

‘It’s part of who I am’:

**Tā’aloga ma fa’asinomaga ma
fa’aSāmoa**

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**Sport, identity, and culture in the lives of
Samoan-New Zealanders**

Joshua Connolly

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Abstract

Samoan-New Zealanders have become increasingly prominent within New Zealand sport since the mid-20th century. Despite the apparent desirability of players with Pacific Island heritage their presence is also met with resistance and apprehension in both professional and amateur settings. Discourse that frames the relationship between Samoan-New Zealanders and sport often does so in terms that rely on stereotypes and the naturalisation of sporting ability and participation suggesting that they are 'built' for sport. This thesis offers a counternarrative to such discourse exploring the ways in which sport, particularly rugby, is a culturally embedded practice for Samoan-New Zealanders. I argue that for Samoan-New Zealanders sport exists as an example of Marcel Mauss's *fait social total* or Total Social Phenomenon (TSP) by virtue of the range of cultural institutions and practices that find expression within it. As such it is deeply and uniquely immersed within the *fa'aSāmoa* or Samoan culture. This thesis is based on seven months of ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, and *talanoa* conducted in Wellington, New Zealand. It seeks to explore the ways in which sport is a culturally embedded practice as a means of interrogating the notion that Samoan-New Zealanders are 'born to play sport'.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

‘I think I’ll be happy when I’m back on the field. It’s kind of . . . I would say it’s part of who I am.’ - Sione (participant)¹

This thesis explores the relationships between Samoan-New Zealanders and sport. One of the central motivations of the thesis is to offer a counternarrative to discourse that frames the relationship between Samoan-New Zealanders and sport in terms that rely on stereotypes and the naturalisation of sporting ability and participation. In doing so it seeks to explore the ways in which sport is a culturally embedded practice as a means of interrogating the notion that Samoan-New Zealanders are ‘born to play sport’. Chris Collins (2007, 3), Meghan Ferriter (2016, 25), and Noel Dyck and Hans Hognestad (2015, 123) all note how historically sport was studied only as an epiphenomenon, secondary to more significant aspects of life such as economy or family. As such it is perhaps not so surprising that ethnographies of sport are still fairly uncommon particularly those with a focus on issues such as ethnicity and religion (Ferriter 2016, 21; Dunn and Hughson 2016, 20). Since the early mid-20th century however sport has shifted to become a major focus for the social sciences with concepts such as ethnicity and gender featuring prominently in analyses (Adair 2011; Carter 2011; Collins and Jackson 2007; Giulianotti 2015; Giulianotti 2016; Mangan 1986; Sands 1999).

New Zealand as a nation has significant cultural ties to sport, particularly rugby. As such, analyses that examine the stereotyping and naturalisation of brown bodies specifically the bodies of Maori and Pasifika peoples within New Zealand sport have

¹ Throughout this thesis all participants (except for one who indicated that they were happy for me to use their real name) are referred to by pseudonyms to protect their identities.

become increasingly common (Calabrò 2016; Grainger et al. 2012; Hippolite and Bruce 2010; Hokowhitu 2004; Teaiwa and Mallon 2005). My research uses these as a platform to examine and interrogate attitudes towards Samoan-New Zealanders in a New Zealand context while filling the gap that exists in ethnographic literature in this particular field. I argue that for Samoan-New Zealanders sport exists as an example of Marcel Mauss's *fait social total* or Total Social Phenomenon (TSP) by virtue of the range of cultural institutions and practices that find expression within it as a practice (Mauss 1990[1925], 3). As such it is deeply and uniquely embedded within the *fa'aSāmoa* or Samoan culture. This thesis is based on seven months of ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation in Wellington, New Zealand. During this time I was enrolled in undergraduate Samoan language courses at Victoria University of Wellington and attended a Samoan church, a number of cultural events, and conducted several *talanoa*² with participants that I met during my time in the field.

I use Mauss's concept of TSP to frame my exploration of the relationship between sport and culture in the lives of Samoan-New Zealanders. In the process of undertaking my research it rapidly became clear that the way in which sport is practiced and understood in this particular context exists within a nexus of social connections. Though I will come to discuss sport's unique status within this context in more depth later it is this connectedness that lays the foundation for my thesis. These connections vary in their nature and scope and often include, but are not limited to, interpersonal and inter-institutional relationships. To better understand sport within this context, one cannot divorce it from its complex social entanglement. It is with this in mind that I draw on TSP as a theoretical framework to aid in my exploration and analysis of sport. Within the introduction to his book *The Gift*, commonly held as a classic among anthropological texts, Mauss offers this definition:

² *Talanoa*: a Samoan research method most resembling an unstructured interview which is used as a means of addressing the power imbalance present in the interviewer/informant style interview.

In these ‘total’ social phenomena, as we propose calling them, all kinds of institutions are given expression at one and the same time – religious, juridical, and moral, which relate to both politics and the family; likewise economic ones, which suppose special forms of production and consumption, or rather, of performing total services and of distribution. This is not to take into account the aesthetic phenomena to which these facts lead, and the contours of the phenomena that these institutions manifest (1990[1925], 3).

Understandably, the use of a relatively old theory associated (at least temporally) with the functionalist or proto-functionalist school of thought may seem an odd choice. Functionalism as an approach tends to analyse or explain phenomena in terms of the purpose they serve. This may seem at odds with a project focusing on Samoan-New Zealanders given functionalism’s historical ties to colonialism (Paul 2016). Functionalism has also been criticised for its inability to account for the heterogeneity of societies instead making appeals to notions of homogeneity and uniformity in a way that fails to account for social change as well as the emergence of inequalities or conflict within societies for example those based on ethnicity or gender (Vincent 2015). TSP has received criticism notably from Alexander Goffman who described it as a ‘vague but suggestive concept’ disparaging it for what he saw as its ambiguity (1998, 63) further stating: ‘The more a theory or concept is ambiguous, obscure and confused, the more it is likely to dominate the sociological mind’ (1998, 64). While this might prove to be a compelling critique of a theory in the tradition of empirical falsifiability in this instance it is less damning, particularly as he places it alongside such concepts as alienation, social class, and gender. Ultimately, this ambiguity is what makes TSP appealing as a framework for me. Its ‘vagueness’ lends it a flexibility that allows it to be used outside of a functionalist context. Furthermore its focus on holism and complexity makes it a valuable theoretical framework through which to examine the culturally embedded phenomenon of sport. This value of TSP as a theoretical

framework is further reflected in its continuing use in diverse fields of academia (Agergaard 2011; Lieskovsky et al. 2012; Pons 2016).

Another concept that I draw on throughout this thesis to inform my use of TSP is that of the *fa'aSāmoa* or 'the Samoan way'. The *fa'aSāmoa* is often invoked as an appeal to a collective Samoan cultural identity in which a number of cultural institutions and practices are considered central. In particular *āiga* or family, the *matai* system of chief and orator titles, *lotu* or church, and *tautala fa'aSāmoa* or speaking the Samoan language are fundamental to this concept as well as values such as *tautua* (service) and *fa'aaloalo* (respect) (Anae 1998; Mulitalo-Lauta 2000; Puaina and Hubbell 2006). My use of these concepts mirrors the use of these concepts by my participants however it is also important to note the inherent subjectivity involved in the use of these terms. What the *fa'aSāmoa* looks like or how it is embodied while referred to by multiple parties can have a very personal interpretation attached. It is not necessarily an appeal to cultural homogeneity but more to a shared identity that is expressed uniquely by individuals. By using the concept of TSP to frame my discussion and complementing this analysis by incorporating the concept of the *fa'aSāmoa* I reinforce the way in which sport is inextricably interwoven with expressions of culture and identity.

Wellington, Victoria University, and Church

Wellington is an urban area that sits in the south of the North Island of New Zealand and encompasses Wellington City (the capital of New Zealand) as well as the cities of Porirua, Lower Hutt, and Upper Hutt. Wellington is the second most populous urban area in New Zealand and also has the second largest population of Pacific identified people (around 8% of the total population of Wellington). According to data from the 2013 New Zealand census the Pacific population in Wellington is around 36,000 - of this 21,200 identify as Samoan (Statistics New Zealand 2013).

Victoria University of Wellington comprises three campuses across three areas in Wellington city. The campus that my Samoan classes and my research at the university took place at was the university's Kelburn campus. It was here that I conducted a significant amount of my research while also making contacts and broadening my field and it was here that I met the four participants that I conducted *talanoa* with.

Church or *lotu* is a central part of life for many Samoan-New Zealanders and this was certainly the case for my participants. I learnt this early in my fieldwork and as such decided to incorporate *lotu* as a key feature in my research. I attended church with a friend that I met through my fieldwork as a means of better exploring the ties between sport and the *fa'aSāmoa*. While participants tended to identify the Christian denominations of Methodist and Catholic as the churches most commonly attended by Samoans the church that I attended was a small congregation that belonged to the Assembly of God (AOG) denomination. It is important to note that any experience of worship within these contexts would no doubt have differed between institutions. Furthermore, though Methodism and Catholicism were identified as being particularly prominent numerous denominations are represented within my field and research.

Sport and Anthropology - A Work in Progress

A considerable body of literature on sport exists in both anthropology and sociology. In spite of a dearth of ethnographies in this area the body of work on sport within anthropology is growing thanks to academics such as Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell, and Thomas F. Carter. Within sociology the study of sport is particularly strongly established. The prevalence of study on sport in both disciplines may be unsurprising because, as Richard Giulianotti (2015) acknowledges, sport is an integral part of social identities for many as well a common topic of daily discourse. One reason for the

prevalence of research within sociology compared to anthropology is the level of institutionalisation that exists within the sociology of sport. The formation of both the International Sociology of Sport Association (ISSA) as well as the European Association for Sociology of Sport (EASS) served to anchor the study of sport as a subfield within sociology. In contrast anthropology has historically regarded sport-like activities as 'tangential to more categorically 'indigenous' social arrangements and cultural belief' (Dyck & Hognestad 2015, 123). This changed to some extent in the second half of the 20th century with the emergence of anthropological literature focusing primarily on sport, however this was after the ISSA had already been established (Dyck & Hognestad 2015).

