

(De)constructing Tongan Creativity: a *Talanoa* about Walking in Two Worlds

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The growing number of Tongan creators searching for a place of belonging and acceptance between the two worlds Tonga and Aotearoa New Zealand has contributed to cultural spaces shifting in terms of identity negotiation, effects on expressions of traditional and contemporary and Tongan values in creative work and confusion around the notion of 'creativity'. This study deconstructs the concept of creativity, in the walk between two worlds. Being a creative in New Zealand equals being innovative, invoking "the shock of the new" (O'Connor, 2010, p. 15). However, being creative in Tonga equals honouring tradition in one's work, the ideals of "interdependence, collectivity, cooperation and authoritarianism" (Weiner, 2000, p. 18).

In this study the method of gathering data was carried out by conducting in-depth *talanoa* (cross-cultural process of storytelling derived from Pacific islands traditions) with Tongan artists and spokespersons investigating their lived experiences and cultural identity. To further enhance each voice and richness of the *talanoa*, thematic analysis assisted in elucidating meaningful insights. From the intercultural communication literature, key cultural values of each 'world' can be identified. The key values of western societies are often said to relate to individual rights and freedoms; justice in terms of equity and equal access; intellectual property, promotion of competition and consumerism; and, scientific-rational thinking (Kornelly, 2008). Tongan values, according to Taufe'ulungaki (2011), consist of 'ofa (love) and its subgroups *mafana*, which drives 'ofa to action; *malie*, its transforming quality; *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *feveitokai'aki* (reciprocity), *lototo* (humility), *mamahi'i me'a* (commitment), *faitotonu* (integrity) and *feongoongoi* (transparency and accountability).

My findings revealed three main areas: *Attitudes toward creativity*, *The role of culture: sharing the creative burden*, and *Creative and cultural identity development* that impacted the walk of two worlds for my participants. Differences exist in the cultural values of Tongan artists, particularly in the Tongan artists' attitudes toward their creative works, and their overall understanding of what 'creativity is'. This is depending upon whether their knowledge of *anga fakatonga* (Tonga way, customs) which in turn, led to an analysis of New Zealand culture's effects on Tongan artists who live in New Zealand. The differences in the way Tongan artists view creativity within the Tongan and New Zealand cultural contexts therefore determines what a creative person is, and how they balance their *fatongia* (duties), obligations while upholding their creative work. Conflict exists across and between the walk in both worlds, as bi-cultural New Zealand Tongan creators grapple with whether a compromise can be made in terms of being contemporary and also respectful towards tradition.

Therefore, this research reveals that the walk in two worlds that Tongan artists conduct requires more understanding behind what 'creativity' means and how it can be valued in the past, present and future to 'move forward into the past'. By focusing on the 21st century alone to investigate the effects of traditional and contemporary expressions of Tongan culture in the creative work of Tongan artists, further *talanoa* will enable us to 'walk backward into the future'.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed: _____

Janet Fatafehi Lupe 'o Talau Tupou
2018

Fakamālō (Acknowledgements)

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understandings.”

Proverbs: 3:15

Looking back as I move forward, I am amazed at how much time and energy has gone into this document. First and foremost, I thank God for filling my cup of patience, strength, will power and encouragement throughout this time. There have been countless times when I wanted to give up, quit, delete every word typed but You have remained my calm in the storm - and I am eternally grateful.

I would like to acknowledge the advice and guidance of my primary supervisor Dr. Frances Nelson, thank you for being such a positive influence for me in all areas – you helped me to trust myself in pursuing my studies to this date, and I am so grateful. I appreciate your time, energy, and investment in me, including your careful and multiple readings of my manuscript and continued mentorship. You always enlighten me through your wide knowledge and deep intuitions about where I should go and what is necessary to get there.

My second supervisor, Dr. Angelique Nairn, thank you for all the hope you have put on me before I thought I could do any research at all. You have always encouraged me to think intensively, even when I was contemplating other avenues. Your precision in thinking has left a good impression for me to follow. Thank you for helping me pull through, in many ways than one. You and Frances are both colleagues that I now, call my kāinga.

Dr. Jaqueline Harrison, thank you for your support and assistance throughout this thesis. You have seen the best and worst of me during my academic pursuit as much as Frances and Angelique have. Thank you for being a strong source of support, always.

To my parents, Siosuia Pilikimi and Tihina Seli Katokakala, I relied on you both during this time to complete my uncompleteness – I love you both so much! This thesis, is dedicated to you both, after God. I cannot begin to repay you for your love, but I will surely try! I love you both so much and always will. I am also fortunate to have siblings who I can argue, cry, and laugh with: Steven, Christopher, Gina – a special thank you for your love, support and keeping me well-balanced throughout this time. Thank you to Gina especially, for dealing with me and your support during the late nights and days that never ended. All your constant words of encouragement have always kept me smiling. I love each of you so much. To my nieces and nephews that have always kept me young at heart, my wish is that one day we can all write one of documents! And why not? I'll be here cheering you on throughout all your ventures.

To all my first and second cousins, my church youth group – thank you for all your prayers and ongoing support and for accommodating my research and study. I can not pay you back for all the love and encouragement so from me to you, thank you.

I wish to also express my deepest gratitude to those who have facilitated my educational journey through the doctoral program: Jessie Hsu, thank you for always being a positive source of encouragement and going above and beyond for me in many ways; Dr. Alice Trugunna, I am grateful to you for comments on my manuscript, and attention given to other academic woes throughout the final leg of the race! Thank you so much. To my friends that never got the best of me: Sara, Ishita, thank you for your patience and unconditional friendship. To my extended family, associates, colleagues: you know who you are and from me to you: *‘ofa lahi ‘atu*.

Finally, to the wonderful people who participated in this study, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for all your time and efforts. Thank you for allowing me the privilege to *talanoa* with you about your lived experiences. You have transformed this thesis into a living document, *malo ‘aupito*.

With love and light,

Janet Fatafehi Lupe ‘o Talau Tupou
2018

Ethics approval was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 21st August 2014, reference number 14/160

Chapter One

Kamata 'oe Talanoa: Opening the Research

This research is a *talanoa*¹ about Tongan creativity. '*Tala*' means talking or telling stories, and '*noa*' means "zero or without concealment" (Halapua, 2002, p.1). Thus, a *talanoa* is a conversation that holds nothing back; a communicative exchange with no shadows on the information that is shared. The thesis is considered to be a big *talanoa* that contains many smaller *talanoa*. As part of my research methodology, the big *Talanoa*² is between me and my readers; the smaller *Talanoa* are between me and the participants who gave me their time and 'sat on the mat' with me to speak about their creative journeys.

As much as "I" speak from my own standpoint in this thesis, the "I" is somewhat "plurivocal" (Peshkin, 1985, p. 220), speaking as the emerging researcher who gathered other people's stories to relate them in the form of this academic document, and in this context, as a participant in my own research. Furthermore, I speak also as a teacher, woman, cultural commentator, and as an observant and curious person who walks in two worlds: that of traditional Tongan society, and that of the Western world of Aotearoa-New Zealand at the beginning of the 21st century. A key intention of this research is to explore the relationship between Tongan cultural values and creative work, but part of my motivation for undertaking this research is also personal: I hope to find my own point of balance between the Tongan and "Kiwi" worlds in which I live. When beginning to formulate this research, I thought hard about the notion of creativity, and found that a Tongan proverb kept coming to my mind:

"Ala 'i Sia, Ala 'i Kolonga", which translates as "Skilful at sia, ski'llful at kolonga."

¹ *Talanoa*: defined in the Tongan dictionary as "to talk (in both formal and informal ways), to tell stories or relate experiences" (Churchward, 1959, p. 442).

² *Talanoa*: as a Tongan research methodology

This proverb refers to the tradition of *heu lupe*, snaring pigeons. The *sia* is the mound on which the pigeons are trapped in and the *kolonga* is the cooking place. The underlying narrative of the proverb is that the best hunters will be successful not only in snaring the pigeons, but also at cooking them. In a modern context, this proverb honours those who are able to adapt their skills to various needs and environments. *Ala 'i Sia, Ala 'i Kolonga* captures a wisdom from ancient Tongan society, that people have a better chance of surviving if they can function in multiple contexts, or, in other words, work in either the *sia* or the *kolonga* (Kai'ili, 1997).

The proverb spoke to me as the heart of what I want to study that unspecifiable point in my life, I came to see traditional expressions of Tongan creativity as being as beautiful as ever, but rather unchanging, not readily incorporating new cultural influences, new times and new places. I have spoken of the 'two worlds' in which I daily walk and over time, I came to think of the *sia* and the *kolonga* as *Tonga* and *New Zealand*. I began to see that for many of my compatriots, the *sia* of *Tonga* and the *kolonga* of *New Zealand* were often very far removed, and never more so than in creative work. To bring this idea closer to the subject of my research, I posed the question, "How does creativity serve the unpredictable walk in and between Tongan and non-Tongan worlds?".

In posing this question, I was aware that the word 'creativity' is a difficult one. It is often overused, misused, confused, abused, and generally misunderstood (Balkin, 1990, de Bono 1975; Gordon 1961; Holstein 1970; Niu & Steinburg, 2006; Nouri, Erez, Rockstuhl & Ang, 2008; Rodari 1996; Shapira & Liberman, 2009). On occasions where it is used properly, it can carry connotations of an exclusive club that does not readily initiate new members (Shapira & Liberman, 2009). In this sense, to claim creativity as an attribute is to aspire to membership of a group set apart by a drive to use vision, talent and skill to make artefacts that to show a society aspects of itself. One of the defining characteristics of creativity is 'novelty' (Runco & Jaegar, 2012; Steinberg, 2005), which is not immediately obvious in traditional Tongan cultural expression. In fact, to further vex the matter of Tongan creativity, I can offer no literal translation of 'creative' or 'creativity' from English to Tongan. The closest expressions for 'creative' and 'creativity' that I found are *fo'ou* (new), *fa'u* or *ngaahi* (to make, construct), *faka kaukau* (idea) or *fakamuna* (imaginative acts), but these words do not carry the same connotations as the word 'creative' does in English.

This thesis, therefore, deconstructs what Tongan creativity is and means and explores how it is valued by Tongan artists who are of Tongan descent. The subject of this research came to me in a at Auckland University of Technology as a result of preparing a lecture on the nature of creativity. I began to question my understandings and socially-constructed meanings of

creativity, and to wonder where Tonga could be situated in them. I began to notice that in the Tongan culture and amongst its people there seemed to be little debate about what creativity means, the various ways it can be expressed, the implicit and explicit concepts of creativity and appreciation of its value in the family, community, culture and society. Simply put, I could see, and had been familiar from birth, with the traditions of weaving, tattoo, dance and carving, but they were relatively static in form, leaving me asking, “What’s new here? What is Tongan creativity?”

The most practised forms of traditional Tongan creativity, then, seemed not to innovate, but rather, to continue established forms and crafts, and in the process, to perpetuate certain social structures and organisations. This is not confined to Tonga. For example, Maduro (1976) provides a study of a Mewari painting community in a village in the Indian state of Rajasthan. It describes a strictly hierarchical group, in which each artist belonged to a fixed social class: labourer, master craftsman or creative artist. It was found that they mostly copied existing forms and patterns, rarely changing any detail of earlier designs, or, at least, rarely making any sort of innovation as it would be considered “in the West” (Maduro, 1976, p.23). In Tonga, a similar practice prevails in the making of *tapa*³, a traditional art form made by groups of local women. *Tapa* does not require innovation, but it does require skill, and there is a big difference between *tapa* made by beginners and *tapa* made by experts. In this case, as was the case with the Mewari, innovation was not necessary for creativity to occur: but rather creativity lived in the level of proficiency with which the artefact is produced.

Sawyer (2006) argues that for such scenarios, creativity cannot be evaluated outside the context of the ambient culture. I noted, therefore, that novelty may not be necessary nor sufficient when assessing creativity within the Tongan culture, that audience response to an artefact is always a key factor in any evaluation, and that the culture itself may be the most important audience. However, despite these balanced judgments, I found myself returning again and again to the question I posed previously, and to a variation of it “How does a beholder go about embracing and assessing creativity if its value is undiscovered within the culture that produced it?”

³ *Tapa* is the beaten bark “cloth” of the *hiapo* tree used for clothing, bedding, decoration and other ceremonial and domestic purposes. Designs are imprinted or stencilled by hand with earth dyes and dyes prepared from the sap of the *koka* and candlenut trees. Fabric made of the bark of the paper-mulberry tree. Bark cloth also known as *ngatu*. (Rutherford, 1977).

1.1 Research Purpose

My deliberations around the questions of creativity led me to the purpose of my research, which is to explore Tongan creativity in the early 21st century. In achieving this purpose, I will walk through two worlds: an inward-looking world in which there are deliberate efforts to preserve traditional Tongan culture unchanged, and another world, in which Tongan people have spread throughout many countries, embracing new languages, cultures and values. The title of my thesis, *(De) Constructing Tongan Creativity: a Talanoa about Walking in Two Worlds* expresses my purpose exactly: to tell a story about the lived experiences of self-identified Tongan creatives, capturing the way they negotiate both the power of tradition and the pressure to innovate. To do this, my study was built around the following research question:

What are the effects of traditional and contemporary expressions of Tongan culture on the creative work of Tongan artists?

This research question and working definitions that will be used throughout my research needs some unpacking before getting into more detail later in the thesis. In the phrase “traditional expressions of Tongan culture”, I refer to a Tonga that is not necessarily pre-European and is not even necessarily located in the Pacific islands named Tonga: rather, it is a concept of Tongan society functioning according to old values and old lifeways, a Tonga that is held close in the imaginations and lives of cultural purists (Rutherford, 1977; Wood, 1972; Wood-Ellem, 1999). When I speak of “... contemporary expressions of Tongan culture”, I am thinking of the Tonga that has spread out across many lands, especially since encounters with catholic and Wesleyan missionaries to Tonga and has adapted to, and sometimes adopted (at least in part), the values and social practices of the host culture (Rutherford, 1977). The phrase “... the creative work of Tongan artists” may sound tautological, because ‘artists’ are, by any common-sense definition, ‘creative’. However, both words have utility for me. By including the word ‘creative’ in this part of the question, I considered that I was able to open an exploration of where creativity sits with Tongans. ‘Artist’ is simply a catch-all word that can apply as well to dancers and singers as it does to painters, carvers and designers.

1.2 Two worlds, Two Walks

Many scholars have written about traditional Tonga (Campbell, 1992; Farmer, 1855; Moulten, 1921; Rutherford, 1996; Wood, 1972; Wood-Ellem, 1999) and others have written about the adaptation problems individuals encounter when they have to make the transition from a traditional collectivist way of life to a modern, individualist way of being (Campbell, 1992; Wood-Ellem,

1999). No one else, however, has questioned Tongan creativity or problematised it as a help or hindrance in the transition process. Instead, the *lālanga*⁴, the *faiva*⁵, and *tā nafa*⁶, the *tā tatau*⁷, have all been accepted as Tongan cultural forms that equate to creative expression. Scholars in the field (Kaufman, 2015; Lubart, 1999; Runco & Jaegar, 2015; Young, 1985) share common ground by way of defining creativity as the creator overcoming the old and transforming it into something better, or as Young (1985) asserts, “transforming what is, into something *better*” (p.77).

However, what constitutes improvement is moot: when a creator alters an original form, a unique contribution – an improvement, maybe – will be gained, but something is also lost. In the case of a numerically small culture like Tonga⁸, the diminution of tradition, language, ways of seeing the world, seem final (Scholefield, 1919; Wood-Ellem, 1999) and reach beyond artists and audiences to whole populations. On the other hand, lack of change can lead to stagnation, not just in artistic forms, but also in cultural attitudes and values. In 2007, Heather-Latu made this challenge to Pacific families living in New Zealand:

We Pacific Islanders must take the time to understand today’s economic and social reforms, the roller coaster of technology, the market and globalisation. We must understand the influence of the media, especially television on our lives and those of our children and what the supports are that our children need ... Our Pacific Island leaders and parents must appreciate these changing times and guide us through them, leaving our identities intact, our uniqueness unique and our spirits alive. (p. 42)

Heather-Latu’s (2007) position here is thought-provoking. She speaks of the power of the media to change Tongan values and asks leaders to understand the complexity of the globalised world so as to keep Tongan “uniqueness unique” (Heather-Latu, 2007, p.42). The plea seems to be for preservation rather than evolution, and presumably applies to Tongan forms of artistic expression as much as to language and cultural values. In her commentary, she appears to be advising Pacific people to be *with* the modern world, but not *of* it, and this is the burden of my research: where do creativity-as-newness and creativity-as-improvement lie (Leung & Leung, 2004; Lubart & Georgsdottir, 2004; Mayer, 1999; Raina, 1999; Ramos & Puccio, 2014), when creative people are bound into a duty to maintain rather than develop? And more than that, to what extent do those artists who do abandon tradition still think of themselves as *truly* Tongan?

⁴ Weaving or knitting

⁵ performance, play, drama, skit, item requiring skill or ability

⁶ beating of drums

⁷ tattooing

⁸ According to Tonga National Population and Housing Census 2016, as of January 2017: 103,252 people currently reside in the Tonga islands.

New Zealand-born Tongans face difficult issues in that the cultural values of family and church are often at odds with the norms and practices of mainstream New Zealand society (Hansen, 2004; McIntyre, 2008; Tiatia, 2012). Taumoefolau (2013) draws attention to the fear held by many Tongan parents that their New Zealand-born children will be full members of neither traditional Tongan society nor of mainstream New Zealand society. Hanifan (2010) claims that young New Zealand-born Tongan women, especially, are experiencing the conflict of life between the ‘two worlds’ because they carry traditional domestic obligations and do not have the same opportunities as Tongan men. Hanifan (2010) makes the (perhaps rather westernised) recommendation that “men and women should have equal rights in any type of role and job whether this be in the society, family, church and government” (p. 28), and although he does not mention women’s creativity specifically, it would presumably fall under the broad banner “society” as part of the equality that women “should” have.

The notion of two worlds, and the difficulties they present, therefore, pervades scholarship, and as I began this research, I could not help but see that the thread of my question about creativity and culture is woven of many different coloured strands. The complexity of walking in two worlds is provocative and made me wonder whether Young’s (1985) classic view of creativity may help to alleviate the struggles faced by Tongans living outside of Tonga, or more accurately, outside of Tongan traditions.

Young’s (1985) studies claimed creativity as an attitude by which people find fulfilment, or as he describes, “... as we transcend our past in the things we do, we also become who we can be” (p.77). According to that position, creativity has the potential to allow the assimilation and integration of polarities so that new ways of being can emerge. In this sense, creativity is more than working in a typically “creative” field such as art or inventing or research, but rather, is the actualising of potential, the expression of ourselves, our “being becoming” (Young, 1985, p. 77). Young’s (1985) view requires a reconceptualisation of the common view of creativity as some form of inspired artistic endeavor. Wolff (1981, p.21) writes, that “... originality lies more in the imaginative ability to do something dramatically different (regardless of its intrinsic merit), or in the knack of inventing something out of whole cloth,” but the doing of something “dramatically different” is not always possible in relation to a whole culture, because cultures tend to change more readily by evolution than by revolution.

It is difficult to think of Tonga without also calling to mind *anga faka-Tonga*⁹ (Daly, 2009; Hansen, 2004; Lee, 2004; Morton-Lee, 2003; Small, 2011), and these values are resistant, because they lie at the heart of ‘Tongan-ness’. A UNESCO report from 2002 advises:

... from the depth of understanding and value of traditional forms, people will gain a strong sense of cultural identity and understanding of who they are ... this will provide a foundation for the development of further skills and knowledge bases, contexts, and understandings for life in the twenty-first century. (p. 3)

‘Creativity’ could be added to the list of “skills and knowledge bases, contexts and understandings” mentioned here, but in fact, like much writing which seeks to address the question of old traditions versus modern ways, this report is long on high-minded rhetoric and short on practicality. The rationale of my research stems from the ‘walk-in-two-words’ approach that in real life is proving so difficult for many Pasifika people. Certainly, research among Pasifika people (Fua, 2001, 2004; Johansson; 2001; Taufe’ulungaki, 2007; Thaman 1988) highlights the importance of holding onto traditional values, beliefs and practices because these seem to be important ‘protective’ elements for young people. On the other hand, in an increasingly globalised world, cultural change is inevitable, and adaptation is essential (Addo, 2012; Daly, 2009).

To answer the research question, “*What are the effects of traditional and contemporary expressions of Tongan culture in the creative work of Tongan artists?*” I used *talanoa* to record the lived experiences of the research participants. This method of gathering data sits within the interpretive research paradigm (Deetz, 1982; Deetz & Kersten, 1983), and sets out to find meaning from the insiders’ point of view. I analysed the data gathered in the *talanoa* using a form of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998; Leininger, 1985; Taylor & Bogden, 1984) that takes *talanoa* methodological approach into consideration.

As previously stated, this study peels back the layers in the journeys of Tongan creatives in a way that has not been done before within the academic literature. Tuhiwai-Smith (2008) argues that the importance of the qualitative research approach is its potential to “respond to epistemic challenges and crises, to unravel and weave, to fold in and unmask the layers of the social life and depth of human experience” (p. 136). The burden of this research was to dismantle deficit ways of thinking, to offer “new” frames and reference points for Tongan creativity, and to centre the artists’ voices and reflections in the context of the wider Tongan culture.

⁹*anga faka-Tonga* means the ways of the Tongans such as habit, custom, nature, quality, character, characteristic; way, form, style, manner, method; behaviour, conduct, demeanour, way(s) of acting (Churchward, 1959, p. 7).

Therefore, this thesis contains my examination of the meaning of creativity in the Tongan culture. The one and the many *talanoa* will explore fundamental concepts and values that define what it is to be Tongan, searching out the effect of these values on the creative practice of Tongan artists. In essence, my research considers whether it is possible to weave two worlds together through creativity.

1.3 Contextualising the Research in History and Geography: a Snapshot of Tonga

The purpose of this section is to sketch the geographical and historical context of this research project. It is not my intention here to attempt an exhaustive coverage of the origins of modern Tonga: for that, see (Latukefu, 1977; Murray, 1885; Rutherford, 1977; Wood, 1978). Rather, I will provide a ‘live photo’¹⁰, that will show how certain concepts and practices in Tongan culture are germane to Tongan creativity. The section is therefore not rigidly organised by ideas like pre-European or post-European contact, though those points in time are acknowledged as being important. Instead, I have approached my ‘live photo’ holistically, conscious that no culture is or has ever been entirely homogeneous (Philips, 2008), and therefore, what I speak of as ‘the culture’ is in fact, a personal judgment that of necessity required me to include and emphasise some aspects of Tonga and exclude and de-emphasise others.

I was conscious, too, that ‘culture’ is multi-layered and complex, the outcome of deliberate interventions and evolutionary variations, incursions from outsiders and inherent flexibility (Howe, 1996). The simple single story that is often told about Tonga is that of ‘The Friendly Isles’, although the overriding narrative of Tongan history suggests that its perceived friendliness was the result of the highly structured and orthodox nature of Tongan society which suppressed internal disharmony that tends to induce violent or revolutionary change (Wood-Ellem, 1999). The aim of this section, then, is to explore the dynamic ‘culture/s’ of pre- and post- European Tonga this will allow for consideration of the relationship between Tongan creative expression and concepts that have been key to the development of the nation.

On the 20th of November, 1839, at Pouono, Neiafu, on the Island of Vava’u, King George Tupou I lifted his palm filled with Tongan soil, looked to the heavens and uttered the *Tuku fonua ki Langi* (the Dedication of Tonga to God). His words were, “*Otua mo Tonga ko hoku tofi’a*” (“God and Tonga are my inheritance”) (Moala, 2009, p. 89; Moala, 1994, p. 213; Samate, 2007). *Otua mo*

¹⁰ Here I am thinking of the facility on some iPhones that allows a still snapshot to contain a micro-second of movement.

Tonga ko hoku tofi'a is a saying that highlights two of the most revered notions in Tonga: land and God. In fact, the saying is so fundamental to Tongan thinking that it has become the motto of the modern nation.

Here, 'Tonga' is a word with a broad meaning: it signifies *fonua* (the land, the earth the people stand on), and also *anga fakafonua* (the ways of the land –the folkways and modes of living); as well as *lea faka-Tonga* (the Tongan language) and *hoto Tonga* (Tongan identity) (Samate, 2007). Thus, in this motto, Tonga is the Tongan culture and language embodied in individuals, and it can also denote the *kāinga* (the extended family). 'Tonga', then, sums up an array of concepts relating to social and cultural capital, and all the resources an individual can attain from this network. *Otua* (God) has a less broad application, but a no less important meaning. It includes belief in a Christian God, love and respect for God, prayer, church, and spirituality, all of which are central to Tongan living (Samate, 2007; Shumway, 2007; Moala, 2009; Tu'itahi, 2009). *Otua* is expressed in a number of traditional forms, including the modest clothes and traditional wraparound that both men and women wear to church to show respect and love for God.

Although the '*Tuku fonua ki Lang'i*' marked the beginning of Tonga as a Christian nation, the concepts of *fonua* and *Otua* were important in Tongan society before European contact. The ownership of *fonua*, for instance, was traditionally the source of wealth and social rank, and a sense of *Otua* was fundamental to Tongan culture, though not in a Christian form. Thus, though the declaration marked the presence of a new God and new forms of worship, the concepts were not new to Tongan thought, and in fact have much to do with the stability of Tongan society over many centuries (Bott, 1982; Campbell, 1992; Korn, 1971). Even before the first European contact, Tonga was as a highly stratified society that operated in accordance with the opinions and preferences of the chiefs or those with power and wealth. Chiefs were often paid respect as 'owners' of 'the culture' (Kaepler, 1971), and what was commonly understood as the 'Tongan way' -- *anga faka-Tonga* or '*ulunganga faka fonua*¹¹' - was mainly their creation. The chiefs held a lot of mana and therefore, both individually and collectively, exercised a profound effect on the customs and traditions of Tonga¹². In every sense of the word, they had a great interest in the

¹¹ '*Ulunganga faka fonua* means the main/real Tongan way of the community, people of the land or country, territory, place (Churchward, 1959, p. 196). *Fonua* is referred to both people and the physical environment.

¹² The Tongan society is a hierarchical social structure of four "successive layers, or strata, of people each with their own code of behaviours, rights and duties and accepted living standards" (Crane, 1978, p. 33). The king (Tui) or queen and his/her royal family are at the apex, *nōpele* (nobles) and the *hou'eiki* (chiefs) are in the second layer, an emerging layer of elite are in the third, and at the base of the hierarchy are the *tu'a* (commoners). Social hierarchy is very important in Tongan society, because the higher a person is in the hierarchy, the more power, respect and mana they have and the easier life is.

‘cultural mat’ and much to lose by surrendering their influence over it, such as their placement in the *seakale ‘o e nofo ‘a kāinga*¹³ (Crane, 1978). However, in as much as the chiefs were the formulators and proponents of the status quo, they would, according to Campbell (2001), instigate cultural change if change served their interests, using their power and accumulated wealth to further entrench their domination. Whether the chiefs acted for change or to maintain the status quo, so complete was their control that they were perceived to possess a divine right to govern, and the commoners saw no alternative to the prevailing social system (Gifford, 1929; Luke, 1974). This social hierarchy is underpinned by a belief, set out in the earliest stories of Tonga, that the first *Tu’i Tonga* (king), ‘Aho’eitu (AD 950), was a demi-god, the son of the god Tangaloa and an earthly mother Va’epopua. This heritage bestowed the highest status and meant that the king and his descendants were *tapu* (sacred) and possessed *mana* (authority, skill & charisma), and led to a sense of rule by divine right (Crane, 1978, Keller & Swaney, 1998). The marriage of royalty and nobles was strictly regulated by the *Tu’i* himself and was restricted to intermarriage between these two classes, thus preventing social mobility for commoners.

Belief in the chiefs’ divine right to govern has led commoners to accept the asymmetrical power relations that prevailed in Tonga and conditioned them to obey the chiefs under all circumstances. The social structure was reflected in the language used to designate a commoner: ‘*me’avale*’, which means ‘stupid thing’ or ‘ignorant one’. The epithet ‘*me’avale*’ arguably played a part in establishing and reinforcing the people’s acceptance that they were incapable of leadership or self-government, as did the reward of ‘*anga faka’ei’eiki*’ (‘chiefly behaviour’) and the punishment of ‘*anga fakatu’a*’ (‘behaving like a commoner’).

In these ways, Tonga was built into a highly stratified and orthodox society in which ‘deviant’ behaviour, any veering from mainstream norms, was immediately obvious and almost as immediately penalised, reducing the chances that the Tongan people would find the will or the space to organise social movements that could lead to self-determination and the emergence of values that would enable individuals to break away from the existing world view (Bott, 1982; Kirch, 1984; Marcuse, 1964). Tongan society, then, has tended to revolve around veneration of the chiefs, both alive and dead, a custom that was clear to the missionaries when they arrived to convert Tonga to Christianity. The Methodist missionary Rev John Thomas, who served in Tonga

¹³ The *seakale ‘o e nofo ‘a kāinga* serves as a social welfare system where the obligations and responsibilities are reciprocated. Although the royal family and the chiefs, nobles are able to extract favours from the commoners, they likewise must extend favours to their people through obligations and responsibilities. Priorities for Tongans are that *fāmilī* come first, then the *siaisi*, then the *fonua* and lastly the *fakatātaha* (individual) (Crane, 1978).

from 1826 – 50, wrote that the great chiefs “liked to be treated as if they were gods” (Wood, 1972, p. 21) and William Anderson, ship’s surgeon on the Resolution, wrote, “... it does not appear that any civiliz’d nations have exceeded them in the great order they observe on all occasions and ready compliance with the commands of their chiefs...” (Korn, 1974, p. 18). Deference to the chiefs was illustrated by the total silence which fell when a chief was speaking to a gathering: contemporary accounts noted that regardless of the duration and the subject, every face showed rapt attention and there were no displays of boredom or disagreement (Campbell, 2001).

In summary, pre-European Tonga was, and remains to this day, a strongly hierarchical society based on ancient chieftainship, a legacy inherited from its oldest ancestors, the Lapita people (Bott, 1982; Campbell, 1992; Kirch, 1984). The kingship system prevails still, ensuring that rule and inheritance of land is essentially through birth right, and the stratification of Tongan society continues. There are three major hereditary classes: *Tu’i* (king/monarch), *Hou’eiki* (chiefly/aristocracy), and *Tu’a* (commoner/peasant) (Campbell, 1992). Tongan language reflects and perpetuates this hierarchy, as there are three distinct levels of language used for the three main levels of society: *lea faka-tu’i* (kingly language), *lea faka-hou’eiki* (chiefly language), and *lea faka-tu’a* (commoner language) (Taumoevalau, 2012).

Following European contact, there were some changes in social attitudes. For instance, in 1862, the Emancipation Edict, enacted during the reign of King George Tupou I, freed all *tu’a* from bondage to chiefs and made education compulsory for all children regardless of rank. The 1862 Emancipation Edict is the type of social artefact that has made Morton (1996), an anthropologist who has studied Tonga and Tongans, argue that Tongan society changed and that the *hou’eiki* and *tu’a* have been ‘eroded’ because of developments inspired by encounters from Westerners (p. 23). Morton’s (1996) opinion is not without truth. European contact with Tonga has created new ways of living for those *tu’a* who are successful in areas of business, medicine, education and others, but overall, in government and church, and at traditional events, the *tu’i* and *hou’eiki* still occupy places of prominence, both on Tongan soil and abroad (Toetu’u & Tamahere, 2014).

Certainly, there is a visible ‘Westminster’ type of government, but it is an externally-applied European scaffold that supports the internal structure of local politics, which are run by the Tongan *kāinga*¹⁴ organisations and by the *Tu’i*. The day-to-day maintenance of peace in the

¹⁴ Extended family, tribe or village; large social unit based on kinship and headed by a chief.

villages was, and is, carried out by town and district officers, together with their respective chiefs, in a continuation of an ancient system which combined disparate units under the control of one person whose words, actions and wishes comprised the law through *faka'ongo*, (loyalty) to *Tu'i*. The words of this person - always a man of chiefly status - became the custom and practice of society.

In the two centuries of contact between “outlanders” and “islanders” (Borofsky, 2000, p. 23), many attempts have been made to overlay a European point of view on *anga faka-Tonga*. Although the ideas introduced by outlanders found a home, for the most part, the Tongan way of thought remained dominant and subsumed the new into itself (Wood-Ellem, 1997). As Wood-Ellem (1997) states, “... to say that Europeans shaped Tongan’s destiny prior to 1965 is to underestimate the ability of the Tongans themselves to make choices, to ignore much of what they were offered, and to transform much to their own design” (p. 21). Contact with European culture, with its relentless search for novelty and variation (Besnier, 2011; Crane, 1978; Kirch, 1984; Wood-Ellem, 1997), may have sparked an upsurge in new forms of Tongan creativity and new ways of expressing traditional arts, but the remarkable capacity of Tonga to absorb and ‘Tonga-form’ ideas (Wood-Ellem, 1997) preserved tradition and eschewed innovation. The way that Tonga is geographically placed tells its own story.

The islands of Tonga are grouped into four separate administrative regions, according to a geographical logic and history. The four groups are Tongatapu in the south (named after the largest island in Tonga where the capital lies), the Ha’apai group in the center, the Vava’u group in the north, and the Niuas, a group of two small islands much more remote from the rest of Tonga. Tonga is often spoken of as the “little land of plenty” (McArthur, 1967, p. 13) a phrase that requires some critical examination because it suggests a utopia, plentiful in resources and populated by a people rich in love, respect and unity. In fact, this view is over-simplified and romanticised, and if the ‘story’ in the phrase has any truth, it is at least in part because of Tonga’s geographical placement.

Figure 1 (below on p. 13) shows the archipelago of Tonga, a group of approximately 75 islands stretching over about 500 miles of ocean. The map is perhaps a little misleading, because it seems on paper that Fiji, Tonga’s nearest neighbour, is quite close, but in fact, it lies nearly 500 miles away. The Pacific is navigable (see, for instance, Wood, 1972 on the human settlement of the Pacific), but the distance is great enough to have acted as a deterrent to regular war parties.

The isolation meant that Tonga developed its own folkways and social structures and had fewer external influences on emerging cultural practices. However, although there is a recognisably Tongan collective culture, there are also some marked local variations, which is to be expected, given that some of the individual islands of the archipelago are as isolated from one another as Tonga is from (for example) Fiji. On the island of Vava'u, for instance, what is generally accepted as true may be quite different from what is held to be true on Ha'api (Campbell, 2001). According to Mumby, (1987), indirect control is possible when ideology is subtly embedded into the verbal, non-verbal and material practices of everyday life. In the context of this research, 'everyday life'

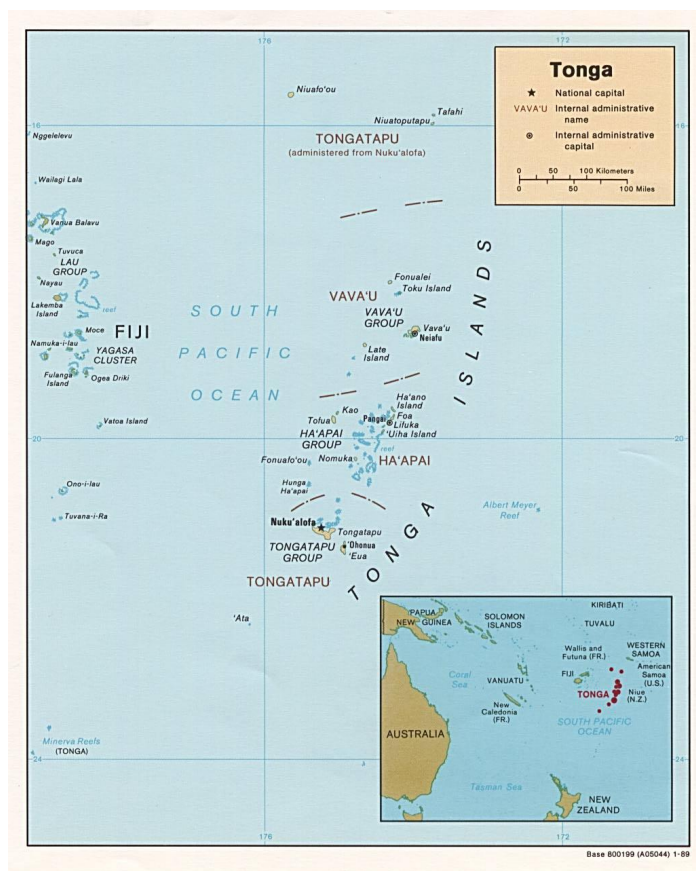


Figure 1: Archipelago of Tonga

SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1: Map of Tonga, from 'Eua Man & Biosphere Report, 2004

is taken as the Tongan culture, which has very nearly unanimous acquiescence among members (Martin, 1992; Meyerson & Martin, 1987). Thus, the patterns of "shared basic assumptions" (Schein, 1992, p. 12) that underpin Tongan social behaviour and creative understandings may derive from a narrowed range of worldviews, and the manifestation of creativity in the lived world is inevitably affected by – arguably, limited by – the orthodoxy of Tongan society. For example, anyone who was not a chief was persuaded against aiming high and sanctioned for 'fie me'a', which means 'wanting to be somebody or something'. In most cases it was only those of chiefly blood who had a hope

of being judged as achieving *anga faka'eieiki* or the 'proper manner', which placed the power of deciding what constituted true – or at least, acceptable-- creative expression in the hands of the ruling class, and tended to suppress any upsurge in variation and inventiveness unless it served the top levels of Tongan society (Bott, 1982; Campbell, 1992).

