely on the military for prosperity. Although

she wanted to join the military, like many family members, her parents dissuaded her so she pursued college.

Earlier Faleula reported that every Samoan could not afford college, and this was the predicament Moliga encountered. The lack of educational funds forced Moliga to change from her highly competitive college major into a major with the least amount of credit hours, which was unrelated to her interests. She recounted an experience that left her perplexed:

> "…I came back and asked the government for help…I was working on my pre-med degree and they said they couldn't help me out so I decided to make the best of what I had to graduate with whatever degree because I had more than enough at the time. So I said forget it, I'm gonna go back home."

Moliga ended up being a teacher, a job that her father held, and one that was far from her mind. Like I mentioned earlier, many teachers are not college graduates or teacher certified so this became the default job for Moliga.

In summary, a Samoan's career decision that led him/her to military service or higher education involved critical factors, such as the military presence, education preparedness, the culture, the need to support the family, etc. Oftentimes, the decision to return home became another significant phase in their life cycle, even though the economic assessment was unfavorable. Also, a significant finding was that the career journeys for both groups: military and college were messier and complex than anticipated. In other words, although some college graduates enjoyed a significant improvement in quality of life, they still mentioned that they admired the military and/or they had wanted to join when they were younger but circumstances, such as disqualifying factors of weight standards or medical conditions, made them ineligible. On the other hand, some military members spoke of pursuing higher education while serving in the Armed Forces because they could not afford the tuition had they pursued the college route.

Returning to American Samoa

The decision to return to one's homeland is filled with mixed emotions. On one hand, the 76-square miles of paradise can be quite isolated. On the other hand, most Samoans feel obligated to return to their roots and relive the old traditions. For example, Samoans who migrated to the U.S. still talk about missing home and how they long to return, even though they know Samoa's economy is suffering and inconveniences are insurmountable.

As an example, I share my friend Malama's story. Malama was a savvy businesswoman who returned to Samoa after living in Beaumont, Texas for over 20 years. I visited her family in 2004 prior to her move back home. Malama's husband had a good job working for the city and her teen daughter seemed to enjoy her life. Malama and her husband had bought a nice Spanish villa and life was grand.

During my visit to Samoa last year, I ran into Malama and she invited me over to her home, which was a small, one-bedroom that she rented. Malama shared with me that her daughter and husband were unhappy living in Samoa because of all the inconveniences. Malama had made the decision to move the family to Samoa after learning that her father was ill, but all she talked about was how she missed her shopping malls, restaurants, being able to go to Wal-Mart late at night, etc. To counter her loss, Malama opened two nail salons, made quarterly trips to the U.S. for shopping, and frequented the night clubs. Her lifestyle had changed drastically and her night life became the town gossip. Malama said that she didn't care if people talked but her expressions said otherwise. Having a private life was impossible because there were only so many places of entertainment.

Malama's case illustrated a common predicament that many Samoans experience when they returned home after being away for some time and becoming accustomed to a different way of life.

Many Samoans return home after being away for various reasons, such as wanting to be near family and taking care of parents, etc. Of the twenty-one study participants, all of them returned home after being away for college or military service. Their commitment to the family was always in the forefront and many natives returned home to help out the family. Most military retirees and college graduates returned home with new vehicles and containers of miscellaneous items that were shipped via boat. These items would establish their new dwelling. Many of them would open up small retail businesses with the wealth they had accumulated because every returnee wanted to show off their material gains. The island of Samoa is over 2,000 miles away or five hours by air from Hawaii. Only one airline provides transportation services to Samoa, with two flights per week. As a result, economic improvements are slow and entrepreneurial ventures that alleviate this void are highly sought.

One of the more common reasons that the study participants returned home was "to be with family, especially taking care of parents" as collectively voiced by Pulotu, Salanoa, Moliga, Matalasi, Maleifua, Ipulani, and Ofeila.