With this considerable history and body of work existing within sociology it is reasonable to ask what anthropology, a discipline described as 'a foreign field when it comes to sport' (Carter 2011, ix), can offer to the study of sport. Dyck & Hognestad (2015) claim that it is this very lack of institutionalisation which can act as a strength for an anthropology of sport. The absence of a formalised perspective allows for approaches that may otherwise be considered 'outside the box' particularly those in which anthropologists 'tend to locate sport within wider social, political and cultural contexts that are not limited to the institutional structures of modern sport organization and businesses' (2015, 127). This kind of ethnographic and anthropological approach lends itself well to my research on sport and Samoan-New Zealanders. It provides the holistic more complex lens which is required to interrogate ingrained societal assumptions around brown bodies in sport and the social, political, and cultural contexts that are involved.

The ways in which sport and sporting contexts can act as a social space is a common focus in sport scholarship. Such research often places emphasis on notions of community and identity (Adair 2011; Bale & Cronin 2003; Hargreaves 1986; Sand 1999). Horne et al. (2013) highlight a shift in sport research from seeing sport as a cause

of particular outcomes in terms of socialisation to a site for socialisation and identity formation experiences. From this perspective sport does not necessarily cause particular outcomes but provides a social space in which socialisation can occur. This reinforces the importance of taking into account specific social and cultural contexts when studying sport so as to properly investigate the ways in which sport can impact individuals and communities. Carter echoes these notions in his criticism of appeals to the concept of 'sport cultures' as being 'too often invoked as if they are in some theoretical or analytical capacity separate from, rather than part of, culture' (2011, 66). While sport is a site of social and cultural experience it is crucial that broader cultural contexts are also considered when researching sport.

Finally, an important body of literature is that which focuses on sport in New Zealand. In this instance a considerable body of work exists within the social sciences. The scope of this literature is broad and serves to emphasise the prevalence and influence of sport in New Zealand society and culture. A few texts in particular offer valuable and comprehensive insights as to the role sport plays on both a micro (individual, family, etc) to macro (the economy, politics) level (Collins and Jackson 2007; Ferguson 2004; Watson 2008; Watson et al. 2016).

Thesis Overview

Having given a broad overview of what this thesis aims to address in this chapter, the following chapters expand on these ideas. Chapter 2 discusses my methods and fieldwork in more depth. It will probably come as no surprise that during ethnographic fieldwork I was forced to rethink my initial framing of my research questions in response to a dynamic and challenging research process. As a result of my participant observation, my *talanoa*, and my experiences in the field I was forced to reflect on the intention and purpose behind my project and what it was I aimed to achieve with my work. In this chapter I discuss my methods but I also consider my

place within the field and my research process itself reflexively as a means of exploring my positionality and assumptions.

Chapter 3 is the first chapter that engages in significant discussion making use of my ethnographic data. I problematise the concept of sport itself and interrogate the extent to which it can be considered the equivalent of its Samoan counterpart *tā'alogā*. In doing so I explore the parallel histories of *tā'alogā* and sport and the ways in which these practices are products of both specific cultural contexts and dynamic social phenomena. I then examine the eventual overlap of these two traditions in parallel to the dynamic relationship between Samoans and *Palagi*³ tracing this relationship from Samoa through to New Zealand.

Chapter 4 is a significant chapter both in terms of its scope and its size. In this chapter I examine the contemporary relationship between my participants, sport, and their identities. I suggest that sporting contexts play a significant role in shaping and expressing the identities of my participants incorporating aspects of the *fa'aSāmoa* such as *'āiga* and *lotu* as well as more traditionally European institutions such as sports clubs. I then discuss the ways in which sport intersects with other aspects of my participants' identities such as their ethnicity and their gender.

Having considered the past and then the present my final results chapter, chapter 5, considers the future. Making use of Hirokazu Miyazaki's (2004) conceptualisation of 'hope' as a form of knowledge creation I examine the ways in which my participants think about and engage with their own possible futures. I explore hope not as an optimistic mind-set but as a way in which my participants take into account their desires as well as their awareness of the practical challenges they may face. In doing so I explore discussions with them around the role that sport plays in their lives, the

³ *Palagi*: a term used to refer to non-Samoans and people of European descent in particular.

way in which it may shape their futures, and the factors that either pull them towards or push them away from pursuing careers in professional sport. Here I offer another perspective on the ways in which sport is profoundly enmeshed in their community identities as Samoan-New Zealanders as well as their identities as individuals.

Finally, I conclude my thesis with chapter 6 by offering an overview of my findings and main argument. I also note areas that I was unfortunately not able to explore due to constraints on time and the length of my thesis. Here I also suggest potential areas that may be of value or interest in further research.

Chapter 2

Methods and Fieldwork

Constructing the field

Going to church with my friend and her family was a lot like attending my first Samoan class in the sense that I felt a lot like an outsider. In some ways I felt this more than I had in that first class. I was, again, the only Palagi-New Zealander in the room however now, unlike when I was at the university, I was in unfamiliar territory. I couldn't even rely on my prior experiences with churches, having been raised Catholic, as the denomination of the church I would be attending was AOG (Assembly of God). This came with its own anxieties, would I somehow do the wrong thing? Offend someone? My Samoan was quite basic, would I miss an important cue? It wasn't until I had the benefit of hindsight, lying on my bed exhausted after three and a half hours of church that I realised. The anxiety, the self-doubt, the fear of doing the wrong thing and upsetting people... This was fieldwork.

I wrote the above excerpt as part of my field notes about my first experience attending the Assembly of God (AOG) church where I conducted part of my research.⁴ Despite the fact that to some extent it did reflect my experiences it also reflected a trope common in older 'classic' anthropological works embodying anthropology's baggage as a discipline. In this sense it also reflects the value of reflexivity in anthropological research, the notion 'that adequate anthropological accounts cannot be crafted without acknowledging the forces – epistemological and political – that condition their writing' (Whitaker 2009, 594).

The construction of a 'field' is crucial to ethnographic research. Raymond Madden describes an ethnographic field as providing:

⁴ This research project received approval from Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee on April 20, 2017 - Approval No. 24537.

An interrogative boundary to map on to a geographical and/or social and/or emotional landscape that is inhabited by a participant group. An ethnographic field has an embedded question (or series of questions) that impels the ethnographer towards resolution (2013, 54).

Because the ethnographic field comprises these simultaneously separate but interwoven landscapes Madden argues it cannot be simply relegated to a physical or social space or as a mental construct on the part of the ethnographer. Rather, he claims, it exists as a combination of these features (2013, 54). This theorisation of the ethnographic field highlights the role that the researcher plays in the construction of their field and reflects the representational power the researcher holds in portraying their experience. Historically this power has manifested in a number of ways in particular the emergence of narrative tropes in portraying the field as well as notions of what constitutes a legitimate field in which ethnographic anthropological research may occur. One of these tropes, reflected in the excerpt from my own field notes, is what Madden refers to as 'the arrival scene' (2013, 40). A staple of anthropology's classic canon such scenes are found in the works of many anthropologists for example in Raymond Firth's *We, the Tikopia* (2011[1936]) or Napoleon Chagnon's *Yanomamo: The Fierce People* (1977). This portrayal of an arrival scene, of the anthropologist boldly going forth into the unknown had a twofold impact: In constructing the field it created an environment that favours questions of difference and placed the ethnographer in the position of cross-cultural expert 'an intrepid, heroic character, setting up a field that is fraught with culture shock and danger, in order to triumph over these obstacles and to deliver a vital portrait despite the difficulties.' (Madden 2013, 42-43).

It is easy to interpret my invocation of the 'arrival scene' in going to church as an appeal to the imagery present in classic anthropological texts, a way of constructing and representing the field in a familiar way. Beyond this though such a representation

can also be seen as a result of my insecurities as a novice researcher. By making this allusion I was trying to rationalise my place in the field in relation to historical practices of anthropology as well as frame my place in the field in a familiar way. More than this though such a representation also reflects a deeper insecurity around not only my place in the field but the field itself. My research did not take place in a foreign field, in fact my fieldwork took place very close to 'home' and for me this was the source of some tension. Virginia Caputo locates the cause of such tension as insecurity in an area of study that historically praised those researchers that travelled to distant, 'exotic' locations to study equally 'exotic' others (Caputo 2000, 20).

While anthropology has distanced itself from this mentality with critical examinations of the othering and the colonial mind-set behind this drive the baggage can still, to some extent, be present. Gupta and Ferguson refer to this baggage as a 'hierarchy of purity of field sites' (1997: 13) specifically the notion that if a field is to be considered somewhere that is not 'home' then naturally there will be those fields considered less 'home' than others. This can be judged by factors including geography and proximity and in this sense some fields may be considered more valid than others. While they were writing two decades ago to some extent this still rang true for me. No-one within my institution had ever intimated that my field was somehow less valid however I still suffered from some insecurities. In response to this my original conception and representation of going to church reflected anthropological 'arrival scenes' as this served to distance my field from my 'home' as a means of assuring myself of the legitimacy of my work, my field, and my place in it. As a result I downplayed the experience of beginning to learn Samoan despite it being my initial entry point into the field due to the fact that it occurred within the familiar setting of the university.

To represent my entry into any part of the field as a contemporary 'arrival scene' is ultimately misrepresentative of my experience. My field is not defined so much by geographical distance or space but more by the overlapping of social and cultural

worlds such as those of myself and my participants and a desire to interrogate stereotypes around the involvement of Samoan-New Zealanders in sport. My real entry into the field occurred on the first day of one of the Samoan language papers I took as a means of helping me to become familiar with not only the Samoan language but also Samoan culture. These classes would become much more central to my field and research than I had originally expected even serving as the environment in which I met my participants. These classes did not take place in some exotic location but rather in the university where I had already studied for four years. Realistically framing this entry as smooth and unchallenging compared to my attending church is also a misrepresentation of my experience. Although the university was a location I had a greater level of familiarity with I was still very conscious of my place as the only *Palagi*-New Zealander in the room, an obvious outlier in a new social space. My entry to the field was not as the bold intrepid anthropologist (whose very existence I have become sceptical of) but rather as a student, unsure of his place but eager to learn. It is this image that is far more appropriate, it is representative of myself and, hopefully, this thesis.