Though resistance to Western ways was deeply engrained in the Tongan mindset (Rutherford, 1996; Wood-Ellem, 1997), contact with the West continued, and cultural change took place. A

protection treaty with Britain, signed just before World War I, brought Tonga more awareness of global matters, and World War II made Tonga, like many other South Pacific nations, both open to Western cultures and also susceptible to cultural evolution caused by sustained contact. For instance, during World War II, troops from both the United States of America and New Zealand were stationed on Tongatapu, and introduced modern music, new sports, cigarettes, beer, different foodstuffs, and new technology (Lee, 2003). These changes were minor accretions, perhaps, lying on the surface of the culture, but nevertheless, they were changes, indications that deeper changes were possible, and in fact, by the early 21st century, Tonga was sufficiently entrenched in the western world as to send troops to Iraq (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2007).

Furthermore, Tonga was under foreign pressure from to make changes to its style of the power as the upper classes was decreased, and the 2010 Constitution changed the power of the monarchy (Connan, 1985). Like other indigenous peoples, Tongans are increasingly having to balance the influence of Western culture and technology with traditional values. According to Lee (2003), this tension is clearly evident among younger people, who are beginning to question the function of the monarch and are rebelling against the idea of the extended family, to the point that Fletcher and Keller (2001) described Nuku'alofa as a place that is “suffering” (p.22) from the influence of Black American culture. It is reasonable to assume that political change and the tensions arising from the contact of a traditional ethnic culture with global culture would have shaped changes to the nature and scope of Tonga’s creative landscape. For a full discussion of Tonga’s ‘cultural mat’, please see Chapter three.

About 103,252 people live in Tonga (Tonga National Population and Housing Census, 2016) and almost as many live overseas (for discussion of Tongan migration, see Lee 2003; Lee & Francis, 2009; Small 1997;). Most Tongan emigrants live in New Zealand, Australia, and the United States, although Tongans can also be found in such diverse countries as Japan, England, France, Germany and Russia, and they have been drawn overseas for opportunities in schooling, work, sports, and simply personal desire (Lee, 2003). Despite the formidable numbers of the diaspora, however, it seems that Tonga and Tongans are intertwined in a ‘spiritual tie’ that cannot be unravelled. Samate (2007) argues that Tongans who live overseas need to return to Tonga from time to time to reclaim their spiritual being, and that no matter where they are located, their hearts will always be Tongan. It is not unreasonable to expect this intense ‘Tongan-ness’ to play out in the creative work of Tongan artists, and in fact, this notion is one of the drivers of the research, as these overseas Tongans maintain their family, social, political, and economic

connections through remittances, the internet, phone calls, visits to the homeland, photographs and Skype.

1.4 Organisation of the Thesis

In this introductory chapter, I have provided an overview of the study, defining some key terms and providing a cultural context for the research. I have also discussed how I came to narrow the focus of the research to a specific examination of Tongan creativity and have laid out the purpose and scope of the research, together with an explication of the research question that I want to answer.

Chapter Two presents a broad examination of creativity in general, drawing on a range of scholarship that tried to define and show the applications and understandings of creativity in many settings from “high creativity” (Runco, 2007) to a more managerialist, utilitarian approach (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014; Lahlou & Beaudouin, 2016). By directing attention to creativity as a field of enquiry, Chapter two prepares the way for the discussion in Chapter three, which lays out the Tongan ‘cultural mat’ so that the data following later has a foundation on which to stand.

Chapter Four provides sets out the methodology and method of this research. Particular attention is given to *talanoa*, which is both the philosophical and practical foundation of the research. The chapter also makes transparent the mechanics of the data gathering and analysis. This chapter leads into the two data chapters (Chapters Five and Six), which present the interview data in themes that were uncovered through the utilisation of thematic analysis. The themes explore the differences in creativity in the different fields that the research participants operate in, and account for the effects of migration, familial ties, rebellion and other personal experiences which have had an impact on the artists’ creative work. The creative nature of their work and the range of social and cultural perspectives and motivations that drive them as artists are explicated, along with the sense of purpose they feel regarding their creativity.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, the significance of the data is discussed, and the key findings are drawn out. The research question is answered explicitly. The last section of the chapter presents some of the avenues for further research, and some final personal reflections on this project.

Chapter Two

Cultural Constructions of Creativity

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how different Western and non-Western cultural groups have come to understand creativity. The chapter opens with a discussion of the definition of creativity and the relationship that exists between creator, field and domain, to establish the place of culture in conceptualisations of creative expression. To offer a holistic account of the different cultural understandings of creativity, the chapter shifts focus to considering what culture is, how it shapes cultural identity and more specifically the Western and non-Western viewpoints on creative people and the value placed on the practices and products of creative activity.

The research recorded in this thesis was an exploration of the ways in which culture impacts the creative expressions of Tongan people, whether they are born in Tonga or elsewhere. Therefore, an account of cultural adaptations with an emphasis on the scholarship of hybridisation is offered. The chapter concludes with a consideration of what is now thought of as representative of Pasifika art and a demonstration of how some of that understanding is a product of Western thought. In essence, this is an overview of how Pacific art is understood by New Zealanders. It is at this stage that I acknowledge that there is an evitable overlap of concepts within this chapter. Culture, identity and creativity are far from linear concepts (Mayer, 1999; Raina, 1999; Weiner, 2000) and as such they are revisited regularly across the different sections of this chapter.

2.1 What is Creativity?

Creativity is a concept without a unanimously agreed definition within the academic literature. Typically, scholars writing in fields such as the creative industries define creativity as “the generation of products or ideas that are both novel and appropriate” (Hennessey & Amabile,

2010, p.23). Such an understanding of creativity could be accused of emphasising the business and instrumental potential of creative processes, and encapsulating ideas of innovation rather than pure creativity (Lahlou & Beaudouin, 2016). Nevertheless, the focus on the novel is useful, as is the signal that creativity does not need to be seen solely as the product of a single ‘tortured genius’ (Herbig & Jacobs, 1996), but rather as a response to both internal and external influences. These influences range from internal motivations (Albert, 1990; Harrington, 1990) to the criteria of the creative field, (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, Lumsden & Wilson, 1981). In the remainder of this section, I will consider the diverging perspectives on how creativity emerges and how it is placed within the wider society.

According to Kaufman (2003), creativity is hard to conceptualise because it is too loosely defined. At various times, for instance, creativity has been considered as “original, unique, unexpected, and/or emotionally moving phenomena” (Elsbach & Kramer, 2003, p. 288) but equally, as the process of implementing new ideas (Van de Ven & Angle, 1989, p. 12). Although Van de Ven and Angle’s (1989) conceptualisation seems to align more closely to simple innovation than to any notions of ‘grand creativity’. The range of concepts in the definitions is at least as great as those mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Indeed, it strengthens this impression that Kaufman (2003) proposes that to overcome inconsistency in articulations of creativity, there could be a ‘Creativity’. Where the uppercase ‘C’ denotes major inspirations, inventions, or new products and services designed to overcome the biggest problems troubling society. In many regards, Kaufman (2003) has sought to capture the ‘grand’ ideas and practices of creativity that are prosocial in motivation and thus, inspired as much from the individuals’ need to express themselves as to benefit those around them (Grant & Berry, 2011). In contrast, the lower-case creativity would signify the type of quotidian creativity that enhances the ordinary daily life of, for example, organisations (Kaufman, 2003).

Creators, artists or producers are defined as developers of a new idea or product (Erez & Nouri, 2010; Simonton & Ting, 2010; Zhou & Su, 2010), and naturally, they bring to bear on their work their subjective reactions to the cultural and creative influences that they have experienced, observed or are negotiating as part of their wider projects of finding identity (Beech, Gilmore, Cochrane & Greig, 2012). By engaging in the identity work delineated by the scholars creative people reflect on, interpret and incorporate their cultural meanings, attitudes and behaviors: their understanding of their cultures, and their embeddedness in them, may become an important source of inspiration (Arieti, 1976; Leung & Leung, 2014). Creative projects, therefore, ultimately become outlets for subjective interpretations of artists’ culture, while at the same time

offering audiences a range of symbolic meanings (Ramos & Puccio, 2014; Rhodes, 1961) that will possibly influence audiences' own cultural identities and sensibilities.

I would argue that the value of creativity is in the eye of the beholder, but ultimately, unless audiences – consumers or critics-- judge the creative work as worthwhile (Simonton & Ting, 2010; Zhou & Su, 2010), it will ultimately fail. A positive evaluation is most likely when a creative product produces a multisensory response in audiences (Grant & Berry, 2011). It can entertain, educate and prove aesthetically pleasing to an audience (Radbourne, 2014), but that is particularly the case when the work assists the audience to learn the *self* (Radbourne, Johanson, Glow & White, 2009). Accordingly, creative products carry cultural meanings that enhance consumers' understandings of *self* in relation to the wider social milieu (see for instance, Runco and Bahleda's (1986) research on Chinese creativity). In assisting audiences to appreciate their cultural heritage and to develop national identity, governments globally use policies and directed funding to encourage creative expression, which flows into a sense of community (Leung & Leung, 2014).

However, in as much as creative products benefit individual identity work (Beech, Gilmore, Cochrane & Greig, 2012), they are also subject to evaluation in their fields. The field comprises the community of experts (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) who influence social tastes by over-laying creative expression with cultural interpretations drawn from the genre and practice. The criteria that influence the value of creative products are in part historically established and culturally specific. For example, in the tradition of the Greek Orthodox church, the design of religious icons may not be altered by including any individual creativity, thereby establishing rules and regulations that govern the act of creation (Benz, 2009; Ouspensky, 1992). Although the field may have a strong influence over the cultural meanings embedded in creative work, the role of the field need not be dominant. Eastern conceptualisations of creativity, on the other hand, are folk theories because their beliefs about creativity originate from the customs, traditions, and values of their culture, unfiltered by expert or professional knowledge (Niu & Sternberg, 2002; Rudowicz, 2003; Rudowicz & Yue, 2000).

Fundamentally, what is evident by considering the place of the creator, domain and field in the development of creative work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) is that while the production and consumption of creative work can be individual and subjective, the relationships formed with the creative product are the result of the wider sociocultural milieu. Therefore, of particular concern for my research, is the influence of the wider sociocultural milieu; what it means to be Tongan

and creative, and how these cultural understandings can be embraced or rebelled against in the formation of old and new creative works.

There is an abundance of evidence about ways in which culture influences creators and what they produce (Erez & Nouri, 2010; Simonton & Ting, 2010; Zhou & Su, 2010). For many, culture can function as a form of constraint which guides and hinders creative activity. Bilton (2007) argues that to create, creative people require both internal motivation and external constraints, and that constraints are best applied when they do not infringe on motivation. In other words, if motivation is strong, certain limitations can inspire further ingenuity. It is an objective of this research to consider whether culture assists creative expression or in fact, hinders the creative processes and identities of Tongan artists, or to put it another way, whether culture facilitates “bounded creativity” (Boden, 2004, p. 12). Thus far, research has identified that regardless of disparate perspectives and methodological approaches to creativity (see for instance Guilford, 1959; Torrance, 1981, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1996, 1999; Simonton, 1988; Sternberg, 1985; Sternberg & Lubart, 1995), a slow consensus is emerging around the idea that creativity is multi-dimensional and adaptive, and that culture is a primary and important influence on its form.

Initially, Western concepts of creativity and measuring instruments were ‘blindly’ imported by researchers working in other parts of the world and put to use on the assumption of their universality (Rhodes, 1961), but in the 1980s, psychologists became aware that culture plays an important role in the development of creativity. This led to a number of investigators from various socio-cultural systems starting to question the validity of such ‘importation’ (Mar’i & Karayanni, 1983; Azuma 1984; Wonder & Blake, 1992; Khaleefa et al., 1996, 1997; Kuo, 1996; Abou-Hatab, 1997; Cheng, 1999; Oner, 2000; Baldwin, 2001). This critique led to the development of investigations concerned with:

- (i) the broadly defined dichotomy between the Eastern and Western or the Western and non-Western perception of creativity (Wonder & Blake, 1992; Ng, 2001);
- (ii) creativity and a specific culture or philosophy such as Afro-Arab Islamic culture (Khaleefa, 1997), a Taoist (Kuo, 1996) or Hindu (Hallman, 1970) perspective, African American culture (Simonton, 1998; Baldwin, 2001) Turkish culture (Oner, 2001) or Chinese culture (Rudowicz & Hui, 1996, 1998);
- (iii) the intra-cultural differences in the perception of creativity (Rudowicz & Yue, 2000).

The growing acceptance of the relationship between culture and creativity seems to mandate some discussion of culture and how it influences self-concept. According to Ting-Toomey (1999, p. 10) “culture is a complex frame of reference that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs,

values, norms, symbols, and meanings that are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community”. In other words, culture is the frame of reference which allows sensemaking of experience to occur, but it also offers implicit and explicit directions on how to think and act appropriately (Varner & Beamer, 2011). That is, culture offers explanations of life after death, the origin of human beings, the place of time, nature and reality to lifeworld (Ting-Toomey, 1999), power structures, truth, speech styles and views on technology (Fischer, 2007). Culture, however, is not deterministic, in the sense that members have no personal choice. Rather, individuals will often select among cultural values and behaviours, rejecting those that they do not find personally valid. For example, stereotypical, patriarchal gender roles exist in Tongan culture: the men provide, while the women look after the household (James, 1992). A Tongan woman who travels overseas and encounters different practices in relation to gender dynamics may rebel against this element of the Tongan culture in favour of a new world view. Therefore, the tenets of a culture are not universally agreed among its members.

Social interactions within the family play a significant part in the early formation of cultural identity (Oetzel, 2009), but when children begin school they begin to mix with a wider group of people and their cultural orientations will develop and change, perhaps bringing new understandings of previously unquestioned differentiations (such as class and gender) that exist within their own society. In other words, exposure to cultural in-groups and out-groups means that individuals look to a wider pool of people for validation and a sense of uniqueness in forging their own cultural identity (Abraham & Anderson, 1984; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Brewer & Gardner, 2004; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997). This cultural identity, much like the multiple identities that define any individual (Burke & Reitzes, 1999; Parekh, 2009; Peek, 2005; Pratt, 2000; Schlenker, 1986; Stets & Burke, 2000), will be interpreted and reinterpreted experiences accumulate throughout a lifetime (Bergani & Bagozzi, 2000; Bullis & Bach, 1989; Pratt, 2000). Of interest to my research is how a salient cultural identity manifests in creative work.

As previously stated, culture influences how creativity is channelled so that, depending on the cultural setting, certain individuals will receive more or less encouragement for their creative expression (Weiner, 2000). Every culture has its own nuanced influences that guide the forms that creativity takes, but it is outside the scope of this thesis to deal with all these influences at length. Morris and Leung (2010) and Westwood and Low (2003) urge researchers to reject, as naïve cultural determinism, any argument that generalises the view that the main differences in cultural influences on creativity are caused by an East-West dichotomy. However, there is such a large body of research (Lan & Kaufman, 2012; Leung & Leung, 2004; Lubart, 2010; Rudowicz,

2003; Wonder & Blake, 1992) based in the East-West distinction, that I have decided to briefly explore that point of view.

According to Huntington (1993), a tendency towards individualism is a defining characteristic of Western cultures. Hofstede (2011) considers individualism to be “the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups” (p. 11), and individualistic cultures operate on the basis that individual members are primarily responsible both for and to themselves. This value is often compared unfavourably with the drive for social harmony and cohesion in the cultures broadly labelled ‘collectivist’, in which individuals are – broadly – socialised into putting the needs of the group before their own. The division between individualistic and collectivist is often roughly aligned along the East-West divide (Leung & Leung, 2004; Lubart, 2010), and as Nisbett (2003, p.18) argues, one big difference tends to be that non-Western cultures tend to view people and ‘things’ as interconnected, bound together as “ropes in a net”. Although I appear here to have accepted this straightforward East-West. collectivist-individualistic divide, in fact, I am aware that this dichotomy is simplistic. Collectivist cultures, for instance, are not exclusively non-Western: Greek culture is strongly collectivist within the family unity, yet the philosophies of ancient Greece gave rise to many of the most prized Western beliefs, of which the notion of democracy is but one (Nisbett, 2003). For the purposes of this discussion, however, I will simply state that much of the scholarship on cultural values shows the West as oriented towards individualism, along with an emphasis on “liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, [and] the separation of church and state” (Huntington, 1993, p. 40).

Bringing this East–West divide close to the main concern of this thesis, creativity, the cross-cultural argument continues. There is some agreement (Lubart & Georgsdottir, 2004; Mayer, 1999; Raina 1999; Rietzschel, Nijstad & Stroebe, 2010) that a creative product has to be accepted as useful, satisfactory or appropriate, and furthermore, *creative* is perceived as *not* the average, the ordinary or the habitual (Weiner, 2000). After that, however, agreement ceases, because the focus on *newness* in the Western conception is not shared in the East. It seems that a definition of creativity embracing novelty and originality fits perfectly with the North American belief system based on the ideals of individuality, democracy and freedom (Choi, Koo & Choi, 2007; Eraz & Nouri, 2010; Goncalo & Staw, 2006) and the egalitarianism that exists (even if it is, arguably, illusory), means that creativity can be conceptualised as extending beyond *the arts* into all areas of life (Weiner, 2000). If this view prevails, it seems that creativity is everywhere, and therefore, somehow and at the same time, perhaps nowhere in particular.

In contrast, non-Western societies firmly grounded in the ideals of interdependence, collectivity, cooperation and authoritarianism have developed a different perspective of the meanings inherent in notions of creativity, and in particular, of concepts of novelty and originality (De Dreu, 2010; Hennessey, Amabile & Mueller, 2010; Karwowski, 2014). Creative individuals in a traditional Eastern society must adhere to the socio-cultural norms of creative expression, yet at the same time detach from them. This is possible because the norms are perceived as unchangeable, but a person is free in his/her deeds and actions. Thus, in the Eastern culture, the concept of creativity may not necessarily contradict conformity (Khaleefa, 1996). Creativity here may take the form of *modification* and *adaptation*. For instance, in some African art forms, such as the making of ceremonial masks, newness and originality do not hold special value. What is important is that certain key features are not left out, and so long as those conventions of making are observed, other characteristics are a matter for the choice of the craftsman (Ludwig, 1992). Mazuri (1996) observed that in Africa innovations were concerned with improvements rather than with new inventions.

Although it may seem that the Western view of creativity speaks to the myth of the lone creative hero, in reality the creative process is often a collective one. As Pirola, Merlo and Mann (2004, p. 239) remark, "... individual creativity can provide the raw material of novel and useful ideas", but they argued that collaboration was essential to optimise creativity because interaction allows the "sharing of diverse opinions, ideas and creative approaches to problem-solving" (Pirola, Merlo & Mann, p. 242). Their view of creativity aligns quite closely with that of many non-Western cultures, in which art is practised as a group activity. In chapter one, for instance, I cited Maduro's (1976) study of the *Mewari* painting community in Rajasthan, where a hierarchical social structure dictated the creative task and craft of the artisans and artists, and the work was not about original creation, but rather, the reproduction of established and 'approved' creative forms. Thus, Eastern and Western concepts of collective creativity may well diverge in both product and process. While the West looks to collaboration as a route to novelty, the East views collective creativity as a means of maintaining traditional cultural expression and passing the practices of the art from generation to generation. Sawyer's (2006) discussion shows that an understanding of cultural contexts is essential in evaluating creativity, and that novelty may be neither a necessary nor sufficient measure by which to judge.

The lower value placed on novelty in non-Western cultures, however, does not suggest that there is a complete absence of creative evolution. In fact, cultures revise and 'renovate' their creative articulations in response to threats to the established social, religious or political order

(Khaleefa, 1996). For example, Mar'i and Karayanni (1983) found that the creativity levels among Arab youth was higher if the situation was not intensely laden with cultural values. Somewhat similarly, Oner's (2000) study of Turkish adults found participants' support for innovation varied according to context. Innovation was welcomed for work, science and technology, but rejected within the family and other interpersonal relationships. Oner (2000) reported that participants expressed fear that the traditional 'pure' moral values of Turkish culture might be corrupted by innovation. No culture is therefore entirely unchanging or completely resistant to creative development, but the degree of innovation may occur in small increments and may be confined to certain types and areas of creative expression.

Within Afro-Arab Islamic socio-cultural systems, originality may be accepted more readily if it connects to prevailing moral and religious values. For instance, verbal expression has a high status and is considered a form of originality, and so memorising and reciting sections of the Koran, which might not seem creative to a person outside the culture, could well be a highly valued expression within the culture, where subtle nuances of interpretations would be appreciated (Khaleefa, 1996). In other cultures, also, the concept of creativity is explicitly linked to ethical standards. The Chinese researchers Liu (1997) and Wu (1996), for instance, argue that good morality and sociability are an integral part of the Chinese concept of creativity.

Wonder and Blake (1992) conceptualised the differences in East–West approaches to creative expression in relation to a tendency towards valuing two different types of knowledge: intuition logic. They proposed that Eastern thought, and therefore Eastern approaches to creativity, is 'intuitive', whereas Western thought is 'logical'. It is axiomatic to the argument these scholars make that creativity means either adding facts to or deleting them from the cultural 'database'. The cultural inclination of the East orients towards finding inner peace by experiencing what is already in the 'database' (culture), and so Eastern creativity is less likely than the West to introduce new information. Instead, creative expression may be more largely about the rearrangement of existing elements of the creative 'pattern' by highly trained master craftspeople trained to a perfect skill level is perfect. By contrast, the West looks outward towards progress and activity, relying heavily on the logic of innovation, which offers vivid new interpretations and understandings of existing laws. Whatever the differences between the intuitive and logical approaches, neither seems inherently *more* creative, simply *differently* creative.

2.2 Valuing Creativity

Cultural contexts influence not only the conceptualisation of creativity, but also attitudes towards its value and utility (Kastika, 2001; Welchsler & Martinez, 2001, Rudowicz & Hui, 1998; Yue & Rudowicz, 2002). In both the West and the East, creative products have to succeed in the marketplace (Chua, Roth & Lemoine, 2015; Lubart & Georgsdottir, 2004; Mayer, 1999; Raina 1999), and the push towards creative industries thinking (Atran , Medin & Ross, 2005;

Casey (2009) elevates individual skill and talent because of their job and wealth potential (DCMS, 2001). In fact, countries across the world, including New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom, have channelled public policy and funding towards the creative industries in the expectation of economic growth (de Bruin, 2005; Erez & Nouri, 2010; Pratt, 2004). Indonesia directs its cultural production at tourism to generate substantial national income, and in Turkey, creativity is strongly encouraged in science and technology in order to increase work efficiency and standard of living (Oner, 1999). Latin America has emphasised creativity in business and advertising (Kastika, 2001; Welchsler & Martinez, 2001). Although nations are attracted to the idea that creativity can save the economic day (Bilton, 2007; Florida, 2002), for individuals, the likelihood of great financial gain from creative work is quite problematic (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2006; Howkins, 2002; McRobbie, 2004). Creative work abounds, but its success or failure depends entirely on audience response (Caves, 2001; Major, 2009), because creative products are subjective and experiential. That is, it cannot be known until the moment of consumption how the creative good will be received (Leadbeater & Oakley; Towse, 2010), so that regardless of the culture in which the good was produced, the economic value of creativity is not guaranteed.

There has been widespread debate (Barron, 1990; Heidegger, 1990; James, Clark & Cropanzano, 1999; Kastika, 2001; Lumsden & Wilson, 1981; Wu, 1996) about how creativity is and should be valued. In the West, shared meanings about creativity connect with individuality, freedom of expression, self-actualisation and with the notion that “... everyone should be creative because creativity is good for an individual and for society” (Baldwin, 2001, p.13). At the same time, there is a groundswell of voices complaining that creativity is not really valued, recognised or rewarded (Abou-Hatab, 1997; Azuma 1984; Baldwin, 2001, Cheng, 1999; Erdos & Ashria 1996; Khaleefa,; Kuo, 1996; Mar'i & Karayanni, 1983; Oner, 2000; Wonder & Blake, 1992). I choose here to focus on the value placed on creativity in an educational context, because school is a powerful influence on how individuals, regardless of cultural affiliation, come to understand the place of creativity in society.

Scott (1999) reported that a cross section of teachers saw creative children as a source of interference and, disruption in the classroom. In addition, teachers' judgments of their favourite students were negatively correlated with creativity, whereas judgments of their least favourite students were positively correlated with creativity (Westby & Dawson, 1995). Ings (2017) conducted research on the education system in New Zealand and how it socialised teachers towards this view of creativity. He found that teachers perpetuated social inequalities by opposing certain forms of creativity that do not align with the national curriculum. These conclusions correspond closely with the earlier study by Raini and Raini (reported in Ludwig, 1992) of traits valued by teachers and parents in Germany, Greece, India, the Philippines and the USA.

In all five cultures, both parents and teachers appeared to reward a compliant child who accepted the judgment of authorities, but there were minor variations about which characteristics of creativity were perceived as worthy of encouragement. Germany and the USA, for instance, placed a premium on originality, whereas curiosity was a valued trait in India, so long as it did not impinge on obedience and courteousness. Characteristics such as independent thinking were not appreciated among parents and teachers from Greece, India and the Philippines (Welchsler & Martinez, 2001). Singh (1987) found that certain characteristics often associated with creativity – courage, independent thinking and judgment, risk taking and intuition – were not appreciated by well-educated Indian parents, who instead believed that the most desirable traits in children were obedience, good adjustment, conformity, sincerity and health. A Hong Kong study of teachers' perception of an ideal pupil and a creative pupil found that their conception of an ideal student fitted a typical Chinese 'good child' type, rather than a 'creative child' model (Lam, 1996). The ideal 'good child' characteristics conformed closely to Confucian values, which rank honesty, self-discipline, responsibility and respects for parents as the most desirable traits, followed by diligence, unselfishness, humility and obedience. The education system therefore, socialises different groups to understand their place in the world, and also, their views on creativity. In relation to my research, the cultural values perpetuated by the school system and family socialisation seem to suggest that the type of unorthodox behaviour associated with high levels of creativity (Czikzentmihali, 1997; Filipowicz, 2006; Rhodes, 1961) are taken as the opposite of being a 'good' child.

Research in Brazil and Cuba (Welchsler & Martinez, 2001), Hong Kong (Rudowicz, 1994), Finland (Saarilahti *et al.*, 1999), Kenya (Gacheru *et al.*, 1999), Mexico (Wilcox & Moreno, 1999) and Romania (Dinca, 1999) has shown that school curricula and teaching practices do not support the

formal declarations of policy makers about the importance of creativity in children's education and development. This situation prevails in Tonga, where there is no formal space for learning about arts and creativity. Instead, logic and memorisation are emphasised, and students' writing is usually on topics directed by teachers. Saarilahati (1999) showed that it also not uncommon for educators and policy makers to accept the 'creativity myth', the first part of which is that creativity is limited to performance of the arts. The second string in the myth is that creative children are undisciplined and uncontrolled, and that their creative activity is purposeless, chaotic and disruptive. The third, and perhaps most potent argument in the myth is creativity takes time away from teaching basic skills (Saarilahati, 1999). Although the Western and Eastern cultures might diverge in their views on what constitutes creativity and how the creative process transpires, what is obvious from these studies is that creativity as a part of school curricula is widely undervalued. While a push towards a creative industries agenda in some Western countries might be paving the way for more acceptance of art in all aspects of life (Keller & Loewenstein, 2011; Morris & Leung, 2010; Mueller, Melwani, & Goncalo, 2012), traditions and rigid rules continue to exist that shape how the youth relate to creativity.

There is divergence on how different cultures value different areas of cultural expression. Rudowicz and Hui's (1998) study suggests that Western perspectives on creativity, such as those typical of North Americans, favour the aesthetic and artistic value of creative work, as well as the economic. Smith and Wright (2000) found that British students believed that people who had made a mark in the arts, classical music, science or philosophy had also made a creative and meaningful contribution to the world. On the other hand, Yue and Rudowicz (2002) argue that Chinese culture tended to appreciate those creative works that assisted not only financial objectives but also political accomplishments. This view on creativity might account for why, when asked to nominate the most outstanding creative people, those in the first tier of selection included politicians and businessmen along with fashion designers. Yue and Rudowicz (2002) also found that Chinese, Hong Kong and Taiwanese interviewees perceived both historical and contemporary politicians, scientists or inventors as most representative of creative people. Their participants rarely nominated artists, writers and composers.

2.3 The Creative Person

So far, employing an East-West mode of examining creativity has shown more differences than similarities in cultural views of the phenomenon (Abou-Hatab, 1997;; Azuma 1984; Baldwin, 2001, Cheng, 1999; Erdos & Ashria 1996; Khaleefa,; Kuo, 1996; Mar'i & Karayanni, 1983; Oner, 2000;

Wonder & Blake, 1992) and there is likewise a divide in perceptions of what distinguishes a creative from a non-creative person. Most Western studies exploring implicit conceptions of creativity have focused on the characteristics and personality types of creative individuals (Runco & Bahleda, 1987; Montgomery *et al.*, 1993; Runco *et al.*, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Helsen, 1996) or conceptualisations of creativity (Sternberg, 1985; Runco & Bahleda, 1987). Although Florida (2002) has argued that everyone has potential creativity, a stereotype prevails in the West that creative people are non-conformist, personally and emotionally tied to their work, and willing to sacrifice money and relationships in pursuit of their creative vision (Major, 2009; McRobbie, 2004). Despite the existence of creative entrepreneurs who are demonstrably capable of wearing both commercial and creative ‘hats’ (Eikof & Haunschild, 2003; Elsbach & Flynn, 2013), much of Western research argues that creative people are ill-equipped to manage their own finances and consider making money from their creativity a form of “selling-out” (McRobbie, 2004, p. 517).

Therefore, creative people are presented as indifferent to, or even as opposing, commercial imperatives in order to maintain their authenticity and to fulfil their intrinsic motivations (Bilton, 2007). In pursuing their art, North American creatives, for example, were found to be energetic, active, willing to take a stand, inquisitive, curious, adventurous, ambitious, self-confident, determined and enthusiastic (Sternberg, 1985; Runco & Bahleda, 1987; Runco, 1989; Runco *et al.*, 1993; Westby & Dawson, 1995). By extension, Western studies frequently listed personality characteristics of a creative person as free spirited, non-conformist, individualistic, confident, assertive, daring, artistic, humorous and possessing good taste (Sternberg, 1985; Runco & Bahleda, 1987; Runco *et al.*, 1993; Westby & Dawson, 1995).

The perception of the core characteristics of a creative person held by the Hong Kong Chinese is to a great extent congruent with the perception held by North American respondents. Yet, characteristics relating to sense of humour, aesthetic and art appreciation, which are consistently reported in North American implicit theories, are absent in the Hong Kong general public’s concepts of creativity (Rudowicz & Hui, 1997). Artistic sensibility and humour were also almost non-existent in the concepts creative people among undergraduates in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan (Rudowicz & Yue, 2000) and among Hong Kong teachers (Lam, 1996; Chan & Chan, 1999). It is also noteworthy that Hong Kong Chinese concepts of the creative person include characteristics that are not present in the North American samples. They seem to relate to a collectivistic orientation of the Hong Kong Chinese and include such attributes as ‘inspires people’, ‘makes a contribution to the progress of society’, and ‘is appreciated by others’

(Rudowicz & Hui, 1997). In addition, Chan and Chan (1999) observed that Hong Kong teachers nominated many more undesirable traits as characteristics of creative students than their North American counterparts (Runco *et al.*, 1993).

This ties back to the idea of orthodoxy, and the push for ‘good’ creativity as opposed to a ‘bad’ or ‘wild’ creativity that might in some way damage society. The contrasts typified in the studies can be summarised by noting that the West views many of the qualities associated with creativity, such as independence or assertiveness, as desirable qualities for individuals. On the other hand, traditional Eastern cultures, which advance the wellbeing of the group over that of the individual, see strongly negative social connotations in the ‘creative’ characteristics such as rebelliousness, self-centeredness or arrogance (Chan & Chan, 1999).

2.4 Cultural Adaptations and Creativity

The focus of this research is on how traditional and contemporary expressions of Tongan culture affects Tongan creative expression. Given that the participants of this study come from New Zealand, the United States of America and Tonga, it is worth considering how adaptation to a non-Tongan cultural milieu may, in fact, influence concepts of Tongan culture and attitudes to, and practice of, creativity. Research highlights (Lee, 2004; Morton, 1996) that the degree to which migrants align with their new cultural surrounds depends on levels to which they accept acculturation. Berry (1997) defines this as learning the elements of a new culture. For instance, Tongan migrants to New Zealand might acculturate by improving their colloquial English, or by adapting to social norms that are less hierarchical (Daly, 2009; Hansen, 2004) than those of their homeland. The deculturation involved in unlearning cultural meanings and acculturating by adopting new ones has a powerful impact on their connections to the homeland.

According to Berry (1980), migrants can exhibit four cultural adaptations: assimilation, marginalisation, separation, and integration. Assimilation occurs when migrants embrace the values and beliefs of the host culture and abandon those of their heritage. According to Chan (2002; 2005) this is a form of conversion that requires either reinterpretation or relinquishing of the original cultural identity. Essentially, assimilation is a process of separation from the heritage culture and its accompanying influences (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). ‘Marginalisation’ is the term applied to the state of feeling no strong attachment to either a home or a host culture (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999), and is likely to eventuate in some form of identity crisis caused by cultural isolation (Burke & Reitzes, 1999; Parekh, 2009). ‘Separation’ describes the state of being

of people who maintain their own cultural understandings and exclude the host culture. Chan (2002) has argued that cultures are “essentializing,” and can operate as a closed system, which accounts elegantly for the instances of separation that occur after immigration. Separation may explain why some immigrants hold to the traditions of creativity they know and resist the different forms offered by the new host culture. Finally, integration is perceived to be the ideal form of cultural adaptation and is a state of ‘fluency’ in both the host and home culture. Both cultures play a part in the formation of cultural identity, and although identity conflict may occur when culture values diverge, the migrant will move freely and easily between both cultures (Oetzel, 2009; Varner & Beamer, 2011).

Chan (2002; 2005) calls the ability to move between cultures ‘alternating’: in the host culture, individuals can pass themselves off, but in the milieu of their home culture, will be able to revert seamlessly to the cultural processes of their upbringings. Continued alternating can, over time, produce hybridised identities (Hofstede, 2011; Nisbett, 2003), which describes “mutual entanglement” or fusion of the cultures (Chan, 2002, p. 13). The ability to integrate and alternate are possibly useful to creative people because new cultural experiences encourage diverse thinking, risk taking and new methods of creating, as shown by Moodod’s (2013) example of based Samoan flax weavers who began to integrate electric cable into their basket weaving.

The value placed on integration is evident in the actions of governments, including the New Zealand Ministry of Culture and Heritage. The ministry funds cultural festivals such as Polyfest to ensure that all cultural groups have “unhindered and dignified representation, as well as to the maintenance and propagation of distinct cultural identities and lifestyles” (Pakulski, 1997, p. 77). In other words, integration is considered important because it encourages cultural well-being and can increase the participation of cultural groups in creative endeavours that serve the cultural, national and economic makeup of the country (Howkins, 2002). For example, in discussing Polyfest, Kornelly (2008) argues that the festival creates a space where young Pasifika people can actively shape and hybridise their identities in an urban New Zealand environment. Festivals like Polyfest assert the importance of Pasifika music and dance in identity creation of individuals and community groups. However, although integration is desirable, attempts to foster it are not always successful, perpetuating stereotypes or offering a superficial account of the culture (Lee, 2011).

Although integration has been discussed above as if it pertains exclusively to new migrants, it is my contention here that integration is an experience also experienced by second, third and fourth generations, who inevitably move between two worlds, tied to the old culture by bonds of

family affection and respect, while simultaneously living a full life in the education and employment systems of the 'new' culture.

If, as some people argue (Walls, Jan & Hayward, 2014) the culture of the whole planet is tending towards hybridisation, it is not a given that people will know or find their identity, for it is not an 'essence' that inheres in people. Rather, identity is acquired during the 'writing' of personal histories, through encounters and interaction, interpretations, acceptances and rejections, conflicts, and constructions (Appiah, 2006). Identity emerges from an ongoing process of construction that occurs within certain constraints (Bocchi & Ceruti 2002; Ceruti 2008). Research on hybridisation (Chan, 2002) suggests that 'outsiders', the marginals who do not identify with their new host culture, are often seen by their wider community as in some way deficit, because they are an unknown minority group. Outsiders however, are often intensely creative (Stonequist 1961; Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005; Benet-Martínez, Lee, and Leu 2006), because they live outside the homogeneous conformity of the majority, and bring a plurality of perspectives to bear on life. What is "given" in one country is not "given" or "just the way things are" in another country. The outsider, the marginal migrant, therefore sees the world from at least two perspectives (Montuori & Fahim 2004), working from a position of bi-socialisation, which has been identified as a central component of creativity. Bi-socialisation involves seeing a situation from two mutually exclusive perspectives, and bringing them together to form something new (Koestler 1990).