It was not enough that a Samoan had a successful career and was able to send money home to his/her parents. Samoans wanted to show their family and others what he/she had become as an individual and the best way of doing this was to return home and contribute towards the family's success. By returning home successful, he/she could help elevate the family name in ways that most Samoans envy. The appeal of being successful in one's homeland and among one's people is paramount. Litaea underscored this thought:

> "…Basically I would tell them my story. How I became what I am now and the trials and tribulations that I went through and how I succeeded and overcame obstacles. I tell them what I had to go through to reach the pinnacle of where I am now. And I just flat out tell them about my life…because when I came back, I went to see my first grade teacher. I got to see my other teachers and they were so proud of me…because I came back to them and told them that I'm here because of you guys, because of the education you gave me, because of the discipline and everything you taught me. I'm the product of what you did and I think we need more…I care

about the students…and the sheer gratification is when they graduate and they do something with their lives. The reason that I say that is that all my teachers that I talked to said the same thing…"

Additionally, respondents were not only delighted with sharing their social capital with the Samoan people, but also savoring the fruits of their labor as described by Moliga:

"No, my greatest reward is seeing my students and coming back and working with them. I have students when I used to teach at Fia Iloa [elementary school] and they graduated and two weeks later I see them in the store and they said, 'teacher, remember when you said [that] if we can't hack a pencil, then find a job and we said, we will' and that's the greatest reward when you know you've made an impact in someone's life. I don't' think any money or time spent can reward the fruit that comes out of knowing [that] you made a difference in a person's life."

In summary, a Samoan's decision to return home was often triggered by a sense of belonging, of wanting to return to one's roots, and making a difference in their homeland. The next section leads right into the discussion in that my respondents' intentions for returning home were aligned with helping to provide a brighter future for loved ones who were unable to do it on their own. These loved ones usually did not have the opportunity and exposure to modern ideas and Western technology and thus were limited mentally, socially, and physically. Using the narratives of my respondents, I describe their hopes for the future.

Hopes for the Future

All 21 respondents in the study felt optimistic about their careers, although about one-fourth (five of the 21 respondents) had some doubts. For example, I sensed that Tutua's and Salanoa's sentiments were perhaps the common feeling felt by most of the participants, but chose not to voice:

"I think our culture needs to be somewhat balanced. We need to maintain our land ownership but we also need to know the opportunities that exist outside our island. Education is a key factor in getting a balance." (Tutua)

"…I worry about our children whose parents do not push them, the uninformed parents who don't understand tough love and that students must work hard or that if a student is given an opportunity to go to college, to take it, no matter if the money is not there initially." (Salanoa)

Nevertheless, all study participants expressed that all hope was not lost and that they could do something to improve the situation for Samoan education. Five of my 21 respondents elaborated on what they felt was their contribution towards enhancing education for Samoan students:

"…that's the reason I've been attending this class for 12 years now…it's a curricula that applies trade work with science…I always try to encourage them to go to college because that's where they'll make all their decisions. No one's gonna tell them to go to class, it's up to them and that's where they learn now to…or they end up back home. I tell them it's different here, you have your family, but when you go off-island you're by yourself and then you know about all the difficulties you have to face, on your own then that will force you to face those difficulties to complete [college] and come back home…" (Moliga)

"…we go out and teach the counselors on how to provide effective counseling to high school students. We hold an annual career day with a speaker from Australia. We have a job center that has many career resources for our students to help them find the right jobs for them. We also provide career development training for the counselors." (Matalasi)

"…one of my jobs is to visit the schools to see how the teachers are doing teaching social studies. I want it to be interesting for the kids…I am able to balance my personal and professional values…I am a mother, teacher, cheerleader whose impacting the young minds I come in contact with so it's satisfying…The kids whom I influence in high school are now in law school or studying to be a judge. I think I am giving back to my community, not as a lawyer, but in helping others do well in school so they can pursue their dream jobs. I am supporting my nephews and nieces and teaching them how to budget and save. I am working with agencies for outreach programs…" (Maleifua)

"Well, I tell the students that they have to decide what they want to do on their own…we focus on trades solely but if we have students that have high grades and they want to be engineers, then we advise them to go to a different school because here, we focus directly on trades." (Galuega)

"I would encourage them to pursue their goals. For career options, they should take field trips to the places where they might want to work, like they do on career day at the high schools. I think a day of shadowing will also benefit them." (Remo)

Every participant was currently employed at the time of the interviews and a few had even created employment opportunities for others. A few respondents ran government programs that helped prepare job seekers for the workforce. Still other participants volunteered their time and talents to teach skills that would equip the young men and women towards a brighter future. For example:

- Niua, a college graduate, opened a private school.
- Sanele, a military retiree, operated a retail business.
- Faleula, a military retiree, educated the community about military opportunities and benefits.
- Litaea, a college graduate, taught students how to apply to colleges.
- Tupua, a college graduate, managed a grant that increased educational awareness to the community.
- Liona, a military member, coached a Little League team voluntarily.
- Salanoa, a military member, coached high school football voluntarily.