My inspiration to research this topic and in this particular field was largely unanticipated on my part. The subjects I held as research interests until I moved into the world of the anthropology of sport had largely been focused on queer identity politics however this shifted in my honours year of study at university. One of my papers was based on the anthropology of globalisation and our class was asked to write an essay on some aspect of it. This paper was co-taught by two lecturers with two very different approaches. When it came to selecting essay topics for one of our major assignments I found my desire to write about globalisation and queer rights movements firmly rebuffed by one of the two. I felt frustrated and so in an attempt to move forward while also being more than a little tongue in cheek I decided to write about something that seemed almost antithetical to my current interests: sport. I ended up writing about transnational professional sport migration in the Pacific drawing on

the work of Niko Besnier and other anthropologists and social theorists. In doing so I came to appreciate sport for its role as ‘a vast global field of social, cultural, economic and political activity’ (Giulianotti 2016, x). One of the themes that became apparent to me while engaging with the literature for this topic was the degree to which sport served as an area in which brown bodies (in particular Māori and Pasifika athletes) are stereotyped and naturalised in a way that essentialises their relationship to sport (Besnier 2015; Giulianotti 2016; Horton 2012; Lakisa et al. 2014). In a less academic setting I also came across a blog post originally hosted on the now defunct The Native Collective blog, an Aotearoa-based blog intended to tell the stories of Pacific people. The blog was titled ‘Dumb, Fat, Violent’ and was written by an anonymous student about their experiences of racism and stereotyping in sport:

A couple of weeks back I played rugby against Massey, and when you think of Massey, you think ‘big island boys’. It was the hardest game and they were the first team to score points against us. Our coach prepared us for the game earlier in the week saying ‘this team is gonna be big, fat, and dumb’ (Dumb, Fat, Violent 2017).

I began to appreciate the extent to which such attitudes were present but also the harm that they could cause. With this in mind I thought that a project that interrogated these stereotypes by exploring the nuances of the relationship between Samoan-New Zealanders and sport would be of value. My decision to focus on Samoan-New Zealanders was, to some extent, a pragmatic one. I felt as though the strong Samoan programme at Victoria University that also offered Samoan language courses would offer a good entry point to the field. This engagement and endeavour to become more familiar with the Samoan language was particularly important to me. Not only as a means of understanding the culture and those around me better but also as a symbolic gesture indicating a genuine desire to learn and know more as well as respect or *fa’aaloalo*.

I began my project with two main research questions. First, 'What role does sport play in the cultural life of Samoan communities in Wellington and beyond a dialogue of naturalisation why do they engage in it?' Second, 'To what extent if any does the naturalising dialogue Samoan bodies in sport impact those that play sport?' Thinking about these questions in retrospect it is interesting how rigid they seem. In particular the search for a definitive answer as to what sport means to a large group of people flirts with cultural essentialism. Since then my focus became more focused not on what sport definitively meant but more what sport *could* mean as a way of introducing complexity and nuance to the conversation around Samoan-New Zealanders and sport. In this sense my adherence to my initial research questions was malleable making room for developments in my work however the original driving force behind my research remains.

The revision of my research questions mirrored a more fundamental pivot in my theoretical approach to sport. Initially I had sought to analyse sport through Pierre Bourdieu's (2000) conception of 'habitus'. Specifically I saw myself following in the footsteps of others who had used this lens as a means of exploring the individual as a site where broader societal structures are embodied through their participation in sport. While I believe such an approach has its merits my experience during fieldwork led me to decide that this was not the approach best suited to my research. While the physical action of performing sport is significant in the lives of my participants sport bears significance beyond the playing field. Sport is central to their cultural and personal identities, it ties them to their communities and families, it is an arena in which these aspects of their lives overlap and it even plays a role in shaping the ways in which they hope when they consider their futures. It was apparent to me that I needed a framework that took a much broader perspective that placed sport within a broad interconnected social and cultural context and it was this that led me to use Mauss's TSP.

My place in the field

Madden's exploration of the construction of the field makes clear the role that the anthropologist plays in shaping it and in this respect my place in the field played a considerable role in how my research developed. I would be lying if I said that I did not feel like an outsider during portions of my research, not due to unfriendliness or rejection from the people around me but more as a result of a persistent self-consciousness. In part this was due to the fact that I was aware that as a *Palagi*-New Zealander in a room full of Samoan-New Zealanders I was often an obvious outlier. This despite being asked on more than one occasion if I was part Samoan, causing me to reflect on a privilege I had not considered before. I was undoubtedly an outsider in many respects however I also shared a lot in common with my participants for example the shared experience of university in this context we were all students even my lecturers who were completing their M.A.s and Ph.Ds.

It is hard to know exactly how others in the field perceived me, a limitation of the human experience, however Sione a classmate with whom I had a *talanoa* or conversation with first offered some insight as to how my presence may have been seen positively in the context of me learning Samoan:

Samoan people love that, they see a *Palagi* guy trying to be a Samoan and they go crazy. Yeah it's the thing about *Palagis* when they learn Samoan culture Samoans go crazy they love that, it's respect, it's a respect, so the Samoans have a lot of respect because they've seen that that person has shown that they are... I mean you earned my respect, when you asked to interview me, it's no problem. We go crazy, if you wanna learn our culture. There's a *siva* (dance) we do, there's a *siva* when a *Palagi* goes up. There's a *taualuga* (a particular traditional dance) when a girl dances with that sword kind of thing, so if you

went up we would all dance around you because, we usually dance around the girl, but if you or a *Palagi* goes up we go crazy like *chee-hoo!*

This final sentence was punctuated with a *fa'aumu* (in this context a celebratory cry). From this perspective despite my reflexive self-conscious self-examination it could be said that my presence in the field may have been seen as a positive thing or a slight novelty but not as especially noteworthy. That being said there is also danger in generalising from this one perspective, suffice to say in general I was welcomed warmly and treated well by those around me.

My position as outsider could also prove to be an asset in the field, because people knew me as a person with little experience in terms of Samoan-New Zealand culture it was not uncommon for things to be explained to me. Because of this occurrences which may have been difficult for me to understand or contextualise were often given an explanation by those around me that would have otherwise been absent if I had been perceived as more of an insider in the field. Furthermore I can only assume that my position as an outsider granted me some leeway in situations where I may have committed some faux pas. Certainly it was obvious that as a *Palagi*-New Zealander the bar was lowered for me in terms of expectations. At a friend's family lunch when an elderly relative of my hosts asked me how I was '*O ā mai 'oe?*' my response '*Manuia, fa'afetai*' or 'Fine, thank you' drew nods of approval.

The importance I place on the way in which I was perceived in the field reflects deeper truths inherent in the process of anthropological research. As Raymond Madden observes the researcher plays a central role in shaping the field (2013, 38) however it must be noted that another force in shaping this field are the participants themselves. As an outsider within a particular community the researcher is, to some extent, at the mercy of their participants. If the individuals within a particular community were to refuse access to a particular part of their lives or assert their agency in some similar

way there is not a great deal a researcher can do to mitigate this. Naturally in my research there would have been parts of my participants' lives that they did not wish to share with me. This dynamic may seem self-evident however it is an important facet of fieldwork and the construction of the field to acknowledge. It plays a crucial role in shaping the eventual form of the research and also reflects the way in which such research is, to some extent, collaborative.

Participant observation

One of the primary methods I used and indeed one that is often considered central to anthropological research is the qualitative method of participant observation. Kathleen and Billie DeWalt define participant observation as:

A method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture (2011, 1).

My participant observation began with my entry into the field specifically this was my beginning to take Samoan language papers at the university. As a result my research came to be largely focused on the experiences of young Samoan-New Zealanders undertaking university study. Within this context my patterns were fairly repetitive following a set structure of three lectures a week as well as one tutorial and one language lab a week a schedule that remained from March through to October of 2017 (with some holiday breaks as well). My fieldwork was not limited to this realm though and soon grew to include various extra-curricular events and I was fortunate enough to have the chance to be a part of two 'Ava ceremonies used to mark significant events. These were *Vaiaso o le Gagana Sāmoa* (Samoan Language Week) and another event in which a number of SAMO (the course code for Samoan Studies) classes shared cultural performances. The field grew even further from there as it became apparent to me that

to appreciate the broader context of cultural life for my participants I would have to broaden my scope to some extent.

It was with this in mind that I asked a friend whether she would be okay with me attending church with her at some point, she happily agreed and so her church also became an area of social life in which I participated. I attended church fairly regularly on Sundays during my fieldwork period occasionally having to miss services due to work and other commitments. Services tended to last one to two hours and were preceded by smaller Bible study classes in which we discussed selected passages in groups organised by age. Attending church was one of the most enjoyable experiences of my fieldwork and I continued to attend for a period after my allotted fieldwork period. Interestingly I never included a sport-specific site in my fieldwork; while I acknowledge that this could have positively contributed to my research my main interest became understanding the way in which sport fit into the lives of Samoan-New Zealanders more broadly. In this respect I prioritised attaining a broad understanding of what these lives looked like and then speaking to the participants themselves to hear about sport from their perspective which I believe offered significant insight.

During this period of research I predominantly kept both field notes and what Simon Ottenberg refers to as 'headnotes' (1990, 144) mental records of experiences during the field. On the other hand my field notes were written accounts I made during or shortly after my experiences. These ranged from notes kept on my phone of Bible passages I had studied at church or particular ideas to things people had said to me at the time. Occasionally they also took the form of scenes such as those italicised excerpts found at the beginning of this chapter and throughout my thesis. The excerpt at the beginning of this chapter serves to highlight the benefits of each type of engagement with the field and the tensions present between the two as field notes are static while

headnotes develop and change as our knowledge of the field grows as Margery Wolf states:

Headnotes, even while in the field, are constantly being revised as new material is discovered, more experiences are processed, early hunches prove false. When the head returns home, it continues to revise and elaborate the headnotes as it encounters new theories, comparative data, and internal inconsistencies. But the anthropologist does not alter the fieldnotes (1992, 87).

This perspective should not be seen to completely dismiss field notes altogether. The value of field notes lies in the way they record and remain static, the mind is not a perfect container and field notes are one way in which events that would be otherwise forgotten may be recorded. Field notes can also serve to keep headnotes grounded, acting to discourage or reign in elaborations that may not be realistic. One example of this relationship is seen in the way I was able to interrogate my initial field notes on attending church as a result of later experience and headnotes. As such the recording of both field notes and headnotes was integral to my fieldwork in that it helped to offer a more holistic perspective.