Any contact of 'culture with culture' can cause cultural loss and depredation, but it can also lead to innovation (Appiah 2006; Bateson 1994; Berry and Epstein 1999; Chambers 1994; Chan, 2002, 2005; Collins 1998; Florida 2002; Hobson 2004; Thompson 1986), because members are not impervious to ideas and practices that offer benefits. As Said (1993) has written, the history of all cultures is the history of cultural borrowings. Thus, though incursions of new forms of creativity and innovation may be irregular and even sporadic, they are also, arguably, essential to the survival of cultures, in the sense that they stimulate a dialogue between tradition and change (Bocchi & Ceruti 2002; Ceruti 2008).

Chan (2002, 2005) contends that it is common practice for immigrants to live a hybridised life, and that it is not an entirely positive experience. Hybridisation can trigger a sense of identity loss as migrants try to make sense of who they are in their new cultural surroundings, yet that very pain and anxiety can be conducive to creative work (Chan 2002, 2005). Byron, Khazanchi and Nazarian (2010) agree that such stress can elicit creative work but add the proviso that stressors must not be so intense as to overwhelm. If the stress of hybridisation becomes too great, it will,

as Frederickson (1998) says, reduce attention and blur focus. Although some scholarship suggests that a positive environment is most encouraging for creativity (Amabile, Barsaade, Mueller & Staw, 2005), Bilton (2007) maintains that clashes and contradictions can also stimulate creative output. In terms of creativity and culture, it appears that hybridisation, with its continual movement between positive and negative experiences, can inspire creative expression.

2.5 Pasifika Art and the West

Historically Pasifika cultures and art have not been natural partners. In fact, art historians and anthropologists have struggled to have the material culture of Pasifika peoples recognised as art (Stevenson, 2001; Hall, 1993; Thomas, 1999). It is true that some sculptures have gained status as masterpieces, such as “The Tongan Wooden Goddess” (St. Cartmail, 1997), but Pasifika art forms are only infrequently found in art galleries: outside their place of origin, Pasifika art is most often found providing ‘ethnographic context’ in the anthropology sections of natural history museums.

There is a sense in which this practice is understandable, because for most of the peoples of the planet, Pasifika nations are remote, small, and exotic, and the Pasifika art in the museums of the West affords a brief glimpse, albeit an ‘othered’ one, into the cultural occasions of distant cultures. However, be this as it may, for the Pasifika artists themselves, the act of creation did not primarily produce a ‘display’, but rather, embraced and expressed particular aspects of cultural heritage. Thus, in the Pasifika context, tradition and art combine readily, for, as Thomas (1999) comments, “Indigenous cultures are simultaneously traditional' and 'contemporary’” (p.23). They are ‘traditional’ in the sense that distinctive views of the world remain alive, but they are also 'contemporary' in the sense that they are produced in the present and speak of the past in a voice of the present.

According to Stevenson (2012), to Pacific Island peoples, New Zealand is seen as a land of milk and honey, full of possibilities, riches and hope. It is a metropolitan nation, with all those advantages, but its location makes it close to Pasifika home lands. It already accommodates large Polynesian populations, so there are existing groups that provide the comfort of familiarity, but at the same time, it also offers ties to the United Kingdom, the United States and Europe. For those creative Pasifika people, New Zealand is known as a country that sustains and supports arts programs that Pasifika island nations can ill afford (Hall, 1993; Stevenson, 2012). For instance, Creative New Zealand (New Zealand's arts funding body), with its focus on arts advocacy, has

directed its attentions to moving contemporary Pacific arts 'offshore' - introducing them into a global art market (Stevenson, 2004, 2012).

Despite this support at the level of national policy, however, public appreciation of Pasifika art is still debatable. On the whole, the viewing audience has been slow to accept contemporary art from the Pacific, and those expressions which address social issues and concerns, though critically acclaimed, have not found easy financial support (Stevenson, 2012). Typically, Pasifika art is considered by outsiders as 'primitive', perhaps more at the level of a craft, using, as it does, traditional materials (St. Cartmail, 1997). This perception is reinforced by exhibitions of masterpieces of Pacific arts, pieces frequently collected at the time of first European contact. Pasifika art and artists remain locked in the static form of the Pacific myth' (Stevenson, 2012).

A Pasifika label projects a particular image which does not equate with the contemporary art practice of other nations. In other words, viewers do not want to see representations of the islands urbanised and so the tradition of innovation and experimentation in that prevails in Western art is denied to contemporary Pasifika artists (Raabe, 2010; Stevenson, 2012). As Albert Wendt (1983, p. 198) noted: "My objection ... is that it gives the impression that our ancestors' art is still the Oceanic Art of today; or, that if it isn't, it ought to be, or that we have not produced any worthwhile art since the *papalagi* came; or that if we are producing some art it is not 'authentic' Oceanic Art and therefore not worthy of serious discussion."

When contemporary Pasifika artists use Western materials, or draw inspiration from the 'global village', the Pasifika label is quickly taken from them: they become contemporary artists, but their work is not Pasifika or primitive enough. As Raabe (2010, p. 15) observed, "Very often a contemporary artwork is denied its 'Pacificness' by the European audience because it seems not foreign enough. Pacific arts have changed, but not the habits of the European beholder".

Raabe's argument continues that merely living in the Pacific does not justify the label for art cannot be considered Pasifika unless it displays traditional knowledge, practices, art forms, and motifs in a pure form.

By contrast, creative collaborator and artist Makerita Urale (2012) argues that for art to be Pasifika, it should not matter what tools are used, but instead that it originated in the mind of a Pasifika person, so that it is able to assert a contemporary Pasifika identity, political stance or commentary. The arguments continue at the macro level of academic and critical debate, but in practical everyday terms, art forms that do not clearly display Pasifika traditions are not accepted as authentic and are therefore denied a place in exhibitions (Hall, 1993). Perhaps public

appreciation of Pasifika arts will increase with greater public knowledge of the international acclaim a few artists have achieved, but established stereotypes continue to define the broad perceptions of what Pasifika arts are and what they should be (Stevenson, 2012).

In this chapter, I have stipulated an overview of the big ideas surrounding my research. Though most of the literature ranged from earlier dates of publication through to somewhat recent, the apparent gaps highlight the need for more attention in the domains of the East and West, and culturally based notions of creativity. I have also laid down the ‘creative mat’ of the next chapter, in *de(constructing)* Tongan art and creativity more specifically.

Chapter Three

Weaving the Cultural and Creative Mats of Tonga

I am going to continue on the *vā* (distance apart, relationships, towards each other) from the previous creative mat that has been *folā* (laid) to weave cultural threads into understanding Tongan creativity in more detail. The word ‘weaving’ means making a complex story or pattern from a number of interconnected elements (van der Grijp, 2001). In this chapter, I intend to present disparate elements of Tongan creative expressions that are applicable to my study, such as canoe building, sculpture, weaving, dance, and other forms, so as to envisage them as the interlacing threads of the Tongan world, coming together to make a *fala* (mat) of creative meaning. This chapter, then, will offer sketches of the different expressions of creativity in traditional Tongan culture, and will examine how creative forms were used as vehicles of cultural agency through Tongan values.

3.1 Seeing Tongan Creativity

Discussions of Tongan art can be vexed. For instance, Havea (1980) asserts that Tonga has no distinctive art, whereas St. Cartmail (1997, p.19) argues that Tonga not only has art, but that it is in a strong state, despite being “mutilated by religious zealots, destroyed by missionaries, dispersed by collectors and scattered to all corners of the earth” (p. 19). There is no easy way to settle the opposing opinions of scholars so separated in their views as Havea (1980) and St. Cartmail (1977), and such a dispute is not, in any case, the burden of this research.

My concern here is to examine creativity as the precursor of Tongan art. Thus, I am inspired in Thomas’s (1991, p. 82) statement, that “objects are not what they were made to be but what they have become”, and in following this line of thought, it has become

axiomatic to my argument in this chapter that certain artefacts of Tongan cultural expression may now be seen as remarkable and beautiful, and may in fact be classified as ‘art’, but yet were probably produced by their makers with a completely different motivation. In other words, the elevated status of some traditional creative forms is an accretion, and did not eventuate from a deliberate attempt to create a form of high art. In this chapter, I will be using the terms ‘creativity’ or ‘Tongan creativity’ to explain how what are now ‘art’ forms have come to be, and how they mark a time when those creative expressions represent a culture that is relatively unchanged in its values, beliefs, and social structure.

Tracking the early products of Tongan creativity is not an easy task, because trustworthy historical information about Tongan art is sometimes difficult to find (Neich, 1997). As a result, much of Tongan history is still a matter of debate (Helu, 2012), which has led to discussions about whose history is the most reliable. Although missionaries and sailors kept journals that have been utilised by modern historians as contemporary accounts of early Tongan life (see, for example, the work of Bott, 1982; Campbell, 2003; Cummins, 1977; Latufeku, 1974; Rutherford, 1977), it seems that in the 19th century and earlier, little was known of Tonga in the West, except as the source of exotic objects collected on Cook’s voyages and by the crews of trading vessels and whalers (Havea, 1980). In fact, Tonga was often grouped with the rest of Polynesia as part of an idealised and romanticised utopia, home of the ‘noble savage’ created by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778) and depicted by artists such as William Hodges and John Keys Sherwin (Guest, 2007; Hetherington, 2001).

To trace Tongan creativity, then, means to look at the objects used in daily life, to consider their decorative form in relation to their utilitarian function (Morton & Lee, 1996; Lythberg, 2014). This requires speculation about the cultural values that drove such efforts. It is evident that Tonga had a strong artistic tradition before its contact with Europeans, for a people whose primary concern was the basic requirements for food, shelter and protection (Sengupta, 2011). Artistic expression was inevitably centered on the objects that supported their needs, Tongan artisans developed unique methods to decorate their clothing, weapons, houses and household utensils and canoes. Traditional Tongan art was located predominantly in the making of utilitarian objects such as fish hooks from pearl shells, and in the signature styles that *tufunga* (builders) created for the sennit bindings that were used to hold house frames together. The art of early Tonga was

primitive, not in any demeaning sense of the word ‘primitive’, but in the sense that it was original and unique, the product of aesthetic and social values largely unaffected by any substantial exchange of ideas with other nations (Van der Grijp, 2001).

What drove Tongans to decorate utilitarian objects and raise them above the mundane may well have been *anga faka-Tonga*. In other words, the impulse and inspiration for decoration was deeply embedded in a sense of the right way to live and the rightness of certain forms. *Anga faka-Tonga* sums up a set of cultural values that together compose ‘*ulu ngaanga faka-Tonga*’ (Lee, 2003). The individual values encapsulated within *anga faka-Tonga* are the quality of “‘*ofa* (love) that informs *faka’apa’apa* (respect); *feveitokai’aki* (reciprocity)” (Thaman, 2008, p. 2) and; “*mateaki* (loyalty)” (Boutell & Campbell, 1992, p. 11). Ka’ili (2005) adds *tauhi vā* (maintaining and nurturing good relationships) into the concept. Both Shumway (2012) and Thaman (2008a) believe that *loto to* (having a ready, willing, eager mind) are also part of *faka-Tonga*, together with *mamahi’i me’a* (to be zealous for, stand for, to contend, strive, or fight for a good cause). I contend that these aspects of Tongan culture were represented on the most ordinary objects: a bowl, for instance, could transcend its apparent utility and present an opportunity to show ‘*ofa* and *faka’apa’apa*, or perhaps *feveitokai’aki*.

Taufe’ulungaki (2003) maintains that the values embedded within *anga faka-Tonga* stand in direct antithesis to Western values, which tend to emphasise individualism, competition, rationality, independence, and equality, and it is interesting (but inconclusive) to note that as contact with the West has increased, so have the traditional arts declined. For instance, at a time, the custom to use beautifully decorated bowls to serve *mei* (breadfruit) pudding at celebrations. However, within contemporary Tongan societies, plastic bowls are now used as they are cheaper and easier to obtain in relation to carving a wooden bowl. This reflects the current situation, and the art of making beautiful bowls has fallen into disuse because the supply of suitable wood has been exhausted.

Anga faka-Tonga is a complex layering of concepts that describes an ideal of Tongan values, and it intertwines with another powerful cultural construct, *anga fakafonua* (the way of the land [*fonua*]). *Anga fakafonua* is anchored in an understanding of the intricate structures of *fatongia* (obligations) and *kavenga* (duties) (Soakai, 2003), and is the frame of reference for another set of values that should be expressed in Tongan social life. These values are *feveitokai’aki* (collaboration), *ngaue fakataha* (cooperation), *fefoaki’aki*

(reciprocity), and *fetokoni'aki* (mutual assistance) (Helu, 1997; Soakai, 2003). These values underpin relationships with people of the *fonua*: the immediate and extended family, local communities, and wider Tongan society (Kalavite, 2010), and as the source of both belonging and obligation, underpins the Tongan sense of reality.

Fonua is the physical and external manifestation of an internal sense of the *vā*, which is a metaphysical common space of interconnectedness between and among people. *Vā* expresses the notion that no person is a separate being, but instead, as each person enters the literal space of the *fonua*, they also enter a metaphysical space that is not empty, but rather, full of nurturing, respectful socio-spatial connections (Doktor, 2009; Ka'ili, 2008). Although Wendt (1996) was speaking of the Samoan conceptualisation of *vā*, I feel that his words are equally relevant to Tonga:

Vā is the space between, the betweenness, not empty space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things . . . A well-known Samoan expression is '*ia teu le vā*,' cherish/nurse/care for the *vā*, the relationships. (p. 402)

Vā is constructed and fashioned through “the relationship between time-markers—beats, things, or people . . . *vā* signifies the nature of the relationship” (Ka'ili, 2008, p. 16) and might exist along a continuum from *vālelei* (good; cohesive) to *vātamaki* (bad, strained) or from *vāofi* (close) to *vāmama'o* (distant). The concept applies to all spaces: physical, social and metaphorical. In *Tā-Vā* (theory of reality), the definition of *tā* includes time, and is thus extended to rhythm and performance implying *fai*, or “to do”. Ka'ili (2008) speaks of *fai* as a verb that signals “perform[ance] or engage[ment] by intersecting actions (*tā*) in space (*vā*)” (p. 143).

Vā, then, is the foundation of social relations for Tongans. Furthermore, *Vā* is the foundation of creativity due to the willingness to decorate and make beauty being simultaneously an expression of the creative self (Mahina, 2004) and part of relating to other people in the *fonua*. Arguably, this is easiest to demonstrate in the *faiva* (dance, performance, feat, skill), which have always been an important part of *kato'anga* (celebration). *Faiva* are elaborate, highly wrought performances that incorporate music, dance and poetry (Moyle, 1991). In the case of one particular *faiva*, the *lakalaka* may be performed by hundreds of participants at important *katoanga* such as coronations, royal anniversaries or birthdays (Kaepler, 2001).

Any creative performance is an attempt by the artist to enter the minds of the audience,

to offer a unique point of view that might open a window into the “wild chaos” (Errington, 1994, p.12) of the universe. However, in *faiva*, the combination of music, movement and poetry is a powerful expression of the *fatongia* and *kavenga* that derive from the *vā*, connecting audiences to their ancestors and to the unformed, but formable future. *Faiva*, therefore, brings *anga faka-Tonga* and *anga fakafonua* into being, and in doing so, express the being of the *vā*. The creativity in these performances is not about innovation (Kaeppler, 2001; Mahina, 2004), but instead, about expertise in doing, for *faiva* tell the existing stories of the perfect relationships possible in the *vā*, and thus preserve and propagate established ways and beliefs. In these great performances, the *fonua* is perpetually connected and re-connected to the endless cycle of being that is the *vā*, which, being outside time, has no beginning and no end, but simply is. The *vā* that fills the *fonua* space fills it with the best that Tongan society can aspire to, and that, in turn, seems to breed anxiety about change: that innovation might cause loss of the values captured in the *faiva* and departure from the ideal *anga faka-Tonga*.

My late grandfather’s brother, Matapa (personal communication, 2018) told me that the *lakalaka* has not always had the social importance it possesses today, and that its current salience cannot be separated from the political unification of the country by George Tupou I (also known as Taufa’ahau I), who became king of the whole Tonga in 1845. George Tupou I believed that Western civilisation could offer Tonga much in the way of wealth, technology and religion, and he took advantage of opportunities to cement both his own interests and those of his people. It was under his rule that Christianity became the national religion, that land was divided among the nobles he recognised and that an upsurge of nationalism occurred with the emancipation of the people in 1862 and Constitution in 1875 (Campbell, 2001; Wood, 1972).

By way of creating and maintaining *vā*, the *lakalaka* became an important way of telling the stories of the Tongan nation and its kings. It acquired increased prestige during the reign of Queen Salote Tupou III (1918 - 1965), because she was, arguably, the best *punake* (poet, composer and choreographer) Tonga has ever had, and composed most of the *lakalaka* still performed for royal occasions today (Condevaux, 2011; Kaeppler 2007; Wood-Ellem 2004). Here, however, the concept of ‘best’ needs examination, for though the *lakalaka* are beautiful and express truths about *anga faka-Tonga*, they continue to be/ remain unchanging. Their preservation means that nothing is lost, but equally nothing is gained except the re-statement of past values in a continuing celebration of orthodoxy.

Shumway (1981, p. 458) asserts that

of the many genres of performing arts in Tonga the *lakalaka* is the most prestigious and perhaps the best expression of what it means to be Tongan. It is presented as a gift by a whole village on important occasions to commemorate a national event or to honour the royalty or nobility. It is not only a thing of aesthetic beauty but also a reaffirmation of loyalty to the throne and of the goodness of the Tongan way of national life.

In Shumway's (1981) argument, the status of this art form is directly linked to the preservation of known and approved forms of creativity as expressions of the establishment and training. To illustrate, the art of learning *faiva* begins in primary school (Havea, 1980). In his works, Havea reported that an annual competition takes place, and children compete in traditional dancing costumes that display the special knowledge and skill needed to fashion garments from the leaves, flowers and traditional local materials. By including the elements of *faiva* in the formal curriculum, the Tonga Ministry of Education is ensuring the maintenance of the traditional cultural identity of Tongans, and simultaneously stressing to each new generation *ako*, *'ilo* and *poto* (Fusitu'a, 1992; Thaman, 1988; Vaioleti, 2001; Vaioleti & Vaioleti, 2003).

These three ideas are fundamental to Tongan philosophies of education. *Ako* (to learn appropriate behaviour and skills), *'ilo* (seeing; understanding, insight) and *poto* (clever, skillful, understanding what to do and how to do it) all work together to build the model of an educated person (Churchward, 1959; Fusitu'a, 1992; Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998; Koskinen, 1968; Taufe'ulungaki, 2002; Thaman, 1988, 1995a; Vaioleti, 2001; Vaioleti & Vaioleti, 2003; Vaioleti, 2011). The educational principles of *ako*, *'ilo* and *poto* complement each other to produce people who are able to participate in all *faiva*, which I have so far used to refer specifically to performance. An opposing view within the literature, according to Kaeppler (1993, pp. 30—31), is that the term is broader than that and "refers to any kind of task, feat, craft, or performance requiring skill or ability or anything at which a person is clever".

Traditionally, *ako*, *'ilo* and *poto* was inherent in the personhood of master crafts workers who were acknowledged experts in their field and used their experience and ability for the benefit of their communities. This is evident, for instance, in the communal activity of building traditional houses under the guidance and supervision of a master *tufunga* (carpenter). The *tufunga* know how to design different types of bindings for the framework so that the building could withstand gales, and he was also an artist, able to wrap and tie the sennit into ornamental geometric designs. The *tufunga* would also be

able to thatch by weaving coconut or sugarcane into patterns which could drain heavy downpours.

There were other traditional applications of *ako*, *'ilo* and *poto*. According to St. Cartmail (1997), all of Polynesia was renowned for the magnificent design and skillful building of great ocean-going canoes and Tongans constructed *olovaha*, two hulls lashed together with cross braces to hold them apart by a carefully judged distance, with a thatched hut for the chief or for the women and children. The *olovaha* were between 15 and 25 metres long, capable of carrying sixty to seventy people, and designed for speed and seaworthiness. The importance of *olovaha* to the village made the canoe master builders people of good standing in their communities, respected for their expertise, which was deployed in great communal events beginning with the selection and cutting of the tree, adzing into trunk into shape, carving the bow and stern with images of protection, and fashioning the paddles and bailers. Bracing and lashing had to be done properly by a sennit artist, and the launch involved a grand ceremony of protection and blessing. In this way, the *ako*, *'ilo* and *poto* of the master canoe builder, like that of the *tufunga*, was put at the disposal of the community for mutual gain and support.

Although navigation by the stars and fishing were both essential to the survival of the Tongan people (Morton & Lee, 1996; Lythberg, 2014), and certainly required skillful practitioners who could demonstrate their *ako*, *'ilo* and *poto* in their respective fields, these necessary masteries were not so obviously creative as house and canoe building, and are therefore of less concern to this research due to the parameters and restrictions of my study.

Of more immediate interest is *ngatu* (tapa making), perhaps the best known of Tongan arts outside of Tonga. The original impetus to make *tapa* was creative: it was a form of folk genius to create a cloth by taking the inner bark of a tree, pounding, stretching and gluing it, until it became big enough to wrap people in (Veys, 2017). The production of the cloth included decoration with symbolic motifs, making it a cultural artifact with a being that transcends pure utility. It is because of the symbolic aspect of *tapa* that the cloth has so often been acquired by visitors who then attach their own meanings to it and identify with it for their own purposes. Those purpose are diverse. Some might use *tapa* as evidence of their travels; in the case of missionaries and church people, it might become part of a 'show-and-tell' and a memento of successful efforts to convert a heathen population (Anderson, 1967; Cook, 1967; Forster, 1982; Samwell, 1967). The dispersal of

tapa from its place of origin marks a Tongan presence in new lands and opens up possibilities of new places to ground Tongan culture (see works by Kaeppler, 1999, 2013).

Tapa making was a communal task carried out by all the women of the village contributing their labour and expertise, and it is possible, therefore, to see the cloth as a site of sociability, creativity, and female agency Veys (2017). The product of the women's work had multiple uses in Tongan society: it was used as a gift, and for a range domestic purposes from blankets (Anderson, 1967; Cook, 1967; Forster, 1982; Samwell, 1967) and mosquito netting (Wilkes, 1845), as a sitting sheet (Cook, 1967) and a room divider (Thomson, 1968), as a bandage to set a broken arm (Mariner, 1827), as a noose (Mariner, 1827) and to mark taboo places (Dillon, 1829). These diverse uses of *tapa* meant that women's work and creativity was central to Tongan social life, and that their *ako*, 'ilo and *poto* was valued for itself and for its contribution to meeting both practical survival needs and also social needs: the decoration and symbols on *tapa* denoted social rank.

Cook's (1784, np) account of Tongan clothing makes it clear that there were class distinctions in the wearing of *tapa*:

This as to form is the general dress, but large pieces of Cloth and fine Matting are only wore [sic] by the superior people, the inferior sort put up with small pieces and very often wear nothing but a petticoat made of the leaves of plants, or the *Maro*, which is a narrow piece of cloth or matting like a Sash, this they bring between the legs and wrap round the waist.

Early European accounts of *tapa* are often highly approving (Vason, 1810; Watkin, 1833), but the greatest approval was given by Wesleyan and Catholic missionaries. They ignored the deep association of *tapa* with indigenous ritual in favour of seeing it as "a worthy women's craft, to be positively encouraged" (Thomas, 2012, p. 285). By locating 'women's work' so firmly in patriarchy, the missionaries in Tonga therefore overlooked the association of *tapa* with images of god/s, which was unceasingly attacked by the missionaries in Eastern Polynesia (Jessop, 2007; Kaeppler, 2007; Shaw, 2011).

What has emerged from this brief consideration of Tongan artistic work is that *ako*, 'ilo and *poto*, the skills and knowledge for making, are underpinned by 'ofa for the community and for the *kāinga*. 'Ofa motivates learners to seek, to absorb and to perfect their crafts, so that in the context of *anga faka-Tonga*, what is offered to the community is worthy to fulfil *fatongia* (obligations) and *kavenga* (duties). Thus, 'ofa implies completing social duty to the *kainga*, and binds Tongan society together through *feveitokai'aki* (collaboration), *ngaue fakataha* (cooperation), *fefoaki'aki* (reciprocity) and *fetokoni'aki*

(mutual assistance) (Helu, 1997; Soakai, 2003). 'Ofa therefore cannot be separated from creative performance, because it is central to the thinking, motivation and behaviour of Tongan people. For instance, in return for his labour and expertise, the *tufunga* would receive the wherewithal of daily life such as baskets of food for his family or a fisherman would donate fish, but even more than that, and perhaps more importantly, he would receive the respect and acknowledgement due to his long learning to master a creative craft. By giving, he received, and in this way all the parties in the transaction cared for the *vā* and preserved the integrity of the social spaces or relationships among people (Ka'ili, 2005; Thaman, 2004). 'Doing' creativity is therefore an integral part of *anga faka-Tonga* (the Tongan Way), comprising, as it does, the inter-connectedness of Tongan knowledge, spirits, beliefs, and relationship practices (Lee, 2003; Morton, 1996).

The creativity outlined in this discussion may be performed for an individual or small group, but it will reach out beyond the immediate 'audience' into the *fanau* (family) and *kāinga* (extended family), strengthening the ties in the *vā* by its existence in the *fonua*. The concept of *kāinga* is not limited to ties of blood, but includes all people within the Tongan community, both nationally and internationally. It is in *famili* (family) and *kāinga* that Tongans construct their cultural identities, learning *tauhi vā* (upholding the *vā*) themselves (Campbell, 2001b; Cowling, 2002; Crane, 1978; Ka'ili, 2005; Kalavite, 2012; Lātūkefu, 1980; Lee, 2003; Morton, 1996; Pau'u, 2002; Taufe'ulungaki, 2004) and passing on the fundamental learning needed for continuing the work of *tauhi vā* through multiple generations (Cowling, 2002; Kalavite, 2012; Morton, 1996).

The discussion above has shown that the weaving of Tongan creativity with Tongan values is simultaneously completed and begun in the unending connections between the *vā* and the *fonua*. Although I have written the section in the present tense, I am aware that there have been changes to Tongan creative work as it appears in modern times in the *fonua*, and that I have written of an ideal way of being. I am, however, reluctant to change the tense of this section to suggest an irretrievable past, because in the eternal and infinite connectedness that is the *vā*, nothing that was ceases to be. In other words, though modes of house building have changed, and tattoo disappeared from Tongan practice, then reappeared, the values that drove *ako*, 'ilo and *poto* still exist and are taught in the *fanau*.

I will now move on to discuss the changes that have occurred to Tongan crafts and creativity. Namely, in the next section, I will sketch in the changes that have occurred to Tongan crafts and creativity.

3.2 Searching for Tongan Creativity

I did not want this thesis to present a pre-European / post-European oppositional history: that sort of discussion has already been examined and departs from the purpose of my research. As stated, creative expression has changed, and this can, in part, be tracked to the presence of new materials sourced from the West (Scholefield, 1919; Wood-Ellem, 1999). Crafts have been abandoned for the sake of convenience and may be lost completely, and what is now offered as authentic Tongan art is sometimes a hybrid product made from a *mélange* of patterns for a new audience of tourists who do not know the difference (Kaepler 2007).

According to Tuai and Mahina (2012), Tongan creativity is currently divided along three lines: *tufunga* (material), *faiva* (performance) and *nimamea'a* (fine arts). *Tufunga* literally means 'beating the surface' / 'marking the surface' or 'the beating out of form' / 'creating form'; *faiva* literally means to 'doing time in space' or the 'intensification' of time and 'reconstitution' of space; and *nimamea'a* literally means 'fine hands', a reflection of the delicate and meticulous operation of the human hand as a tool for production. These categories are further subdivided into various practices. For example, *tufunga* includes, but is not restricted to, *tufunga tavaiivali* (painting), *tufunga lalava* (kafa sennit-lashing), *tufunga langofale* (house-building) and *tufunga tatau* (tattooing). *Faiva* includes, but is not restricted to, *faiva ta'anga* (poetry), *faiva hiva* (music) and *faiva haka* (dance). *Nimamea'a* includes, but is not restricted to, *nimamea'a lalanga* (mat- weaving), *nimamea'a koka'anga* (barkcloth-making) and *nimamea'a tuikakaia* (flower designing). The three categories relate broadly to gendered divisions of performance. *Tufunga* and *faiva* are predominantly carried out by men, while *nimamea'a* are predominantly the domain of women. However, there are areas where these gender divisions overlap, such as women artists who are involved in *faiva* performance arts as well as in *nimamea'a*.

The explanation of contemporary Tongan art in the preceding paragraphs suggests that the creative scene in Tonga is flourishing and perhaps it is, according to some measures. I contend, however, that the status of both creative people and their crafts has diminished, because arguably all statuses diminish in time. Tongan craftspeople were

once respected and powerful influences in Tongan society (Havea, 1980) due to their work reaching into every part of Tongan life. Craftsmen and women followed the traditions which they had been taught by their elders (Havea, 1980), and good work built good reputations and strong demand for their services. People outside the craft came to believe that the practice of a particular skill was influenced by magic, so that no one else could practise that particular art as well (St. Cartmail, 1997). When people wanted to build a canoe or a house therefore, they engaged skilled *tufunga* (artist) and consulted a priest for the appropriate rituals and rites.

The teachings of missionaries, however, disrupted traditional practices and beliefs. For instance, Christianity taught Tongans that nakedness was evil, which had two immediately visible effects on expressions of Tongan creativity (Kaepler, 1971; Wood-Ellem, 1997, 1999; Scholefield, 1919). Here, Tongan people began to exchange their exiguous traditional clothes for European styles that covered the body more, and traders were able to make a lot of money from the sale of European cloth. Carvers then abandoned the carving of 'sinful' naked figures on canoes, and canoe building is now a largely forgotten art as it is easier to purchase an open boat with an outboard motor (St. Cartmail, 1997).

Other changes have occurred on the creative landscape. Traditional fishhooks are no longer made out of pearl shell by Tongan craftsmen but have been replaced by Japanese steel fish hooks. I assume that these changes to creative practice occurred to introduce practicality, convenience and functionality. Traditional methods of building with elaborate geometrical sennit lashings have given way to the use of modern construction materials, and the cost of housing has increased hugely. In the past people could build entirely from local materials, for no cost except the exchange of food for service. The availability of loan finance has encouraged Tongans to construct European houses which require the importation of nails and other building materials and leading to expensive contracts for the builders (St. Cartmail, 1997). Not only are the traditional arts used in Tongan house building are being lost, the importance of *nofo fale Tonga* (living in a Tongan styled house) has diminished due to more innovative, Western influenced designs of housing brought ashore.

Art is now largely occupied with making handicrafts to cater for a new tourist clientele (Condevaux, 2010; Daniel, 1996). The Visitors' Bureau lures tourists to the islands to experience their natural beauty and the living arts and handicrafts industries (Appadurai,

1986; Donner, 1992). However, suitable carving woods have become scarce, and craftsmen carve cheap figurines out of inferior wood, blending imitations of Maori or Papua New Guinea designs with local imagination to make them sell, even using machines to mass produce art objects to cater to the commercial demand. Contact with the West, then, has brought a sophistication that Tonga may have lacked previously, but it has also changed the form of Tongan creativity. New cultural experiences have caused some craftspeople to consider that their own work crude is and inferior ('primitive' in its worst sense) in comparison with the art of New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, or Africa (Errington, 1994). The ritual and magical functions of the craft have become questionable and unnecessary. The created objects which have been used for generations to meet society's needs are no longer desirable to their primary audience. Craftspeople can no longer make a living by depending entirely on their traditional arts (Appadurai, 1986; Donner, 1992).

Although the great *faiva* which tell the stories of the nation have not yet become mere floor shows, the Tongan people have realised the commercial value and potential of their performance art, and in fact, the living arts are in great demand locally because of the promotion of tourism (Vilt, 1991). Several groups have been formed to cater to the overseas demand for 'ethnic' performance, and the troupes have created new styles of dance which are pleasing to foreigners. According to Donner (1992), the new, populist entertainment has overtaken traditional dances, with their accompanying monotone chants, because foreigners do not understand them and prefer to see vigorous and energetic dances. The popularity of the new forms of entertainment arts has enabled them to take on the status of a full-time, gainful employment, but local policies on the importation of plant materials means that travelling groups cannot take traditional costumes overseas and have had to use synthetics and plastics (Trimillos, 1988).

One traditional creative form has survived, perhaps in large part because the missionaries in Tonga did not perceive the symbols on local *tapa* as having any mystical significance or spiritual significance, and instead saw it simply for its decorative function as ceremonial objects and as a medium for exchange. Scholars (Hooper, 2006; Thomas, 2012) agree that missionaries simply failed to understand that by being wrapped in *tapa*, living people would become vessels for, and images of, the gods, giving physical form to abstract ideas of divinity. Due to the naivety of missionaries in their reading of the artefact and their not

preaching against it, the need and demand for *tapa* persisted in Tonga, and so did the *ako*, *'ilo* and *poto* connected to its making.

As a vessel that still sails through time, the concept of education is heavily revered and can be seen in how Tongan creativity is expressed. In light of *ako*, *'ilo* and *poto*, Tongan people value formal education, and in fact Tonga has more doctorates per head of population than any other nation (Carpenter & Taumoefolau, 2014). However, it is possible that in the case of creative arts, the formal education system is not able to deliver necessary training. In the past, the acquisition of *ako*, *'ilo* and *poto* was a matter of long-term training at the hands of a master. According to Thaman (1980, 1993) only a few selected schools in Tonga offer creativity in Tonga is taught at a surface level throughout primary and secondary schools as 'Arts and Crafts'. The subject consists of pencil and crayon drawing, water colour painting and portrait and scenic sketching. When Havea (1980) carried out his research, Tonga lacked teachers who could teach beyond basic levels within the arts. In fact, most of the 'art teachers' were simply general teachers given the additional responsibility of teaching art. Havea's (1980) research is dated, but art is still a somewhat undervalued part of the curriculum (Coates, 2013). On the other hand, select 'living arts', such as traditional dance, are relatively prominent in the curriculum. Children learn informally by watching adults perform, but associated hand movements are taught formally (Coxen & Munce, 2008).

It is known that more Tongans live outside of Tonga than live within her shores (Schoone, 2008; Small, 1997), and that the diaspora (or more accurately, the diasporas) have had an effect on Tongan creativity. According to Lee (2003), the cultural identity of diasporic Tongans in the United States of America, New Zealand, and Australia is formed through the social network of *fāмили*, but changes in location inevitably alter *fāмили* experiences and perceptions, and the processes of both creating and valuing creating cannot be the same as they would be in the homeland. Bringing something into being in the *fonua* implies it will possess a biography that includes birth, life and death, (Kopytoff, 1986), but regardless of where artefacts are created, their making will serve *tauhi vā* and construct and protect Tongan identities both genealogically and socially.

This chapter departed from the customary path of previous scholarship and has walked through the intersection of creativity and selected art forms within the Tongan culture.

This chapter, along with the two previous chapters has assisted in locating this research in cultural contexts and has begun to shape the answer of research questions regarding the effects of traditional and contemporary expressions of Tongan culture on the creative work of Tongan artists. The next chapter describes the methodology and method of qualitative research that I undertook to (de) construct Tongan creativity, through the walking of two worlds: Aotearoa New Zealand, and, Tonga.

Chapter Four

Tufunga Fekumi (Research Design) and Tūkufua Ki He Fekumi (Theoretical Framework)

This chapter begins by setting out the *tūkufua ki he fekumi* (theoretical framework) that structured this research and flows into discussion of elements of the *founga fekumi* (research design) which is the “plan or strategy aimed at enabling answers to be obtained for the research questions” (Burns, 2000, p. 145). In this research, the methods for data generation and analysis, and the ethical considerations, have been selected to meet both Tongan and Western research principles. It is my intention that including both styles in the research design will enable them to work together to inform the quality and credibility of the research. As the Tongan proverb says, “*Tākanga, enau fohe*” (their oars move in unison).

4.1 Methodology

‘Research methodology’ is a term that covers “the overall epistemological paradigm adopted within a particular discipline or tradition, or within a specific research project” (Mikula, 2008, pp. 127-128). The methodology in this study sits within an overarching paradigm of Pasifika thinking, values and traditions, but is a specifically Tongan expression of those mental attitudes: the *talanoa*. As I began the research, I was fascinated to realise that in choosing *talanoa*, I was committing to both methodology and method, for *talanoa* is both. It is first, a philosophical orientation that guides understanding and forming new ideas and making new knowledge, and second, a way of going about the process that will lead to reaching shared understanding and new knowledge. At the same time, however, the research drew on western scholarly perspectives, and it was possible that I could have found myself dealing with conflicts between two points of view that exist at opposite ends of a continuum.