Furthermore, all study participants realized that they could not change the negative aspects of the Samoan culture, in regards to the government and how they operated; however, in some small way, their individual contributions could go a long way towards improving the lives of Samoans students, one step at a time. Niua captured this thought so succinctly:

> "…but there's something to say about the government…they are such a prominent part of our lives…we've had 106 years under this government and we're getting federal funds…to really help our people requires something be a part of the curriculum and so it must come from the

> government. They're the ones who are educating 80% of our population. The other 20% is private, now we're doing what we can for the private schools. We definitely have plans to work with the Department of Education, to reach out to the public schools…and when you approach them and say that we need to do better, our kids need educational improvement, but you know it comes at a price and they don't like it. We have to find a way to work with them so that we're not a threat, a mutual working ground…we can only do what we're doing…if we try to get someone else to do it, uhh forget it…anything that helps to move us forward and educate our people but it needs to be out in the public."

In summary, all 21 respondents were optimistic about Samoa's future. They believed that that they could positively impact the lives of the Samoan people by sharing their skills and experiences and providing job opportunities to increase their awareness and knowledge and to elevate their socioeconomic status.

In the next section, I wrap up the study by presenting my private reflections on what I discovered during this process. This study was relatively personal for me and my expressions will underscore the predicament of exploring a topic that was an intimate experience for me as a member of the Samoan study population, both as a former military member and a college graduate.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

> "You know my thing is, my thing right now is that seems to be a problem with what's going on nowadays with the Samoan community is that they're waiting 'til they get to high school to try to solve the problem, which is too late. They need to start where it all begins, which is elementary…" (in Tsutsumoto, 1998, p. 71).

Samoans have been marginalized in the educational, political, and social setting for quite some time. My respondents' narratives spoke of these issues and all of them had strong views on how they felt such marginalization could be addressed. Their collective feelings were that the problem must be dealt with as early as possible. In fact, an underlying obstruction in the economic progress for American Samoa was the fact that they are still affected by colonialism. Samoans had done very little, if anything, to challenge U.S. hegemony that has infiltrated their oasis and has marginalized them for over 100 years. Their colonized state of mind has thwarted progressive efforts towards freedom because they were unable to shed the Euro-American ways of thinking. In this chapter, I focus on the major conclusions that I drew from this study, its limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Major Tenets

Three underlying themes stood out during my reflection on this study, which helped to underscore the issues that have plagued the Samoan people. These themes are 1) the collectivistic nature of the Samoan culture, 2) lack of social capital, and 3) an underdeveloped educational capacity. I will address each theme individually.

Samoans have relied heavily on the *aiga* (family) for guidance on almost all matters. This collectivistic infrastructure requires teamwork and cohesiveness from its members, exact characteristics that are fostered in the military and which is probably why the Armed Services appeal to Samoans. A military organization cannot function without full consensus of its people and this state of mind aligns with the Samoan

perspective. Collectivistic societies would view higher education as an individualistic pursuit. In contrast, Western values promote capitalism, free thinking, creativity, etc., and these views contradict the Samoan collectivistic nature. Tsutsumoto (1998) wrote about one of his college participant's views on this matter:

> "…So it's independent, but then it goes back to how Samoan families are…family structure and when you go to school, they break it down to an individual thing like you think for yourself. But when you're home, your dad or mom thinks for all of you…But when you go back to your roots it's a family thing, which I think family structure is very important to Pacific Islanders, especially Samoans" (p. 73).