Talanoa

Before entering the field I needed to decide what methods I would use and how I would approach my research. I knew it would be important to conduct my research in a way that interrogated the inherent and implicit power balances present in the academic research process. These power imbalances in academic research have been explored and discussed extensively by a range of theorists working in various disciplines identifying the ways in which this kind of research has historically been tied to imperialistic, Eurocentric, and even colonial powers and interests (Smith 2012;

Chilisa 2012). Anthropology in particular has often been criticised for its historical ties to the colonial project as Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes it:

The ethnographic 'gaze' of anthropology has collected, classified and represented other cultures to the extent that anthropologists are often the academics popularly perceived by the indigenous world as the epitome of all that is bad with academics (2012, 70).

Because of this history and perception and as a *Palagi*-New Zealander who would be undertaking fieldwork that focused on Samoan-New Zealanders I felt particularly accountable for doing my best to make sure my research did not reproduce problematic imbalances tied to Eurocentrism or ethnocentrism. It was with this in mind that I decided to use *talanoa* to inform my methods. *Talanoa* is often translated as being the Samoan equivalent of 'conversation'. Within a research context Jione Havea describes *talanoa* as referring to:

The *content* (story) **and** to the *act of telling, unpacking and unravelling* (telling) that content, **and** to the *event of engaging, sharing and interrogating* (conversation) the content that is being unpacked and unravelled. The eventuation of the three, together, is what *talanoa* is (2010, 11).

Talanoa is a form of engagement and knowledge creation that pushes back against the power imbalance present in academic research by fostering a collaborative environment where data is produced dialogically. What this meant for my research was that rather than using semi-structured interviews as I had originally intended to I instead conducted something more akin to an unstructured interview with no script or set questions to guide the process. The act of removing the script from the research equation went some way to level out the power dynamic inherent in interview processes, rather than a series of responses to questions prescribed by myself these

talanoa were guided by both parties touching on the topics that naturally came up. In this setting participants were more able to guide the process themselves in the directions they felt appropriate which they often did, for example in one interview a participant asked me why I had chosen to look at Samoan-New Zealanders in particular. For me their comfort in asking this question within our recorded *talanoa* was indicative of it being a balanced conversation rather than a one-way interrogation.

As has been indicated the *talanoa* themselves exist as a broader relational experience. My recorded sessions often existed as an extension of earlier less formal conversations with my participants however for convenience the instances I refer to as *talanoa* are these recorded conversations. Overall I conducted four *talanoa* with four different participants. I spoke to two men and two women so as to try offer some gender balance and a more holistic perspective all of which were conducted in different locations around the university a common ground for both parties. I had also hoped to interview at least one person who identified as *fa'afafine*⁵ however an individual that I did approach declined on the basis that they did not believe they were involved enough in sport. These *talanoa* tended to last one to two hours and consisted of an unrecorded introductory conversation which was then followed by a recorded discussion. These recordings were fully transcribed by myself however at some points I did make amendments excluding some interjections and including non-verbal cues. The use of Samoan phrases and words in these contexts also presented some issues in terms of transcription as I understood that to non-Samoan speakers these may prove problematic. With this in mind when a new or important concept or phrase is introduced I try to offer a reasonable translation within the text however I have also included a glossary to aid in this respect.

⁵ A biological 'male' within Samoan culture whose behaviour is gendered as feminine (Schmidt et al. 2016, 2).

While my engagement with *talanoa* to inform my research process was used as a means of addressing power imbalances and problematic histories it is also important to note that it is not without its critics. In particular Laumua Tunufa'i (2016) is critical of the ways in which *talanoa* is seen as 'trendy' amongst researchers in Pacific settings and of the way in which it is seen as a pan-Pacific approach even in cultural contexts in which *talanoa* is not an endemic concept. Tunufa'i is also sceptical of its strict application to Pacific communities outside of Samoa: 'to New Zealand-born and raised Pacific peoples whose 'realities here in Aotearoa' are 'Kiwi'. For most, their abilities to speak their respective 'ethnic language' is mostly non-existent' (2016, 234). It is partially because of this that I refer to my methods as being 'informed' by *talanoa* as they were influenced by and conducted in the style of *talanoa* with the aim to conduct more collaborative and ethical research. However, I am also aware of the ways in which they would be considered somewhat divergent. In particular as a *Palagi*-New Zealander to lay claim to *talanoa* and say that I had performed or enacted *talanoa* perfectly could be seen as ignorant and arrogant. As a cultural outsider I am critical of my ability to fully engage with and comprehend the cultural significance and broader implications of *talanoa*.

Disruptions

While discussing the methods I used in my fieldwork it is important that I also note what I refer to as the disruptions of these methods, the times where I was required to compromise my initial plans so as to continue my research. One instance in particular illustrates the realities of interacting with people in the field and the degree of flexibility this can require.

It had taken me some time to work up the courage to ask my first participant to sit down for a recorded *talanoa* with me. Eventually, having talked to Sione for some time as well as touching on the topics of sport and my research, it came up naturally in

conversation and he was happy to do so. I was elated and told him that it would just consist of an unstructured conversation about his experience with sport. This seemed to put him slightly on edge and I asked him if that was okay. He responded that he would prefer it if I came with some questions to ask. Perhaps he was worried that it might be awkward, that I might struggle, or that he wouldn't be able to talk about sport for long enough without set questions. Whatever the concern it placed me in a complicated position, I had planned to use *talanoa* as a means of making my research more collaborative and balanced however here was a participant specifically requesting a more structured interview style and process. I agreed to his request and we organised to have our conversation at a later date in the university holidays. By the day of our *talanoa* I had written out some interview prompts and used the first to initiate our conversation 'How long have you played sport for?' This ended up giving us enough direction that I did not need to rely on the rest of those I had written down and so it followed an unstructured process more than expected. Despite this such events raise interesting questions. In this instance I had a participant specifically requesting a more structured format. My desire for a collaborative process where both parties had a say required that I compromise the initial steps I had taken to ensure that this would be the case.

Complexity

While I initially set out with a set of questions, a predetermined method, and an idea of what to expect in the field it soon became apparent the extent to which myself and my research would be shaped by external forces. Initially I had hoped to offer a definitive answer as to what sport meant to Samoan-New Zealanders however this kind of mission can veer dangerously close to making its own generalisations. Instead what I offer is an account of what sport means to my participants and what it *can* mean for others. In doing so I hope to offer a counter narrative to the stereotypes and naturalising language that Samoan-New Zealanders face when engaging in sport. This

attempt to capture the complexity of the connections between sport, culture, and identity can never be a truly complete representation, there will always be some element left out due to the sheer enormity of the task. In my next chapter I begin this attempt by problematising the practice of sport and the degree to which it can be considered a true equivalent of its Samoan counterpart *tā'alogā*. In doing so I trace the relationship between the two from historical Samoa to contemporary New Zealand exploring the relationship between the two countries and their people as I do so. This thesis is my attempt to try and capture, at least to some extent, the complex and at times messy and contradictory relationships I encountered in the field as they appeared to me through my own experience and the experiences of my participants as they related them to me.

Chapter 3

Tā'aloga and Sport: The Same but Different

'Sport' can be a loaded term, it comes with a lot of baggage that isn't immediately obvious to the casual observer. In New Zealand where sport, and rugby in particular, is considered by many to be sacrosanct this is especially true. It is easy to be unaware of the fact that what we refer to as sport in a modern context is the product of a particular cultural paradigm. I was one hour into my second *talanoa* when my participant Le'ausālilō Lupematasila Fata 'Au'afa Sadat Muaiava (Sadat) mused 'I guess sport is a very Western term.'⁶ Something I had not considered until now, until it was spelled out to me by one of my participants, was how inherently Eurocentric my own understanding of sport was, I began to examine this in more depth.⁷

When I began my project I engaged with a wide range of literature, especially academic work on sport. As someone so unfamiliar with sport I wanted to figure out what my field was, its edges, its boundaries. My first attempt at this was to find a way to define sport beyond what I could find in a dictionary, something more substantial that took into account sport's presence in a broader social context. One of the first things that became apparent was how difficult it was to find an academic source willing to offer such a definition - perhaps it was considered self-evident or did not seem as though it were a problem requiring a solution. An early definition I came across was offered by the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace describing sport as:

⁶ Sadat indicated that he was happy for me to use his real name, all other participants are referred to by pseudonyms.

⁷ Unfortunately I did not have benefit of entering the field having read the excellent *The Anthropology of Sport* by Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell, and Thomas F. Carter as it was released December 2017, after I had completed my field work.

All forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being, and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organised or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games (Henne 2018).

However this was too broad and too vague for me as it seemed to exclude activities largely accepted as sports for example chess which does not significantly contribute to physical fitness. Another more clinical and comprehensive definition came from Richard Giulianotti who gives five key properties for sport in *Sport: A Critical Sociology* claiming that they are:

1. *Structured*, by rules and codes of conduct, spatial and temporal frameworks (playing fields and time limits on games), and institutions of government;
2. *Goal-oriented*, as sport is aimed at achieving particular objectives - e.g., scoring goals, winning contests, increasing averages - thus winners and losers are identifiable;
3. *Competitive*, as rivals are defeated, records are broken;
4. *Ludic*, enabling playful experiences, which germinate excitement;
5. *Culturally situated*, in that 1-4 are intertwined with the value-systems and power relations within the host society (2016, xii).

Originally this definition seemed adequate to me. It established an apparently comprehensive series of necessary or sufficient conditions through which one might analyse whether or not an activity may be considered sport. However, as I was to discover, such a mode of analysis can be left fundamentally lacking. This is a result of its uncritical approach to the construction and cultural history of the concept of sport itself. Ultimately, this definition was of little use to me in my project.

To understand the role of sport in the lives of Samoan-New Zealanders it is important to contextualise the present as a result of a historical sequence of events progressing through to today and extending into the future. In this sense it is crucial that I problematise the current concept and definitions of sport as products of a Eurocentric and colonial past. To do this I will examine the histories of Samoan *tā'alogā* as well as that of European sports which, while being the closest equivalents for one another in their respective languages, do not necessarily describe the same phenomena. I will discuss the eventual overlap of these two different traditions and the ways in which these dual heritages echo and are embodied in the present as well as the importance of drawing on both traditions to explore *tā'alogā* and sport in this context.