Taufe'ulungaki (2003) asserts that in the west, truth and knowledge have a utilitarian purpose: they are sought to provide meaning to life and order and control in a seemingly chaotic natural universe, whereas the Tongan perspective is that truth and knowledge are integral parts of the natural universe, in people and around them, not for any particular reason, but simply because they exist. The blending of the two philosophical approaches was not always easy: my holistic, Tongan point of view was sometimes at odds with that of my supervisor's quite linear thinking, but the journey, though sometimes difficult, was worthwhile. In her poem 'Our Way', Tongan academic and poet Konai Helu Thaman (1987; 1988; 1999) expressed the difference in approaches this way:

your way
objective
analytic
always doubting
the truth
until proof comes
slowly
quietly
and it hurts.
my way
subjective
gut-feeling like
always sure
of the truth
the proof
is there
waiting
and it hurts.

The different approaches did not affect the data-gathering so much as the data analysis: I might have left each *talanoa* to speak for itself. In the Western way of thinking and finding truth, however, a large body of raw data needs analysis, and the subtleties and nuances that I would have left buried need to be brought forward and organised, and so it was that I find myself mining for universal themes within the *talanoa*, searching for the mini and micro stories within the macro ones, so as to offer explanations of Tongan notions of creativity.

Whether the research is informed primarily by Pasifika or Western thinking, it clearly sits with the qualitative paradigm. Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help people understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 2001). Qualitative researchers set out to discover the often disparate 'realities' that individuals construct within their own social worlds (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), and inevitably, carrying out qualitative research means

becoming involved in other people's lives and writing about that participation (Cohen et al., 2007; Ezzy, 2002), because the purpose of the research is to understand how people make sense of the world that they live in. As Patton (1990, p. 1) explains:

Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting.

Qualitative researchers, then, enter the worlds of the participants, and try to create conditions in which the participants can share their stories, perceptions, and feelings about the topic under enquiry (Bouma & Ling, 2004; Cresswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) so that the observations, collected as field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) allow interpretation of the material and immaterial practices that make the participants' worlds visible and meaningful.

Located under the wide umbrella of qualitative research, ethnography is a particular form of research that means (literally) 'writing about a people'. For practical purposes, it is probably easiest to describe ethnography as the study of human societies (Burns, 2000; Crang & Cook, 2007; Merriam, 2001), immersing the researcher in a social setting for an extended period of data gathering in order to develop understanding of the emic –the insider's point of view (Bernard, 2000; Denzin, 1997; Holmes & Earcus, 2005), and the 'insider view' here is a key point. Ethnography should be understood less by how data are collected, and more by the lens through which the data are interpreted (Bernard, 2002; Merriam, 2002).

Alasuutari (1998, p. 61) asserted that ethnographic interest lies with "questions related to the difference, to the otherness of the collectivity", and in this project, I am aware of both *otherness*, in the sense that I am not an artist, and yet also of belongingness, in the sense that I am knowledgeable about the Tongan traditions that shape and influence, or are denied and rejected, in the pursuit of the creative work. I stand in my research, therefore, as both an insider, already possessed of an emic view at the macro level of Tongan culture, and as an outsider, someone willing, perhaps, to follow the etic, in respect to the specific issues of creativity and creative practice that I explored with my participants. My position in the research, then, matches Eppley's (2001) notion of the "insider-outsider" (p. 11). There are many benefits to insider status. As Hockey (1993) points out, an insider is immune to culture shock and, from a base of common understandings, is able to speak easily to participants and build rapport, so is likely to be seen as empathic. An insider-researcher is also in a strong position to assess and make sense of

responses to question. All of these points are positive justifications for my decision to undertake *talanoa*.

One of the frequently-addressed concerns about qualitative research is that of researcher bias (Wicks & Roland, 2009), and certainly, research that is carried out in a close relationship with a (usually) relatively small number of participants, has the potential for overly personal readings of the data or skewed data-gathering. Many scholars (see, for instance, Cohen et al., 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 2002) agree that high quality research should be firmly grounded in the conceptual framework, should employ congruent methods for data collection and analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), and should clearly demonstrate trustworthiness in all stages of operationalisation.

It was a concern of mine that my research should be considered trustworthy, in large part because of my insider status in a small community, where my actions in this research project, and its outcomes, could become known to many more people than those directly involved, but also because this research is Pasifika, about a Tongan topic, and thus will augment the presently rather slender body of work about Pasifika life in general, and Tongan matters in particular. As I approached my research, therefore, I was conscious of those elements that contribute to trustworthiness. Validity, which in the context of research “usually means whether a method investigates what it purports to investigate” (Kavale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 327), is a key to producing meaningful, useful and trustworthy research. Here, I submit that *talanoa* is a valid tool, appropriate to my topic and both familiar and relevant to my participants. Marshall and Rossman (2006) maintain that trustworthiness can be judged if the research process is transparent so that every phase can be checked for a valid contribution to the overall purpose of the project. Thus, it is possible for readers to evaluate the trustworthiness of research if researchers provide field notes, interview transcripts and other records of the research process to validate the conduct and the findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Patton (2002) asserts that the skill, professionalism and integrity of the researcher all play an important part in ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research, because, as Bryman (2004) says, although complete objectivity is impossible in social research, a high level of trustworthiness is possible when researchers act in good faith, not allowing personal values to sway either the conduct or the findings of the research.

Strachan (1997) offers a discussion of inter-subjectivity that is relevant to *talanoa*, defining it as “a sharing of knowledge between the researcher and the participant[s] which includes the researcher’s own experiences, and details of the research process so there is no hidden agenda,

and an input by the participant into the research process” (p. 95). Inter-subjectivity, which is significant in all qualitative research and essential to this research, sums up the notion that researchers should build trust and good relationships with participants by respecting cultural norms such as reciprocity “because the conduct of the study depends exclusively on the relationships that the researcher builds with participants” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 78). The sharing that took place between me and my Tongan participants during *talanoa* sessions flattened the asymmetrical power relations potentially inherent in research relationships (Strachan, 1997), and resulted in the development of special relationships, out of which valuable and relevant information was provided that gave credibility to this research. In this way, inter-subjectivity links to the credibility of the research: it is not uncommon for Pasifika researchers to argue that for research outcomes about Pasifika to be credible, they must result from Pasifika researchers researching Pasifika people (Anae et al., 2001; Smith, 1999a, 2004; Taufe'ulungaki, 2003). In this research project, I built close relationships with all the participants, and in a sense they were all related to me as *kāinga*, if not by blood, then by culture. This kind of close relationship is true of Tongans because we come from a small country with strong kinship ties.

Ethical conduct is vital if research is to be considered trustworthy and valid (Denzin & Giardina, 2007; Maxwell, 1998; Merriam, 2002). Ethical considerations include avoiding harm to participants (Bernard, 2002; Bouma & Ling, 2004; Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008; Kvale, 1996) and obtaining consent that is based on full, clear information so that both the researcher and the participants share a mutual understanding of their relationship so that commitment from both parties is genuine (Blaxter et al., 2001; Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003d; Kvale, 1996), and ensuring that participants know that they have the right of withdrawal from the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003c; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Confidentiality is very important so that participants will not feel threatened and, therefore, willingly share with the researcher (Bouma & Ling, 2004; Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002).

I ensured that I closely all ethical procedures laid down by Auckland University of Technology and by my own knowledge of how to conduct relationships on the Tongan cultural mat, because I fully accept that “the rights of the people are greater than the researcher’s need to know” (Bouma & Ling, 2004, p. 192). As a social researcher, I have the responsibility not only to my profession in the search for knowledge, but also to the participants I depended on for the research; that is, I have to preserve the dignity of my participants (Cohen et al., 2000). Therefore, doing no harm to participants meant that this study strictly complied with AUT’s guidelines. The participants knew that their involvement was entirely optional. They were sent a letter inviting

them to participate and were given information about the research, and what I would need from them if they agreed to be part of the project. They were also assured that all their responses were confidential and that the findings would be analysed and presented in such a manner that they would not be individually identifiable. Furthermore, they were informed that all the materials related to the study would be securely stored for five years after the completion of the study then all materials, interview tapes and transcripts would be destroyed or returned to the participants if they wanted them. Informed consent is very important as it gives the participant rights to freedom and self-determination about joining the project (Cohen et al., 2000; Kvale, 1996). A consent form was sent to participants. An accompanying letter was attached to the transcripts informing the participants that they could amend the transcript, that a one page summary of the research findings would be given to them for comment and discussion, and that the final research report would be made available to them. Confidentiality is extremely important as it ensures that participants “private data identifying the subjects will not be reported” (Kvale, 2007, p. 27). The participants were, therefore, informed that the access to the information obtained from the interviews was restricted to the participants, me and my supervisors, and that any additional access to the information would only be granted with the permission of the participants. Every participant was thanked by letter to *tauhi* (maintain) our *vā* (relationship) throughout the research.

In this section of the chapter, I have set out some of the general principles of qualitative research and have related them to this specific research project. In the section that follows, I will examine some styles of Pasifika research, bringing the discussion around to *talanoa* in order to establish for this thesis the most important principles of thought and conduct.

4.2 From Pasifika Research Concerns to Metaphors of Doing...

Some Pasifika researchers such as Anae, Samu and Finau (2001) have suggested that “if [Pasifika] research is to make meaningful contributions to Pacific societies, then its primary purpose is to reclaim Pacific knowledge and values for Pacific peoples” (p. 8). These researchers also argued that research concerning Pasifika peoples must avoid the assumptions that underpin Eurocentric, western structures, institutions, and knowledge, and instead, should employ models that reflect Pasifika worldviews, values, belief systems, and ways of sharing knowledge. Nabobo-Baba (2004) contends that Pasifika peoples have often been the focus of research and writing that has not highlighted or captured the ability of Pasifika peoples to connect to one another and benefit from their relationships. Pasifika researchers, should therefore be exercised about creating their

own pedagogy and symbolic orders and their own sources of identity, authority, mediating structures and appropriate standards that are rooted to their own Pasifika values, assumptions, knowledge, processes and practices (Anae et al. 2001; Manu'atu (2000a); Nabobo-Baba (2004); Smith, 2004;Taufe'ulungaki, 2003; Vaiioleti, 2003).

According to Smith (2004), research is both the principled search for knowledge by civilised people and also a set of activities that, deployed thoughtlessly, can perpetuate asymmetrical power relations. Therefore, it is important that Pasifika researchers employ forms of research that will reclaim their 'cultural mat' and in doing so, will disrupt "hegemonic research forms and their power relations" (Smith, 2004, p. 5) and tell Pasifika stories about colonialism, gender, race, class and difference. Finding the Pasifika paradigm would shift Pasifika peoples from seeing themselves as passive victims of research to viewing themselves as activists who are engaged in a counter-hegemonic struggle (Smith, 2004).

Although Pasifika cultures are diverse, Pasifika research methodologies display certain similarities in philosophy and operationalisation (Health Research Council of New Zealand, 2004). For instance, they all work within a model of what is called *whānau* among Māori and *kāinga* among Tongans. Both words mean 'extended family framework', and in a research context, imply a high degree of trust between researcher and participants. The trust implicit in the *kāinga* relationship is that good use will be made of the information, so whatever is used and co-constructed in research will benefit everyone, not just the researcher.

Within the total corpus of Pasifika research models, there are many metaphors to describe Tongan research specifically, and each contributes a sense of developing knowledge in a culturally appropriate manner. For instance, Thaman's (2002) image of research as *kakala*, making a garland of flower, is a moving and apt way to describe the research process, for making *kakala* goes through three steps: *toli*, (gathering), *tui* (making), and *luva* (giving) (Johansson-Fua et al., 2007; Thaman, 1995b, 2005; Wolfgramm-Foliaki, 2005). Another fitting metaphor for Pasifika research is that of *toungāue*, the word that describes co-operative work in Tongan communities. *Toungāue* operates on the expectation that all members of a groups will donate their labour to another member for a specified period, and so on, until everyone has been helped by the group.

Both *kakala* and *toungāue* are beautiful metaphors for the co-operative attitude that distinguishes Pasifika research, but possibly even more picturesque is the metaphor of *mālie* – *māfana* (aesthetics-warmth), which (Manu'atu (2000) argues, are inseparable concepts associated with *faiva* (dance/performance). As Mahina (2008, p. 72) says, "both performers and

viewers are symmetrically unified in harmony in order that they commonly experience *mālie* (the aesthetically pleasing state) and the emotional feeling of *māfana* (warmth)”. When researchers and participants all perform their *faiva* (dance) with *aonga* (effectively, symmetrically, unified in harmony), all those involved contribute to the creation of *mālie* and feel the *māfana* from the co-creation of excellent research outcomes.

Moving from models of work to models of sharing, *tālānga* has similar characteristics to *talanoa* in that both concepts refer to creating knowledge through talking and sharing. *Tālānga*, however, is more formal than *talanoa*, because it has a specific agenda and structure. Māhina defines *tālānga* as a place where people exchange words and ideas (from *tala*, to tell, and *anga*, a place), and explains that in formal ceremonies, the *matāpule* (talking chiefs) would use the Tongan formal language in *tālānga*, which was an opportunity to *tā* (to hit, strike, beat; also *tāa’i* to beat, to chop, to cut or carve) and *lānga* (to raise or rise up; to build). Thus, Vaka’uta (2009) defines *tālānga* as the introduction of an idea or issue, and also the process of how it is discussed, chopped, cut, carved, and, most importantly, built into a greater meaning.

Vaka’uta (2009) critiqued *talanoa* for its tendency to be monological and to lack structure, finding fault in the idea that an individual would *talanoa mo e loto* (converse with one’s own heart). However, when I considered the two forms of exchange, I decided that the formal nature and structure of *tālānga* might restrict the exploratory purpose of this research, and I took the monological nature and lack of structure in *talanoa* (Vaka’uta, 2009) to be strengths rather than weaknesses. In fact, conversing with one’s own heart can deepen the exchanges, and the free structure allows space for sensitive subject matters to emerge gently, in a non-threatening way. Despite the criticisms of *talanoa*, then, I argue that it is a suitable Tongan framework for this research because of its openness, warmth, and approach to the *loto* (heart). The concept of *loto* is difficult to present in English. *Loto* literally means inside, and can be applied to both physical and spiritual being. Vaka’uta (2009) and Halapua (2002) discuss it as ‘the heart’, which in English captures the idea of something central, and also emotions. I am using ‘heart’ and ‘soul’ to refer to *loto*, but these words do not fully capture the essence of the *loto*. Despite the difficulty of finding the perfect English words to translate one of the key concepts of *talanoa*, I maintain that it is the best approach to this research project, and in this, I am following Halapua (2002), who believes that reaching the *loto* is time consuming, but argues that a small input from the *loto* is more valuable than a lot of superficial information which could be inaccurate and ineffective.

4.3 Arriving at Talanoa

Talanoa is a research methodology where a space is created for people to tell the stories of their pasts, their issues, their realities and their aspirations (Tiatia, 2007; Vaioleti, 2003, 2006), and the role of the researcher in *talanoa* is to first, facilitate the telling, and later, deconstruct the stories into themes that can be re-constructed into new knowledge about the subject of enquiry.

Because *talanoa* can range widely over sometimes complex matters, a good relationship is necessary between researchers and participants. The establishment of good relations starts with a formal invitation to the *talanoa*, and continues with introductions that might include presentations by a third party. Like the Māori in their *mihimihi*, Tongans add family genealogies to their introductions to demonstrate their connections to the land, society and *kāinga*, and also to establish their interconnections within different groups.

People sometimes take part in *talanoa* without making verbal contributions and instead, offer non-verbal cues to keep the *talanoa* going. Vaioleti (2003) maintains that skillful synthesis of the expressions, humour, nuances, emotions are integral to *talanoa*, and produce more authentic possibilities for addressing Pasifika issues. Gunson (1993, p. 149) notes that even subtle non-verbal signals can mean much: Pasifika listeners might know, for example, “what the speaker meant by perhaps the rise of an eyebrow, an expression of the face, a tilt of the head, or a description moulded with fingers”. These non-verbal cues encourage speakers to keep on talking until they arrive at *māfana* (warmth) and *mālie* (harmonious state) state. Once *māfana* (warmth) is established in the exchange, rapport and trust will follow, building into *‘ofa* (love), and not only will the communication will be free and authentic, but the exchange of information, experiences, and knowledge will flow straight from the *loto* (Manu'atu, 2000).

Manu'atu (2000) describes *talanoa* as the constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing of Tongan social realities. In its purest form, therefore, *talanoa* aims to dissolve the barriers of hierarchy in Tongan society so that people do not see one another as their social positions, but more as equals sitting on the mat together (Fonua, 2005; Halapua, 2002; Jensen, Johansson- Fua, Hafoka-Blake, & 'Ilolahia, 2012; Marcus, 1980). However, this is an ideal, and like all ideals, is not always achieved, for according to 'Otunuku (2011), although the core of *talanoa* is open talking, factors such as social status, customs and rituals, language, personality and the professionalism of the researcher can affect both the topic and the depth it will reach.

Despite any difficulties with its practice, however, *talanoa* has been used throughout the Pacific as a research approach (McFall-McCaffery, 2010; Otsuka, 2006), a teaching approach (Kalavite, 2010), in seeking solutions to complex social and political issues (Halapua, 2005, 2006; Ministry of

Social Development, 2012), to discuss health issues (McGrath & Ka'ili, 2010), business matters (Prescott & Hooper, 2009), and in general research (Latu, 2009; Toluta'u, 2008). Overall, it has been reported to be an effective way to raise matters for discussion among Tongan and other Pasifika peoples (Otsuka, 2006; Robinson & Robinson, 2005). Perhaps one of the reasons it is an effective approach is because of its circular and collective characteristics, which according to 'Otunuku (2011), suit Tongan ways of thinking, which centre on the relationships between and among people. 'Otunuku's view of *talanoa* somewhat matches that of Halapua (2002, p. 1), who describes the *tala* component as an embodiment of "our understanding of the inner feeling and experience of who we are, what we want, and what we do as members of a shared community" and urges Pasifika people to use *talanoa* to draw on their own cultural ways, rather than using foreign tools to try to solve Pacific issues. Like Halapua, Vaioleti (2003) also emphasised the strength of *talanoa* to instruct, narrate, tell stories and to "create an ideal sense of being for a Tongan which is one who is balanced spiritual social being who is at harmony with self, family, the environment and his/her God/s" (p. 14). To use *talanoa*, then, is to follow a respected research and cultural tradition, and this was not something I took lightly.

I selected my participants using snowball sampling (Bernard, 2002; Bouma & Ling, 2004; Bryman, 2004; Davidson & Tolich, 2003), which took two months using word of mouth, phone calls, emails and letters. I began by leaning out into my own networks to engage possible participants, then let the snowball gather size from that point (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Friends and acquaintances who knew of my research suggested names, and I then followed up with an introductory email and information sheet. When people accepted the invitation, I applied the snowball technique to them too, and I stopped seeking more *talanoa* when I noticed that each conversation was yielding different details but similar principles. I took that to mean that I had reached data saturation. The *talanoa* themselves took place over a five-month period, in two main phases, partly because some personal events required that I take a period of leave. At the time, the break seemed to disrupt the flow of the research, but in fact the period of leave turned out to be an opportunity for deep reflection.

Most of my participants, as it turned out, lived in Auckland, but one was based the United States of America. The participants were all artists who self-identified as Tongan, and they were all born in either Tonga or New Zealand. Every participant is regarded as highly competent in their chosen creative areas; and they are all knowledgeable about Tongan values and beliefs. Some of the group had formal qualifications that underpinned their creative endeavours, and some did not, and although they all had some tertiary education, they did not all hold tertiary

qualifications. Perhaps most importantly; given the context and purpose of our *talanoa*, they were all prepared to walk with me during this research (Bernard, 2000).

Once the participants were found, I began with a formal invitation to enter into *talanoa* with me at an agreed time and place, for about an hour, although the discussion was not, in fact, limited by the clock because everyone was very generous with their time. The *talanoa* were not entirely unstructured: I had prepared guide questions, but I used them only to bring the *talanoa* back to the research topic (Blaxter et al., 2001; Bouma & Ling, 2004; Bryman, 2004; Othman, 1997; Patton, 2002) if we strayed too far from the matter at hand. It is tempting at this point to write about Western concepts of semi-structured interviews (see, for instance, Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 1996; Blaxter et al., 2001; Carspecken, 1996; Edenborough, 2002), but the reality of this research is that a *talanoa* is not an interview of any sort: rather, it is its own entity, and must be understood that way. Since I am fluent in both Tongan and English, we conversed in the language that best communicated concepts and ideas clearly during the *talanoa*.

Talanoa offers opportunities to pursue unanticipated but interesting topics, and to circle back to topics for clarification, and in this respect, though a *talanoa* is not an interview in the pure sense that Western research would define an interview, as a form of data-gathering, the method does share certain similarities with semi-structured interviews (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014), and some of those similarities are worth remembering. For instance, as Leininger (1985, p. 6) writes, the interviewer needs to uncover and understand the “cognitions that help [the participant] to make sense of the world”. During the *talanoa*, my cultural fluency and my ability to speak Tongan perhaps afforded me some sensitivity to and familiarity with the participants’ ‘cognitions’, and I was attentive to the process by which we co-constructed meaning during our *talanoa* (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Certainly, I was conscious that the *talanoa* had the capacity to change the participants, because, inevitably, they engaged actively in developing new insights by virtue of the discussion that took place. In this respect, following Taylor and Bogdan (1995), it seems important to note that although the *talanoa* were an authentic exchange of truths, they were simultaneously only single moments in the participants’ evolving perspectives. There is one other point about interviews that I thought important in relation to *talanoa*. Robson and McCartan (2016) distinguished between ‘witting’ and ‘unwitting’ data, where witting data is the information that the participant consciously intended to share, and unwitting data is material that might be understood from unintended verbal and nonverbal signals. The intimacy that grew from *māfana* (warmth) and entering *mālie* (harmony) meant that I acquired a good deal of unwitting data, but I was careful not to

extrapolate beyond the participant's intent. This was an ethical decision I made, to honour the commitment I made to my participants to present their stories as best I could without doing harm. Finally, in terms of the practice of the *talanoa*, the exchanges were not constrained: they began and continued as long as needed. In one sense, they did not end, because even after the principal data gathering was complete, I felt able to ring or email my participants to ask clarifying questions, or to check my interpretation of their words, and I am endlessly grateful for the ungrudging gift of their time, without which my own *talanoa* in this thesis would not have been possible.

How to present the *talanoa* was a matter of much discussion between my supervisors and me, and even now that the decision has been made, I have some misgivings about whether I have done sufficient honour to my participants. My dilemma was caused by my walk in two worlds: I conducted this research as a Tongan, with Tongans, using a Tongan methodology, but I am presenting the research in a thesis – a Western format—for a Western qualification. I have already said above that a *talanoa* is not an interview, but has its own process, structure and texture, and I am committed to that truth, culturally and politically (if in fact those two ideas can be separated other than in a lexical construction). I wanted, therefore, to include my participant's voices as much as I possibly could. Like hooks (1990), I did not want to reduce the *talanoa* to mere fragments of their original holistic form so that the stories could barely be heard among my interpretations, nor relegate the transcripts to the appendices and thus marginalise the participants. However, the full transcript of one *talanoa* alone amounted to more than 20,000 words, and so to include every word of every *talanoa* was impossible in a thesis format. I therefore determined to include the participants' actual words, in both Tongan and English, but to select what I included and excluded. This was necessary, but perilous: I used my own judgment to determine the content, and I am very conscious that another researcher, working with the same *talanoa*, would possibly have made different choices, and this, of course, raises questions of researcher bias. I sent my summary stories back to my participants for approval, but in spite of this, I feel some issues of representation and voice must always remain unresolved. What is in this thesis are *talanoa*, but altered: not 'talanoa lite', not even *talanoa* re-purposed, but nevertheless, not in their original form.

Because of the co-constructed and relational nature of *talanoa*, their ownership could be disputed, and boundaries may be even more blurred when the story is translated for inclusion within the researcher's own story. On this matter, Josselson (2007) submits that the story belongs to the participant, but the "interpretive authority" (p. 557) belongs to the researcher,

and although this is a useful distinction, with *talanoa*, sometimes the ‘text’ and the ‘interpretation’ of it do not remain as straightforwardly separate from each other as Josselson argues. Thus, though I am clear that the *talanoa* belong to the Tongan artists, I am aware that my voice speaks in them too, both literally and in a more abstract way, in that the shortened versions are the result of my decisions. However, I acknowledge that ultimately in the presentation of a thesis, the researcher’s interpretation is omnipresent and that as Chase (1996) argues, I must take full responsibility for the interpretation. I am aware, too, that in the on-going life of the *talanoa*, readers will also make their own interpretations, and I have aimed to include enough material to ensure there is no “impoverished basis for interpretation” (Kvale, 1996, p. 167) As Clough (2002) warns, “The stories require investment - of energy and emotion and intellect – and so will speak differently to different people” (p.18).

The struggle I have experienced with presenting the *talanoa* encapsulates the effort I have put into finding my own voice in the thesis. I recognised that there would always be a fine line to walk between locating myself in the research and dominating the text (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Lincoln & Denzin, 1994; Etherington, 2006; Trahar, 2011), but there was another aspect to finding my voice that pertains directly to my walk in two worlds: I found I needed to reconcile my Tongan voice with my academic voice, which sometimes seemed to clash with those of the invested Tongan and the literary storyteller. I have tried to blend these different voices together more subtly, but am aware that they continue to bump against each other and reveal the multiplicity of voices that are simultaneously mine in the two worlds. Like Leitch (2003), I recognise that

I also have a much stronger sense of my ‘voices’ coming together, albeit that they are not yet in harmony and indeed may never be. I am aware, as any reader of this text will be, of how one voice has rubbed up against the other in various sections of the text, like flesh against a cheese-grater, but this was all part of the learning process for me, and I am resisting apologizing. (p.202)

The *talanoa*, then, are a risk. If the thesis is viewed as a Western document, then they form a cultural artefact that some may view as out of their place and time. If the thesis, however, is a Tongan work, then I am open to criticism for modifying the *talanoa* from their original state. My own view is that the thesis is hybrid, as I am, and that it will live in two worlds and speak to two worlds. What I have learned from the struggle I have had with presenting the *talanoa* as they appear in Chapter 5 is that “the researcher is always partially naked” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 423).

4.4 Data Analysis

In chapter One, I established the purpose of my research as an exploration of Tongan creativity in the early 21st century, and my purpose has to be achieved in the ‘two worlds’ of which I have spoken already. In this section, I bring the discussion of my research closer to Western modes of enquiry, not leaving *talanoa* behind, but instead, showing how, in Chapter 6, I handled them differently from the (largely) holistic form they took in Chapter 5. This thesis conforms to the broad conventions of its genre, and the research is organised around a research question: “*What are the effects of traditional and contemporary expressions of Tongan culture on the creative work of Tongan artists?*” The *talanoa*, presented as themselves in chapter 5, provide abundant and rich raw material, but their holistic form did not allow verifiable commonalities to be drawn out so that the research question could easily be answered. I chose to address this problem by mining the *talanoa* using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fielden, Sillence & Little, 2011), a method of data analysis that locates patterns of meaning within and across data sets. At this point in my research, I needed to regard each separate *talanoa* as a single data set within the whole, and the burden of this analysis exercise was to find the experiences the participants had in common in relation to their creative practice. Here, I was heavily influenced by Burns (2000), who discussed the organisation of material so that “comparisons, contrasts and insights can be made and demonstrated” (p. 430).

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 78) assert that thematic analysis is so flexible across such a wide range of research types that it should be taken as a “foundational” method, useful when subjects have not been researched much before, because the findings can be so rich (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012; Lacey & Luff, 2001). Braun and Clarke (2006) submit that thematic analysis is especially efficient when, as in the case of *talanoa*, there is a large volume of raw data to be analysed. At its most simple, thematic analysis allows patterns in the data to be identified through a systematic (though sometimes imaginative) process of coding (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fielden, Sillence & Little, 2011), and in fact, Boyatzis (1998, p. 4) describes it as “a way of seeing”. By talking of a way of seeing, Boyatzis means that the analysis makes visible those elements that cohere within and across disparate bodies of information, building moments of insight and understanding. The insights I speak of are composed of what Braun and Clark (2006, p. 97) call “similarities and differences across the data set”, and grouped together, constitute a theme. A theme may be manifest – in other words, clearly and unambiguously present in the data, – or latent, in need of drawing out by the researcher to make them apparent (Boyatzis, 1998), but both types of theme need to be identified and their qualities described so that their meaning and implications can be evaluated. I used thematic analysis so that I could

handle the six separate *talanoa* as a single data set and generate ‘holistic’ insights. When I began my analysis of the *talanoa*, I chose an inductive approach. In other words, I allowed the data to speak to me about the themes that could be identified, rather than starting with a “pre-existing coding frame” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83) that would limit the possibilities that I might find. I did not initiate the analysis with a hypothesis to prove or disprove, but with an open mind as free of allegiance to one theoretical position as possible.

Thematic analysis is increasingly popular in qualitative research (Constas, 1992; Wolcott, 1995; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Lacey & Luff, 2001; Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012) but it is also criticised by some scholars (Aronson, 1994; Tuckett, 2005), who argue that the method is not sufficiently rigorous. The flexibility of thematic analysis certainly permits researchers to operationalise the analysis in ways that may be idiosyncratic: some draw the data out as a series of mind maps and colour in connections, while others use more obvious key word clusters. I determined that my own idiosyncratic approach would produce defensible themes, and appreciated the fact that the method did not impose a process on me, but rather, allowed me to work in a way that suited both my data and my way of thinking. However, I was constantly aware that it was necessary to keep notes of how I coded, finalised and named the themes (Constas, 1992; Tuckett, 2005; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

There are some differences among proponents of thematic analysis about how to actually carry it out. For instance, Boyatzis (1998) advises “sensing” (p.19) of “codable moments” (p.20), and he describes sensing as a process that takes place in three stages: recognising, encoding and interpreting. In contrast, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest producing rough initial codes, searching for themes among the codes and then re-coding so as to confirm and fortify the emergent themes. The analysis process, however, may not be quite so orderly and undeviating as Braun and Clark make it sound, and in fact, the discovery and refining of themes can happen almost simultaneously. What all scholars seem to agree on is that once the data are coded, the themes should be reviewed and polished so that all ideas within one grouping possess ‘internal homogeneity’ and ‘external heterogeneity’ (Patton, 1990); that is, that each theme has its own internal logic but is clearly distinct from the others. Finally, the themes must be named and described so that their features and meanings are easily understood by people outside the research.

4.5 Working with the *Talanoa*

Each *talanoa* was tape-recorded, and I kept a hand-written exercise book of field notes as well, to record my observations of non-verbal signals and other potentially significant information, and as soon as was practicable after each session, I transcribed the *talanoa* and returned it to the participants to check that they were willing to for their stories and perspectives to be used in the research. The participants were able to edit, add to or delete from the transcript, and it is the approved transcripts that formed the raw data for the thematic analysis. I then cross-referenced my field notes to the typed transcripts, and produced a single, very lengthy data file with all material logged according the details of the participant. The data file was 72 pages long. The process of producing the file had already imparted a good deal of familiarity with the material from the *talanoa*, but at this point, following Marshall and Rossman (2006) and Cresswell (1998), I began to immerse myself further in the data, making notes on the transcripts, listening to the *talanoa* over and over, noting the rich language my participants had used and the words that seemed important to them. I worked quite systematically, noting down key ideas within and across each separate *talanoa*, so that I ended up recording recurrent ideas within a single *talanoa*, repetition of ideas across all the *talanoa*, and the passion that sometimes flared up in connection with a single idea. I found that passion was a fascinating category, because it did not necessarily relate to an idea that was repeated, but one that was so powerfully expressed that it could not be ignored as an outlier. This process took some considerable time – probably between two and three months – but at the end of it, I had found three themes that I could defend as being on the hearts and minds of the participants in relation to their creativity.

In axiological terms, I understand that my research is not value-free. I know that another researcher, working with the same data sets, might well find different themes, which is why I tried so hard to remain present in the coding, but aloof from the emerging themes. By this I mean that I did not want to become so excited about the notion that a particular theme might exist that I defended its existence, even if justification for it was, in reality, quite slender. This explains why I was so careful to be consistent about the way I coded: the process had to support the existence of the themes as I argued them and allow them to be defended.

Finally, the research has produced specific findings rather than generalisations. There is no sense in which this research will allow the formulation of an overarching ‘rule’ about Tongan creativity, but it will allow the beginning of knowledge about *these* creative works at *this* particular time, and as such, contributes to the quite slender volume of what is known about Tongan social life and Tongan creativity. What I have tried to do in this chapter is to make the process of the

research transparent, so that the data, following in the next two chapters, are seen as valid and reliable.

Chapter Five

Individual *Talanoa* (*Talanoa Fakatuitui*)

The five participants in my study, Sina, Sitiveni, Sela, Neti and Lisiate are “holders and creators of knowledge” (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 121). They are creatives, artists, fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters of Tongan parents whose social, cultural, and historical worldviews are situated in shared spaces that shape their decisions and experiences. My participants are New Zealand and Tongan-born adults, with hybridised cultural identities. They have been influenced by the West, which is notable in their creative outputs, but they are all grounded in their Tongan ways of being and doing, which is vital to their creative and cultural identities.

As I weave my own voice through each *talanoa* I acknowledge the authenticity and richness of what each *talanoa* holds on its own. That is, I do not deconstruct each *talanoa* with my own voice, but instead honour the *talanoa* in its original state. For this reason, I have not corrected the grammar and language used, but instead interpret the content with my own voice, adding observations from my field notes and considering how the *talanoa* was taking form in relation to the purpose of my research. The value in the stories shared by my participants cannot be measured, and I continue to feel indebted to them for the knowledge and relationships they have shared with me.

5.1 Sina's *Talanoa*

I begin with Sina¹⁵. The *talanoa* took place at her home. Entering a person's home for the first time is never an easy task, especially when you have never met the other person because all the communication to this point had been through phone calls and email exchanges. When I met

¹⁵ As mentioned in the preface, all names of people and places, organisations and institutions in this work are pseudonyms.

Sina, I instantly felt *laumālie* (spirit) and *māfana* (warm, heartfelt emotion) in her presence. As we enter the *talanoa*, the commentary (in italics) will unpack my thoughts and observations.

Sina is a first generation New Zealander and grew up in a bicultural home. Her father was of European descent and her mother, has both European and Tongan ancestry which manifests in her creative endeavours. She is intrinsically motivated to create and express her cultural identity, but she is also passionate about how her work can help create change for her people. She has her own contemporary signature style that is distinct from other artists in the Tongan community and culture. She has two children and is a proud art teacher for young Pacific children that are also on a journey of self-exploration through creativity.

The first observation I made was that I came into the talanoa expecting that I would be guiding much of the conversation, but to my surprise, I took on more of a listening role. I very rarely had to field and probe for answers to my pre-prepared questions. We sat at the table and Sina was very hospitable toward me: asking if I was comfortable, warm or hungry. Being in her house, I was given the opportunity to see her work first-hand, and it was my questions and fascination with her paintings and creations, that began her talanoa.

We shared commonalities in the first minute of the talanoa, as we realised that we had been brought up in the same area, attended the same schools and came from the same island back in Tonga. The comfort I had felt around her upon my arrival made sense. Unlike other Talanoa, my ability to code switch between speaking Tongan and English was not exercised as Sina only spoke in English.

Saane and I, are certain that I am one of the first Tongan females to graduate out of Metoli Art School in the early 1990s. But when I was there, a big stem of my work was based on anger as I was really angry that people used to think that I was Māori because I was brown and part of a small minority in the school. It was my art teacher at the time, Lia, who said ‘Sina if you want people to know who you are, maybe your art will be a great vehicle to do just that’. At art school there was no other Tongan artists there with me but there certainly was Samoan and Māori, so we just clustered together – there was about 9 of us.

I found that Sina was really excited when she spoke about being the first Tongan female to graduate out of Metoli. Although she had once felt angry about the others stereotyping her, Sina appeared to have moved past the anger because it became a key motivation for her creativity and has helped her achieve the credentials that she holds now. I sensed that the value of education sat quite highly in her life as it was emphasised by her parents from her

earliest memories. Her isolating experiences in her educational setting influenced her decision to study art, and is one she did not regret. Evidently, there was no mention about being 'forced' to take up art; she had the freedom to make choices about her future and the place of creativity within it. There was no mention of any restrictions: economic, social, familial which I found interesting, because the talanoa of my other participants did acknowledge economic challenges and that their kāinga are more attracted to educational pursuits that had financial benefits.

I'm not full Tongan and I have had to negotiate on what that looks and feels like for me. My mother is not from the main island - she's had a really interesting upbringing. Her father brought her out from Tonga to New Zealand when she was 8 years old, because he got annoyed at some of the Tongan ways. But at the same time he was really proud, so there's sort of this tension that never goes away and it's really fascinating.

Sina's personhood is grounded in her unique ancestry and ethnic mix, which is evident in her fascinating creative designs and also in how she holds herself. I sensed some sadness, almost regret, for the fact that she had not had the chance to immerse herself into the Tongan culture in its entirety. It almost seemed that the choice was not hers to make in the first place, and that all she could do now was to make up for lost time. She also sees this as a chance to express her childhood and past experiences in paintings, where she uses some of her traditional roots fused with European understandings.