Incidentally, Samoans have been introduced to these individualistic, U.S. values through the education system, grasping that these Western U.S. values could bring greater success and wealth for them. This becomes a predicament Samoans face: follow their collectivistic culture, chase after individualistic pursuits, or try to combine the two. The latter is what many Samoans have tried to do, much to their downfall. Collectivistic societies mandate the familial position, whereas individualistic societies, like the U.S., thrive on exclusive rights. As Enright (2004) wrote:

> "The ethnocentric innocence that prevailed in Samoa well into this century has in recent decades been overwritten by another set of standards, one in which 'culture' (whatever that is) and tradition have become employable tenants in a larger political game. It is a new political game for Samoa. And Samoa is a place where the communal, consensual, tightly layered social order often makes day-to-day life look—to an individualistic Westerner—like constant politics." (p. 9)

A second theme that dominated the study was the lack of social capital or not having "the educational, social, and cultural advantages that somebody from the upper classes is believed to possess" (Encarta Dictionary, 2007). Nevertheless, a small percentage of Samoans were successful in acquiring higher education degrees and they could have organized a system that capitalized on their social capital so that American Samoa would be economically stronger. Unfortunately, Samoa's social capital is dispersed in many directions and is not operating at its potential because not enough people see the benefit in a united front that could create an institutional change. Not

many folks want to challenge the status quo of American Samoan. Tsutsumoto (1998) noted an aspect of this phenomenon:

> "This observation leads to an area of concerns which supersedes the Samoan community—the obvious lack of support networks which could have provided assistance in the form of dissemination of information on any programs which prepare students for financial and academic challenges of higher education" (p. 79).

For Samoans, social capital could be acquired from being in the military or from pursuing higher education. However, most Samoans pursue military service because it would require less time to achieve financial wealth, in order to address their immediate needs. On the other hand, the social capital from higher education would incur an inordinate amount of time and resources to acquire and cannot provide immediate relief. Also, as noted in the last section, many college graduates are not taking full advantage of their social capital to improve their economy.

The third theme that stood out in the research was an overriding lack of educational capacity. Like social capital, forward thinking programs, such as a progressive and culturally proficient curriculum, were not actively pursued because of a flaw in the system. In 2006, American Samoa was operating off of "67% of fund from U.S. grants" (Office of Insular Affairs, 2007) so the incentive to create wealth building possibilities that could increase education capacity was missing. For so long, Samoans have been receiving hand-outs from the U.S. that I fear that they have gotten comfortable. Is there was no incentive for wealth building because they have accepted their marginal conditions? By the way, no one had challenged the system to change, so why create a problem? American Samoans have lived under minimum health standards and a malnourished economy for so long that a modification would seem wasteful and overwhelming. Memmi (1965) wrote extensively about this idea of the 'colonized mind', which has leaked into the Samoan society and has contaminated Samoans into consenting to their own oppression (p. 34). Harrison and Huntington (2000) explained this phenomenon and I believe it fits the Samoan situation:

> "At mid-century, underachievement black Americans was easy to understand. It was an obvious consequence of the denial of opportunity—in education, in the workplace, in the polling booth—to the minority that had never been invited into the melting pot, the minority for whom the Bill of Rights really didn't apply...but a racial gap remains in advanced education, income, and wealth…" (pp. xx-xxi).

In a 2002 visit to the United Nations, American Samoa's leaders petitioned for the territory to continue to remain under the U.S. umbrella. Ahmad (2006) wrote:

> *"IN JULY 2002, A LOCAL SAMOAN LEADER TOLD THE* SAMOA NEWS, *'OUR RESOLUTION LAST YEAR [2001] WAS VERY, VERY CLEAR, ON WHERE AMERICAN SAMOA STANDS.' AMERICAN SAMOA WISHES TO 'RETAIN ITS PRESENT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICAN [SIC] AS AN UNINCORPORATED TERRITORY.' IT IS APPARENT FROM THE STATEMENTS OF THE AMERICAN SAMOA LEADERS THAT THE ISLANDS HAVE DETERMINED THEIR STATUS. THEY WISH TO REMAIN A TERRITORY OF THE UNITED STATES" (P. 73).*

From the above statement and my visit to American Samoa in 2006, current conditions presented a dismal effort towards an improved and prospering economy. American Samoa had not developed a sustainable agenda towards fiscal growth. One of the reasons for this was that American Samoa still operated off of an old paradigm that had never kept up with modern advances. For example, the election of American Samoa's first native governor in 1977 had been a vital concern to the U.S., and for good reason. Ahmad (2006) described this phenomenon:

> "In 1905, Naval Governor C. B. Moore, the first official 'governor' of American Samoa, reported to the assistant secretary of the Navy that Samoans possessed a 'desire for knowledge of civilized government—that encourages the hope that knowledge will bring with it the spirit of emulation of the virtues of good citizenship'. Acting with that in mind, Moore called the first *fono* of the whole territory. Moore intended the assembly to be composed of elected representatives of the districts; however, those sent to the *fono* were chosen according to traditional Samoan custom. From this experiment, Moore concluded that the Samoans were not yet ready for representative government in the American sense" (p. 72).

Although many U.S. developments have been instituted in American Samoa, sustainable efforts are absent. I believe the reason Samoans continue to experience fiscal difficulties is best explained by two economists:

> "History tells us that the most successful cures for poverty come from within. Foreign aid can help but, like windfall wealth, can also hurt. It can discourage effort and plant a crippling sense of

> incapacity. As the African saying has it, 'The hand that receives is always under the hand that gives'. No, what counts is work, thrift, honesty, patience, and tenacity. To people haunted by misery and hunger, that may add up to selfish indifference. But at bottom, no empowerment is as effective as self-empowerment" (Landes in Harrison and Huntington, 2000, p. 12).

> "One might attribute their behavior to fatalism, a reverence for the past when things were better, blind pride, and accompanying lack of openness that stands in the way of learning and innovation. One thing is certain: This country is doomed to more failure until the human crisis grows and forces them to reflect on the deep-rooted impediments to their productivity" (Fairbanks in Harrison and Huntington, 2000, p. 274).

A lackadaisical concern for the problems and a defeatist mentality have smothered and suppressed the hopes of Samoans to move towards an improved economy.

My discussion of the themes of collectivism, social capital and underdeveloped educational systems has brought me full circle, back to the theories that informed this study. In the next section I return to the theoretical underpinnings of the study, to ascertain whether the theories on minority education and post-colonialism are the most valid ones for understanding the study results. This section will examine what I discovered to be core canons, the theories, that I believe have shaped my understanding of the character of the Samoan people.

Returning to Theory

John Ogbu's *minority education* and Edward Said's *post-colonial theory* or *post-colonialism* were the major theoretical positions I employed in understanding the educational and economic hindrances in American Samoa. Even after I had conducted the interviews with the study participants, I was convinced that both the lasting impact of colonialism, and the mis-education of the Samoan people, had not lost their grip and were still widespread. These two networks have had lasting effects on Samoans and have marginalized their chances for *economic capital* that Porter explained as "the beliefs, attitudes, and values that bear on the economic activities of individuals, organizations, and other institutions" (in Harrison & Huntington, 2000, p. 283).

For example, the Samoan curriculum that was modeled after U.S. standards in 1900 had contributed to the impediments in educational growth of Samoan students by utilizing a *minority education* platform to teach students. This platform restricted critical thinking skills and global awareness and had become a roadblock, as well as the academic model for aspiring college scholars. Such an educational model perpetuated the belief in Samoan students that they could not succeed in the world of academia. Tsutsumoto (1998) described this notion during an interview with two Samoan college students:

> "Academic status...I believe. A lot of kids think that if they don't have the grade point average, there's no chance they can get into any college" (p. 11).

> "I'd have to say it would be academics. You know mostly, they just don't have the grades to get in and the academic background to get in. Oh it starts earlier on, and that's based on my own experience" (p. 12).

Additionally, *post-colonial theory* helps us to understand the intensified educational and economic burden that many Samoans faced. For so long, Westerners had depicted negative images and stereotypical labels about the natives that immediately cast a shadow of doubt into their trustworthiness and capabilities. Campbell (2005) explained:

> "You will never get the Samoan to do anything; they will promise everything you ask them to do but will not work beyond the minimum necessary to sustain life…therefore, what you are doing is a waste of money" (p. 56).