Tā'alogā

The English term 'sport' is commonly translated as being the equivalent of the Samoan word *tā'alogā*. *Tā'alogā* is the noun form of the verb *ta'alo* which is usually translated as meaning 'to play' (Allardice 2000, 188; Milner 1993, 440). However, as has been noted in many contexts prior, there is much that can be lost when translating between languages (Jones 2003, 45). This is certainly the case in the instance of *tā'alogā* and sport. While these terms are the closest approximations of one another in their respective languages this belies the fact that each word and concept originates from its own cultural context. They carry their own specific connotations and understandings. It was in the *talanoa* with Sadat that we discussed the Samoan understanding of *tā'alogā* and I first began to appreciate the variations between the concepts of *tā'alogā* and sport.

Sadat was the oldest of the participants I spoke with and was also my lecturer for one of the papers I took in the process of my research (SAMO101 - Introduction to Samoan Language). Though he was a teacher Sadat was a student himself completing a PhD

that examined developments of the Samoan language. Sadat's passion for Samoan language and the finer points of its history and development became clear almost immediately in our first lecture with him. Before discussing Samoan grammar or word order typologies Sadat wanted us to know about the history of the language itself, to understand it as a living thing. To this end, topics such as a history of competing orthographies and the phonological variations between formal, informal, and ceremonial language formed some of our first lessons. Sadat's passion for language and teaching were reflected in our *talanoa* in which Sadat began by offering an etymology of *ta'alo* the root word and verb form of *tā'aloga*:

The word is *ta'alo* and it's made out of two words. *Ta'a* means to roam and *lō* is a noun, it's a type of fish and so we say you put those two words together and you get sport or playing. *Ta'a* and *lō* and you get *ta'alo* and that, for us, sort of reflects our perception of sport.

When I asked Sadat at a later date whether this etymology was meant to evoke the notion of a school of fish to embody the idea of sport as a collective he confirmed that this was the case. In this sense the Samoan word *ta'alo* and *tā'aloga* are poetically expressive and reflect a fundamental facet of Samoan *tā'aloga* - it is understood as a collective pursuit, a school of fish swimming alongside one another.

The Samoan understanding of *tā'aloga* as a collective pursuit is a fundamental aspect of its nature. Sadat explained the way in which the collective essence of *tā'aloga* was formalised within Samoan culture and the ways in which words and language reflected this:

One of the things that is really important and that you see in sport - especially those who were raised in a strong Samoan cultural environment - is the notion of what we call *tāpua'i* and *ta'i*.

He paused briefly to write the words down on a piece of paper he had brought so that I could see how they were spelt and then continued:

So Samoan sports, games, are divided into these two groups (of people) *tāpua'i* and *ta'i*. *Tāpua'i* means worship. In sport *tāpua'i* is your family and what they do is they worship for us people who play sport, the *faiva*. *Faiva* means 'task', that means an expedition. But task for us back then meant fishing, war, things like that. So they fall under the group of *ta'i*. *Ta'i* means to be involved in the task, those who are performing the task. So you have *tāpua'i* who are your family members and *ta'i*, so a sports person.

'There's a Samoan saying that goes '*E lē sili le ta'i nai lō le tāpua'i*' he told me, using one of the many '*Alagaupu Samoa*, or Samoan proverbs, that became commonplace in my fieldwork. He elaborated on the significance of the saying in this context:

What that means is that those who are performing the task, their role isn't more important than those who are *tāpua'i*, those who are worshipping. So I think that sort of brings out some of the comments you hear in the sense that we don't perform sports independently.

This was a lot of information for me at the time and it took a little while for me to process. He continued for a while further explaining this connection and then stressed the way in which this understanding was inherently tied to religion:

The other saying in Samoan, in our metaphorical expressions that reflect our epistemologies as people is that "*O faiva e tāpua'ia, e manuia!*" what that means is that the tasks that have been blessed will be successful. Tasks that are not blessed or have not consulted their family won't be successful.

He paused here to glance at me and obviously picked up on the fact that I was feeling inundated with new information. 'I'll let you process that. That can be overwhelming a bit, yeah?' At this we both laughed; it was certainly a lot of new information.

Samoaan *tā'alogā* predates Samoa's first visit by Europeans in the early 1800s as well as its eventual colonisation (Meleisea and Meleisea 1987, 43). The term originally referred to a range of activities that did not include European 'sports'. These activities were uniquely Samoan and were deeply embedded culturally, connected to many different parts of life. Sadat named a few of these *tā'alogā* as we spoke:

Sports like *seuga lupe*, pigeon catching, that was a sport. Even *tagati'a* which is like a javelin, a javelin-like throwing sport, even *taulafoga*, which is disc-throwing, things like that.

For me all of these sounded fascinating, however *seuga lupe* in particular struck me as interesting as it was one which did not seem to have a readily offered parallel in European sport as the others did. 'Pigeon-catching sounds really cool...' I said.

'Yeah that was the sport for chiefs and no-one else'. This piqued my interest further, a chiefly sport? 'Oh really?' I asked.

'Yeah it was only chiefs so they had competitions between themselves to see who could catch using traditional tools.'

'Like snares?' I asked fascinated.

He replied:

Yeah, like snares, but we had different huts, different heights. One chief would be down there, one chief would be here and just trying to snare pigeons because we didn't just see them as pigeons... You've heard of honourifics?

He was referring to the system of *matai* titles, and I had, in fact I had been told multiple times by other people how Sadat himself had four, a reflection of how well regarded he was.

The Samoan word for honourific is *fa'alupega*, and the root word in *fa'alupega* is *lupe* which is pigeon. So we see them, at least back in traditional times, *lupe* as not only birds but they determined a lot of Samoan village hierarchies and there are a lot of different types of *lupe* for us: *lupe moa*, *lupe nofoaga*, all of that, and the type of *lupe* you caught sort of influenced the status of a high chief if it wasn't existent or a new status.

This in particular struck me as noteworthy in the way it indicated the broad significance of *tā'alogā*. This was a *tā'alogā* specifically for *ali'i* (chiefs) that influenced their status. The connection between *matai*, *fa'alupega*, and *tā'alogā* came up again later in the *talanoa* reiterating the connections between them but also showing just how deeply interrelated they were:

A lot of Samoan chief titles, family titles, family names, traditional family names that are part of the Samoan village hierarchy, so these are very important names, originated from sport.

This new piece of information caught me off-guard as Sadat had casually mentioned it as a thought that had occurred to him as a result of our earlier discussion. 'Really?' I responded.

Yeah, the thing about traditional Samoan society was that when villages, village hierarchies, were being constructed sport was a medium where Samoan families, Samoan people engaged in for prestige and for us in Samoan culture prestige is about playing to earn prestige or respect. It's about playing

not against your own but against other people in their turf and if you are victorious in their turf their leader will bestow upon you a title. They were only names but these names are now prominent chief titles in Samoan villages so the origin of these titles come from sport.

Tā'alogā much like European sport was a contest however it was one that played a major role in the construction of Samoan village hierarchies and the shaping of broader Samoan inter-village political structures.

The relationship between *tā'alogā* and *fa'alupega* was one of the more in-depth conversations that Sadat and I had on the relationship between *tā'alogā* and Samoan culture in a broader sense. However, we did talk about how other *tā'alogā* intersected with other aspects of Samoan life. One of these intersections could be found in the gendered nature of *tā'alogā*. It was considered a very masculine and male dominated pursuit. In this vein Sadat noted the ways in which *tā'alogā* such as the javelin-like *tagati'a* were used as a form of courtship:

Getting the daughter of a high chief, of a very high chief, will bring prestige to your family who isn't as prestigious compared to the other family, so sport was also used in that way.

While *tā'alogā* played a significant role in the way Samoan people related to one another it also embodied the way in which they related to their environment. Sadat explained this through a description of a traditional *tā'alogā* that consisted of shark fishing:

Our fishermen used to talk with the shark so they didn't engage in any fighting, there was no struggle, we can only speculate but that's what our elders have told us, what the literature has even told us, that we were in

harmony between humans and the environment and the reciprocity of giving back.

I appreciated this explanation of the connection between people and the environment but the idea that there was no struggle had me at least somewhat sceptical. Sadat addressed this 'I'd lie if I said there wasn't a struggle, there was a struggle, but not when luring the shark.' This made more sense to me.

So we used to wrap it and put the shark on the boat, there was struggle but you know you get the sense of how things were so harmonious back then.

Tā'alogā was deeply embedded in Samoan life in a unique way that reflected social, spiritual, and ecological epistemologies. Sadat had mentioned, when tying together *tā'alogā* and the environment, the importance of the notion of reciprocity. This became a recurring theme in our discussion. The idea of the importance of reciprocity in this context tied back to the concepts of *tāpua'i* and *ta'i*:

The thing is for anybody who is *ta'i*, if your family or if your church are *tāpua'i* and have blessed your endeavours or journey in sports or whatever it is, according to Samoan culture you are obliged to give back.

Sadat explained, going on to give a more practical example of this:

You can see some of the obligations of some sports people to look after their families finance-wise, not only for their own families but their parents and also their extended family, their church family.

This association of *tāpua'i* with Christianity is significantly ingrained for contemporary Samoans. This understanding is the product of over a century of

interplay between the *fa'aSāmoa* and the introduced Christianity. During this time these traditions have had a chance to influence one another. Just as *tā'alogā* had a pre-European existence so too did the notion of *tapua'i*. Understanding the development of this concept helps to contextualise it in the present. The work of George Pratt, a missionary who produced the first grammar and dictionary of the Samoan language in 1862, offers some insight into this pre-Christian understanding of *tāpua'i*. Pratt offers four definitions of *tāpua'i*:

1. To abstain from all work, games, &c., and to sit waiting for success in war or in sickness.
2. Applied to passengers in a canoe thanking the pullers, who answer, Faafetai tapua'i!
3. To give something to bring success.
4. To offer religious worship. A recent adaptation of the word] (Pratt 1984[1893]).

There are a few features that make this definition noteworthy. The first is its treatment of *tāpua'i* as existing both as a verb and a noun whereas Sadat's contemporary use of the terms regards it as a noun. Also of interest is the way in which historic use mirrors more contemporary invocations that involve support and reciprocity. Particularly interesting however is the lack of a religious element apart from, as Pratt notes, a recent adaptation. This gives us some insight as to the history and development both of Samoan cultural understandings associated with *tā'alogā* but also the early interactions between Samoan culture and Christianity.