As you walk into a *papālangi*¹⁶ home, the *ngatu* (tapa cloth) is hanging on the wall and it's celebrated as that, but in a Tongan home it's folded under the bed. That is showing that there is a whole lot of things unravelled when we bring that into a gallery setting. There is a lot that can be said about the so called perceived Western view and mixed with Tongan in terms of what it means when it is up in the wall, and how does that change things? It poses many different problems like how we value these things.

What really stood out to me during this conversation about how art is perceived and celebrated in the Tongan culture, was just how different the value and appreciation of art is in the palangi culture. Sina spoke passionately about the topic, because she too was 'walking in both worlds'. Her vā towards this topic was deeper than mine, and I was in the

¹⁶ Papalangi means European, or anybody belonging to a white skinned race.

learner's seat, whereas she was the 'master' or the 'expert' on this particular topic, literally walking the talk, and talking the walk.

Who your audience is plays a part as well. How do we bring our people into a gallery setting and they see these things and they still don't see the significance of why it's up? It's so complex – yet fascinating. Case and point, the last Epic Gallery called 'Vā moe Tauhi', they sold both these pieces at a very high price for X amount of money and when you see these at Polyfest it's a lower price. But in a gallery it's higher? Those contrasts to me are a very interesting thought that needs more attention.

At this point of the talanoa, Sina used different examples to expound her point, and what struck me was her experience, which was influenced by her education and qualifications. I was left thinking about the topics of education and experience and valuable insights can be gained when a person is labelled as an artist. The audience, and as I was her audience in this talanoa, plays a vital role in how credible, valid and authentic an artist is.

That's what Siua and I were talking about, something that can just open up the channels of *talanoa* when it comes to this stuff. So we said let's put something together, as our culture is orally based – if there's only some artists in our culture that abide by this we need to leave that imprint for others to follow. I took German and French because my father thought that I was going to be a diplomat. My teacher at the third form said no, this girl needs to keep doing art, as I was ready to give up. So the influence of teaching and teachers have a big impact on how and what children do and end up doing in life. I think that some of our Pasifika kids as well need that just as much, if not more. Coming from a teacher's angle, that me now as an artist and now a teacher I know that if it wasn't for my own teacher I wouldn't be doing this. So the importance of a really good teacher is so critical.

During the talanoa, I noticed that Sina and I were laughing a lot and that humour was becoming the 'third person', which contributed to how comfortable and at ease we felt in each other's company. Again and again, the narrative was drawn back to the topic of education, now in the sense of 'giving back' in her role as a teacher. She spoke about her father and how he only wanted her to have the best of both worlds when it came to education, as well as her journey of discovering more about her 'mixedness'.

It's that validation that us as educators need to pass on. There are definitely kids that are good at art, and you can see it. But as you and I both know, it's getting past the parents. When I told my parents and asked them at 7th form that I just loved art – they did know that I was stubborn and

they knew that they had to let me. It's a huge decision and I have seen some irresponsible ill informed decisions of the realities of what this world looks like, and there's a real romantic view that's painted, and there is also a real fear about entering these industries.

Here, Sina was quite animated and it was almost as if she was preaching, or engaging in a motivational speech. She started to raise her voice, which I saw as a way of matching how invested she was in this area. She consistently emphasised the role of a parent, especially because she was one herself. See seemed be on a mission to break down the barriers stereotypically attributed to artistic pursuits, and I could also sense frustration because she believed that she was just one voice trying to enact change.

I have spent 30 years being an artist but this stuff that doesn't happen overnight and you have to keep building your reputation so you can be sustainable, but I still have to have that balance. Had my Nana been alive, perhaps I wouldn't be where I am today. And Nana's are always at home in the Tongan family structure, and that's where I lack that type of connection to my roots. A lot of that is passed down, and a lot of that is in the matriarch makeup of a Tongan family. We have learnt our culture in the everyday culture and you cannot get more authentic than that, for us we didn't have that closeness but we had it in other ways.

Sina began to speak more softly, especially as she reminisced about her Nana. I began to sense that she was experiencing some of the same emotions that were apparent when she spoke about her upbringing in the beginning of the talanoa. Her career and reputation as an artist is a key part of her identity, and she tends to discuss her creative work in relation to her culture, particularly those aspects of her culture that she is negotiating, such as the fragmented parts of her past.

I basically think that creativity is something that you are born with, and I believe that we are all born with a varying degree of creativity and I think that as we all grow and mature that creativity has a more natural aligning with what we do and decide to do. My first view of creativity as a child was my Mum sewing me a dress, or my Mum baking me a cake or the way she would cook and put food together.

Here, it became clear to me that Sina's salient identities were of a creative/artist, and also as a Tongan. She said creativity is a gift, and that it was a birth right. She spoke on about how she sees this in her children, and in her role as a teacher. Her definition parallels sentiments raised by her art teacher (mentioned at the beginning of our talanoa), suggesting that to

some degree, her art teacher had left a lasting impression. As she retold her anecdotal memoirs, I could see that she was overcome with grief when talking about her mother.

The imagination that children have as a child is just so colourful – all the children run with it, but it's not until we put them into a classroom and teach them how to do this which can be very harmful for one's creativity. While those things do come with time, it's all about just building up a person's individual voice. It's your story which is through your dance, song, and it's so important. It's all about that validation of the person in the story and the voice. These are some real critical things and I think that our teachers do some of the most damage and they make or break kids. Kids are not failing schools – schools are failing kids.

In my field notes, I wrote: 'the themes of children, education, giving back, roles on society = meaningful' because Sina paid special attention to these elements to make sure that I understood what she was saying, and how pivotal these aspects were to her as a Tongan.

So community wise, that signifies that something is happening. Someone once said to me “Oh Sina, art is like the bush and hunting and making all your mats” and I said no – it's on a different level. I said that from the reign of Queen Salote, that she placed art in education and it was taught and valued and now we see a slow transgression going downwards in terms of what art is. We met the new King and Queen they embrace art, but at the same time there is this mentality and you have to go against this mentality.

It became clear to me that Sina saw a relationship between education and her family. Aside from referring to the emphasis placed on art by the King and Queen of Tonga, she also referred to her home as a source of strength and a cultural reference point that has aided her creative and educational development.

In terms of *lalaga*, the women will sit and make the *fala* but if there was no *lalaga* there would be no *fala*. You weave your culture in your genealogy but the *fala* is the foundation. You lie on it, dance on it and it is the building foundation of our culture. Weaving is our foundation. It's so invisible and it's an investment and it takes toll on the body. It's a real wow factor. And one may ask, why am I doing this? It's about the voice, but also about valuing it. It comes back to what I said, if I am doing it now and people recognise it, what about our Aunties that have been doing this for years and years and years and still are not being recognised? So, I will put this into a gallery exhibition but I want to see it as more of a collaboration where I am giving them a voice, and the credit as well as a platform in what they have been doing as a daily routine for so long. It's the bigger picture and it has evolved my practice.

Here, Sina was expressing that there was a failure in how art and creative expression have been valued, and that not enough credit was given back to the creator. She maintained a deep desire to try to change this, and discussed the impact this has had on how she creates and displays art.

Last year, we were in France we had this “Made Overseas” exhibition and they were so amazed in what we did and they got it! But in the islands no the woman are just in dark dim corners but in Germany you have them in a place of reverence. I said to Siua, we have to travel half way around the world to be valued and that’s what it feels like. I love that in being an artist, that there is that social element but in terms of being received quite well I think that it is becoming stronger and stronger. So that is giving us more voice and makes us talk more and I was just so aware of how artists can be so isolated and we need to be together as well, compared to musicians we are on our own.

Sina was bringing her words to life through her own voice, and the topic of voice was starting to become a central focus through which she organised and understood what she was doing in her creative endeavours. At times, I sensed her frustration because she was still negotiating her anga fakatonga and it was as if she had a burden, or fatongia (duty) on her shoulders to correct what has not been correct in the past perceptions of art and creativity.

Being true to yourself and having an authentic voice and being honest in your approach is key. I am a hybrid of cultures therefore I give a hybrid view and I am so proud. It’s all about giving back. It’s important to not strive for perfection and that can sometimes be hard in an artist; perfection can be so hard especially as an artist. We are our own worst enemy. So be serious but with good balance. So what did formal training give me? It gave me some thick skin and teaches me to take criticism and exposes you to a wider view.

Here, the talanoa was coming to an end, and it was almost signalling the take home thoughts that Sina wanted me to capture. Her honesty and authenticity in what she was imparting made her see ‘critique’ as valuable, and creative expression as a positive outlet and not something that should be viewed as daunting and unnecessary. She was acutely aware that she was in a fortunate position by having a hybridised identity and again, saw training and education as fundamental to having success.

And also, you will be able to challenge that concept – critique is so important, I have never been critiqued hard enough at that level as there are not many Pasifika that are at that level which

have the same common ground to sock it back to me. I have never really had to defend my work, and you get a little bit complacent sometimes as it's really hard as you are keeping everything for your practice but you want to get the layers handed back to you so you can reconstruct what you're doing.

Through observing anga fakatonga or Tongan ways of knowing and being, selectively articulated by her father, Sina mimics the spirit of her upbringing by perpetuating interpretations of anga fakafonua in her own way. She does this by challenging the status quo through the practice of tauhi vā and 'ofa. Through reciprocal patterns of care and obligation in her creative works, and by extension, her kāinga: namely her husband, children and also her students in the classroom, she winds the talanoa back to education and to being brave, bold and not afraid to breakdown stereotypes through voice, creativity and ongoing lifelong learning. I was surprised that she mentioned a key theorist in one of the papers that is taught in the Creative Industries major, and even more surprised that it was part of her leisure reading.

Interestingly enough, I'm reading Florida's work. When I read this, and I think that yes it is changing and the world that we are living in today is so rapidly changing and incredibly visual and even breaking down what creative industries is and you look at some of the top people in the world; musicians and actors -it's all changing. And that's why I think that we are not ready – we're not ready as a people.

The older generation can't accept it and they are not ready at all. They cannot get their heads around this stuff. The part that I am reading is that every single human being is creative. And as a parent now, I'm all for it – but it's all rapidly changing.

This was one of my favourite quotes during the talanoa. We both agreed in laughter and in all seriousness that the older generation was one of many barriers that did not seem to change with the times. As our talanoa came to an end, the va we had created was one that will remain endless as the space between us was mafana and the conversation was malie – if we were to pick up again on this talanoa at another time, it would take off like it never ended.

5.2 Sitiveni's Talanoa

Sitiveni is situated in the field of music. Born in Tonga, his family came to New Zealand to look for a better life and to make the most of the opportunities this country had on offer. I assumed that

because of our gender differences, the *talanoa* would slowly ease into a place of *mafana* but I was wrong – we were very comfortable in the meeting room where this sharing of lived experience took place.

Sitiveni took on a dominant role in telling me his story and throughout the talanoa. I hardly had to ask for clarifications as he spoke. I took on more of a receiver role, mainly because I was intrigued by his passion and captivated by his retelling of his experiences. He used a lot of his own intrapersonal thoughts in his part of the talanoa which made the conversation quite lively and easy to relate to.

I consider myself like a rap artist, and bit of a producer where I do recordings. You can say I'm a creative, but I also know the technical side of things. It all just happened, in the spur of the moment. We all just started writing a script, brainstorming, and then my cousins stayed up and started writing because most of us hadn't done script writing or anything. So I had no acting experience, no nothing but based on our little film they (production company) asked me to jump in so I did that last year, and then I got asked to do another short film with some other Tongans and then I did 48 hour film again this year with some mates and it all just came from that.

Here, Sitiveni started to open up about his personal life and we found out that we shared common ground because we had mutual connections. There was a natural flow in how we related to each other, and we took turns responding to what each other had said. This is when the talanoa started to become personal, and he started to be more expressive and animated, using non-verbal cues such as hand gestures and he even stood up once or twice in this part of the talanoa.

I then messed around in the underground for a while, I kinda just faded away and then I worked as a bouncer for a while and labour jobs for a few years, 5, 6 years then in 2009 I was bouncing one night and staring at the door and thinking, "is this my future? Is this life? Is this me" in my head, and after years of conversation and conversing with these people I was thinking, 'is this all trash?' Like, it's okay to talk about it, but the nightlife is just, the level of intelligence is down here (*shows with hands*) and here I am standing at the door sober and every night I'm talking to people and I was just like "bro, what am I doing here"?

My whole family is academic, like, my Mum just graduated in ECE, my Dad's doing his doctorate, my brother just got his degree and my other younger brother is getting awesome grades at school and I'm the eldest son and I'm like "bro, you didn't come to New Zealand for this".

Here, Sitiveni started to use more non-verbal cues and raised his voice when he spoke about what his family studied and how much they emphasised education. He got straight to the point by using personal anecdotes, with his family as the main source of his examples.

So that was in 2007, and since then I had enjoyed music as a passion but technically I didn't know how to record. So then I decided to study audio engineering and did a diploma in Sound Engineering for two years and I then graduated, moved back home to my Mum and Dad's because I was trying to find a job after getting that diploma, thinking "yeaahh I'm gunna get a flash job" and nothing. No work, everyone in my class was struggling so I decided to save up some money and I bought a computer and some equipment and set up a little home studio in our basement and started recording.

There's the question of, "why can't I do this myself?" so now that I have audio engineering and the talent to record, with my cousins we started channelling our talents through our mini business. Then I discovered that I need to start learning how to design album covers, posters, photo shoots and all that.

Here, Sitiveni gave me an insight into what he did to make money and talked about how many different roles he had held. The struggles that he spoke of were reflected in the intensity of his voice. He was not ashamed of his struggles and saw them as an opportunity to learn, rather than a barrier to success.

And I guess it's easier for islanders to relate to you, then say, turning to an office in Ponsonby where they may find it a bit uncomfortable. Like the demand is there and it might not be good money, you know "hey, ai mai pe ke ma'ama'a" (come on, just make it cheap please) like family rates but hey we have to start somewhere. So yeah, now I'm just studying design and doing the music on the side. During the week I'm at school or uni, and at night I'm recording for other artists getting some money just in my bedroom and in the weekend I'm performing and doing music videos out there.

It's all Samoans. Like no disrespect, but where are all my people? We need more Tongans to pursue their talents and get out there. We are just like, it comes back down to the roots embedded in our culture, like "tangutu ki lalo" (sit down) you know, don't say anything that you are not supposed to and don't kaimumu'a (self possessed) because we come from that culture. Where as the Samoans stand up for themselves more and it's all part of their culture. They are real showy, entertainers but us Tongans we stick together, do it together you're not allowed to know more than anyone else but that's fine there's pros and cons for both. At times its

embarrassing and you think “wow, why are they doing that” but at the same time if that person doesn't do that, if Einstein didn't think that way, if Gandhi didn't do what he did and broke barriers then we will never learn; we'll always be in our little bubbles.

What I admired about Sitiveni was that he formed his own path and didn't let anyone else determine what his standards should be. He was humble in his approach to presenting his message to me, but I sensed that this came from a place of frustration and almost anger. Additionally, I have noticed that in my talanoa with my participants Sela and Neti that they were regularly comparisons made to the Samoan culture and people, perhaps because of the similarities in the cultures, or because they are often grouped together under the umbrella term “Pasifika”.

And that's what frustrated me with the Tongan culture and our people is because you know “nah you go, it's okay I'll just chill at the back” and then it's like “bro, what's the back gunna do for you?” and then you start saying I should've, would've and could've. Then you regret things and wish that you had asked. You know, there's no Tongan chief behind you saying “shhhh, sit down” no way. But it's so embedded in our roots that we are so suppressed in what we can and can't do and it's just time for us to stand up. Yeah I do it affects how we think as Tongans.

Here, Sitiveni began to raise his voice and walk around as he talked about his frustrations. He banged his hand against the table to show how passionate he is about his culture and what his views are. There was an underlying pain in his voice, as if he is very annoyed at the culture itself, something I had also felt at various times during my upbringing. It was at this stage that I felt more connected to Sitiveni, because he spoke life into my own feelings and attitudes. Although it was his reflection, it stimulated my own thought processes about our culture and its influence.

Nobody is yet to have a problem with what I do or at least not yet. Because I think with a lot of my stuff I try to be uplifting and positive in terms of my content. I have never sworn in my craft, and I think that hip-hop is known for explicit language and swearing and in my head I'm just thinking “you have just cut off a whole market” by saying one swear word. Like when I/we grew up, you're not gunna play ‘booty’ and rap songs because you know that Mum's listening. To me, Will Smith was a great artist because he never swore and I wanted to be like that and to use that kinda instinct in what I do, and to listen without worrying about anything like who is listening.

Sometimes people can be so narrow minded and try to fit you into certain stereotypes and throw around empty statements because they are scared of something different. People are like “Why

are you weird?” I’m like so what? That’s who I am, that’s what my parents believe in and where I got my name from. I was born into this religion, and I will throw that flag up because that’s what makes me so different while the rest of our people sit on the other side of the room. And these are the tests and trials that you have to go through, because they make you a stronger person in the end.

I found it interesting that Sitiveni changes and creates his work around the Tongan value of respect, and he even uses his work to mark who he is and who he isn’t. To me, that reveals a deep sense of authenticity, by not allowing the fads and trends of the music industry to compromise his values.

The talanoa led into my next question, where I asked what the idea of creativity meant to him. He was quite surprised that I had asked this question and took some time to think before he responded:

Creativity to me it means childhood. I always think about myself, being a ‘big kid’. I still see myself as a 16 year old even though I am 30. When I look at other artists that are creatives, I still see themselves as kids. Hear me out, when we grew up, the world was endless but the older we get the world starts getting smaller and smaller and you feel stuck in your ways. But when you are a kid, bro, everything is massive, you can do whatever you want within reason, like, the dragons are flying, there are monsters in the sea and your imagination just runs wild. Suddenly, everything becomes narrow. No Santa Claus? No Easter Bunny? Then you’re like, bro, what is this world? And who am I? You become so stuck in those ways.

As mentioned before, Sitiveni became animated once again – and I assume that this was because it had been the first time that someone had ever asked him this question. As much as he was retelling his lived experiences, I could sense that he was also self-reflecting and thinking about his responses on a deeper level in terms of his own creativity.

Children have it so good because they are so free to create, where as adults become chiselled down to just being in two worlds: a world where you can do whatever but get shit from it, or a world where you conform to society but you’re not happy. Suddenly it’s like, oh you can’t write like that, you can’t wear that – and then you ask, but why not? Says who? Who says I can’t wear this and that, because I am old and that stops me? But to me, those that can create still have their inner child and when I meet creatives they can still hang and relate to kids. But when people are so narrow minded, they become so far gone from reality and their essence of their imagination. I

wonder, you're not a human being then. Why would God give us all this imagination and creativity when you just cut it down to nothing?

The mention of two worlds caught my attention, and it was here that I began to realise that this whole talanoa was Sitiveni taking me on a journey to discover how he balances his own walk in two worlds: creatively and culturally. He spoke passionately and openly about what he would like to see change in terms of the Tongan culture.

I think that I am trying to refine what our culture is with this new concept of Aotearoa with our people. I want to hang on so badly to the old; I don't know much of the history of our people, but I also want to bring our people into this new world so they can understand why our kids get lost. Those kids that are losing the connection to the culture and language. Even myself, I came here in '94 and I have only been back there twice and to me that's losing the connection. I don't feel the need to go back home, and I don't yearn for it, I am good without it. I don't see many Tongans every day and I don't see that as a problem because I am so integrated with kiwi society I have more friends of other cultures and I have never thought twice about it as such. In the end, we are all islanders and like I said there's always pros and cons we all tend to be lost and that's a culture in itself. We are all finding who we are. Inter-racial relationships, half caste kids and over time it won't matter who or what we are as we are all part of the human race - and it's all a good thing as it breaks down cultural barriers.

Here in our talanoa, Sitiveni disclosed that he has nothing against the culture but feels that it is 'stuck in its ways' and that it disheartens him so he tries to use his creative work to express how he feels:

I want to be known as somebody who wasn't afraid to stand out. Not to be scared of who are in terms of your identity and I want to pass that message through my music or acting. That's why people don't live a happy life, as they are always worried about what others say and think. I think and know that it does, I think there's one thing about being passionate and talented but you have to have the drive and the knowledge to make creativity come to life. You can do it without education, but it will be a huge bonus and advantage. I wouldn't be where I am if I wasn't educated as its been embedded in me since I was a child to learn, learn, learn and that education is key. It also opens your mind and brings life to the dark.

Again, he mentioned education and connected this value to his family. I took mental notes about how he made transitions to different topics throughout our talanoa. Similarly to my talanoa with Sina, luck is also mentioned in solidifying personal identity:

I was one of the lucky ones where my Dad has been really supportive, as usually the fathers of the family are typical of pushing you into a job, help the family. I have been lucky to not need to help my parents out, ever since we have come to this country my parents have worked really hard. When we first got here, my Dad took on three jobs and just that hardworking ethic and attitude especially on education. My Dad was a teacher, and before he would teach he would go into the library and read up and learn how to teach that class on that topic. We're all Tongan born except for my youngest brother.

Here, I was really interested in his comments and opinions because it brought the discussion back to divisions that Tongans tend to hold in their views on creativity. And, to my surprise, just how unsupportive Tongan people are of, and for each other.

I think some of the barriers I tend to see now is support and recognition from Tongans. There are a few artists out there doing their thing out there in galleries but people just don't know. I think we have missed the boat in terms of supporting one another, and compared to Samoans – I know I always compare to them but they have an advantage over us Tongans in terms of getting ahead and I just wish we could speed up that process of getting out there. I think we just come from an old era where the musician and artist is not solid enough. It's understandable, as I think parents are just trying to look out for us. But I think when it comes down to more practical things like making the *ngatu* that is work but they don't see that as creativity. I am guilty of all of that, and get lost in it all but it important to have that balance holistically – body, mind and soul all need that input and you need to keep it even. Too much of one thing, you can lose it easily.

We ended our talanoa here as Sitiveni had another appointment to attend, but as we began to close the talanoa at this time, he kept emphasising the fact that Tongans needed to be more free and expressive in embracing what their talents are: in other words, to not be afraid of creativity.

5.3 Sela's talanoa

Sela's background is in dance and she is known as a *punake* (composer/choreographer/historian in dance). She is well known in the Tongan diaspora and community for her work, particularly her ability to fuse her 'Tonganness' together with elements of contemporary dance. She was born in Tonga but grew up in New Zealand, and she is a mother, daughter, and sister in a family that preserves and performs Tongan dance up to this day.

My background is with dance, performing arts in the field that I am in at the moment. It started off to when I was young, Grandpa used to teach Tongan *faiva* (performance, play, drama, skit, item requiring skill or ability) for youth stuff and around here my area. My parents were given the responsibility to teach Tongan *faiva* as well at church. My dad's background is that his grandfather is the son of Soni Li, who was the composer and choreographer for Queen Salote so that's where our genealogy comes from everything passed down generation to generation. And dance is always something that I was passionate about, but funnily enough my older sister isn't into dance like how I am and my brother.

In our talanoa, Sela was comfortable opening up to me and we found out that we had crossed paths in many other ways outside of this talanoa through the networks we shared, and places we had resided. This helped to ease any awkwardness that we might have been expressing because I was there to talk to her for a research project. The fact that we had similar interests, friends and upbringings helped the talanoa flow.

I have a natural flair for moving, so I would always dance at church functions and events and it wasn't until I met my Grandfather (dad's father) and he came from Tonga in mid/late 90's. He had taught us, myself and my brother an ancient dance and these existed back in the 50,60s – the composition and movements are very unique, and he passed this down to my brother and I. In a way I would say that I am lucky, as this runs in our blood line, so I was lucky that my parents wanted to pass this on. We went to a function where we performed this and these old ladies in their 80s came to me, and she knew exactly what the movements were and how I executed them – so it was very fascinating to see that in her eyes. It's all passed down, nothing written, and it's passed down through action – I was about 14/15 at that age.

After that moment, I was hooked and just the way that he would teach back then, it wasn't written – he would close his eyes and just tell me to watch him and to remember the actions and then he would sing – and to say back to me that I needed to show him just what he mimicked was fascinating. So that was the beginning for me. That's when Dad realised that I had something special, different in me at a young age, and he encouraged me to pursue that and to go hard. That's where it all began.

As much as Sela was telling the story, I could see that she was also emotional whilst sharing her experiences. Her voice softened and she was fighting back tears.

So then, I was studying – finished school and working and had no idea and what I was going to do. Mum and dad saw my talent from a very young age, so Mum pushed me towards Jazz, ballet,

folk dancing and some parents would never do that. My dad saw that I was into that kind of stuff and they have always been so supportive of all my decision and whatever career path I chose. So, I was lucky, one of the lucky few. But I think a lot had to do with my father's background, they didn't see it as *maumau taimi* (waste of time) but they saw it more as a blessing in our family to have that responsibility of being a *punake* (composer/poet).

Again, the value of education became relevant here – that as much as Sela was knowledgeable and talented, she felt that she had to back this up by some educational qualifications and credentials.

Dad understood, and Mum was just like find something and do it – as she saw me starting something and not finishing, so I went and auditioned, got in and then studied, finished and it started for the certificate and then went into the Diploma, it took two years. So, when I finished I saw that I had enough certification to create work for myself, and while I was studying, I saw that there weren't many Tongan stories or plays being told – there was Maori, Samoan, and Fijian and no Tongan – yet Tonga is full of it. Nothing was written by a Tongan person, or even a Tongan story written by others, there was nothing. So while I was playing all these characters I told myself, this is it - I don't wanna be just playing 'other characters'. I want to do Tongan work, for my heritage and for the wider picture as well.

Sela began to show conviction in how she spoke. She was enthusiastic about this and told me that things had to change and that if they did not, then the future of Tongans and their way of thinking would eventually degrade the value and integrity of the culture.

In visual arts, there is a whole lot of Tongans there, and I ran the Me'alea festival with Lola and it wasn't till then when we realised that there are a lot of Tongan artists, but everyone is doing their own thing, nobody's really working together. The festival was a total hit – everyone loved it, Creative NZ called it one of their babies; but they didn't even fund it – they gave us pennies. They dubbed it as one of their projects that they invested in, but we only got \$2000 to run it. But you know, because it was such a big hit I then realised that the next stage is all about formalising. After that one year; No one in the Tongan community wanted to formalise and have responsibility for the festival they just wanted someone to run it and then they could have some ownership over it which for me – I said I'm not going to invest my blood, sweat in something and my name and for it to go to a collective – no way. Ever since then it hasn't been on. The other artists went their own ways and that's okay because unless we can work together there's no potential. And you know, I think for Tongan artists, there's like only five or a handful that you can

name because of the issue of putting in the hard yards and not waking to maintain it. Samoans, are more open and they don't compete as much they like to work together but Tongan's not so much.

Sela always brought the talanoa back to her Tongan roots. She appeared to be negotiating who she was during the talanoa because she would offer information, question it and then internalise or accept it. Negotiating identity is often an interactive process, and I was glad to help Sela understand what her culture meant to her and her work.

So since then, I wanted to focus more on my work and on my own thing and build my own portfolio up since that's what everyone else was doing. So, I have my Tongan traditional work which is totally separate from my contemporary work. My work is about preserving the Tongan heritage, and it was quite different as the festival is quite contemporary. It was about preserving some remaining ancient Tongan dances that we have, that have survived before the missionaries came, and it had survived through our family.

I learnt something new here about dance. For me, the talanoa became a learning opportunity because not only was I introduced to different forms of creative expression and interpretation, I was also made aware of the disjoin that exists between traditional Tongan dance and the new versions developed by Tongan diaspora.

And it was through us that we continue to tell that story, and what I have noticed is through Polyfest, kids down like the old traditional dances – they don't see the beauty in those forms of movement, they just like the dances that seem to be 'cool'. Even in Tonga, everything has become comedy based and *eti faiva* (entertainment) and it's taken over the whole passion for the real emotions that come from dance. Every time I teach the old *faiva*, we got 0 marks for it – and the judges said that we have no right to perfume that *faiva*. And I was like wait – hold on a minute, it was done through her poetry and without music - so we couldn't bring her poetry to life? It was publically accessible – as she has written the poem and the musical element was my great grandfather and the musical elements was done through my ancestors, so for them to be like no it doesn't qualify it just doesn't make sense. At the end of the day I was like, you don't know nothing and I was so over it.

But you know, we tell the kids we are not here to win a prize we are here to see the kids become *māfana* we try to put the spirit into the work, and that's the reason why they have survived so many years. That's the old tradition of dancing.

In performing arts, based on my background, there's only a selected few that can do what a *punake* is capable of. And it's not like Western society where you have a composer, you have a choreographer, production, lighting, costumes – with *faiva* its only one person that's in charge of all that – poetry, composition, structure, movement. It's a big word that people throw around like nothing, because of things like Polyfest, family functions, they think that if you can teach a dance, then you are considered one: but that's not necessarily the case, *punake* needs to know the whole history of Tonga, culture, heritage, what to do and what not to do. You can't just call yourself a *punake*, because that's the bar or the level that I want to get to, and you can't be a *punake* unless the royal family or someone *hou'eiki* anoints you. My dad's father was a *punake*; and it doesn't mean that it makes my dad a *punake*. He had to work and earn it, and then got anointed in Tonga and that's why he has a name from that day forward he has the *punake* title.

It was clear that Sela loves dance and sees being a punake as extremely important to those in the field. It appeared that it was the punake role that saw certain forms of dance validated, and by extension, certain Tongan dancers. This is when I realised that there were certain guidelines and boundaries that Tongans had when it came to dance.

You can't be automatically considered a *punake* – because you don't have that nobility and the passion in the form of *faiva* to be considered one. We perform *faiva* in Tonga to *fakame'ite* (entertain audiences of royal/noble rankings) to *hou'eiki* (chiefs) because that's what's been bestowed to us. Even though we have *punake*, they are creating the work to give back to others, and it's not necessarily for them so it's something and it's a responsibility that you take on board but it's for a different purpose.

I keep my traditional and contemporary work separate, because my contemporary work is me and how I see things and how I express this. And I use the foundation of my Tongan movement, or my 'Tongan-ness' as a foundation of how I express this. Traditional work is strictly that, based on what my family has passed down. But we use Western theatre styles to present it, so rather than entertainment in a hall and that's it - we make it into a story. I have taken it into theatre where people can understand it, and not just a watch and enjoy and go home type performance.

This part of the talanoa captivated me – the way that Sela kept her work separate, was fascinating to me because I had read about it in Western scholarship, but to hear it from a Tongan artist was very moving.

It's an experience! So they come here and sit and then go home and say wow. There's something about these songs that get people into the experience. And even more so for me, it's an exciting

to see that there's different people, it's drumming and the harmony that get people swaying and into the mood.

Well, I have wondered for years what it is in these songs that have made them survive for so many years and the only that I have come up with is that – when we look at Tongan life in Tonga, it's communal. Everybody works together, everybody is part of something that they are not. When you *kaunga fononga* (join) or *ngāue fakataha* (work together) with people in the journey of life, there's some sort of spirit in there that makes it so *māfana* or *fakalata* (causing to feel at home, or be happy, content) that makes living in a group so wonderful. It doesn't matter what we have or share, everything's just a great experience. And that is probably why Pacific Islanders live in clusters; church, family, everywhere we go it's communal. Our social groups – and it's the way that we have been brought up, it's all done as a group and it doesn't matter where you are Tonga or Kiwi that's the way it is. The name of the play that my grandfather came up with, and it means to preserve or 'Tongan-ness' to hold who we are, what we know and our ways of doing things because we are no longer in Tonga anymore. So, in my Tongan work, creativity for me is about preserving, holding on – it's about holding on, I'm not trying to change it – because that's what contemporary is.

Again, the aspect of togetherness as a Tongan person spoke loudly here and Sela did not hold back when discussing her experiences of teaching traditional dance in new settings.

Because of my background and in my traditional work and experience and my history, I haven't been called *fie pālangi* (to want, desire, wish, or be willing; also, to imagine oneself to be, or so to be treated or regarded as) because I know what I am talking about and I can back that up with stuff that's been handed down to me. Yeah, you have some people that say that tradition evolves, there is no tradition – but I'm like wow hold on a minute, so if I'm teaching tradition dance from back then what do you say then? It evolves if you make it evolve – you have choices you can choose whether to keep something pure, or liquidate it and turn it into something different.

I was fascinated by her views on creativity and how she spoke with conviction. Sela started to use her hands a lot in this part of our talanoa, perhaps to express how much she wanted me to understand and acknowledge her point of view:

Or you can take an idea from there, make it yours and express it as something different that's how I operate but you have to go back and say this is where I got it from. You have to acknowledge the past, the root of something where you spark something from where you

originally picked it up from, and I think that's what some people lack these days. They claim it as theirs, they pick it up and run with it but no – you have to state where you got it from. And even if I use my contemporary work, the only thing I would change is to use female dominated voice as opposed to male voices but that doesn't water it down – it just gives it another life. The words are still there, the lyrics are still there it just gives it another breathe. And that's what I try to do.

My dad was always encouraging me to finish off school, and I was always waiting for a place to offer me something that I wanted to do. When I finished from PIPA my Dad noticed that my way of thinking had changed, he was very supportive of that. My Mum was kind of weary about the money side of things.

In performing arts, I remember that my grandad always used to say that creating work was always something that was given so the *hou'eiki* (chiefs) had to give them a theme or an idea and from there they had to create work, poetry, music and then perform it as events such as Kings birthdays. Fiji has there on version of the lakalaka – and even though it was created, it was created for a purpose they didn't just sit around like the artists these days that can just make an album for fun – it wasn't their glory to do just that.

I am inspired by my family. Even in my contemporary work, a lot of my work – my father just passed away and he's the pillar of my work. My contemporary work is all me, it has very little to do with anyone else. There are so many ways that I can tell a part of the story without stating it in its exact form.

There's no platform for Tongan contemporary dance, and I didn't want to be labelled under Pacific Contemporary Dance. Black Grace is more *pālagi* movement and I didn't wanna be like that or like that, because you can't signify their work as Samoan or Tongan or Maori. I wanted to build a platform where Tongan dance choreographers make it significant to our people specifically, to us. So I used my Tongan *faiva* stuff to tell stories but everyone tells me that my work is not dance, drama, music – but I was telling them that Tongan *faiva* has three elements: dialogue (poetry) music and movement and that's what makes Tongan *faiva* Tongan *faiva*. In order for me to do my contemporary work, those three elements need to be present in order for it to be Tongan – so you can't question that it's not music or drama because it's all those three in one frame. There's time when the movement is going and the music has stopped, or vice versa but its three different things surviving in that one moment. So it's different from Black Dance and UMU.

Here, Sela spoke and it was almost as though she was performing a spoken word piece: she was very elaborate in how she used her hands and facial expressions to match her words to what she was talking about.

My background makes people not judge and it makes me want to teach what I know, and doing what I know I have been quite adamant about sticking to that and I only strictly do the stuff from my village and from my roots. People are like “I love the Tongan dance with the coconuts” and I correct them and say no it’s not a Tongan dance it’s just a dance with coconuts. My Dad comes from Lea and I would never want to do things from other villages, so for me to do something else is what I won’t do. My dad will always say don’t go and touch other people’s things because that’s how people misinterpret your help and creativity as stepping into their zones and their speciality dance. In my contemporary work, my dad doesn’t mind but traditional work I will take on board his advice.

At the end of the day, it’s what we do that will speak to us, not our mouths - if we create good work, people will see and we don’t have to explain and put it all on you tube – you just make yourself look stupid and bad. Actions speak louder than words.

I don’t want this to all be about work, I want this to be an empowering experience with my Tongan work, with my kids, it’s about them understanding our Tongan heritage and culture, and having a love for it and appreciation for that. I always tell them that with theatre it’s a make or break moment, and you either make it or you drown – and if you want to enjoy it, they have to see you enjoy it, it’s a give and take experience. You have that one night; it’s never going be the same you have to flow with it.

That’s the one thing I want people to know – I want you to know that I am Tongan. I just finished watching a Tongan show, I just finished listening to some Tongan music – that’s what I want them to say. And of course, a memory and their experience of Tonga.

As our talanoa ended, I felt inspired and empowered by Sela – the way that she walked the talk, and also talked the walk was powerful and she was not ashamed of her voice or her story. This made me reflect on who I was as a person, and if I was to ever retell my own story to others, would I be able to speak with such strength. It was an honour to sit beside Sela.

5.4 Neti's Talanoa:

Neti is a Tongan born woman who migrated to New Zealand for a 'better' life for herself, and to support her parents that lived back in Tonga but who frequently visit. Her creative work is in the area of poetry and she is very proud of how she expresses herself in her craft. She speaks very softly, and is also bi-lingual in her responses.

In this talanoa, I noted that Neti was talking to me as though she were delivering a motivational speech, and at times I even felt she was preaching to me – I took notes but I mainly observed how she weaved the talanoa together into one main story. I felt as though I did not have to ask any questions, because the talanoa started by her wanting to know more about me and what I did and why I thought she would be the right person to seek answers from, which is quite a different and interesting way of getting the talanoa under way: I assumed it was because the talanoa took place in her place of work and the context had an impact on how she articulated herself.