Tsutsumoto (1998) also captured similar comments that reinforced seeds of doubt as to a Samoan students' competence that led to their feelings of inferiority:

> "They [some of my relatives] didn't expect me to go on [to college]. They'd be like, 'so where are you gonna work at?' They didn't ask me where I was going to go to school. They would start asking me, 'so where am I gonna work at?' [The obstacle for me to deal with was] just overcoming the stereotype that we couldn't get to college and that once we were there, we were going to flunk out. We weren't going to survive" (p. 43).

A Seattle public school teacher's sentiments added fuel to the fire saying:

> "Forget about them. They're better left outside" (quoted in Tsutsumoto, 1998, p. 31).

Also, During summed up the effects of colonization, which I believe have caused more damage to Samoans than they want to believe:

> "For victims of colonialism, culture means strategies of survival as much as heritage, so that the gap between inherited or official meaning (ideology) and its individual performances provides room for resistance and individuation" (in Wendt, 1995, p. 189).

Colonialism had changed the Samoan culture in many obscure ways but surprisingly, most of the study participants were still optimistic about the U.S. intrusion. Only one respondent, Niua, out of the twenty-one respondents spoke directly to the issue of U.S. colonization, saying that most Samoans did not view themselves as being colonized, which is a sad reality. Other participants spoke about government corruption and how it must be ended and that leaders needed to be held accountable. This notion reminded me of Memmi's (1965) idea of the colonized people becoming colonizers as a way to reap the benefits of white supremacy (p. 121). No doubt, this is what has happened to the Samoan people.

Limitations of the Study

After analyzing the research data and mulling over the issues that have troubled the Samoan natives, three issues surfaced as being constraints to this study. First, the study did not include natives who never returned to Samoa or those who have made their homes outside of the territory. I believe that an understanding of how they came to accept such a decision of not returning to their home roots, when it was the norm, is crucial. Findings from this study revealed that all the respondents returned home after being away mainly to help take care of their parents. It would have been helpful to learn

the rationale employed by those Samoans who never returned. Why were they able to stay away when their collectivistic nature may have pushed them toward returning?

Second, college group participants were not probed deeper into why they persisted in higher education when so many other Samoans never attempted it or quit. How were they able to contribute to the mounting monetary needs when they were financially strapped with college expenses?

Third, the fact that I am a Samoan native, a college graduate, and a former military member, presented ethical issues that I had to guard against. I researched my own people, who I had easy access with, but it opened up areas of scrutiny for me as well as Samoans, who have deep-seated ties with military service. I was concerned with being perceived as a problem, rather than a solution, to the economic woes experienced by Samoans.

A Petition

This section has probably been the most difficult to write because I came across other studies that been have conducted about the Samoan economy that have made solid recommendations on ways the territory could implement changes for improvement, yet efforts toward implementation were not visible. I read with dismay a speech given by the governor of American Samoa to the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources (U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, 2007) about the emerging economic developments on the island. On paper, it all looked good. The governor spoke of improvements in the roads, education system, and health facilities, but in reality, not much had advanced. This was my observation during my visit in 2006. So this section is really my petition to the Samoan leadership that it is indeed time for a 'revolution of values' (hooks, 1994, p. 27) because the old paradigm has not been working and the Samoan people deserve better living conditions that use the best that the U.S. and the Samoan culture have to offer.

I had lived in American Samoa from 1971 to 1983, ever since childhood where I began pre-school and then graduated from high school. When I first arrived, a *palagi* or white man, appointed by the U.S., was the governor in office. I remembered that we had a beautification competition among the villages, an incentive that kept the island tourist-ready and much less polluted. I remembered going to the airport to await incomings relatives, who were welcomed by a troupe of island dancers, who then draped flower leis around their necks. It was beautiful. The only museum on island had a substantial display of our material culture and I always enjoyed going through it.

Every Sunday at the crack of day, one of the extended families honored grandfather by delivering a coconut basket full of Samoan delicacies that had been freshly-cooked in the *umu,* or stove oven. Samoan families have their biggest meals on Sunday and titled chiefs, such as my grandfather, enjoyed the service of families under his tutelage.

These were but a few of the efforts that I believed had made all the difference between living on a remote island and enjoying it. For a native, I understood the good, the bad, and the ugly of living there, where one third of the population lived in poverty and a lack of resources had become the norm.