Tā'alogā as it was traditionally understood and practiced in pre-colonial Samoa played a unique and deeply embedded role in Samoan social life. This can be seen in the way it reflected and embodied cultural understandings of collectivism both through its etymology but also the ways in which the roles of *ta'i* and *tāpua'i* were understood. *Tā'alogā* was also significant in the way it helped to shape villages and hierarchies in originating *matai* titles as well as the ways in which it reflected the ways in which Samoans understood their relationship with the natural environment. As such one cannot refer to traditional Samoan *tā'alogā*, at least in this context, as 'sport' without leaving this assessment fundamentally lacking. This is further compounded when you consider not just the social aspects of *tā'alogā* but also the range of activities that this could include. One of these activities was traditional Samoan oratory, as Sadat noted:

We see that as a sport, they are all categorised under the spirit of *faiva*, it's a sport because it's about seeing who's going to be the best - it's confrontation, verbal confrontation. ... Even education is a sport for us, I guess sport is a very western term, but if you see it as a *faiva* which is a task, that's what we see as sport.

With the notion of *faiva* being fundamental to a Samoan understanding of what constitutes *tā'alogā* it is clear that while *tā'alogā* and sport may be the closest equivalents for one another in each of their languages they certainly do not describe the exact same phenomena.

Sport and Colonialism

Sport as a concept and practice holds an exalted position in New Zealand society and in global consciousness in general. As sport is commonplace and significantly culturally embedded it can be easy to take for granted. However, just like *tā'alogā*, sport as it is understood today is the product of a specific cultural background.

Though sport-like activities have existed in multiple times and in numerous societies sport as we know it is very much a product of Britain. Cricket, a focus of this chapter, and rugby, a major focus of this thesis, were codified in 1744 and 1845 respectively.

Besnier et al. note that:

Before their encounter with British - and later American - sports, most world languages did not possess a term defining a unified category of competitive athletic activities that distinguish a winner from others (2017, 3).

The first use of 'sport' in this sense occurred in English in 1863 (Besnier et al. 3, 41).

Understanding sport as a product of a particular place and time contextualises it as a cultural practice and makes it easier to interrogate the functions it has served historically and how these have evolved over time. One of these historical functions was the central role that sport played in the imperialism and colonialism of the British Empire. For the British, sport served dual purposes. It was a vehicle for the 'civilizing' process 'taming' the 'savage' body and bringing it under colonial control while also serving as embodied evidence to the colonisers of their superiority through their creation and adherence to values, rules, and norms of play (Besnier et al. 2017, 45).

The impact of colonialism on indigenous cultures was also reflected in the way that sport either replaced or erased traditional activities. Samoa was no exception to this rule. During my conversation with Sadat he observed that the practice of traditional *tā'aloga* such as *seuga lupe* had waned:

No one does that anymore that's why we see the effects of colonisation, and also Christianity, in the sense that no, chiefs don't do *seuga lupe* anymore. That all comes down to the change in perception of *lupe*, or pigeons, but also how

Samoans and their environment are no longer in harmony, you know what I mean? So birds are just seen as birds.

This account bore parallels with contemporary translations of observations made by Augustin Krämer a German naturalist and ethnographer. Conducting fieldwork in Samoa around the turn of the century he noted the disappearance of *seuga lupe*:

Unfortunately that beautiful sport has been almost totally abandoned, on the one hand due to the introduction of firearms which decimated them, on the other hand as mentioned earlier through the influence of missionaries who considered this innocent game damnable because it interfered too much with the new converts' church attendance (Krämer 1994, 388).

Hearing Sadat's account and reading this, having also discussed the significance of *tā'alogā* and specifically *seuga lupe* to Samoan culture, it's hard not to feel a sense of loss at the disappearance of such a significant cultural practice. At the same time this offers an insight into the ways in which sport can be a powerful cultural and ideological force shaping the lives that are intertwined with it.

While it is important to unpick the history of sport and to interrogate colonial histories and power imbalances it is also important to do so in a way that does not disempower indigenous peoples or negate their agency. While colonisation unarguably had negative impacts on Samoan people, particular changes such as the adoption of Christianity were not necessarily unilateral. Penelope and Malama Meleisea (1987, 54) note that for some Samoans the acceptance of the Christian God was a logical choice as it was apparent from the wealth of Europeans that their God was powerful. While some were cautious to accept a new religion without fully understanding it for others the disruption that the arrival of outsiders presented to their traditional epistemologies caused them to distance themselves from the old ways. On other

islands when people accepted Christianity they symbolically burned idols and pulled down temples to signal a shift from their old religions to their newly adopted one. Anthropologist Jeffrey Sissons (2014) terms this ‘the Polynesian Iconoclasm’. However, Samoans did not traditionally construct temples and idols. Instead the rejection of the old gods and the adoption of the Christian god by villages was symbolised by the consumption of previously sacred animals (Meleisea and Meleisea 1987, 54).

Worlds Collide

It was one of the days we'd managed to finish our activity early in the language lab for SAMO102 and so we were sat around the table in the middle of the room chatting and just generally killing time. Our tutor decided to put on some music and took requests from the class, the one that was finally decided on was a pop song that I was vaguely familiar with however with a noticeable variation, it was entirely in Samoan. 'Oh wow' I said, turning to the friend I was sitting next to, 'do people often do Samoan versions of songs?' She sighed, rolling her eyes, 'Yeah they do it with pretty much every song' from her body language and disdainful tone it was obvious she found the whole situation fairly cringe worthy. I, on the other hand, was excited. 'So wait...' My mind was racing 'Does that mean there's a Samoan version of Despacito?' (The song by Luis Fonsi being popular at the time). 'Oh yeah' responded another of my classmates. Before long a cover version of Despacito entitled Se Tautino with lyrics in Samoan rather than the original Spanish was playing. It was at this point that I remembered the contents of the original lyrics, the extensive description of a sexual encounter between the song's narrator and a woman which, translated into English, contained such passages as: 'I want to undress you in kisses slowly, Firmly in the walls of your labyrinth, And your body, I want to create a manuscript' (Hanlon 2017). I panicked, worried about what it was I'd just suggested my class listen to. I turned to my friend and asked: 'Wait, do the lyrics mean the same thing as the original?' She responded sheepishly 'Nah, it's about Church and family and stuff.'

Another '*Alagaupu Samoa* that Sadat introduced me to in our discussion was '*E sui faiga, ae tumau fa'avae*' or, as he translated it into English, 'Approaches change, but foundations remain.' For Sadat this reflected the way in which, while specific practices may evolve or change, they remained grounded within a cultural framework, in particular the *fa'aSāmoa*. From my perspective in the field this proverb found expression in the ability of those around me to make whatever they did distinctively Samoan, incorporating their identity and values in a range of different contexts. This propensity to 'Samoanise' or reinterpret through the lens of the *fa'aSāmoa* is not limited to any one area and can be seen in sport both historically and in modern settings. In doing so Samoans assert and reinforce their own values and identity. One particularly prominent example of this can be seen in the relationship between Samoans and cricket.

The introduction of cricket to the colonies was common and, as has been noted of British sport at the time, served to further the colonial and imperialist goals of the empire (Besnier et al. 2017, 45). It was in this context that in the late nineteenth century cricket was introduced to the Samoan islands (Akeli 2015, 281). It did not take long for Samoans to seize this sporting form and indigenise it in their unique way, as William B. Churchward, British consul in Samoa from 1881-1884 observed:

'Soon nothing remained of cricket, *pure et simple*, but the practice of one man bowling a ball to another man trying to hit it. All the rest of the proceedings were purely of their own manufacture' (1887, 143).

This new form of cricket became known as Samoan cricket or *kilikiti*. Understandably the colonial powers took exception to the co-opting of this traditional British pastime with several attempts made to manage the practice. A notable example of this was during Major-General George Richardson's tenure as New Zealand administrator

where, amongst other Samoan games, *kilikiti* was identified as needing to be controlled (Akeli 2015, 282). Despite attempts to rein in or eliminate the practice of *kilikiti* it endured and continues to do so to this day with *kilikiti* organisations making some attempts to standardise its rules. My *talanoa* with Sadat, for whom *kilikiti* plays a considerable role in his life, offered a deeper insight as to the ways in which *kilikiti* embodies and reflects the *fa'aSāmoa*.

Kilikiti was one of the reasons Sadat and I ended up in a *talanoa* with one another. It was something I had read about but I was interested on hearing his perspective to better understand how it fit into a broader and more contemporary context. I approached him after one of our language labs and after a brief conversation I asked if he'd be interested in a *talanoa* with me, fortunately he was gracious enough to agree to this. Our *talanoa* was in essence an extension of this discussion. One of the first revelations around *kilikiti* that came out of our *talanoa* was how much of a presence it had in Sadat's life. He had started playing around the age of 12 and continues to do so to this day. However for Sadat *kilikiti* was not just a sport:

For me it's more about the aspects of the culture in the sport that really strike a chord for me and that really attracts me to go back to play *kilikiti*.

The importance of *kilikiti* to Sadat's relationship with *fa'aSāmoa* is deeply rooted in its history and the history of the Samoan people: 'For many of us we believe that *kilikiti* replaced...' he paused before finishing his thought 'war.' This comparison was not one I was expecting however it was echoed somewhat in Robert Louis Stevenson's writing on the period of time he lived in Samoa from 1882 to 1892:

Cricket matches, where a hundred played upon a side, endured at times for weeks, and ate up the country like the presence of an army (1892, 11).

For Sadat this relationship to war exists on multiple levels and connects to broader values including *ta'i* and *tāpua'i*:

If you see the way *kilikiti* is practiced it's a reflection of how Samoans prepare for war. Whether it was civil war or inter-island wars and you see it in *kilikiti* all the time.

This too is seen in the interplay of the cultural and physical elements of *kilikiti*:

Even the bats, there's a lot of *tapu* around the bats, that's probably what we see back then as war clubs. The bats, why? Because before Samoan *kilikiti* begins, before war, we have this belief in being together, so if the game is tomorrow we have to sleep together as a team.

In this scenario the bats were seen as part of the team, a reflection Samoan material culture: 'In Samoan material culture like for example fine mats and you name it, we see them as not just tools for the trade, they have life.' Sadat continued to discuss these bats as a way of focusing in on how *kilikiti* is tied to much broader cultural understandings:

So when we get to the pitch we're not allowed on the pitch we have to stay away from it until it's formally opened so we can't step over the boundary we can't even go onto the pitch itself. In terms of the bats once we get there the bats are laid out not on the curve but with the curve up, that for us symbolises life, it symbolises an opportunity to be victorious, because it's the head, it's very sacred. These are some of the things that could result in someone getting injured or someone dying, things like that, so having the bats up like that symbolises not only victory but an opportunity for victory so we don't leave

any stone unturned and we have to follow all of these cultural aspects of sport to ensure victory.