Creativity for me, is to use present knowledge to create something that is not usual. Or to create something that satisfies my aims. Usually I would have a goal in mind and I will say that I am setting out to do this, I want to do it well, and different from what others have done it, depending on my goal. I usually critique old ideas and I like to create my own views and write them down. I'd say that that's what I do with everything that I write, because everything that I write I like to depart from the usual so I can say this is my own and claim ownership of my ideas. I think that depends on what it is. I see a lot of creativity in the work of Tongans around me, even the way they dress.

I noted that I naturally took the seat of the student and wrote notes as she spoke, making sure that I was to capture how softly spoken she was because her tone had an impact on the interpretation of what was being said:

I think maybe because there's so many factors involved in what we mean by creativity. What someone calls creative is something that another person won't necessarily call or see as the same. That's the difficulty of definition because you can't pin down what the criteria are for creativity. Like if you had a list of things, for example, what does creativity need to satisfy? And then you apply it to every situation, and it's a matter of degree and extent. There will be some, for example if I see a piece of *taovala* – to me that's very creative and someone else may not think so because it's already been done before. Those are the sorts of considerations.

Because our culture has certain prescribed requirements you have to be *faka'apa'apa* (respectful) and that's something that cannot change. But what can change, is your way of showing it. Like remember, we used to sit down as a way of showing this value, that's our traditional way of showing it. And now we rise. I think maybe its Western, and always bringing new things into our culture. But it's important to note that it is the quality of how it is retained – there are Tongan context where we don't rise, we sit down. As long as we keep the basic requirements and don't depart from it, we can still be creative despite of those things.

Here, Neti began to draw closer to me and also whisper as though she did not want anybody to hear what she was saying:

We keep those things as a requirement of our traditions despite the changing worlds as long as you don't contradict any of those established things. Like *fe'ofa'aki* (loving) and *fe'tokoni'aki* (helping) if you become well educated and not help your people that's not value. But I suppose within the boundary of these requirements of what we have to do, we are at liberty with what one wants to do, as long as it doesn't conflict too much with the rest of the basic requirements. Other cultures don't have the prescribed requirements like how Tongans do, like you said – its collective, everyone is part of that.

Even if, maybe what we do in Tongan culture is the same of what is done in other fields. There are some really foundational values that must be there, even in medicine – there is some knowledge and that knowledge is a given and you would be mad to contradict that scientifically proven existence: that's a given and on top of that you can be a creative. I think that's just the same as Tongan culture, you know, within that boundary some are afraid to be creative.

In our talanoa, whenever Neti referred to herself, she would use humour to enhance her anecdotes and to create vā with me. Humour allowed the conversation to flow and established common understandings between Neti and me.

But I have noticed that there is a lot of conflict between my parents and our younger people. When the children come home, they think that they are free – but the parents have in mind certain things that are compulsory. And the children don't realise that, they think they are like *palagi* and they can be free.

I had a sister, that went to the States and she came back to Tonga and she had a lot of conflict with my Mother because she picked up the idea that she was an individual, she has her own mind she can determine what's good for her. My mother didn't think so, she said that she still had to

do this and that. And think that it's the same case for creativity you can be creative as long as it doesn't not touch the basic requirements to whatever field it is – I'm extending it to beyond our culture.

Here, I found it interesting that most of her examples were based around her mother and other immediate family. It indicated to me that she valued the views of others, and had, perhaps, adopted some of those same attitudes towards the Tongan culture. It was not unexpected that her understandings of her culture would be a product of familial ties and interactions. Interestingly, she talked about being grounded in traditions and not departing from that or not being too creative on top of what is essential as a Tongan person.

I think the writing that Konai Thuman, does is very creative and she shows it in English. She told me once, that she writes it in Tongan first and then she translates it into English. It's amazing, as her point was that she thinks in Tongan and that's how she creates her poems.

First of all, for myself I wouldn't write about something that I wouldn't have any strong feelings about. I need to have that strong emotion before I can do research about a certain topic. Yeah, there comes a point when you feel that you feel that there's something missing in that theory, and you want to fill that gap - and to me that's my creativity. I give it a unique twist. I think my Mother is much more artistic than me, now she's 90 – she used to weave and produce very beautiful Tongan mats. The last piece of taovala that she wove: you know, a lot of that belongs to the old. To do your weaving, you have to abide by certain laws of weaving and that's the old. On top of that you create, decorate kiekie – my Mother used to make kiekie for Queen Salote, and that's the part of her creativity with another woman. It's just an illustration. But in my writing I feel that there's something missing and that's when I like to create my own twist.

Here, Neti used her own lived examples through the use of humour to convey her views. I found that Neti sought to offer examples that painted her in a positive light. She probably did not want to be judged, and looked to project a favourable self-image.

When I see contemporary dance, how much of it is a departure from the old? Once I saw a modern Tongan dance, and it was fun – and fast paced, straight movement and not like traditional dance and I was thinking “what is it that makes us think this is dancing” because it's so different. I supervised a student who did work on Tongan dance, and she is non Tongan but she's all for the tradition Tongan dance – and there's nothing in it that's new – and she said that's the way it should be. So maybe there are things that we wouldn't want to change, and to keep separate.

The thing is that whoever did the *taolunga* (dance) must have created it and isn't it logical to see that we must proceed from that? There are some new hand movements that I haven't seen. I think that it is important and looking at Tongan culture there are certain things that they don't want to change. Looking at dance, the hip movement. The hips will always be in one place, and there are other little haka but not the hip movement. Maybe it is suggestive, and maybe it's also to do with the idea of being feminine and being dignified and if you move your hips it will suggest other things – that you are too free and too wild. It's like when you go to church, there's a concert and they play these songs and you move along with the other ladies and I am wanting to be *mafana* and I want to move as well but I am thinking, this is church and these are people from church (laughs). So I hold back, so the ladies start being clownish and make it look funny to make it deliberate moves to make it look funny to avoid that.

But, I know that there conflict there as the relations of the traditionalists who does certain art forms in Tonga and masters in the craft get angry when others have applied that knowledge. There is the master and learner divide. But there must have been a time when the master was a learner? It can be applied to anything. Very interesting. Even in dress, the short sleeves its considered a no-no and the splits in the skirts. Even the tight tops that some girls wear, you can see how tight it is and see the spare tyre (laughs) and its rude to our culture.

I found it interesting that Neti was thinking about all aspects of creativity – not just the creator but also the audience, and the final art form:

I think creativity that, there is something important also is the number of people. If there's only a few people then its new, and if lots like it then its fashion and acceptable. So I think it's the number of people who accept and like it. If you have a lot of followers, then that's a sign.

I think in our world, with education - everybody looks up to education because it brings knowledge that you don't necessarily get when you stay home and do your artistic work. It's also to do with numbers, you know more people are accepting of things that are endorsed and ideas that come through educational institutes. Just because its more prestigious and you'll be likely to come across more things that you wouldn't if you wasn't educated. But I think it's a numbers game: I can't understand modern paintings and why people pay so much money for that painting, the scribblings of a child, but if many people considered that to be beautiful then it's acceptable and popular.

Neti had to ask again what I had meant by the notion of creativity, she wanted my view first to reassure herself that we had the same understanding of the term before presenting her views:

I don't understand what you mean by creative; do you mean people in those areas of art? I think we do have a kind of superstition that what people like that do is not as important as a person that becomes a lawyer or a medical doctor, and I think it's a lot to do with the prestige of education and connected to what you earn. But, I think there are artists that earn much more, painters – but then again what's in a job? Lawyers are in a regular job, and its tied to what your income is.

I think that it is central, *vā* changes if you're doing something that is not accepted by the rest. Because we have aesthetic view of *vā* and we think that *vā* is always the same and we keep it *lelei* (good) but I think because being creative involves changing one thing to something newer then it must change some of the *vā* that is involved. It's like ripples, if it is ripples there then it tends to go on to the end of the tide. Hmmm. I never thought about those things – so your work is very interesting. What you need to do is get the thesis done, as you have started the debate and limit your thesis because there's lots of decisions that you need to make –about the influences, and non-changing values of Tongan culture.

The talanoa ended with Neti asking whether I was related to other Tongans of royal descent, and we began to realise that we had the same networks of kāinga. I found it really interesting that our talanoa ended with Neti offering me advice on my own research. I valued this and took this into account when finalising some decisions around the use of Tongan language employed in this thesis.

5.5 Lisiate's Talanoa

Lisiate, a Tongan-born tattoo artist, lives overseas. We conducted our *talanoa* over Skype. This *talanoa* was memorable because Lisiate was so very much his own person. He spoke courageously and was unapologetic for speaking his mind. He is an extremely popular artist with a waiting list of clients. In our *talanoa*, Lisiate was very talkative, straight-forward and did not hold back when telling of his experiences as an artist.

Interestingly, Lisiate opened the talanoa by talking about what he had gone through that day and spoke to me as though I already knew him, yet the only contact we had had was

through email because of differing time zones. The talanoa flowed naturally and was a great opportunity to hear about his creative endeavours and experiences.

Te'ekiai keu sio kihe kakai lotu malie, 'etau kakai (I've never seen people that are really good at praying, our people). I was just at the funeral of one of my really good friend and it was shocking. I have seen it around me in so many ways. Oh it was everyone – ladies, the youth, everyone. After the burial, actually before he was buried everyone already started to walk away to see where the feed was afterwards. In Tonga, everyone settles the dead first then they all walk away and carry on with the formalities. But not here. It's just like tattoo, I see people here tattooing Tongans and having tattoos – all areas are covered with tattoo, and then when I ask them something about Tonga, they go quiet. Clueless. Mainly it's those people that are brought up here. Faka'ofa (sad). Faka'ofa toutupu (the youth of today are in a sad state).

There's a cycle. Parents 'iate, 'iate moe foha, cousin and uncle (parents landscape, their offspring do landscaping). Ngaue (work) Mum at the airlines daughter and cousins all work here. And these people, they all think that I am faka'sesele (crazy) – well, I am kind of. You know graduation? What people do is kato'anga (celebrate) and they wear all the kahoa (necklaces) and they all compete with each other, \$100, \$1000 and the graduates wear them. And I have always said, why string that around their necks when you can't teach them how to get a job?

In our talanoa, Lisiate used rhetorical questions to emphasise his points. At times, I responded to these because the talanoa is so mālie that I could not help but respond to his questions as a way of continuing the conversation. I noticed that at times, he even responded to his own questions.

When high school is over, welcome to the real world. I tell people I didn't graduate from anything here. In 1996, I was sitting in a hall I wasn't part of the graduate party. I was sitting with money in my hand as I was the one cutting everyone's hair and they pay me lunch and give me money. All I got was a certificate in "thank you for coming to school" I could have made it, I think if my Dad didn't go to school academically like you – I would've tried that path. But because my Dad was educated – he has two Masters degrees – so, that's why I wasn't focusing on the academic side.

Lisiate highlighted that because his father pursued education, this almost validated and justified why he did not go down the same path. I found that he had an entrepreneurial mindset from an early age, which has continued into his adulthood. In our talanoa, despite my efforts to bring the narrative back to the guiding questions I had prepared, Lisiate had a

circular approach in his responses, answering through the use of imagery such as metaphors and similes.

Even the birds that go fishing as a group as a community – one will always fly alone by itself and I guess I am that bird. Our people in Tonga has forgotten about our blessing of the ocean, they have forgotten about whales, turtles - our people don't see anything spiritual in our land – the only thing they see spiritual is Sunday, Jesus and talking about the ghost stories, you know ones about possession. That's the only thing that they see as spiritual. Our (long pause) people don't even know the meaning of their tattoos and why they have one. Like I see here, it has to be very big, "to know I am Tongan" to show it off – and when you ask them about anything Tongan they won't even know. A lot of people don't even know that the word 'tatu' (tattoo) derived from a Tongan word 'tapu' (sacred) and whenever I met a foreigner who doesn't know about Tonga that's the first thing I tell them, 'tapu' then I explain to them about sailing.

Again, working as a collective had become one of the common threads woven through this talanoa, similar to the others. Lisiate tended to jump from different examples to questions, to situations to scenarios and then came back to the point of our talanoa. I found this very interesting and quite entertaining as it brought the talanoa alive in an animated way.

Our people were focused on the superficial side of things. When is the world cup? I want to fly to NZ. The white man studied our craft – we built a *kalia* (double hub canoe) and we were able to navigate through the South Pacific in the old days. Our people built that, and now white people build million-dollar boats and yachts and race them in the America's Cup. That technology – those yachts were built using the technology that Tongan and Polynesian people started. They have prospered from that.

Bungy jumping in Vanuatu, the local people and Pacific people don't think it's cool they think everyone is stupid. It was our tradition – boat building, sailing and now? They don't believe in it as much as they do because they underestimate who is going to buy it and make money off it. The white man have turned that into a sport now, there's no Tongan and Polynesian teams, even getting paid from it or contributing to building it. Like Bungy jumping, the Vanuatu people are busy jumping in their villages and the white man learned it and turned it into a money-making venture. There's so many ideas that the Polynesian people don't understand how much we have influenced the world because they are blinded with parties, alcohol, TV and everything that is new.

I found these examples deeply insightful –revealing creativity in his thoughts and how he linked ideas from the past to the present. Lisiate created bridges in his talanoa so that I was able to climb over them in time: past, present, and future.

How big Kim's ass is, Instagram, face book and social networking. Even surfing – Hawaiian people started surfing and Tahiti. If you look at the biggest surfing companies that make the gear, the surfboard compete in surfing competitions in the world – you don't see any Island companies. So, the islanders are very skilful and smart people but a lot of our people don't think it can transition to help or make a living doing it. Like tattoo. The people who are in tattooing, me and Sione just came into the scene in 2002/2003 which is late. The people who introduced tattoo to Americans and white man were the Polynesians. We didn't start tattooing, the Japanese started that. But we tattooed our people, our ancestors and they tattooed so much of the body and it's now a million-dollar business.

And here I am working here with these people here because. Tattoo in the media has taken to a big industry. The industry is big – it's a billion-dollar industry. Tattoo removal, permanent makeup, your eyeliner it depends who is doing it but it comes with a price. And, our people is very small – tattoo is a Polynesian word but it's very small there's only a very few islanders who has done that and taken tattoo to a level that it can help your family.

At this point, I did not deliberately guide the flow of the talanoa because I was becoming familiar with how Lisiate responded through storytelling. I sat back, took notes and enjoyed the talanoa and where it was taking us.

In Tonga, Tongan people look down at tattoo. It's a *me'a fakahaua e* (to joke or banter) . There is like five tattoo shows on TV, that's how big the tattoo industry is. The people who make the ink, caps and supplies. Our people cannot see that far, '*oku faingata'a* (it is difficult) in the beginning of my career me and Sione didn't care about how much we would make. We make some money its good, but all we cared about was practice, practice and practice to master the art to master everything: needle, craft, light, everything. Not just the tattoo. Um, placement, body, ethos, attitude there's more to tattoo than we know. A lot of tattoo artist I see, even the good ones, do the same tattoo sleeve on a guy and on girls. Some doesn't know the difference between the guy and the girl and all he sees is the same person. He doesn't see love, joy, passion, he doesn't see beauty, skin. He sees the same person, but they are really two different people, two different sexes.

In the talanoa Lisiate took me on a journey: from how he started and the trials and triumphs that he encountered on the way. He kept pausing and making sure that I was following as he was speaking.

We started in a garage. No, it started in Malaysia. Went to Malaysia and we wanted to build racing cars – it was tough. Our visa was paid our ticket was paid back to Fiji our father paid it. So, I went to Malaysia first then Sione came. Halfway through 2001 I decided to stop. We were having a hard time financially. My father stopped the finance. At the time it was tough – I was angry, I was young, about 22? But right now I am glad that he did it because I decided to drop out. I told Sione either we are going to keep going to school and suffer be hungry or we are going to drop out and survive. So, I dropped out of school. I woke up the next day, I told everyone I'm not going to school – Sione thought that I was playing, but he went to school by himself. And that week he quit school too. So we were both dropped out because I told him forget school for now, no more. We know how to read and how to talk we know how to do some work here and there. When he turned to me and asked me what we are going to do, I told him – tattoo. We have never tattooed before, ever.

I told him I remember how the machine was constructed so we starting gathering the materials. We got a motor, a stereo and picking out parts so you make the machine like a jail house machine. Motor, ball point pen, toothbrush, button from the shirts and then we had to – at first we tried what the guys were doing in Tonga by using the big batteries and connecting the wires together positive negative – but the problem with that is that the battery runs out. So we decided to use our knowledge from school, and this was when Sione went into engineering and electronics and me with auto engineering, so that we would make it better.

So we started using cell phones. The charger plug back in 2001, we started looking around for chargers to find the right one that runs perfect. At that time we were two young Tongans who was trying to do a *fakamuna* (to indulge in make believe) by experimenting first to buy equipment, no tattoo experience using our knowledge that I remember that I got tattoo from *haua* (continuously wandering about as if more or less insane) in how it was made. So we had so much drive, passionate, we were hungry “it has to be done” because Carl asked me, when I stopped going to school. Why tattoo? he asked me. I told him when we were at school, most Asian boys at school wanted tattoos.

I was fascinated by the themes of entrepreneurialism that emerged, there was a strong drive to succeed and to not quit. Lisiate applied his creativity to his surroundings in order to

survive and to prove his father wrong. I sensed how proud he was of himself but he was still very humble, despite all his success and accolades.

I saw a market because there was only two tattoo artist in the place we were at in Malaysia at the time and I said those people, even celebrities that wanted the tattoos I said that I'm going to be the one to do that. But it was trying to make it perfect and to get it right – we had to find the ink, Chinese ink, Indian ink – we walked the whole town just to find the ink. He didn't know what we were doing, but we had it all mapped out in our heads. Sione was a good artist, he took art school he was able to draw – but I didn't. When we started I knew that we had to take it further than the garage, I said either we go hard or quit and go home but in my mind we was going to go back home and *fakama'i* (embarrass) our father and that was something that I didn't want to do. If we were to ever go back to Tonga, we have to bring something from where we went, the only thing I brought back was tattoo.

I did tattoo but we only tattooed Asian people. Whatever the Asian boys wanted to tattoo. Starting with Sione's friends, we all lived together in the dorm and he was our first client. I think the rent was \$300 a week, and that's how we paid our rent. My father made the right decision, he stopped our spending money because with that money I would by drinks alcohol and liquor in the weekend and I would drink. Everybody would go home to their homes, but I would stay back and drink, because it was *taeoli* (boring), there was no Tongan food; people, music or even Pacific Islands there was Fijian people but they lived at the Fijian Embassy which was very far.

So now, I had to prove it. I had to prove my theory. These people wanted tattoo and I had to supply the demand to feed us. Everybody wants to have a tattoo to be bad – and that's what he wanted. We were so passionate to make each tattoo perfect. We had to try different needles, hand sewing needles, sewing machine needle – we was like two crazy scientists. I would always push him, because the only other income was the tools that was given to us and the textbook. As engineering students, there was a textbook. I would look for every new student and sell them our old text books. That was natural to me, selling. I did it in Tonga when I used to mow the lawn. I would sell everything to them, it was a struggle before the tattoo started. And that's how it all started.

At this point of the talanoa, I sensed that Lisiate had said all that he wanted to and that he wished to let his work to speak for itself. His talanoa was about how he had started, and the struggle of his early days as a creative worker still has a significant impact on how he continues his craft. To this

day, we keep in contact with each other: he has told me his story, and the vā we created is maintained.

Overall, it was an honour and a privilege to sit with all five participants as they presented their *talanoa* with me, and to me. As we sat on the ‘mat’ together, I was able to uphold their stories by weaving my insights and personal thoughts throughout. The following chapter will analyse the *talanoa* thematically in order to draw on the richness and *maliē* that each them holds.

Chapter Six

Ngaahi Tu'unga Lea 'Oe Talanoa: Themes from the Talanoa

This chapter sets out the themes that emerged from analysing the five *talanoa*. My analysis split the *talanoa* codes into three groups called 'Loto' (inward) and 'Tu'a' (outside), and 'Māfana' (warm, heartfelt emotion). From these groups, I arrived at six key themes: *'Being Tongan, Expressions of self, Keeping it real, Reaping what you sow, Paying it forward and The gift that keeps on giving'* but these were further collapsed into two central themes which held the key qualities most of the initial six themes.

In this chapter I present the two themes: *Tonga will always be Tonga* and *Walking in Two Worlds* and my intention is to express the nature and scope of each theme in a way that honours the voice of each participant while at the same time, presenting my interpretations and observations. The data are illustrated in their original form as excerpts from the *talanoa* transcripts, presented with Tongan and English translations as naturally expressed by each participant. It should be noted that because some Tongan concepts and terms do not translate easily or exactly into English, I have presented the translations in a form that is faithful to the participants in order to capture the variation in style that relates to each participant's identity and status. I have attempted to include the range of ways of speaking within the transcripts by integrating 'Māfana' as a holistic aspect of each theme. The themes are outlined in Table 1 (below on p. 91).

Table 2: Breakdown of Themes from *Talanoa* Coding Groups: 'Loto', 'Tu'a' and 'Mafana'

Theme 1: Being Tongan		
Anga fakatonga Kainga Ngaue fakataha Change		
Theme 2: Expressions of self	Theme 1: 'E kei Tonga pe 'a Tonga Tonga will always be Tonga	
I am who I am Take it or leave it Creative vs. Culture Win/win vs. win/lose Understanding and being understood	Being Tongan Paying it forward The gift that keeps on giving	
Theme 3: Paying it forward	Theme 2: Walking in Two Worlds	Theme 1: 'E kei Tonga pe 'a Tonga Tonga will always be Tonga
Fatongia Fetokoni'aki Past into the present To change or not to change	Expressions of self Reaping what you sow Being Tongan Paying it forward	Being Tongan Keeping it real Paying it forward The gift that keeps on giving
Theme 4: The gift that keeps on giving	Theme 3: The Creative vs. Cultural self	Theme 2: Walking in Two Worlds
Being appreciated Education Actions speak louder than words	Expressions of self Being Tongan Keeping it real Reaping what you sow	Expressions of self Reaping what you sow Being Tongan Paying it forward Keeping it real
Theme 5: Reaping what you sow		
Traditions of being Tongan Character Changing what is unchanged Getting out what you put in		
Theme 6: Keeping it real		
Unapologetically creative Stepping outside the cultural box Taking risks		

6.1 Theme 1: ‘E kei Tonga pe ‘a Tonga ‘ia (Tonga will always be Tonga)

Keywords: ‘anga fakatonga, kainga, ngaue fakataha, change, always, frustrating, tauhi vā, separate, knowledge, past, future, creative, creativity, New Zealand, tauhi vāha’a

The first theme that emerged from the *talanoa* encompassed the keywords in the textbox above. All the words stand in relation to significant Tongan cultural values and beliefs that had an effect on how participants understood and carried out creative work. This theme has two main subthemes, the first being ‘Tonga: the land and its ways’ (*anga fakafonua*), and second ‘Being Tongan: the people and their ways’ (*anga fakatonga*). These two parts were analysed in relation to what each *talanoa* revealed.

The qualities that made up this theme were prominent in all the *talanoa* as participants referred to ‘Tonga Always Being Tonga’ by way of lived experience, negotiations of creative and cultural self and socially conditioned practices from childhood and adulthood. The phrase “Tonga will always be Tonga” can be translated in many ways but for the most part, can be understood as Tonga reigning as an unchanged nation, tracing its history back to not succumbing to British colonisation (Wood-Ellem, 1999). Although Queen Salote III was interested in Western influences, her heart was set on Tongan traditions, customs and values and she believed that changes should be made “slowly, rather than too quickly” (Wood-Ellem, 1999, p.223). According to traditional history, another alternative of this phrase is *Tonga ma’a Tonga* - “Tonga for Tongans” was a common way for the *Tu’i* to politicise other powerful chiefs (Crane, 1978; Wood, 1972). They were told to leave “Tonga for the Tongans” if they were not happy with a command; in other words, to leave Tonga to seek possibilities for themselves on other islands (Wood, 1972). Furthermore, this particular title of ‘Tonga always being Tonga’ carries on the continuity of weaving cultural and creative *fala* threads to fulfil the overall purpose of this research. In being true to my participants, I return to the purpose of this research which is an examination of the effects of traditional and contemporary expressions of the Tongan culture in the creative work of Tongan artists. I proceed with each participant’s take on *tauhi vāha’a* in their personal and creative journeys at the forefront of my mind.

Tonga: the land and its ways (*‘angafakafonua*)

Traditions of *anga faka-Tonga*, and practices of *tauhi vā* —enriched by values such as *faka’apa’apa* (respect), *mateaki* (loyalty, dedication, and commitment), *feveitokai’aki* (reciprocity or reverence for others), and *loto tō* (desire to give) underlying the meaning of *‘ofa* (love)— are as relevant today as in the past. Each participant’s *talanoa* entailed a degree of struggle with *anga fakataonga*, and each participant engaged in *anga fakafonua* in different ways.

I interpreted the experiences of my participants through observing Tongan ways of knowing and being, by laying down the foundations of *anga fakafonua* to richly articulate the nature of this theme. *Anga fakafonua* acts as one of the unifying factors amongst my participants based on how they hold and maintain relationships among peoples, and between peoples and the environment (Taufe’ulungaki, 2004). The notion of *anga fakafonua* is evident in how Tongans live together, work together, and grow together as a people. The ultimate purpose of this relationship and exchange between the environment and humanity is to maintain harmony in life in sustainable ways. One of my participants, Sela, saw *anga fakafonua* coming to life in how certain songs are composed:

“Well, I have wondered for years what it is in these songs that have made them survive for so many years and the only that I have come up with is that – when we look at Tongan life in Tonga, its communal. Everybody works together, everybody is part of something that they are not. When you kaungafononga (join) or ngaue fakataha (work together) with people in the journey of life, there’s some sort of spirit in there that makes it so mafana (spiritual), or fakalata (harmonious) that makes living in a group so wonderful. It doesn’t matter what we have or share, everything’s just a great experience.”

In the *fonua*, as in this context, where it is people and webs of relationships that matter, “... the ultimate purpose of this relationship and exchange between the environment and humanity is to maintain harmony in life in sustainable ways’ (Tu’itahi, 2007, p. 5). Sela makes the point that communal living and working together as a people maintains the spirit of Tongan songs that have survived the test of time. The way that songs have been crafted with the purpose of communicating certain messages as a collective for a collective emphasises the significant influence of the *fonua* construct in Tongan thinking and being. On the other hand, another participant, Sina, saw *anga fakafonua* expressed in how contemporary and traditional creative work was valued in certain settings. For example, Sina raised the example of:

“As you walk into a palangi home the ngatu is hanging on the wall and it’s celebrated as that, but in a Tongan home it’s folded under the bed. . . There is a lot that can be said about

the so-called perceived Western view and mixed with Tongan in terms of what it means when it is up in the wall, and how does that change things? It poses many different problems like how we value these things.”

She noted differences in how creative work was being valued, based on the *fonua* that it was displayed and made in. Naturally, these observations were based on her mixed ethnicity and upbringing in different *fonua*. Sina made this reasoning by default as she explored her cultural and creative identity throughout her life. Lisiate also shares a personal anecdote in his *talanoa* as he describes how funerals are carried out in different *fonua*:

“After the burial, actually before he was buried everyone already started to walk away to see where the feed was afterwards. In Tonga, everyone settles the dead first then they all walk away and carry on with the formalities. But not here. It’s just like tattoo, I see people here tattooing Tongans and having tattoos – all areas are covered with tattoo, and then when I ask them something about Tonga, they go quiet. Clueless.”

I found his story quite interesting; particularly in the way that he wove the narrative back to tattoo. I realised quite soon into our *talanoa* that he would always refer back to the *fonua* as a crucial power point where all other topics of discussion were either connected, or disconnected, from the main ‘socket’ of *fonua*. Sina observed that creative art forms in the Pacific were not given as much value and appreciation as they would if they were in Western settings:

.. How do we bring our people into a gallery setting and they see these things and they still don’t see the significance of why it’s up? It’s so complex – yet fascinating. Case and point, the last Epic Gallery called ‘Vā moe Tauhi’ they both sold these pieces at a very high price for X amount of money and when you see these at Polyfest it’s a lower price. But in a gallery it’s higher? Those contrasts to me are a very interesting thought that needs more attention.

By travelling across the globe, she confirmed her pre-conceived notions about how different *fonua* and contexts value the same Tongan traditional art forms but do not honour or value the *fonua* that the art form originated in. Sina says that she carries out her creative work in a way that is closely aligned with her cultural identity and how she chooses to value the *fonua* that her art form originated in:

“It’s about the voice, but also about valuing it. It comes back to what I said, if I am doing it now and people recognise it, what about our Aunties that have been doing this for years and years and years and still are not being recognised? So, I will put this into a gallery exhibition but I want to see it as more of a collaboration where I am giving them a voice, and the credit

as well as a platform in what they have been doing as a daily routine for so long. It's the bigger picture and it has evolved my practice"

This is a significant observation because other participants in my research such as Sitiveni, made deliberate efforts to preserve traditional Tongan values such as *faka'apa'apa* (respect) in his work, despite not being born in that particular *fonua*:

"I have never sworn in my craft, and I think that hip-hop is known for explicit language and swearing and in my head I'm just thinking "you have just cut off a whole market" by saying one swear word. Like when I/we grew up, you're not gunna play 'booty' and rap songs because you know that Mum's listening"

Sitiveni removed offensive and degrading content from his craft and constructed his work as if 'Mum's listening'. In other words, no matter where or how he creates music, *Tonga will always be Tonga* – he does not depart from the values of his birth *fonua*. To an extent, of course, this says a lot about his personal identity and character and how closely aligned he is towards certain Tongan values. One of the core purposes behind why he pursued music was to create relationships with his craft, his audience and the Tongan culture. In other words, he was upholding his *'anga fakafonua'*. The core idea here is the emphasis on creating warm relationships, not just any forms of relationships with people of the *fonua*. Sina notes that:

"Who your audience is plays a part as well. How do we bring our people into a gallery setting and they see these things and they still don't see the significance of why it's up? It's so complex – yet fascinating"

This comment reflects how highly-valued an audience is when it comes to creating common ground through expressions of creativity. Some of the key ideas that I interpreted from this particular part of our *talanoa* was that there was a *lack of appreciation and value* from the audience when it came to displaying their art in a gallery setting. This could potentially indicate a lack of awareness when it comes to understanding the impact that Tongan creativity has in other settings. Lisiate also employs the same technique of informing his audience about the *fonua* that the tattoo originated in:

"Our people don't even know the meaning of their tattoos and why they have one. . . A lot of people don't even know that the word 'tātu' (tattoo) derived from a Tongan word 'tapu' (sacred) and whenever I met a foreigner who doesn't know about Tonga that's the first thing I tell them, 'tapu' then I explain to them about sailing."

Lisiate makes the deliberate effort to honour the stories and spirit of the *fonua* that the tattoo originated in by sharing knowledge behind how and why he uses certain patterns on their bodies. This is also a way of *tauhi vāha'a* with clients, ensuring that a warm and close relationship is nurtured during the tattoo process. On the same page but in a different creative context, participant Neti states that:

“...Our culture has certain prescribed requirements you have to be faka'apa'apa (respectful) and that's something that cannot change. But what can change, is your way of showing it. . . but it's important to note that it is the quality of how it is retained. . . as long as we keep the basic requirements and don't depart from it, we can still be creative despite of those things”

This comment reveals the contradictions of thought that some people of the *fonua* hold toward the notion of creativity, that it can exist only in a certain way in a certain *fonua* and cannot be changed. Reflecting from the vantage point of analysis, I wonder if this how Tongans perceive, and furthermore, define creativity? Is this why there are misunderstandings and misinterpretations of creativity in the Tongan culture? I remind myself of the title of this “*E kei Tonga pe a Tonga 'ia*” (*Tonga will always be Tonga*) and consider how Tonga is a nation that remains largely unchanged socially, culturally and morally but is fraught with contradictions of understanding and applying creativity. Being ‘obedient’ to the way of the *fonua* can breed ambivalence, resistance and fear of change rejecting the potential that creativity holds for the people of the *fonua* in more ways than one. Whether or not this is so, it is Neti's perception of creativity as well as Lisiate's views:

“Compared to Samoans – I know I always compare to them but they have an advantage over us Tongans in terms of getting ahead and I just wish we could speed up that process of getting out there. . . I think we just come from an old era where the musician and artist is not solid enough. I think when it comes down to more practical things like making the ngatu (tapa cloth) that is work but they don't see that as creativity.”

These views demonstrate that creativity is a difficult concept for some people of the *fonua*, and reveal an underlying concern for these creatives. Sina agrees:

“... Yes, it is changing and the world that we are living in today is so rapidly changing and incredibly visual and even breaking down what creative industries is and you look at some of the top people in the world; musicians and actors -it's all changing. And that's why I think that we are not ready – we're not ready as a people. The older generation can't accept it and they are not ready at all. They cannot get their heads around this stuff.”

These quotes were expressed with a great deal of *māfana* through the use of nonverbal cues (voice tone, standing up, animated hand gestures) to get the message across. The use of humour in our *talanoa* was interesting as humour was often used to break up any moments of awkwardness, and this is a common technique evident in Tongan culture and as conversation fillers. Neti spoke in a quieter tone, but the conviction in her voice was evident. I did not probe any further in this part of each *talanoa* because I did not want any participant feeling any uncomfortable or interrogated, so I closed off the *talanoa* even though some individuals were still *māfana* and carried on venting (which some participants asked me to remove before they approved in their transcripts). However, it is interesting to note the degree of concern for this particular topic.

Sela refers back to the *anga faka-Tonga* values of *feveitokai'aki* (reciprocity or reverence for others), and *loto tō* (desire to give) to give reasoning to why particular songs that have been passed down through her family have stood against the test of time regardless of being part of the diaspora:

“My grandfather had taught us, myself and my brother the ‘longopeau lakalaka – and these existed back in the 1950,60s – the composition and movements are very unique and he passed this down to my brother and I. In a way I would say that I am lucky that my parents still wanted to pass this onto us despite being born and raised here. Fua ‘o Tonga – was the name of the play that my grandfather came up with, and it means to fua Tonga away from Tonga because we are no longer in Tonga anymore to preserve or ‘Tongan-ness’ to hold who we are, what we know and our ways of doing things. So, in my Tongan work, creativity for me is about preserving, holding on – it’s about holding on, I’m not trying to change it – because that’s what contemporary is.”

Although conformity to the New Zealand culture entails the acquisition of the English language, obtaining a job to become part of the New Zealand working class, and living amongst a community of non-Tongan neighbours, Sela considered herself ‘lucky’ that she was still able to possess some of this unique *anga faka-Tonga* characteristics. She draws on the traditions and knowledge passed down from her grandfather almost as if they are distinguishing features which set her apart. Sela comments on how she uses these movements in her creative endeavours as a performer and *punake* – rationalising her creative endeavours as ‘not just a hobby’ but an important source of her cultural and family identity.

Some participants spontaneously referred to *anga fakafonua* as a way of sustaining harmony through the intangible as much as the tangible expressions of Tongan culture. Hina, who

migrated to New Zealand as a child, shared an insightful view on how she links *anga fakafonua* and her creative work:

“Because our culture has certain prescribed requirements, you have to be faka’apa’apa– that’s something that cannot change. But what can change, is your way of showing it. Like remember, we used to sit down as a way of showing this value, that’s our traditional way of showing it. And now we rise. I think maybe its Western, and always bringing new things into our culture. But it’s important to note that it is the quality of how it is retained – there are Tongan context where we don’t rise, we sit down. As long as we keep the basic requirements and don’t depart from it, we can still be creative despite of those things.”

Neti emphasised the maintenance of prescribed requirements (traditions, values) that cannot be changed regardless of the talented, gifted abilities, occupation or duties a Tongan may have. Her approach to upholding the *vā* between *anga fakafonua* and her creative work is to think of new ways of showing the old, but it makes me question aspects such as creative freedom, individual expression: – how can one be considered a creative if one is bound by certain cultural restrictions?

Sitiveni reflected on the difficulties his parents encountered as they attempted to balance *anga fakafonua* and their lived realities, as a way of motivating him to achieve more goals in his creative work:

“I was one of the lucky ones where my Dad has been really supportive, as usually the fathers of the family are typical of pushing you into a job, help the family. I have been lucky to not need to help my parents out, ever since we have come to this country my parents have worked really hard. When we first got here, my Dad took on three jobs and just that hardworking ethic and attitude especially on education. My Dad was a teacher, and before he would teach he would go into the library and read up and learn how to teach that class on that topic. We’re all Tongan born except for my youngest brother”

In his detailed *talanoa*, Sitiveni uses this testimony as a reminder to remain authentic and unapologetic in his creative work and other endeavours as a musician. He reveals that this memory serves as a pillar of inspiration in his creative work and he only wishes that others were able to adopt the same mindset. The process of discussing the past tended to induce comparisons with the present for some participants, as there are several New Zealand values that conflict with *anga fakafonua*. For example, in New Zealand, individuals strive for increased material comfort and individual success, contrary to the Tongan way of life, which emphasises

living within one's means and working not only for individual success, but for one's family and community. Hina brings this point to life by informing me of a situation that she witnessed with her sibling:

"But I have noticed that there is a lot of conflict between my parents and our younger people. When the children come home, they think that they are free – but the parents have in mind certain things that are compulsory. And the children don't realise that, they think they are like palagi and they can be free. I had a sister that went to the States and she came back to Tonga and she had a lot of conflict with my Mother because she picked up the idea that she was an individual, she has her own mind, she can determine what's good for her. My mother didn't think so, she said that she still had to do this and that. And think that it's the same case for creativity... you can be creative as long as it doesn't not touch the basic requirements to whatever field it is – I'm extending it to beyond our culture."