Since I left for the military in 1983, I returned home four different times. Each visit was hardly better than when I lived there, and I felt that the island had lost its allure. Pollution was widespread, the roads had so many pot-holes, government buildings were not maintained, and the hospital was unsanitary— workers and visitors walked by water and debris that was in the middle of the floor and hospital rooms appeared unsanitary. Many villages still had no sidewalks, street lights, or cross-walks. The only museum looked like it had been looted because it used to contain a robust of cultural displays but it now only housed a bare minimum of items. It had surely not been maintained. I found out from local newspapers that funding had been cut. Enright (1992), the current Historical Preservation Director wrote:

> "…the majority of Samoans really couldn't care less about the archeological evidence of their prehistory or even about their prehistory itself. It is not an active part of their cultural identity. Samoans—like most people—live in the present, and what is past is past—except where their own family's titles and lands are concerned" (p.11).

Before I left Samoa in 1983, the tourism efforts had dwindled down and pollution was mounting. Anti-pollution boards stood along the roads yet many islanders still dumped trash from their moving vehicles. Efforts to propel the island forward failed because the mentality had not changed. This underlying message was what Carter G. Woodson (1990) described in *The Mis-Education of the Negro,* where he wrote about the Negro:

> "The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples' (p. xi)

> "The large majority of the Negroes who have put on the finishing touches of our best colleges are all but worthless in the development of their people. If after leaving school they have the opportunity to give out to Negroes what traducers of the race would have it learn persons may thereby earn a living at teaching or preaching what they have been taught, but they never become a constructive force in the development of the race. The so-called school, then, becomes a questionable factor in the life of this despised people" (p. 2)

I believe that the same power relations, U.S. supremacy and Samoan culture, are at odds with one another in American Samoa, with the former being the colonizers. There have been numerous study commissions, business reports from public and private sectors, to advance the Samoan economy but still, sustainable evidence falls short. No matter what recommendations are made on behalf of improving the Samoan economy, nothing will be accomplished until the collective minds agree because no decision is made without consensus. The Samoan community must unite to create a new vision for improvement but more importantly, they must take ownership, if changes are sought.

I do not doubt that many Samoans have tried to instill good measures towards improving the economy, but I just believe that it will take a lot more than think tank

studies and congressional visits to institute and sustain a protracted change in American Samoa. I say this because while researching for this study, I located numerous articles and/or studies that had been undertaken to help provide solutions to the island's floundering economy, but few visible improvements can be found. Take a look at two recent ones:

- A Private Sector Assessment for American Samoa by Doane, J. and Gray, S., 2006 Island Fellows sponsored by the Office of Insular Affairs.
- American Samoa Business Opportunities Report by Stein, A. 2004, sponsored by the Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs

Other articles that also provide analytical data that speak about the distress felt by Samoans and what could be done:

- Statement of Honorable Togioloa T. A. Tulafono, Governor of American Samoa before the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, February 27, 2007
- No Child Left Behind and the Pacific Region, by Burniske, J. in Pacific Educator, Spring 2006
- State of American Samoa Economy, 2005 Annual Report to the Governor
- American Samoa: Accountability for Key Federal Grants Needs Improvement, December 2004 by the U.S. Government Accountability Office
- "Curfews, Culture, and Custom in American Samoa: An Analytical Map for Applying the U.S. Constitution to U.S. Territories" by Hall, D. 2001, 2, 1, in Asian-Pacific Law and Policy Journal

In addition, on January 18, 2007, American Samoa's congressman, Eni F.H. Faleomavaega was a guest caller on the Malama TV channel, a contemporary television broadcast in American Samoa. A prominent segment of his discussion was a petition to

the American Samoa government to initiate hearings on recommendations that were provided by a study commission over four years ago.

Four years ago, Congressman Faleomavaega had secured $600,000 from the U.S. Secretary of Interior to fund an economic study commission for American Samoa. The recommendations were completed and have been lying dormant in the territory's files. Further, the congressman had pleaded for over two years with the President of the territory's senate about this issue, to no avail (Malama TV Samoa).

I have great hopes for the future of my people but I believe any effort to improve must come from within the Samoan community. Once the people are on board with the change, external efforts, such as the recommendations by various studies and commissions, could be implemented.