The indigenisation of cricket into *kilikiti* took a traditionally British pastime and adapted it into a practice in which the *fa'aSāmoa* is deeply embedded. This act of adaptation and the survival of *kilikiti* to the modern day despite attempts to control it can also be seen as an act of resistance against colonial powers and influences. This indigenisation of cricket as resistance to colonialism strongly resembles the practice of Trobriand Cricket as explored by anthropologist Jerry Leach in the film *Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response To Colonialism* (1975). The indigenisation of cricket is an example of the determination of Samoans to maintain their distinct culture and values in the face of forces that would erase them.

Sport and Samoans in New Zealand

Sport in New Zealand followed a similar trajectory to that of sport in Samoa having been introduced by missionaries supplanting traditional Māori sport-like activities. Today these activities have experienced a resurgence and are referred to as *Ngā Taonga Tākaro* however initially they were seen by colonial powers as barbaric (Watson et al., 2016 132). Sport plays a significant role in the identity of communities and individuals within New Zealand. Furthermore it shapes the identity of New Zealand as a nation. Rugby in particular, as the national sport, is highly influential. Supporting the national team the 'All Blacks' is often seen as crucial to being a New Zealander (Watson et al. 131). It is also closely linked to the formation of ethnic identity in New Zealand especially as New Zealand has continued to become more multicultural since the mid-twentieth century. The influence of sport has been viewed ambivalently across various circles as it has positively promoted various ethnic identities however it has also been criticised for promoting stereotypes of particular ethnic groups as well (Watson et al., 2016 132; Edwards 2007, 171). The participation of players with Samoan and Pacific

heritage in sport at both national and local levels also became more apparent during this time (particularly as clubs known to be welcoming to Pacific Island players emerged). This reflected a rising Pacific population as well as an acknowledgement of their sporting ability by wider society (Watson et al. 2016, 136). It must be noted that this relationship is coloured by what Teresia Teaiwa and Sean Mallon described as an 'ambivalent kinship' (Mallon and Teaiwa 2005, 213). Despite the apparent desirability of Pacific Islanders within New Zealand rugby their presence is also met by resistance and an apprehension in both professional and non-professional rugby. This is particularly true in secondary school rugby where *Palagi*-New Zealand boys are often described as 'suffering' at the hands of larger players of Pacific descent (Grainger et al. 2012, 274; Mallon and Teaiwa 2005, 213).

Conclusion

To discuss the role of sport in the lives of contemporary Samoan-New Zealanders it is crucial to understand the historical contexts that produced and influence this relationship. By interrogating the category of sport as a social construct and engaging a deeper understanding of *tā'alo* it becomes possible to trace the overlap and the interplay of these traditions. The history of sport and *tā'alo* is not simply that of two different practices but also one that traces constantly shifting dynamics of power and resistance. These dynamics, seen in the Samoan act of appropriating European sport and incorporating aspects of the *fa'aSāmoa*, is one that manifests in a number of ways historically. This practice is also a current one, in New Zealand where sport is often central to the ways in which identity is formed and negotiated. Samoan-New Zealanders inhabit the realities of *tā'alo* and sport simultaneously. The ways in which Samoans engage with sport, in particular rugby, is uniquely Samoan - it incorporates aspects of *tā'alo* as well as the Samoan expression of the *fa'aSāmoa*. The relationship between sport and identity is central to the experiences of the Samoan-

New Zealanders with whom I conducted *talanoa* and it is this relationship that I make the focus of my next chapter.

Chapter 4

Playing Socially: Sport and Identity

In a project begun with the desire to interrogate stereotypes it was inevitable that the scope would include the identities of those around me. At every stage of my project I found myself thinking about the concept of identity. This was true both before and after my fieldwork but especially during it. When I was attending church, when I was in my Samoan language classes, when I was thinking of the ways in which sport fit into the spaces around me it was something I was, to some extent, aware of. On a personal even selfish level this preoccupation was with my own identity, a focus on my place within the field. In these spaces, church and class, I often thought of myself as an obvious outlier, someone who didn't necessarily belong there because I would always stick out as a Palagi-New Zealander or Pākehā-New Zealander, not to mention as someone outside the world of sport.

Language forms a significant part of culture and cultural identity. It seems like a banal observation but for someone who grew up in a society where the only language associated with their cultural identity, English, is predominantly spoken it had always been one I'd had the privilege of taking for granted. In one of our first classes our lecturer asked us to tell each other why we had chosen to take the paper (SAMO 102: Conversational Samoan). For some of my classmates it was a paper that counted toward a major, they seemed confident in their language abilities. Others were confident speaking the language but wanted to learn how to write it better, and there were others who could understand the language from hearing it at home but couldn't speak it. We were all at different stages but I came to appreciate the fact that for many of my classmates their reasons for wanting to learn le Gagana, the language, were deeply personal. These reasons seemed to me to be rooted in their sense of fa'asinomaga (identity) in a range of ways. One student wanted to be able to understand the jokes his friends made, another classmate wanted to be able to speak to her grandparents better. I began to appreciate

more the complexities and dynamics of fa'asinomaga and, of course, the place of sport in this context.

Identity and its overlap with sport was a major focus of mine, a recurring motif in the field. A large part of its appeal for me lay in the fact that it managed to encompass the dynamic intricacies of what it means to be human. In the process the use of 'identity' can also have the effect of veiling the complexities it represents; for this reason it is crucial that I explore what it means for me to speak of identity. Identity is used in a range of academic contexts as such its definition can vary between disciplines as well as between theorists within these disciplines. In my framing of identity I draw on the introduction to an interdisciplinary collection of essays on identity in New Zealand. This section is written by the book's editors James H. Liu, Tim McCreanor, Tracey McIntosh, and Teresia Teaiwa (2005) academics working in the social sciences. In their exploration of the concept they distinguish three qualities of identities:

1. Identities are dynamic and multi-layered. In this sense the authors refer to the ways in which individuals can lay claim to a range of contextual identities depending on the social environment they find themselves in. This reflects the way that, while the conception of the self is individual, our association with groups also plays a role (Liu et al. 2005, 14).
2. Identities are socially constructed. This reflects the discursive nature of identity formation in that it is influenced by broader social relationships, particularly collective identities whether it is through adherence to expected values or norms or the rejection of them. In noting this the authors identify collective identities as 'imagined communities', while one may belong to a particular group they are not likely to meet or know every other person who also associates with that label. While they may be perceived as facts or natural they exist as a result of the considerable

effort that is put into maintaining them. The authors also highlight the way in which identities are often rooted in notions of historicity - they are legitimised by representations that portray a continuity from past, to present, to future (Liu et al. 2005, 14).

3. Identities carry ideology. Identities are deeply embedded within a nexus of social relations operating at both micro and macro levels. As a result they carry meanings that reflect not only the identity individual or collective identities of social groups but also broader societal values or ideologies (Liu et al 2005, 15).

These three qualities are expressed in the relationship between sport and identity, particularly in a New Zealand context. Anthropologist Jeremy MacClancy describes sports as being 'vehicles of identity, providing people with a sense of difference and a way of classifying themselves and others' (MacClancy 1996, 2). This entanglement of sport and identity can be observed in New Zealand for example in the role that rugby union has played in shaping the 'Kiwi identity' (Watson et al. 2016, 141). Sport is a social arena in which a person can achieve value or legitimacy as a New Zealander. One of the features of Liu et al's (2005) exploration of identity that is particularly compelling is the way in which it takes into account the complexities of identity formation including the tensions and contradictions that characterise it.

For my participants sport, particularly rugby union, plays a significant role in the way they form and conceptualise their identities. For Sione who is quoted in the title of this thesis and the beginning of my introduction, his sense of self was intrinsically tied to rugby. In the experience of Rachel (another of my participants) it was more than just personal, rugby ties her to her country: 'It feels like I'm part of the New Zealand culture if I'm playing rugby.'

Sport is one of the contexts in which participants engage with, interpret, and express their collective identities as Samoan-New Zealanders as well as members of churches, families, and sporting clubs. They also engage with broader societal identifiers in this space such as ethnicity and gender which, while being general categories, are simultaneously very personal individual identities and lived experiences. It must be noted that to separate these coexisting, dynamic fields of identity, while necessary when discussing them, belies their deep interconnectedness. The way in which these categories of identity can be seen to overlap with sport and the *fa'aSāmoa* are testament to the way in which sport exists as TSP, present and expressed in multiple aspects of cultural life.

In discussing the relationship between my participants, their identities, and sports, it is crucial too that I acknowledge the dangers of generalisation. Liu et al. comment that their approach to identity treats it as 'a question rather than a statement' (2005, 16) this is reflected in my work. In offering these accounts of sport and identity I do not wish to make the statement: 'This is the relationship between sport and the identities of all Samoan-New Zealanders'. Instead I ask, 'What can the relationship between sport and the identities of Samoan-New Zealanders look like?' In doing so, I aim to interrogate the stereotyping and naturalising discourse that targets Samoan-New Zealanders involved in sport and offer some insight into a much richer and more complex relationship.

Hyphenated Identity

Before entering a discussion on sport and identity in the lives of my participants I would like to address an issue of terminology. In this thesis and especially this chapter I refer to my participants and the ethnic group they identify with as Samoan-New Zealanders. The use of hyphenated identities has been criticised on multiple grounds. In particular it has been interpreted as potentially othering by suggesting that those

attributed hyphenated identities are somehow diluted or less than. For example one might argue that by calling participants Samoan-New Zealanders I am suggesting that they are not considered 'true' New Zealanders and am at least symbolically preserving prejudices (Verhoeven 1996, 97). The hyphen can be seen as an attempt to incorporate minority identities into the dominant category while maintaining a degree of separation (Grainger 2009, 2349). This said, in using the moniker Samoan-New Zealander I aim not to invoke notions of part-Samoan, part-New Zealanders. I employ this terminology as a means of stressing two aspects of the identities of my participants that they consider significant to who they are. For my participants their identities as New Zealanders exist wholly and simultaneously alongside their identification with their Samoan cultural and ethnic heritage - dynamic and multi-layered in their coexistence and interplay. This is an aspect of their identities that I will explore in more depth later in this chapter. To further address the issue of an appeal to hyphenated identities I consistently use either the term *Palagi*-New Zealander or Pākehā-New Zealander to interrogate the notion that those of a predominately European ancestry have exclusive claim to the title of 'New Zealanders' sans hyphens. Whilst I do not presume to have solved the issues of implication in the use of hyphenated identity I hope that by addressing it I am able to clarify my reasons for its use and in doing so mitigate problematic connotations.