The desire to pursue the New Zealand way has encouraged Tongans to adopt a "nationalistic" New Zealand attitude that leads creatives such as Sitiveni to believe that the New Zealand way of life is the best and to distrust 'un-New Zealand' behaviour. As outlined in Hina's anecdote, this attitude can also be displayed is not limited to where one grows up. Sela mentioned earlier that for this reason of avoiding conflict in understanding and accepting that traits of the *anga faka-Tonga* are changing she keeps her tradition and contemporary work separate:

"So since then, I wanted to focus more on my work and on my own thing and build my own portfolio up since that's what everyone else was doing. So I have my Tongan traditional work which is totally separate from my contemporary work".

This particular mention of 'conflict' links to the concept of "*tauhi vāha'a*". Sela uses the fact that she makes this decision to distinctively rule out her grounding towards what has been passed down from her grandfather, from her individual take and interpretation of what she has bestowed from her family history into New Zealand's more accepting, diverse way of being and knowing:

"I keep it separate, because my contemporary work is me and how I see things and how I express this. And I use the foundation of my Tongan movement, or my 'Tongan-ness' as a foundation of how I express this. Traditional work is strictly that, based on what my family has passed down. But we use Western theatre styles to present it, so rather than entertainment in a hall and that's it - we make it into a story."

What constitutes being Tongan and living the Tongan way are questions that frequently emerge in Tongan communities abroad, not to mention in this thesis alone. Sitiveni shares a similar upbringing to Sela, yet his view on being Tongan and acting like a Tongan is quite different and ranges over diverse concepts. However, Lisiate, another artist who later migrated overseas, holds entirely different views on *anga fakafonua* and applying it in his craft. He gives insight into his ‘street knowledge’ as a *haua*:

“Even the birds that go fishing as a group as a community – one will always fly alone by itself and I guess I am that bird. Our people in Tonga has forgotten about our blessing of the ocean, they have forgotten about whales, turtles - our people don’t see anything spiritual in our land – the only thing they see spiritual is Sunday, Jesus and talking about the ghost stories, you know ones about possession. That’s the only thing that they see as spiritual. Our (long pause) people don’t even know the meaning of their tattoos and why they have one. Like I see here, it has to be very big, “to know I am Tongan” to show it off – and when you ask them about anything Tongan they won’t even know.

The thread of *fonua*, where its people and webs of relationships are central to maintain harmony in life through sustainable ways between the environment and humanity is what Lisiate sees as selective, almost hypocritical: where Tongans claim to be Tongan aesthetically, but cannot ‘talk the talk’ of being and knowing what Tonganness is. Lisiate paints a realistic perspective on how Tongans act based on his lived and creative experiences as a tattoo artist.

Being Tongan: the People and Their Ways (anga faka-Tonga)

The notion of *anga faka-Tonga* (the Tongan way) is represented in different ways. Sela delves into *anga faka-Tonga* as a basis of describing how she views the importance of being Tongan, indicating that sharing or collectively experiencing life is valuable, regardless of what is being shared. Sela seems to be expressing the positive attributes that sharing as a collective group possess, as a way of demonstrating the intangible, symbolic outcomes. Sela also goes on to say that:

“And that is probably why Pacific Islanders live in clusters; church, family, everywhere we go it’s communal. Our social groups – and it’s the way that we have been brought up, it’s all done as a group and it doesn’t matter where you are, in Tonga or NZ that’s the way it is”

Sela further suggests, based on her lived experiences and observations, that *anga faka-Tonga* is depicted through collective living arrangements that ensure that Tongans are always in close

proximity with another. Interesting to note here, is that Sela was brought up in an area of Auckland which is home to the smallest number of Pacific Island people (Statistics New Zealand, 2016). Her exposure to other Tongans, apart from perhaps her immediate family, is limited but does not seem to affect her awareness of the Tongan way of life, particularly as it is expressed by helping the family and beyond. In contrast, another participant, Sitiveni, explicitly shows another side of *anga faka-Tonga*:

“And that’s what frustrated me with the Tongan culture and our people because of how we put others first like, ‘Nah you go, it’s okay I’ll just chill at the back’ and then it’s like ‘Bro, what’s the back gunna do for you?’ and then you start saying dammit! I should’ve, would’ve and could’ve. Then you regret things and wish that you had asked. But it’s so embedded in our roots that we are so suppressed in what we can and can’t do and it’s just time for us to stand up.”

Sitiveni was openly criticising *anga faka-Tonga* through the Tongan values of *loto tō* (sharing) and *feveitoka’aki* (reciprocity, mutual helping/assisting each other). He outlines a struggle in upholding both values in a collective setting, at the expense of his personal needs and wants, clearly feeling emotions of regret, guilt and disappointment in himself as he upholds the importance of abiding by Tongan values, motivated by saving face in front of others. Both Sitiveni and Sela reflect the title of this subtheme, revealing an evident identity struggle that grapples with some cultural elements of *anga faka-Tonga*, resulting in renegotiations of what being Tongan is, on an individual level. Much of this concern has become a critical site for contestation, construction, and “reconstruction of Tongan identity” (Morton, 1996, p.22). Sitiveni says:

“I think that I am trying to refine what our culture is with this new concept of Aotearoa with our people. I want to hang on so badly to the old; I don't know much of the history of our people but I also want to bring our people into this new world so they can understand why our kids get lost.”

Sitiveni was openly nostalgic about the growing fears of a weakening or even loss of the traditional Tongan culture through *anga faka-Tonga*, struggling to balance the ‘old and new’ being in New Zealand. He appears to be open-minded about using selected elements of the Tongan culture to enhance his ‘Tongan-ness’, rather than being compromised over the expectations to be Tongan across all aspects:

“Those kids that are losing the connection to the culture and language. Even myself, I came here in ’94 and I have only been back there twice and to me that's losing the connection. I don't feel the need to go back home, and I don't yearn for it, I am good without it. I don't

see many Tongans every day and I don't see that as a problem because I am so integrated with kiwi society I have more friends of other cultures and I have never thought twice about it as such. In the end, we are all islanders and like I said there's always pros and cons we all tend to be lost and that's a culture in itself."

Here, I would like to pick up on what Sitiveni says about the loss of culture and being comfortable as a product of a "lost" culture: *"I don't feel the need to go back home, and I don't yearn for it, I am good without it. I don't see many Tongans every day and I don't see that as a problem because I am so integrated with kiwi society I have more friends of other cultures and I have never thought twice about it as such. In the end, we are all islanders and like I said there's always pros and cons we all tend to be lost and that's a culture in itself."* This extract is one that indicates confidence in asserting his personal and cultural identity against the country he was brought up in. He also says that:

"... Like no disrespect, but where are all my people? We need more Tongans to pursue their talents and get out there. . . Where as the Samoans stand up for themselves more and it's all part of their culture. They are real showy, entertainers but us Tongans we stick together, do it together you're not allowed to know more than anyone else but that's fine theres pros and cons for both."

This is where Sitiveni notes that Tongans work and stick together as Sela commented, but that the Samoans raise the bar higher in how they co-operate and work together as a collective group. As noted earlier, Sela seemed content in how she had become acculturated by the *anga faka-Tonga* through her parents, and took that as a given into how Tongans are expected to live and behave. As our *talanoa* went on, Sela revealed that she separates out her contemporary and traditional creative works in order to honour *anga faka-Tonga* customs and traditions:

"So since then, I wanted to focus more on my work and on my own thing and build my own portfolio up since that's what everyone else was doing. So I have my Tongan traditional work which is totally separate from my contemporary work".

So notably, Sela has had to renegotiate her 'Tongan-ness' to avoid losing face with the collective by not mixing her creative work – which has had an impact on her craft and who she seeks advice from. As the interweaving and intersecting of certain threads become layered and complicated, I take comfort in revisiting the purpose of my research. As I sought to understand how participants described the influence of Tongan perspectives and ways of being on their current ways of knowing and being, I was reminded by Mahina (2007) that we cannot escape our past as

we are grounded and connected to our indigenous worldviews. Creatives such as Sitiveni, and to an extent, Sela, articulated different stances based on the indigenous worldviews of *anga fakatonga*, highlighting its values as neither static nor fixed, but continually remade with each generation in the diaspora.

With a strong foundational understanding of *anga faka-Tonga* (particularly of *tauhi vā*) negotiated in the home, Tongan traditions are continually evolving and they remain important to developing, strengthening, and sustaining harmonious relationships in a group-oriented culture (Thaman, 1995). Sina, however, refers to the lack of exposure she had to Tongan culture while growing up and how regular visits back to Tonga assisted in maintaining her *anga faka-Tonga*:

“I’m not full Tongan and I have had to negotiate on what that looks and feels like for me. My Mother is not from the main island - she’s had a really interesting upbringing. Her father brought her out from Tonga to New Zealand when she was 8 years old, because he got annoyed at some of the Tongan ways. But at the same time he was really proud, so there’s sort of this tension that never goes away and it’s really fascinating”

The points that Sina raises here in relation to her ‘Tongan-ness’ is based on the *vā* that she had with the Tongan culture in her childhood. The struggle to maintain her connection to her Tongan side was hard, and she has picked and observed ways of being and knowing through her interaction with family members. She considers herself authentic in being able to pick up on certain aspects from the daily routines that Tongans perform to extend her understanding of how she negotiates her identity as a Tongan. Hina compares herself against how other family members were raised and brought up to solidify her platform of Tongan-ness, and draws on the importance of maintaining relationships with others in the family and beyond. Sitiveni also shares common ground with Neti noting that:

“My whole family is academic, like, my Mum just graduated with ECE, my Dad’s doing his doctorate, my brother just got his degree and my other younger brother is getting awesome grades at school and I’m the eldest son and I’m like “Bro, you didn’t come to New Zealand for this.”

Gonzalez (2005) states that at the heart of the home, there is a rich nest of ethics, pedagogical practices, and funds of knowledge drawn from relatives, oral accounts and history. Both Sina and Sitiveni drew on this notion as a way of further understanding what *anga faka-Tonga* means to them, as a way of convincing themselves that they are just as ‘Tongan’ as any other person brought up differently.

Summary

It has become apparent due to the cultural loss that has transpired throughout the Tongan New Zealand diaspora because of Tonga assimilation to the New Zealand culture. *Anga faka-Tonga* emphasises most highly the importance of family more than any other, but also stresses the importance of kinship, community, respect, discipline, generosity, loyalty, and obedience to parents, elders and authority. The priority and importance of these values has become challenged by New Zealand values which emphasise the importance of material comfort, competitive-oriented achievement and success, individualism, and independence. The complexities and pressures of living in New Zealand has influenced Tongans to conform to these New Zealand values, which has resulted in cultural compromise and neglect. “Cultural compromise” is a state in which traditions and values are transformed by the new social conditions in which they exist.

The transformation of these essential Tongan values has inevitably affected the younger New Zealand born generation and has contributed to a loss of Tongan identity and social skills within Tongan families and communities. To be Tongan does not simply mean knowing the language and culture, but having the heart of a Tongan, or *loto’i Tonga*. Although many sociologists and anthropologists in academia will argue that it is natural for immigrants to experience various degrees of cultural loss and transformation in the process of adaptation to and assimilation into their host culture, for many Tongan migrants, being Tongan means visibly representing their Tongan attributes to mainstream society, and wearing their *anga faka-Tonga* like a garment.

My participants offered the view, sometimes conflicted but nevertheless present in all the *talanoa*, that a critical dimension of being Tongan is the constant reconstruction of the ideals of *vā* that decenter the ‘self’ in favour of obligations to the ‘collective’. Thus, though creative work is an individual endeavor, my participants chose the values of the collective, strengthening harmonious relations in time and space to uphold memories of *angafakafonua* through expressions of *fetokoni’aki* (mutual assistance) that often lead to *fe’ofa’ofani* (reciprocal love and concern for another) when relationships emphasise reciprocity and communality. Ka’ili (2008) might see such identity work as an aspect of *tauhi vā* based on “*feongo’i’aki* or being in tune with the feelings and actions of others” (p. 49). The actions that were carefully orchestrated by some participants such as Sela and Sitiveni are certainly compatible with reducing the scope of individuality, and instead promote the consensus and interconnectedness that support meaningful *anga-fakaTonga*.

These participants showed commitment to a *vā* between themselves and their family members at work and other places away from home. In this case, the *vā* is an active agent upholding cultural values that are vital to survival as Tongans carrying out creative work in spaces that impose new, non-Tongan cultural ethics. The creative work thus acquires a political element, because the proceeds of the work might well be directed towards helping *fāmili* in traditional ways, yet at the same time, it will –inadvertently, perhaps, but inevitably– transmit new cultural values to family members and beyond, and among those values may be the notion that success is individual, requiring competition, self-expansion, and self-promotion. Tonga will always be Tonga, but if enough individualism pervades the creative drive, some creatives may lose their connection to *anga-fakaTonga* and as single people, cease to be Tongan.

6.2 Theme 2: Walking in Two Worlds

Keywords: harmony, *māfana*, New Zealand, walk, skip, *fatongia*, purpose, education, paying it forward, conflict, indifference, diaspora, difficult, frustrating, stressing, carry, burden

I begin this theme by unpacking the notion of culture. Any discussion of culture amongst Tongan people produces an outcome as diverse and dispersed as the Tongan islands themselves. Different views, attitudes of acceptance and rejection of particular traditions and customs mean Tongans hardly see eye to eye and end up ‘agreeing’ with one another in order to minimise conflict and indifference. This maybe a generalisation, but it reflects a social reality that I have frequently experienced. Tongans favour any *talanoa* that does not disrupt the harmony or *māfana* of the dialogue flowing, and this has both positive and negative results. So here, I pose my research question once again: *What are the effects of traditional and contemporary expressions of Tongan culture in the creative work of Tongan artists?* A partial answer to this question can be found in the way ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ Tongans identify themselves, although previous scholarship sounds some caveats about this. Lee (2003), for instance, argues that the most difficult hurdle to overcoming the loss of identity as a Tongan is that many young Tongans overseas do not have a secure identity as ‘Tongan’, often because they lack language and cultural skills. Without such skills, they may be challenged about the authenticity of their identification as Tongan. Participants in this research stated when they had the opportunity to visit Tonga, they often do not feel ‘at home’ for various reasons. Perhaps this feeling may be a reaction to the rather ambivalent attitude many ‘Tongan Tongans’ display toward visitors from the diaspora, for diasporic Tongans are seen as immigrants as much as they seen as Tongan. Yet, many Tongans born in New Zealand (for instance) are keen to show their Tongan-ness through their creativity.

Most participants described their ‘walk in two worlds’ in the form of *fua fatongia*, a complex and highly nuanced concept that means, in a crude translation, ‘obligation’. However, according to Tofuapangai & Camilleri (2016), to translate *fatongia* as bluntly as ‘obligation’ is to miss a crucial sense of what this concept means in Tongan culture. As the main theme here, *fatongia* has significant metaphorical, aesthetic, social, psychological, political, moral, economic, religious and cultural characteristics.

The etymology of *fatongia* stems from the traditional Tongan sweet-smelling plant *fa*, and *tongia* stands for ‘immediately permeating fragrance’ (Lafitani, 2011). In his master’s thesis, Lafitani outlines ‘Fa’ as a pandanus plant (*Pandanus odoratissimus*) belonging to the tropical *pandanaceae* family and varieties of this plant are found throughout the islands of *Moana* and other tropical places. *Tongia* here refers to ‘the fragrance that permeates the immediate vicinity of a round bunch of ripe pandanus fruit, straightaway after plucking or cutting’ (Helu, 1999, 2006; Thaman, 1974, 1981, 2000; Mahina, 1992, 2005, 2006). In this context, *fatongia* implies that an obligation is a beautiful pleasure, and as my participants bring forward in their individual *talanoas*, it is often a gift from parents or elderly people in their childhood or socialisation from a young age. In the same sense that the Tongan theorists highlight above, receiving a *fatongia* is similar to receiving a sweet-smelling, newly-plucked fragrant plant. For the receiver, obligation is not about coercion, lack of choice or mandatory behaviour; it is a gift, a pleasure, not a burden, to have an obligation (Tofuapangai & Camilleri, 2016).

While *fatongia* is a pleasure, it is much more than that. Tofuapangai and Camilleri (2016) state that *fatongia* is how Tongans perceive fundamental human values and behaviour in society. Such values as moral *faka’apa’apa* (respect) and *nima homo* (generosity), are all based on and evolved from *fatongia* with the aim of pursuing happiness. It is one Tongan concept that – along with other concepts such as *fonua* (land and people) and *moana* (sea and people) – interacts in a dialectic manner of opposing and supporting modes of exchange.

Fatongia in action is what Sina describes as:

“It’s a journey, and I always want to sit at the feet of our elders and learn but I need to know, and others do too that this doesn’t happen overnight. But, I am just glad that there was that simplicity to it and it shows in how I relate my knowledge to others.”

Fatongia is an essential part of being Tongan. However, it is recognised that *fatongia*, for many Tongans, can also be *tā palasia* (exploitation), *fakaehaua* (alienation) and *fakapopula* (oppression), particularly in the feudal and Christian systems in Tonga (Helu, 1999). It is the situation which is known by Tongans as *fua kavenga* (to carry the burden). Such a situation can in fact create *ta’efiefia* (unhappiness), *ta’efiema’lie* (dissatisfaction) and *ta’enonga* (anxiety) as a consequence of failing to direct and operate things in the *tatau* (equal) and *potupotutatau* (symmetrical) ways of *fatongia* (Mahina, 1992, 2005, 2006; Ka’ili, 2008, 2010). For Sina, *fatongia* is reflected in her craft and how she goes about sharing meanings and knowledge with others around her. For Sitiveni, it was employed in self-discovery and a moment of self-reflection:

“Yeah it does come down to that sometimes, but also there’s the question of, ‘why can’t I do this myself?’ so now that I have audio engineering and the talent to record, with my cousins we started channelling our talents through our mini business. Then I discovered that I need to start learning how to design album covers, posters, photo shoots and all that.”

For Sitiveni, *fatongia* is seen as also a mode of exchange which is equal and proportional, so that there is *maau* (harmony) and no chaos. Here, he avoids chaos in carrying out his *fatongia* with anyone that might misunderstand or misinterpret his creativity:

“I think so, yeah I do it affects how we think as Tongans, but nah I don't think so? Nobody is yet to have a problem with what I do or at least not yet. Because I think with a lot of my stuff I try to be uplifting and positive in terms of my content. I have never sworn in my craft, and I think that hiphop is known for explicit language and swearing and in my head I’m just thinking ‘you have just cut off a whole market’ by saying one swear word.”

In both the political and social sense, *fatongia* is a sweet-smelling gift if it is about exchanges that bring harmony, happiness and satisfaction to all participants, but without mutual obligation what is realised is not the *fatongia* of sweet-smelling action, but the *fua kavenga* of carrying a burden. *Ta’emau* (disharmony) occurs when there is failure to uphold the balance, and instead of sweetness, it will be imbued with metaphoric flavours of *hu’atamaki* (bitter-liquid-taste), *kanota’ maki* (bitter-flesh- taste) and *ta’eifo* (tasteless), creating unequal and oppressive relationships.

Sina states that:

“I have never been critiqued hard enough at that level as there are not many Pasifika that are at that level which have the same common ground to sock it back to me. I have never really had to defend my work, and you get a little bit complacent sometimes as it’s really hard as you are keeping everything for your practice but you want to get the layers handed back to you so you can reconstruct what you’re doing.”

Fatongia is not a constant or a bank which builds up credit to be discharged in the future. It is in a very real sense momentary, fresh, immediate and not durable. It is the willingness of the person to undertake *fatongia* that captures the sense of immediacy and the beauty of caring for others. Helu (1999) argues that Western societies take an individualistic approach to finding socio-political security and economic and cultural well-being, whereas Tongan *fatongia* operates altruistically for communities (Lafitani, 2011). *Fatongia* is a worldview and cannot be isolated from related moral values like *totonu-‘a-e-kakai* (human rights), *vahevahe-tatau* (social justice) and *pule-*

'a-e-tokolahi (democracy). There are multiple and changeable fundamental values and behaviours when dealing with *fatongia*. By using the concept of *fatongia*, the Western discourse on obligation can be redeemed from its coercive, compulsory and oppressive connotations to one of engagement and reward. The transition of Tongan society from a traditional culture where *fatongia* is central to social and political life to a more complex and postmodern culture (blending the new and the old) has seen a weakening of *fatongia* without any development of the social support systems of a modern welfare system (see Lafitani, 2011).

The formation of *fatongia* in each participant's responses was based upon questions termed as—*Ko e hā hoto 'uhingá moe fatongia iho'o ngaue* (What is your purpose in the creative work you do? And *Ko e hā aonga ho'o fatongia* (What does one's purpose serve/usefulness). Participants saw *fatongia* as the backbone of both questions I had asked, and the consensus was that *fatongia* was first planted and nurtured at home by the family in their upbringings. For these participants, following their *'aonga* (purpose) and *'uhinga* (reason) combined the teachings received from home, alongside their own determination and motivation to serve others. Tongans are socialised to know their place, status, responsibilities and how to interact with others to create harmony and peace in socio-spatial relations (Ka'ili, 2008). *Fatongia* and *'aonga* must be embedded in individuals from a young age, and they are acculturated into believing that the two concepts foster awareness of making choices that serve the collective. *Fatongia*, then, was a pivotal matter for all participants and *'aonga* guided their actions and efforts and carried lifelong importance. All participants concurred that other values, knowledge, and worldviews were acquired by living in different places, and through encounters with different people and cultures and that *fatongia* and *'aonga* were the foundation of worthwhile interactions.

Some participants stated that *'aonga* (purpose) supported their creative and academic achievements because when they felt confident in the callings placed upon their lives from others around them, and from a Higher Being, they felt encouraged and motivated to push themselves harder to help their families and others around them. *'Aonga* also enriched the relationships between those involved in their personal, academic and creative endeavours as it evoked a sense of accountability and responsibility in what they were striving to do. As Sina says:

"My teacher at the third form said no, this girl needs to keep doing art, as I was ready to give up. So the influence of teaching and teachers have a big impact on how and what children do and end up doing in life. I think that some of our Pasifika kids as well need that just as much, if not more. Coming from a teacher's angle, that me now as a fine artist and now a

teacher I know that if it wasn't for my teacher I wouldn't be doing this. So the importance of a really good teacher is so critical"

Sina uses the platform of being a teacher to enhance into her creative purposes, and to extend them to those that she teaches. In Tongan society, education is revered, and her qualifications as a teacher give her a certain status to impart weight to her ideas.

Sina goes on to say that:

"Well, I can see it and I guess it's a mirror to what I have been going through in terms of being pro-active as I can just tell that YES this kid needs to keep doing this. There are so many labels out there. I also work really closely with the parents, and when I say work closely – I just say look, this is what I am seeing and we have these really good conversations that go along way for the parents and the children. And I really enjoy it, standing in front of them each day and giving them that exposure which they probably don't get enough of, so it's nurturing them as well."

Here, Sina is deep in her sense of 'aonga as she pays her *fatongia* forward to her students. She strives to address their talent and challenge them creatively, to break through negative labels of 'naughty children' and stereotypes, and to use her occupation and creative abilities to foster both her pupils and her sense of self:

"It's all about giving back. That's why I am so happy to see you are doing such a project. It's important to not strive for perfection and that can sometimes be hard in an artist; perfection can be so hard especially as an artist. We are our own worst enemy. So be serious but with good balance. But I guess I want to give back, I want to share but I am also learning on the way know that as humans in our nature you don't usually get that from others. And some people don't give as you would expect, so yeah."

The emphasis on obedience, duty, cooperation, compromise and sacrifice for the sake of the group is a crucial element of Tongan culture, and as a result, Tongan people will tend to conform to behaviour that will create social harmony rather than to express their own feelings, opinions or desires. They may also feel shame and embarrassment if they fall short of a cultural ideal, and may therefore be cautious and indirect in their interactions (Rudowicz, 1994; Farver, 2000; Ng, 2001). Sina is constantly attempting to break through this aspect of her heritage, and she finds that she is compromising aspects of her personal and creative identity along the way:

“While those things do come with time, it’s all about just building up a person’s individual voice. It’s your story which is through your dance, song, and IT IS YOU and that is what I am here to listen to, and it’s so important. So it’s all about that validation of the person in the story and the voice. I find though, at times that I struggle with my personal voice and creative voice based on what I do. It’s an area that is under conflict, not to mention cultural tensions that come into play as well.”

Sitiveni confessed to a certain rudderless existence:

“I then messed around in the underground for a while, I kind of just faded away and then I worked as a bouncer for a while and labour jobs for a few years, 5, 6 years then in 2009 I was bouncing one night and staring at the door and thinking, ‘Is this my future? Is this life? Is this me?’ in my head, and after years of conversation and conversing with these people I was thinking, ‘Is this all trash?’”

The moment of revelation that made him question his life was the beginning of finding his ‘aonga, which was the also the basis of his sense of creative identity, for the sense of who he was both as a Tongan and as an artist was missing in Sitiveni until he came to terms with his culture and his creativity. Even with his ‘aonga firmly in place, however, Sitiveni still struggles to maintain his sense of creative self:

“Umm, I don’t think so as I can’t really pinpoint someone because that’s what has made me stand out so loudly and proudly because there was no one doing it? I felt so alone, and I still feel so alone because the aspects of my life is so different from everything that’s going on, I’m not trying to be like fiepoto (too out there)”

Self-reflection and thoughtfulness have helped Sitiveni understand part of his cultural and creative journeys, but the destination, if there is one, is a shifting goal, for it is obviously not straightforward to keep *fatongia* central and yet continue to develop creatively. He is not alone in this: all my participants knew the sweetness of *fatongia* in their creative work, but also, they had all sometimes experienced it as *fua kavenga*.

My participants faced a variety of challenges as creative artists. Some of them expressed a sense of struggle because they are caught between two different worlds; their Tongan world and that of the dominant Aotearoa-New Zealand culture. The artists experienced both harmony and disharmony through their relationships with the *aonga*, ‘*uhinga*, *fua kavenga*, *fatongia*, *anga-*

fakaTonga, ako, their *fāmili*, themselves, and their *anga fakafonua*. The final chapter of this journey of through my research will start with analysing, theorising and commenting on the research findings, followed by discussions about contributions to knowledge, implications of research, future recommendations and, the last word.

Chapter Seven

Discussion

The primary purpose of this research was to deconstruct Tongan creativity by way of exploring the effects of traditional and contemporary expressions of Tongan culture in the creative work of Tongan artists. In this manner, the study sought to narrow the focus down to investigating certain aspects of creativity in the early 21st century in the contexts of efforts to deliberately preserve traditional culture. In relation to this overarching aim, I have explored two associated ideas: first, the assumptions around notions of creativity in the Tongan and Western creative climate, and second, contributions to creative and cultural identity. In chapters one to three, I introduced the concept of my research and examined the literature associated with the research field. In chapter four, I discussed the methodology and methods employed in my research, and chapters five to six contain the data and analysis in answer to my three research questions. The aim of this final chapter is to discuss how the purpose of my research has been achieved, as well as the significance of my research findings by answering my research question:

What are the effects of traditional and contemporary expressions of Tongan culture in the creative work of Tongan artists?

In this chapter, my intention is to set out my observations and conclusions drawn from the analysis of the data and explain their significance in relation to the research question. First, I will synthesise observations made from each finding in relation to three main areas: *Attitudes to creativity, the Role of culture: sharing the creative burden and creative and cultural identity development*. Second, I will discuss the findings in relation to the theoretical underpinnings of the research. Then, under each section I will discuss in-depth, the conclusions I drew in light of implications and avenues for further research. A detailed response to the research question will be addressed at the latter part of this chapter. Summaries of my key findings follow.

7.1 Key finding 1: Attitudes towards Creativity

Some of the key findings demonstrated that there was a range of attitudes from the most favourable to some that are undesirable. The deficit understandings seemed to be caused by a lack of understanding as to what and how creativity is defined in the spaces between the Tongan and, New Zealand context. Participants found that the concept of ‘newness’ was seen as a threat to Tongan tradition, and that creativity held various means for different people, even if they were part of the same culture. For example, creatives who were born in New Zealand believed that creativity was about newness, innovation, challenging the ‘old’, but for more traditional Tongan creatives in particular those that were born and raised deeply in the *anga fakatonga*. When the opposite point of view prevailed, certain participants who employed more traditional expressions of creativity in their craft talked about their Tongan cultural identity, they did not see it as a separate entity from their Tongan cultural practices.

My data strongly indicate that differences in attitudes exist in defining what creativity is and is closely aligned with what scholars writing in the fields of the creative industries have researched where they also view creativity as “the generation of products or ideas that are both novel and appropriate” (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010, p.23). Kaufman (2003) theorised that creativity is hard to conceptualise because it is too loosely defined. At various times, creativity has been considered as “original, unique, unexpected, and/or emotionally moving phenomena” (Elsbach & Kramer, 2003, p. 288) but equally, as the process of implementing new ideas (Van de Ven & Angle, 1989, p. 12). The findings glorify what Kaufman (2003) proposes that in order to overcome inconsistency in articulations of creativity, there could be a ‘Creativity’ where the uppercase ‘C’ denotes major inspirations, inventions, or new products and services designed to overcome the biggest problems troubling society. In many regards, Kaufman (2003) has here sought to capture the ‘grand’ ideas and practices of creativity that are prosocial in motivation and thus, inspired as much from the individuals’ need to express themselves as to benefit those around them (Grant & Berry, 2011). The data suggested that uppercase ‘C’ is the degree of deeply embedded tradition and customs around certain creative expressions and that in contrast, the lower-case ‘creativity’ would signify ‘new’ or contemporary creativity. Such ‘small-c’ creativity enhances ordinary daily life by making the creative product more accessible and practical. An example of this is *ngatu* made not from traditional beaten and dried bark, but from paper and another is the *faiva* expressed in contemporary jazz.

Findings from my research also indicate that for particular creatives, the heart of their creative work is to magnify the Tongan culture by preserving and upholding traditional creative

expressions. My data indicate that this finding does not come as a surprise, as creators, artists or producers are defined as developers of a new idea or product (Erez & Nouri, 2010; Simonton & Ting, 2010; Zhou & Su, 2010), and naturally, they bring to bear on their work their subjective reactions to the cultural and creative influences that they have experienced, observed or are negotiating as part of their wider projects of finding identity (Beech, Gilmore, Cochrane & Greig, 2012). Creative art forms, therefore, ultimately become outlets for subjective interpretations of artists' culture, while at the same time offering audiences a range of symbolic meanings that will possibly influence audiences' own cultural identities and sensibilities. The data suggested that one of the core reasons why these creatives pursued tattoo, dance, and storytelling was to create relationships with their craft, audience and the Tongan culture, and not just any relationship, but *warm* relationships, or *mafana*. *Mafana* nurtures the *va* between things and people, and as such, is a key part of the creative process for my participants. In other words, as they work, they care for the *va* and as mentioned earlier in this thesis, one of the deep concepts underpinning Tongan culture is found in the notion of *tāuhi va* or *tāuhi vaha`a*, the process of caring for the *va* (Ka`ili, 2005; Thaman, 2004). Thus to be creative was also to express their Tongan-ness.

My data confirmed that the creative process and products, integrated with traditional and contemporary practices have quite significant impacts on both Tongan and New Zealand born creatives (Bollard, 1974; Evans, 2001; Fisi'ahi, 2006; Morton, 1978, Taylor, 2010). The findings also support the suggestion to acknowledge differences in both traditional and contemporary creative practices as positive attributions so that Tongans can attain a more balanced and well-rounded understanding how valuable the notion of creativity is. The study also revealed that certain groups of people in Tongan society could object to this suggestion, as it goes against the orthodox nature of Tongan culture. As I discuss this theme at large, the research findings suggest that this exploration of creative and cultural identity in Tongan and New Zealand born creatives is one that can be perceived in many ways – but the only authenticity that underpins this discussion is that of anecdotal lived experience of my participants lived realities. I note that '*fatongia*' is contextualised as an obligation, as a gift, seen as an extension of self onto others, as many of my participants have reiterated in each individual *talanoa*.

7.2 Role of Culture: Sharing the Creative 'Burden'

I would like to open this section up with a reminder of what the notion of *fatongia* entails. *Fatongia* is about obligation that is entered into freely: it involves the giving of a gift that is

enjoyed and reinforces mutual obligations. It is reciprocal and symmetrical and leads to stronger sense of community. By comparison, obligation in Western discourse is asymmetrical, coercive, compulsory and oppressive. For creative practices, the concept of *fatongia* offers a new direction where duties and responsibilities are seen as gifts stemming from talent and ability. The duality of obligation and rights under *fatongia* implies a web of relationships between people, families and communities.

One of the functions of a discussion chapter is to point out any variance between previous scholarship and the findings of this research, and on this point, I was surprised to find similarity between the more traditional participants in this research (Neti, Sela) and those who were the subject of research by Taylor in 2010. Taylor wrote of two key findings which were that personal contributions to cultural obligations have added to increasing hardship among many Tongan families, and that “*fatongia* was natural extension of self” (p.25). This study has shown that this may be so as the more contemporary creatives did not question, challenge or critique their personal *fatongia*. Accepting their *fatongia* in the family, village and community had a flow on effect on how they were obligated to their *fatongia* in their creative work. A common phrase among Tongans “*koe me’a pea ‘oku tonu ketau fai*” or “it’s something that has to be done no matter what.” That “something” is *fatongia*, and there is the common assumption among many Tongans that no one is to ever question or challenge against *fatongia* in any context or situation. Taylor’s findings are in harmony with those of researchers such as Tofuapangai and Camilleri (2016) as they affirm that the receiver of *fatongia* sees obligation is not about coercion, lack of choice or mandatory behaviour, but rather as a gift, a pleasure, not a burden.

Taylor’s study alludes to ‘*fua fatongia*’ experiences as being important in understanding the reciprocal and collective nature of the way in which they fulfil their given responsibilities, from their upbringing and through self-identity, but points out that for specific Tongans *fatongia* can create a financial and social burden. These findings are consistent with previous research conducted by Helu (1999) also recognising that *fatongia*, for many Tongans, can also be *tā palasia* (exploitation), *fakaehaua* (alienation in the culture) and *faka popula* (oppression). Mahina, (1992, 2005, 2006) and Ka’ili’s (2008, 2010) research also found that Tongans can see *fua fatongia* as *fuakavenga* (to carry the burden). Such a situation can in fact create *ta’e fiefia* (unhappiness), *ta’efiema’lie* (dissatisfaction) and *ta’enonga* (anxiety) as a consequence of failing to direct and operate in the *tatu* (equal) and *potupotutatau* (symmetrical) ways of *fatongia*.

My research found that almost all Tongan born creatives reflected on the concept of *fua fatongia* in a positive light, whereas participants born out of Tonga did not. It was evident from the

responses from the participants born in Tonga see *fatongia* as an extension of who they are as Tongans, and how they fulfil collective responsibilities in a mutual way, serving one another for the betterment of the collective. At no point during the *talanoa* was *fatongia* inconspicuous in the participants' minds. It is possible, I speculate, that what is central to these responses by Tongan born creatives is the consideration of others, meaning that *fua fatongia* is more meaningful to participants when others' needs and expectations are prioritised and fulfilled. Rather than accumulating *fua fatongia* for their own benefit, the Tongan-born participants in this research approached *fatongia* in a way which has benefits for others in the likes of the family, community, or for the health and pleasure of others. This does not mean, however, that these participants operated within ideologies that are entirely free of financial considerations. I must acknowledge that the participants in my research tended to have a more traditional view of *fatongia*, where they admitted that it did indeed come with a price – but because they were brought up to see *fatongia* as something unchallenged, it was mandatory to complete *fatongia* without complaints or regrets. I should make clear that I did not ask questions in regard to my participants' financial situations, noting that to do so cause my research to head into a direction that veered away from the essence of my research question.

This finding does not come as surprise, because the notion of *fatongia* has been previously discussed in the heart of this thesis, where I unpacked Tongan cultural values, although Tofuapangai & Camilleri (2016) emphasised that more crucial considerations were on the shoulders of individuals carrying or giving forward the *fatongia* as opposed to those receiving it. My findings show that there were three main considerations that Tongan born creatives had to be mindful of when manifesting *fua fatongia*: actions, reciprocity, and the collective. Although this was deliberated in a natural way as it is part of 'being Tongan' never the less the context of each of these actions had to be taken carefully into account when delivering *fatongia*.

Taylor's (2010) study was an exploration into *fatongia* discourse, but even allowing for the difference in method between that study and mine, it seems that the participants born out of Tonga in this research take a different approach from the respondents in the earlier research. Therefore, this research uses the noun '*fatongia*' in a different sense from the way Taylor does when it comes to analysing the participants born out of Tonga or, I will name *TIWI* (*Tongan Kiwi*) in my study. For that reason, one of the conclusions of this research is that the term *fatongia* should be used cautiously. As a term that was fashioned in Tongan culture, it does not necessarily translate successfully in academia without careful explanation, and it may be in danger of being an obfuscating term rather than a usefully descriptive one. I maintain that the *TIWI* participants

who took part in this research do indeed *fua fatongia*, but do so in an approach that is different in research elsewhere.