Future Research

I ended the last section with advocating for a collective front by the Samoan people. In this last section, I propose four areas that would be valuable to the Samoan people so that they would have a better sense of the mechanisms that are hindering their economic progress.

First, I suggest an interview with the key leaders in the Samoan government to find out how they foresee the deficient conditions in Samoa and what they suggest as a solution. This would mean that they would have to agree that there is a deficiency and I do not believe that they would own up to it. I believe most leaders would say that the conditions are much better than before but I would beg to ask, what and whose standards are being used? As a follow-up to this inquiry, establish an outside entity, i.e., from the Office of Insular Affairs, which holds Samoan leaders accountable, and monitors the progress of implementation of initiatives. The key is to have a checks and balance effort or this inquiry will be a waste of time.

Secondly, I would investigate the government corruption that has permeated because federal funds are allocated each year but it is a mystery where it ends up. Again, the checks and balance officials must be unbiased in order to separate what is ethically right or wrong without having any cultural ties.

Thirdly, I believe the Senate seats, which are elected by peers, must be put to a popular vote. I agree that seasoned Samoan chiefs are vital to understanding the Samoan culture but I believe that leaders can hire subject experts, if needed. The 'good old' boy' network must be dismantled so that fresh ideas can be spread across the decision-making group so that an effective change is instituted.

Fourth, and final, I recommend a study of those Samoans who have committed themselves to making a positive change in American Samoa. This study exposed me to number of grass-roots workers who had talent, zeal, and a desire to see their native land prosper. These individuals took low-paying jobs, worked astronomical hours, and/or created non-existing programs that were needed in the community. These dedicated individuals, teachers, health care workers, professionals, etc., were not afraid to challenge the status quo because they saw the 'greater good' in their efforts. These brave men and women could be rewarded by being appointed as a member of the coalition that will spearhead the institutional change that American Samoa needs. The hope for a better future for Samoans is situated within themselves.

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TABLE 1: PARTICIPATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

Dear _____:

My name is Michelle L. Carmichael and my advisor is Dr. Sally A. Lloyd, from Miami University, Ohio.

You are invited to participate in a study that looks at how Samoans decide on their vocations (i.e., go to college; go to military service, etc.). I will ask you to complete a short biographical data sheet about yourself. These will be kept anonymous, as you will select a pseudonym to conceal your identity and all your information will be kept in a locked container.

You will participate in one of two interviews, based on your group. One group will be college graduates who attended most of their K-12 schooling in American Samoa. The other group will be military members, whether on active duty, retired, or separated from military service.

The interview session will take between 45-90 minutes. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time or elect to not answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. If you leave the session before it ends, all your material will be destroyed. You will not be asked to do anything that exposes you to risks beyond those of everyday life. The benefit of the study is to get a better understanding of how Samoans formulate their decision for a vocation after high school, specifically why some choose the college/university path, while others choose the route of military service.

If you have further questions about the study, please contact Michelle L. Carmichael at telephone: (513) 742-1616 or e-mail: carmicml@muohio.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Office of Advancement of Research and Scholarship at (513) 529-3734 or email: humansubjects@muohio.edu.

Thank you for your participation. We are very grateful for your help and hope that this will be an interesting session for you. You may keep the top portion of this page.

****

Cut at the line, keep the top section and return the bottom section.

I agree to participate in the study of vocation decisions for Samoans. I understand my participation is voluntary and that my name will not be associated with my responses.

Participant's signature _____
Date _____

TABLE 2: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA SHEET	
1. Pseudonym	
2. Gender	Male Female
3. Age	
4. No. of years a resident of American Samoa?	
5. Highest level of education completed	BA MA PhD EdD
6. Higher educational institutions attended	
7. Number of brothers / sisters	
8. Rank among your siblings (eldest, 3rd of 6 siblings, etc.)	

TABLE 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1) Where did you grow up?

2) Describe your school experience? What stands out?

3) Who helped you the most with education?

4) When did you decide on what to do after high school? Why?

5) What would you have done differently if you didn't take the route in #4?

6) How has your career decision affected your life? (For military members: describe military life.)

7) Would you want others (children, siblings, loved ones, etc.,) to follow in your career path?

8) What advice would you give a Samoan contemplating his/her future career?