Before I venture into how certain creatives perceive *fatongia*, it is crucial to analyse *fatongia* from a platform that asks the deontological questions of who is obligated to whom? Who is to obey? And who is responsible to others? My findings indicate that for more traditional creatives, these questions are ones that remain unasked as participants are not necessarily concerned with the feelings of who is to be obligated and responsible to whom, because that is covered by *fatongia*. The general impression of traditional creatives was that creativity goes hand-in-hand with the feeling of helping and caring for others, with the aim of pursuing happiness and harmony (Mahina, 1992, 2005, 2006; Ka'ili, 2008, 2010, 2011). Underlying notions in these studies signify that Western society operates through this particular way of caring for and loving others in the manner of asking who is responsible to whom, to form a judgment usually with form of payment in exchange of 'paying the *fatongia* forward.' This is one key finding that highlighted the difference between traditional and contemporary creatives because their views on being paid for their *fua fatongia* duties and obligations are significantly *kehe* (different).

By using the word '*kehe*', I mean that more traditional creatives are less engaged and concerned with the 'payment' of their *fatongia* than the less traditional creatives. As mentioned above, traditional creatives locate themselves in a spiritual, familial, and in relation to their *fatongia* and what they get out of it. This is a special way of viewing the world, Tongan people sometime say, "*Ne lava fiefia pea faka'ofa'ofa 'a e fatongia', pea kuo tau fiemā lie mo nonga*" which translates as "Our obligation was successfully and beautifully fulfilled, and we are in satisfaction and serenity". Normally Tongans do not feel *fiefia* (happy), *fiemalie* (satisfactory) and *nonga* (calm) if a given *fatongia* is not carried out successfully. Such values as *faka'apa'apa* (moral respect) and *nima homo* (generosity), are based in and evolved from *fatongia*, so that happiness can be attained. It is one Tongan concept that – along with other concepts such as *fonua* -- is a crucial mode of exchange and exists only in relationships.

In some of my findings, the focus changes to how the participants express their *fatongia* through their creative work. Through each *talanoa*, participants experienced varying degrees of value and rejection around *fatongia* to fulfil their creative endeavours. The formation of *fatongia* in each participant's response was based upon questions termed as—*Ko e hā hoto 'uhingá moe fatongia iho'o ngaue* (What is your purpose in the creative work you do? And *Ko e hā aonga ho'o fatongia* (What does one's purpose serve/usefulness). Participants saw *fatongia* as the backbone of both questions I had asked, and the consensus was that *fatongia* was first planted and nurtured at

home by the family in each of their upbringings. For these participants, following their *'aonga* and *'uhinga* combined the teachings received from home, alongside their own determination and motivation to serve others. Tongan individuals are socialised to know their place, status, responsibilities and how to interact with others to create harmony and peace in socio-spatial relations (Ka'ili, 2008). *Fatongia* and *'aonga* must be embedded from a young age in the and is acculturated to see these two concepts foster awareness of making collective choices that serve an audience greater than themselves. *Fatongia* is related to both related to the political-moral and socio-economic duties of people to look after themselves for social and political security, welfare and cultural preservation. There are multiple and changeable fundamental values and behaviours when dealing with *fatongia*. On the one hand, it can be fragrant and exciting, associated with satisfaction and serenity as well as being reciprocal and equal; but on the other hand, it can end up in a *fua kavenga* situation of unhappiness, with the metaphoric flavours *hu'atamaki* (bitter-liquid-taste), *kanotā maki* (bitter-flesh- taste) and *ta'eifo* (tasteless) with unequal and oppressive relationships.

7.3 Creative and Cultural Identity Development

Fatongia was a central question for all participants and *'aonga* guided their actions and efforts and carried lifelong importance. All participants concurred that other values, knowledges, and worldviews are acquired along the way as their lives life in different places and encounter different people and culture. *Fatongia* and *'aonga* were the foundation in making informed and orthodox decisions, for my participants born in Tonga. The nature of serving others in the Tongan culture is a natural part of cultural identity and *fatongia* is the obligation that Tongans hold in their everyday activities, cultural obligations and duties and as well as the relationships with their family, church, *fonua* and other in groups in wider society.

Some participants stated that purpose supported their creative and academic achievements because when they felt confident in the callings placed upon their lives from others around them, and from a Higher Being, then they felt encouraged and motivated to push themselves harder to help their families and others around them. Purpose also enriched the relationships between those involved in their personal, academic and creative endeavours as it evokes a sense of accountability and responsibility in what they are striving to do, for example, Sina uses the platform of being a teacher to delve into her creative purposes, and how this extends to those that she teaches. Cultural and socio-historical contexts not only influence conceptualisation of creativity but also people's attitudes towards the value and utility of creative endeavours. People

around the globe have been creative in innumerable ways, but it is also evident that the practice of creativity may bring about tension, controversy and encounter endless obstacles (Westby & Dawson, 1995). This is so because people in every culture, even the most progressive ones, are to some extent entrenched in a complicated set of human relationships and traditions, and creativity may pose a danger to these very relationships and practices.

This goes to show that what constitutes Pasifika creativity and more specifically, Tongan creativity, are complex and multifaceted debates and beyond even a temporary approach here. Costigan and Neuenfeldt (2002) discuss the conflict of cultural practices and their role in education. While Costigan and Neuenfeldt (2002) maintain that music and dance are important and beneficial ways to express and celebrate cultural identity, and to articulate concerns to wider society, they question whether this reinscribes and essentialises stereotypes, pointing to other impacting issues that need addressing for real and effective change to occur. Creativity is not limited to simply what is seen above the surface, as there is a need to address the deeper meanings that dwell behind these emergent forms of cultural, personal and traditional expression. Different cultural, social, political and historical circumstances have encouraged and fostered creativity in certain realms of human activity, while discouraging it in others. Thus, depending on the cultural setting, certain individuals will receive more or less encouragement for creative expression (Weiner, 2000).

The emphasis on obedience, duty, cooperation, compromise and sacrifice for the in-group is crucial in the Tongan culture, and as a result, people will tend to conform to their in-groups and will be concerned with social harmony rather than with expression of their own feelings, opinions or desires. In my data, participants born in Tonga believed in the importance of social order more than those that were born in New Zealand, and they tended to rigidly uphold social rules and norms. This finding is close to scholarship by Burke (1937) and Cheney (1983a) that asserted that individuals exposed to any number of interactions daily and belonging to any number of targets or social groups (Dutton, Dutton & Harquail, 1994) come to develop multiple identities (Abraham & Anderson, 1984; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Brewer & Gardner, 2004; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997; Scott, et al, 1998). The same group of participants born in Tonga emphasised group interests over individual creative concerns encouraged self-control in setting and achieving goals so that it was for the benefit of the *kāinga*. My data was closely aligned with Rudowicz (1994) and Ng (2001) who conducted works on experience of shame and embarrassment when interacting with others, when in a particular in group.

The concept of *fatongia* could rescue the Western discourse of obligation from its coercive, compulsory and oppressive connotations and redirect it instead toward engagement and reward. However, the transition of Tongan society from a traditional culture where *fatongia* is central to social and political life to a more complex and postmodern culture (blending the new and the old) has seen a weakening of *fatongia*. Purpose demonstrated through multiple personalities creatively and personally has an effect on how participants feel emotionally and as part of their own culture. How to transition, and how to keep the concept of *fatongia* central yet develop shared meanings around how creativity can be accepted and valued more is complicated. It is, however, possible to incorporate the values of *fatongia* into how a society supports creative endeavours of Tongan individuals, families and communities by serving purpose.

Some of the key findings demonstrated that questions of Tongan cultural values and expressions in contemporary and traditional creative work harboured different motivations for some participants more than others. For example, when Lisiata and Neti talked about their Tongan identity or ‘being Tongan’, they did not see it as something different from their Tongan cultural practices. One of the core purposes behind why these creatives pursued tattoo, dance, and storytelling was to create relationships with their craft, audience and the Tongan culture. As mentioned earlier, one of the deep theoretical assumptions underpinning Tongan culture is found in the concept of *tauhi va* or *tauhi vaha`a*, both referring to the process of caring for the *va* – the social spaces or relationships among people (Ka`ili, 2005; Thaman, 2004) and my findings are closely aligned with this scholarship.

The findings reveal four key aspects of ‘Being Tongan’ that were central for understanding the motivations that certain traditional creatives employed in traditional creative work: *famili* (familial relationships) and expectations; *māfana* (warm love/inner warm passion) for their creative field; *fua fatongia* (fulfilling obligations) for the culture’s sake; and *faka`apa`apa* (respect) for what other masters in their creative fields had done in the past. *Fāmili*, indicates that participants’ traditional practices in their fields of interest were first encouraged through their family upbringing. Sela, Neti and Lisiata reported being involved in various familial relationships which had given them the appropriate *mafana* and *faka`apa`apa* to think about how to carry out their creative endeavours in their respective communities. They were conditioned into these expectations at a young age, usually by their elders (parents, grandparents) and these participants grew up thinking that it was a normal cultural obligation of being Tongan. These familial relationships accepting their familial obligations based on sibling rank, gender expectations, continuity of generational power in of creative knowledge, and preserving family

ties that trace back to the royal family. As these participants were conditioned to these relationships, over time the *māfana* for their creative endeavours became an extension of their individual identity. Not only did these particular participants develop a deep love for the way traditional forms of creativity were upheld and preserved, but they began to see it as their ‘calling’ or being ‘lucky’.

Historically, Tongan society has specific and strict gender roles and expectations. Performance of these roles concurrently reifies and sanctions them (Scully 2004). Scully’s research explored that role that women played in the upkeep of Tongan culture and society and narrowed his focus into how women maintain the home. Scully’s (2004) conclusions matched my findings about the effect on how Tongan women employ their creativity in the Tonga culture and context. This narrative highlights the gendered roles and expectations that women are expected to fulfil in the traditional Tongan culture but extends the expectations and boundaries on creative work. The Tongan culture places great significance on the respect of women, for example, “the institution of *fahu* (respected position), once the core of ancient hierarchy is now espoused by commoner families, each of whom now elects their *fahu* for family ceremonies” (James 1992, p. 74). Although certain women are placed as the *fahu*, as is the case in many societies, women also occupy the domestic sphere. More specifically, when it comes to creative work, traditional expressions are still very much considered a predominately-female ministered area.

This hierarchy has an effect on how and what creative women are ‘allowed’ to extend their creativity towards. Unfortunately, my data do not allow me to determine whether the creation of these creative artefacts is received or rejected, but it is an idea worth exploring in more detail. My data showed that female participation in traditional Tongan forms is expected, but it is permissible in contemporary forms of creativity, to be expressed through fine arts and painting. A departure from the cultural norm can cause judgment and negative assumptions about the authenticity of the creatives toward their culture. In my research, I have found that when women carry out ‘male orientated’ roles in creative work, they are not well regarded and not taken seriously unless their creative work is supported or backed up by a formal qualification.

The second key factor central for understanding the motivations that more traditional creatives employed in less traditional work is *māfana* or spiritual driver. These findings are generally compatible with researchers who have explored this notion in great detail (see Morton, 1996, and Thaman, 2005). The heart of their research focused on *mafana* as a vessel of why Tongan act and behave in collectively. What I found was that the strength of *māfana* rests on its ability to transform participants’ minds and souls to move freely towards achieving the creative outcome

or product in their creative endeavours. I found that *māfana* had a major perceived influence as the most critical aspect driving successful creatives in their respective fields, as nearly all participants emphasised that it is their *māfana* that motivates them to fulfil their duties and perform beyond cultural expectations or *fatongia*. As participants emphasised, the concept of *māfana* coincides with deep perspectives underpinning the idea of *loto`i Tonga* (Tongan pride) which usually underpins their actions and interactions with others. Certain participants showed three aspects of *māfana* to be essential for driving their motivation and confidence in their creative industries: *`ofa* (love); *lotolahi* (courageous soul); and *fakalaumālie* (Christian belief). For instance, Lisiate stated that it is their strong connection with their spirituality and faith that has given them the strength and patience to strive hard for excellence. However, participant Sela said that *māfana* is not understood nor recognised as a strength in their creativity, because the religions that they follow is often misunderstood and not followed by wider Tongan society. These findings are in accord with those of researchers such as Māhina (2007) and Ka`ili (2008) who bring these Tongan values out in more detail, exploring how *loto`i Tonga* (Tongan pride), *`ofa* (love); *lotolahi* (courageous soul) are all woven into Tongan culture and society.

Third, the importance of collectivism (as opposed to individualism) in relationship building is vital, particularly for the more traditional participants: Neti and Sitiveni, whose view of *vā* is never empty, but always related, holding things together, and giving meaning to context (as previously stated by Wendt, 1996). The shared understanding that we are interconnected is implicated in the participant's *talanoa* interactions as they indicated a need to deconstruct space as relational, mutual, and reciprocal, and relationships as spatial (Ka`ili, 2011). To grasp the intimate connections of collectivism and the role of relationship building with regard to their creative work, then, there must be a fundamental understanding concerning their strong affinity toward communal interests and group unity. These findings are consistent with previous research by Halapua (2003), "unity building resides in interpretation of our understanding and respect of good *vā* in ways we relate to one another" (p. 4). In many instances, in his study he reveals that relationships that were consistent, congruent, and culturally appropriate (mirroring Tongan ethics and values) produced positive outcomes that was widely accepted and received by wider Tongan society.

What I found was that traditionally focused participants had a high culture of care in how they maintained the *vā* between themselves and their audiences, which was underpinned their motivations to create and share their creations with others. To increase the *māfana* in the *vā*, certain creatives who were not born in Tonga turned to the elderly and other masters in the field

in this study believed that consistent dialogical interactions that led to trust were critical to arranging a closer *vā* with the audiences of their craft, in particular – tattooing. These performative articulations were expressions of *tā-vā* intersections (Mahina, 2007) that were key to building relationships and shifting audiences or receivers of their creative work from the margins to the center, thereby fostering a warm relationship of trust. Participating in such close intimate space cultivated common grounds of community, harmony, and caring.

7.4 Conclusions

In the Moana generally, and in Tonga specifically, it is thought that, in a circular style, people walk forward into the past, and walk backward into the future, both in the present, where the seemingly fixed past and elusively, yet-to-take-place future, are constantly mediated in the conflicting, ever-changing present. – Hufanga ‘Okusitino Mahina (2007a, p. 189).

As I walk forward into the past, I am always mindful of the space between the two different worlds that I walk in, and that mindfulness comes to me in a series of questions that I pose but even at the end of my doctoral research, remain rhetorical. Will this ‘walk’ ever end? Where is my final destination? Is there a final destination? Why is the distance between each foot growing greater as the walk in my research comes to an end? Is this final section on my thesis even the end? It is the nature of rhetorical questions to provoke thought rather than offer definitive answers, but the responsibility of a doctoral student is to answer the research question. In this final section I want to approach my research question, but at the same time acknowledge that it may not be possible to ever answer it conclusively. Standing upon Tongan shores and looking over my research, I am conscious that the experiences of my participants represent a significant time in their life, but as time passes their representations of this significant time may well shift. The *vā* in the *talanoa* that I have presented, though true and faithful at the time of this research, may be only part of the *vā* that will be represented by my participants in the future.

My participants create according to their calling, and I have created according to mine. We have all woven our own creative mats, and in my case the threads that form the warp and weft are the voices of my *self*, and of my participants. The weaving of my creative mat has not been easy, but the difficulties have had their own beauty, and as I continue to find my voice by representing the voices of others, I have learnt more about the way *anga faka-Tonga* and *anga faka fonua* drive and affirm Tongan artists as they create traditional and contemporary forms. My data showed me that “Tonga will always be Tonga”. This notion summarises the fact that creativity expressed in

traditional creative work comes with guidelines, and attempts to alter the traditional forms by incorporating Western influences into traditional forms is largely a process of taking innovation and “Tonganising” it. In terms of the contemporary expressions of Tongan culture, the discussion goes on: are these expressions Tongan, or something that is still becoming? In this case, the effects of contemporary, hybridised expressions of the Tongan culture on the creative work of the Tongan artists. The effects of contemporary expressions on Tongan culture in the creative work of Tongan artists have been fraught with bitter sweet harmonies that come at the expense of *fua fatongia* that can cause conflicts in creative and cultural identity. Thus, when I revisit and contemplate the research question that was a vessel for my research:

What are the effects of traditional and contemporary expressions of Tongan culture in the creative work of Tongan artists?

My overall answer must be again, that Tonga will always be Tonga and that even in contemporary forms, “Tongan-ness” asserts itself powerfully.

In this thesis, I have spoken a lot about my walk in two worlds, and I find now as I revisit and contemplate my research question for the last time that I find both worlds are informing the way I want to handle my answer. In fact, it is safe to say, that the *anga fakatonga* of my Tongan traditions and sense of *anga fakafonua* of my Kiwi traditions are woven together to form a third and hybrid space where I understand the power of both tradition and innovation for my participants. The analysis demonstrates, therefore, that the effects of traditional Tongan culture on Tongan art forms is to preserve rather than change.

7.5 Contribution to knowledge

This research has uncovered the fact that Tongan creatives walk constantly in two worlds and this extends beyond Tongan artists to Tongan people in general. The walk in two worlds is hedged on both sides by cultural appropriation, cultural negotiation and social stigma that needs more attention, particularly for Tongans in diaspora who may be struggling with identity issues. All these worlds are a reality for some Tongan people and, as such, are important (Hill & Hawk, 1998). This is parallel to the findings of this research indicating that Tongan artists expressing traditional and contemporary expressions of the Tonga culture have multiple identities that need navigating. These worlds manifest themselves in different positioning’s determined by their *fatongia* to their creative endeavours, *kāinga*, and *fonua*.

Integral is this study's use of *talanoa* and thematic analysis, adapting this to account for concepts and values sourced from *anga faka tonga* and *anga fakafonua*. This research is important to the development of increasing the understanding of how Tongan methodological frameworks can be fused, or hybridised to increase existing knowledge of how to analyse *talanoa*. Throughout this research I have related Kalavite's (2008) existing *talanoa* theory with Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis and have enriched the way *talanoa* can be grouped into themes as a way forward for research on the diaspora. This fusion has shone an analytical light on how research might investigate other areas of the Tongan culture.

The (de)construction of creativity in the Tongan culture contributes to an existing field of scholarship sourced from a Western world, such as the exploration of the community of experts (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) who influences social tastes by over-laying creative expression with cultural interpretations drawn from the genre and practice. To date, no specific theorist has stressed the importance of exploring Tongan creativity and what it means for the culture and its people. The result of my research was the exploration of the effects that traditional and contemporary expressions of Tongan culture have in the creative work of Tongan artists through attitudes towards creativity, role of culture and identity development. These and other contributions that this research has allowed for the consideration of factors of creativity and the effects that it has on Tongan artists and their craft.

Ultimately, the final output that is in the form of this doctoral thesis, can be seen as an overall contribution to knowledge in the way that I have deliberately chosen a non-Tongan supervisory team. The journey has been insightful, fascinating and at times fraught with breakthroughs and breakdowns of self-reflection, mutual understanding, reflection and communication. Research conducted by Kalavite (2010) in her doctoral thesis highlighted that many non-Tongan academics do not understand and appreciate the extent to which Tongan students must renegotiate their relationships to be academically successful. In my own experience, the degree of disorientation that my supervisors Frances and Angelique faced during my research was reduced by the way we effectively negotiated, and renegotiated the task at hand: mainly, the building of an academic document nestled, not between two worlds, but rather, simultaneously in both. This process can be seen as an example as collegial intercultural co-operation and creating *vā* among ourselves, the research, and *tauhi vā* within within New Zealand's education system. At the same time, I poured my *vā* in the thesis as they poured their *vā* into me.

7.6 Implications for Future Research

This research has pointed to a number of areas where further explorations would help broaden the understanding of how to better understand what Tongan creativity is, and the effects of what it represents. The recommendations made for future development and research are very important although they have a wide scope.

First, further research is needed on specific groups such as Tongan artists who are born and raised in New Zealand or on those who are of mixed heritage, even those who were born and raised in Tonga. This research found that Tongans born in New Zealand have different views and understandings to what creativity is based on their knowledge and understanding of *anga fakatonga*. In the same vein, it can also be applied to Tongan artists born and raised in Tonga, or those that have migrated to New Zealand. There are different cultural understandings, which range from being born and raised in Tonga and then migrating to New Zealand, to artists who are of mixed descent. Research on these areas specifically might provide further insights on the different world views that Tongan artists apply to other areas in the *fonua*. These differences in Tongan people's worldviews may impact on their creative endeavours. Therefore, such research could inform more specific ways of helping this specific group of Tongans. Specific research on Tongans with mixed heritage is also recommended for similar reasons.

As I come to the end of my thesis, I am aware that there is an email in my inbox with a call for papers to a storytelling conference in England. Scholars from all over the worlds are being invited to speak about storytelling in many forms, one of which is as a research methodology. *Talanoa* is a particularly Tongan form of storytelling, yet my supervisors and I brought the *talanoa* of the thesis together by blending cultural forms in ways that my great Grandfather *Matapa* might not have recognised. We often laughed as we struggled to make sense to one another's approach to the story, for Frances and Angelique were quite linear in the beginning compared to me, who is so much more circular and inductive. This blending of *Talanoa* with a more Western approach strikes me as an interesting area to explore and to bring to the academy, honouring the voices of two traditions that have much to say to one another about finding truth in social phenomena.

I come back to the idea that Tongans walk in two worlds, and having recently lost my own Grandfather, I am aware that with the passing of an earlier generation and the pressures on diasporic Tongans to embrace the West, much may be lost forever of language and traditions. This brings me to the idea of using all forms of technology to capture *talanoa* about the rich culture that is Tonga. It may not be traditional to video, record, capture digital records but it would be a worthy research project to spend time sitting on the cultural mat with the older

generation to hear and preserve their *talanoa* forever and to make their wisdom permanently available to future generations.

7.7 Recommendations

I should stress that my study has been primarily concerned with gender in the categories of male and female, and that I have not mentioned the community that is labelled transgender, gender-liminal, transvestite, or even gay, but none of these terms fully encompass the marginalised *fakaleiti*, known as the ‘third gender’ in Tonga. *Fakaleitis* are men who live their lives as women, and they “perform tasks such as household duties, work in the fields with other women, dress as women” (Farran, 2010). Even though my study did not include interviewing *fakaleiti*, it is worth mentioning this is a potential avenue of future research that I will consider outside of this thesis. In light of de Beauvoir (2011) argument that gender is a performative act, the *fakaleiti* are the epitome of this statement when it comes to entertainment purposes and occasions in the Tongan culture. As my findings revealed, men and women are not given the same platforms to avoid gender performance, especially when it comes to creative work.

7.8 The Last Word

What I have learned from the struggle I have had with presenting the *talanoa* as they appear in Chapter five is that “the researcher is always partially naked” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 423).

Throughout my research, the participants recognised the value in *talanoa* as a conscious movement toward reclaiming the power to de(construct) their stories in the spirit of experience, identity, and self-reflection. My own view is that the thesis is hybrid, as I am, and that it will live in two worlds and speak to two worlds. During this process, I, too, was mastering the art of listening in the *talanoa* process to ensure that I was co-constructing a cohesive portrait honouring their voices.

Part of what I have learned in this doctoral journey is that it is my *fatongia* to pass the knowledge forward, as I continue to walk in two worlds.

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Glossary

The glossary of non- English terms drawn from Churchward's (1959) '*Dictionary – Tongan – English, English – Tongan*' refers to Tongan terms and concepts which are used in this thesis.

The glossary is arranged with the Tongan word italicised first, followed by the English translation in brackets upon first mention. There are various meanings and interpretations of these terms and Tongan people may have defined these terms differently, however the meanings and definitions of these terms are translated in relation to the context which it was used.

All other citations of the word will be in Tongan only, unless I feel the need to gently signpost the English translation to enhance meaning. Any lengthy descriptions of the words will be otherwise in footnotes.

<i>ako</i>	To learn appropriate behaviour and skills
<i>anga faka'eieiki</i>	The proper manner
<i>anga fakafonua</i>	The ways of the land –the folkways and modes of living)
<i>anga faka-Tonga</i>	The ways of the Tongans such as habit, custom, nature, quality, character, characteristic; way, form, style, manner, method; behaviour, conduct, demeanour
<i>anga fakatu'a</i>	Behaving like a commoner
<i>'aonga</i>	Purpose
<i>faiva</i>	Performance, play, drama, skit, item requiring skill or ability. Also includes, but is not restricted to, <i>faiva ta'anga</i> (poetry), <i>faiva hiva</i> (music) and <i>faiva haka</i> (dance).
<i>fakaehaua</i>	Alienation
<i>faka kaukau</i>	Idea
<i>fakame'ite</i>	Entertain audiences of royal/noble rankings
<i>fakamuna</i>	Imaginative acts
<i>fakapopula</i>	Oppression
<i>fakataha</i>	Together
<i>fakalata</i>	Causing to feel at home, or be happy, content
<i>fakamā'i</i>	Embarrass
<i>fanau</i>	Family
<i>fatongia</i>	Obligations
<i>fatongia maau</i>	Harmony

<i>fa'u or ngaahi</i>	To make, construct
<i>fe'ofa'aki</i>	Love for each other
<i>fe'tokoni'aki</i>	Mutual helpfulness
<i>feveitokai'aki</i>	Reciprocity or reverence for others, collaboration
<i>fie</i>	To want, desire, wish, or be willing; also, to imagine oneself to be, or so to be treated or regarded as
<i>fie me'a</i>	Wanting to be somebody or something
<i>fola</i>	Laid, laying
<i>fononga</i>	To walk, or to go on a considerable distance, to travel or journey especially by land
<i>fonua</i>	The land, the earth the people stand on, people and the physical environment
<i>fo'ou</i>	New
<i>fua kavenga</i>	To carry the burden
<i>haua</i>	Street knowledge
<i>heu lupe</i>	Snaring pigeons
<i>Hou'eiki</i>	Chief, chiefly/aristocracy
<i>hu'atamaki</i>	Bitter-liquid-taste
<i>'ilo</i>	Seeing; understanding, insight
<i>kaimumu'a</i>	Self-possessed
<i>kāinga</i>	Extended family, tribe or village; large social unit based on kinship and headed by a chief
<i>kato'anga</i>	Celebration
<i>kaunga</i>	Work together, connecting link, join
<i>kavenga</i>	Duties
<i>kiekie</i>	Ornamental waistband or grass skirt)
<i>kolonga</i>	Cooking place
<i>kanotā maki</i>	Bitter-flesh- taste
<i>lakalaka</i>	Termed a standing dance as opposed to a sitting or solo dance with the combination of poetry, dancing and choral singing which can last up to 15-20mins with over 100 performers, depending on the occasion. Performing the <i>lakalaka</i> is preserved for royalty or nobility.
<i>lālaga</i>	To weave, or to knit
<i>laumālie</i>	Spirit
<i>lea faka-hou'eiki</i>	Chiefly language
<i>lea faka-Tonga</i>	The Tongan language
<i>lea faka-tu'a</i>	Commoner language
<i>lea faka-tu'i</i>	Kingly language

<i>loto</i>	Inward
<i>loto'i Tonga</i>	Heart of a Tongan
<i>loto to</i>	Having a ready, willing, eager mind, desire to give
<i>maau</i>	Harmony
<i>māfana</i>	Warm, heartfelt emotion
<i>mamahi'i me'a</i>	To be zealous for, stand for, to contend, strive, or fight for a good cause
<i>maumau taimi</i>	Waste of time
<i>mana</i>	Authority, skill and charisma
<i>mateaki</i>	Loyalty
<i>me'avale</i>	Stupid thing' or 'ignorant one'
<i>mei</i>	Breadfruit
<i>ngatu</i>	Tapa cloth
<i>ngāue</i>	To work
<i>ngaue fakataha</i>	Co-operation
<i>nimamea'a</i>	Fine arts; includes, but is not restricted to, <i>nimamea'a lalanga</i> (mat-weaving), <i>nimamea'a koka'anga</i> (barkcloth-making) and <i>nimamea'a tuikakaia</i> (flower designing).
<i>noa</i>	Means “zero or without concealment” (Halapua, 2002, p.1).
<i>nofo fale Tonga</i>	Living in a Tongan styled house
<i>'ofa</i>	Love
<i>papālangi</i>	European, or anybody belonging to a white skinned race
<i>poto</i>	Clever, skillful, understanding what to do and how to do it
<i>potupotutatau</i>	Symmetrical
<i>pule-'a-e-tokolahi</i>	Democracy
<i>punake</i>	Composer/poet,
<i>sia</i>	The mound on which the pigeons are trapped in
<i>ta'e fiefia</i>	Unhappiness
<i>ta'e fiemālie</i>	Dissatisfaction
<i>ta'emaui</i>	Disharmony
<i>ta'e nonga</i>	Anxiety
<i>ta'e palasia</i>	Exploitation
<i>ta'e oli</i>	Not amusing
<i>tala</i>	Talking or telling stories
<i>tā nafa</i>	Beating of drums
<i>talanoa</i>	To talk (in both formal and informal ways), to tell stories or relate experiences
<i>Talanoa</i>	Tongan research methodology

<i>ta'olunga</i>	Traditional Tongan dance
<i>ta'ovala</i>	A mat wrapped around the waist, worn by men and women at all formal occasions
Tapa	Tapa is the beaten bark “cloth” of the <i>hiapo</i> tree used for clothing, bedding, decoration and other ceremonial and domestic purposes. Designs are imprinted or stencilled by hand with earth dyes and dyes prepared from the sap of the <i>koka</i> and candlenut trees. Fabric made of the bark of the paper-mulberry tree. Bark cloth also known as <i>ngatu</i> . (Rutherford, 1977).
<i>tapu</i>	Sacred
<i>tā tatau</i>	Tattooing
<i>tatau</i>	Equal
<i>tauhi vā</i>	Keep good relationships
<i>tauhi vaha'a</i>	Maintaining spaces between relationships
<i>totonu-'a-e-kakai</i>	Human rights
<i>Tu'a</i>	Outside, commoner/peasant
<i>tufunga</i>	Material can also mean a carpenter.
<i>tufunga lalava</i>	Sennit-lashing
<i>tufungo langofale</i>	House-building
<i>tufunga tavaivali</i>	Painting
<i>tufunga tatau</i>	Equal
<i>Tu'i</i>	King/monarch
<i>'uhinga</i>	Reason
<i>ulunganga faka fonua</i>	The main/real Tongan way of the community, people of the land or country, territory, place (Churchward, 1959, p. 196).
<i>vālelei</i>	Good; cohesive
<i>vahevahe-tatau</i>	Social justice
<i>vāmama'o</i>	Distant
<i>vāofi</i>	Close
<i>vātamaki</i>	Bad, strained

Tongan Expressions and Phrases

<i>'Ai mai pe ke ma'ama'a</i>	Come on, just make it cheap
Ko e hā hoto 'uhingá moe <i>fatongia</i> iho'o ngaue you do?	What is your purpose in the creative work
Ko e hā <i>aonga</i> ho'o <i>fatongia</i>	What does one's purpose serve/usefulness.
<i>'Otua mo Tonga ko hoku tofi'a"</i> 2009, p. 89; Moala, 1994, p. 213; Samate, 2007)	God and Tonga are my inheritance (Moala,

Tangutu ki lalo

Tonga ma'a Tonga

Tuku fonua ki Langi

Sit down

Tonga for Tongans

The Dedication of Tonga to God

Participant Information Sheet



Aho na'e fa'u 'ai pepa koeni:

20 May 2014

Hingoa 'oe fekumi 'oku fai:

Lue he kuonga 'e 'ua : A talanoa about Tongan Creativity

Koe faka'afe:

Maloeelelei, kole pe keu hufanga atu he fakatapa kuo 'aufaki keu fai 'atu ' e ki'i faka'afe koeni.

Ko hoku hingoa ko Seneti Fatafehi Lupe 'O Talau Tupou. Ko hoku taumu'a keu fakatoto'lo'i 'ae ngaahi fakakaukau fekau'aki moe creativity (fa'u fakakaukau fo'ou) tautefito kihe kuonga nake kau ai 'i Tonga pea mo Nu'usila pe foki.

'Oku 'ou faka'afe'i koe keke kau mai kihe 'eku fekumi 'oku fai fekau'aki mo 'eku feinga mata'i tohi koe Doctor of Philosophy - Communication Studies. Ko ho'o kau mai, koe me'a faiteliha pe 'a koe, pet eke fie malolo pe 'a koe ha fahinga taimi pe ke loto kiai.

Koe ha fekumi koeni?

Ko 'eku taumu'a ke tau fe talanoa'aki fekau'aki mo ho'o 'ilo kihe ngaue 'oku ke fai, kihe fakatoto'lo koeni. Ko 'eku fakamahino'i atu pe, 'oku 'ikai ha ta'efemahino 'ihe natula 'o 'eku fekumi 'oku fai. 'E 'iai pe taimi te tau toutou fakataha fekau'aki moe me'a 'oku 'ou fekumi kiai. Teke faiteliha pe koe keke talanoa mai kiate 'au, he ko koe pe mo 'au te ta 'ilo ke ho'o tokoni 'oku fai mai kihe feinga'ni.

Na'e anga fefe ho'o fili 'au keu kau he fekumi koeni?

'Oku 'ou faka'afe koe keke kau mai he ki'i fekumi koeni, fekau'aki moe taleniti moe ngaue 'oku ke fai.

Koe ha loloa 'oe fekumi koeni?

Koe loloa 'eta fetalano'aki 'e fai, mei mie pe 'l houa 2-3, fakatefito ki ho'o atā. Koe pepa koeni, 'alu moia 'o fakakaukau kiai pea ki fetu'utaki mai pea teke kaukiai.

Koe ha me'a teu fai kapau teu fie kau he fekumi koeni?

Ko ho'o fe kau mai, 'e email atu 'ai pepa 'I taha keke fakamo'oni mai 'ai.

'E ngofua pe keu lau 'e 'ola 'oe fekumi koeni?

'Osi 'etau talanoa, 'e 'oatu 'ae faka'iki'iki 'oe me'a na'a ta talanoa kiai.

Kapau 'i 'iai ha fehu'l, teu fetu'utaki kia hai?

Ka 'iai ha me'a ke ta'e fiemalie kiai, fetu'utaki mai kihe Project Supervisor (pule), *Dr. Jacqueline Harrison*, *jharrison*, pea moe Executive Secretary of AUTC, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , 921 9999 ext 6038.

Fekumi:

Janet Tupou

Email: jtupou@aut.ac.nz

Phone: confidential

Project Supervisor (Pule):

Dr. Jacqueline Harrison

Email: *jharrison*

Phone: Confidential

Participant Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

22 May 2014

Project Title

Lue he kuonga 'e 'ua : A talanoa about Tongan Creativity

An Invitation

My name is Janet Fatafehi Lupe 'O Talau Tupou and I am conducting a research project that aims to explore and analyse the shared meanings or Vā behind the notion of creativity for Tongan people in their different kuonga. I would like to invite you to take part in my research, which contributes towards my Doctor of Philosophy (Communication Studies) qualification. Your participation is voluntary: you may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of data collection.

What is the purpose of this research?

The project aims to conduct a series of Talanoa sessions, with the intention of providing a wide variety of responses as possible, and representing different perspectives based on the notion of Tongan creativity. You will provide insights based on your experience and background in your area of creative work. The findings of the project will be published in my Doctorate thesis, as well as in academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

As one of six participants selected based on the unique nature of your creative work in the Tongan context, the expertise and experience you possess will contribute greatly to the nature of this project. Your contact details have been obtained through personal and public sources. I can assure you that close family and friend connections are excluded.

What will happen in this research?

In brief, you will be part of a series of common talanoa based on Tongan creativity. The talanoa will be in an informal environment, where you can voice your experiences, background and any stories that relate to any of the topics covered. Following up on the talanoa may arise naturally, over more than one occasion. I can assure you that your consent cannot be valid unless you are adequately informed and understand the intentions of the project clearly. Please note that the data collected is for the purposes of this research only.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Overall, there is minimal likelihood for discomfort or risk, as the talanoa process advocates for open, genuine exchanges of information without concealment. Based on your background, you may be familiar with the nature of talanoa.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your privacy and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the small number of participants selected, however if you do not wish to be identified, you have the option of using a pseudonym. All responses will be confidential, and you have the opportunity to alter any information that you give.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Participating in this research will take approximately 2-3 hours over 2-3 days, depending on any follow ups needed. These times will be based on your availability.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Based on the initial conversation prior to receiving this information, you will be given three days to consider this invitation.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Upon agreeing to participate in this research, you will be sent a Consent Form via email that will confirm your place in this project.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes, each participant will be provided with a two page summary of this research.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, *Dr. Jacqueline Harrison*, *jharrison*, +649 921-9999 ext: 6374.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz*, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Janet Tupou

Email: jtupou@aut.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr. Jacqueline Harrison

Email: jharrison

Note:

Remaining documents have not been published due to private and confidential content

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on August 1st, 2014
AUTEC Reference number 14/160***