Sport and Community

Identity is socially constructed, influenced by social relationships and association with groups (Liu et al. 2005, 14). In this sense sport often acts as a vehicle of identity in a range of contexts, a fact largely attributable to its nature as a social environment (Giulianotti 2015). The notion of sport as a social pursuit is central to traditional understandings of both sport and *tā'alo*. My participants experience sport as an amalgam of these traditions within the context of contemporary New Zealand. As discussed in the previous chapter aspects of *fa'aSāmoa* find their expression in the

Samoan experience of sport, in particular the notions of *ta'i* and *tāpua'i* which reflect the broader value that is placed on community. Two aspects of the *fa'aSāmoa* that were prominent in my participants' discussion of sport were '*āiga* and *lotu*. The interplay of these values with sport plays a significant role in how they conceive their identity. The identities of participants are also influenced by their affiliations with clubs, institutions traditionally originating within European sport.

Āiga and Sport: A Family Affair

'*Āiga* is one of the key elements of *fa'aSāmoa* and plays a notable role in my participants' experience of sport. The term '*āiga* is commonly translated as being the equivalent of the English 'family' however it is important to note that '*āiga* can also have broader implications than its English counterpart referring to parents and children but also broader relationships of blood, marriage, and adopted connections (Grattan 1985, 10). Speaking to participants it became obvious very quickly the significant role that '*āiga* played in their participation in sport.

My first *talanoa* was with Sione who was one of my SAMO 101 classmates along with my participants Phoebe and Rachel. Initially Sione and I had not had much contact however when I mentioned my research and my ongoing search for people to *talanoa* with he readily volunteered to take part. Something that became apparent early on in our discussion was the significant role that sport and family played in his life. I started our conversation with a basic question: 'What sport do you play?' His answer was simple and a little redundant as we both knew already, he'd asked for more of a traditional interview format though, so this was it. 'Rugby' he responded.

'How long have you done that for?'

'Since I was four.'

'Since you were four?!' I responded, surprised.

'Yeah, I'm 24 now so that's like 20 years' he said laughing.

‘20 years, that’s crazy!’ I couldn’t imagine doing anything for that long. ‘When you were four... How did you start then?’ I asked.

He briefly considered my question and replied ‘I would say Dad pushed us to it back then, it was for fun and for fitness.’

‘Yeah, fair enough.’

He continued: ‘‘Cos I was quite a fat kid’ at this we both laugh ‘it was like oh okay burn it off. McDonald’s eh, McDonalds, island food. But yeah, played since I was four.’

This early introduction to sport interested me as I’d only ever got into sport through school and school teams but Sione’s experience was not unique. Phoebe, the third person I spoke to, told me about how when she and her siblings were younger her uncles would take them to the park to play basketball, touch, they’d even train them in boxing and running stairs. Family has always been closely tied to Phoebe’s experience of sport, though it would make sense to call it *‘āiga* too because for her it was more than just close blood relatives:

Do you know where Strathmore (a Wellington suburb) is? So my family has lived there for ages and so has everyone else and everyone else has kids now so all of us just say we’re cousins and then we all go to the park or go to the beach to play some touch.

The fourth and final person I sat down with, Rachel, shared a similar story of early involvement with sport having begun netball at the age of five. For Rachel family played a large role in her switch from netball over to rugby:

I used to play netball but I fell out of love with the sport, my whole family have all played rugby and for school holidays my siblings and my cousins, my older cousins would just jam rugby and if they’re looking for numbers they’re like ‘bring the girls in’. They’re like ‘come play’ and we’d be like ‘oh

nah, we don't know how to play' so it was kind of them that fed rugby a lot to me and taught me how to play, even my dad, my uncles, my friends, they all loved the sport.

I was beginning to appreciate just how much of a driving force family could be when it came to sport, for Rachel though, there was an initial reluctance: 'I was just like 'ah yeah, yeah, yeah...' Her tone reflected the hesitance she had originally felt, she went on:

My cousin, when she started playing rugby, I kinda look up to her, she made me wanna play she was like 'leave netball, come play rugby, give it a try' and I was like 'Oh, I'm too scared' and my dad was like: 'Do not play rugby' 'cos he thinks I'm too small and fragile 'It's a boy's sport, not a girl's sport.' So I went to a couple of trainings and then I was like 'Oh, it's not bad' and then yeah, I got into it and now I'm playing for another two years so yeah. It's cool.

For my participants involvement in sport was strongly linked to family or *'āiga* with sport being a significant element of the family activities. A lifelong involvement in sport, particularly during their formative years, has made sport a significant part of their identities. This relationship was especially pronounced for Sione. 'I'm the oldest of six' he told me 'and all of us play rugby, five boys one girl.' We spoke about his family involvement in sport for a little while:

It's in our... I don't know... our thing. Yeah, this cheeky little thing we say like 'You're not an Auva'a if you don't play rugby' that's our last name so... So everyone has to play, yeah.

I thought to myself that it must be a lot of pressure but if it was Sione and his siblings handled it well based on what he'd told me. 'So that's really like the family identity almost?' I asked.

'Yeah' he replied 'so everyone knows us as the rugby players.'

'That's really cool though, that's a solid reputation to have as well.'

'Yeah, yeah yeah' he said 'sometimes.' We both laughed at this. 'You can't just play rugby your whole life, but yeah, everyone plays rugby.'

Sport played a central role in the *'āiga* of my participants having been present from a young age. It was significant in terms of the way that they interacted but also in the way they formed their individual and family identities. This relationship with sport is not just one-sided as family also shapes the way in which participants experience and take part in sport. The significance of sport extends beyond this aspect of their social worlds further overlapping with other elements of the *fa'aSāmoa*. In the next part of the chapter I explore the ways in which sport and *lotu* can overlap in the lives of participants.

Lotu: Community and Commitment

It was a Sunday and, for the first time in a long time, I was going to Church. Since my research had begun I knew that if I were going to be looking at Samoan culture the church would at some level become part of this. One of the first events that led to this realisation happened in my Samoan class as we were talking about the differences between life in Samoa and New Zealand. 'In New Zealand, the church is the village' said my lecturer, of course I immediately wrote this down. As I made more friends I found that for a lot of people this was indeed the case. My friend, whose church I was going to attend, told me about how her family's church was located in a Wellington suburb where they used to live, despite the fact they were now based much further away, in the Hutt. 'We tried to find a new church but it wasn't the same'

she told me, and so every Sunday she and her family load into their van and make the 35 minute drive into the city. This particular Sunday though was slightly different for them because they were picking me up. The last time I'd seen my friend before that Sunday I'd spent about ten minutes trying to figure out how formally I should dress.

I grew up attending a Catholic church and I thought this past experience would give me some advantage in this new setting. I quickly came to see how wrong I had been to try and translate my past church experiences into what to expect from the church I was going to attend. Before every service we would have bible study, this in itself was a new experience for me. In this time before services there was also time to socialise and in this instance sport was a common topic of discussion. The services themselves were entirely different from what I had expected. They were much longer than the ones at my church when I was growing up, almost entirely in Samoan, and the music was better too - there was even dancing. One on occasion a person became hysterical during the service and I realised that they was speaking in tongues, something that had never happened at my church. Though it surprised me at first I could appreciate it as an earnest religious experience.

When the people I spoke to in my *talanoa* would talk about church or members of their congregation they would talk about them as if they were family and in a sense they were. The church as a village was a simple but evocative image reflecting how deeply religion and the church was tied to a sense of community and collective identity for many Samoan-New Zealanders and, of course, sport found its way in too.

For Sadat (my lecturer) his experience of sport was directly tied to church and was deeply rooted in his relationship with his culture: 'I've played *kilikiti* (Samoan cricket) since I was, I think, 12. But I began playing for church and we had a youth team' he told me, 'I'm quite into my Samoan cricket but for me it's more about the aspects of the culture in the sport that really sort of strike a chord for me.'

My other, younger, participants did not directly speak to this idea of cultural connection in terms of church and sport but it became obvious the extent to which church and sport were inextricably interconnected. I wondered if Phoebe's community in Roseneath extended to or included her church 'you say you've all been in the same area for a while, with the community, is it everything? Same church?' I asked. She replied:

Yeah, well my grandparents they're Catholic so they used to go to church with my rugby coach and everyone. My parents went to their church but my dad is Mormon so even though he's not from this area, he's from the Hutt, there's other Mormon people like... I don't know how to explain it, my mum and her best friend they lived in Strathmore then my dad and his friend went out with my mum and her friend so yeah, they just went to the same churches and stuff.

I could appreciate the significant role of the church in their social lives.

'So you go to a Mormon church?' I asked.

Yup, and one of my friends does, we grew up together, we play for the same rugby club, the same church, the same work, the same everything, we say we're best friends but we're kinda like family.

Our conversation gave me more of an appreciation of the social roles of rugby and church in her life again stressing connection but I wondered if there had ever any tension between the two. I asked Phoebe if she had ever experienced a clash between rugby and church.

I think our coaches know Sunday is a church day. I think church comes into a lot of rugby players lives like how that guy was Mormon who said he wouldn't play in some games, and then he was gonna get signed to play for a high team but he turned it down until he came back from his mission.

What I understood from her anecdote was that it can be complicated. As part of her community where everyone is aware of one another there is more room to work things around each other and be conscious of the possible conflicts but at the same time it is also a matter of personal priorities.

While Phoebe is primarily involved in club rugby Rachel must also reckon with the responsibilities of representative rugby as well as other commitments, clashes are not so easy to avoid:

The social side of rugby does come in the way of church things but my parents are real flexible with that, sometimes they won't let me go to any rugby functions because church is important and that's completely fine with me because my faith is put first. So sometimes we have games on a Sunday and that's like 'Oh, rough' but my dad's fine with that but it's not like netball where there are games every Sunday but with rugby you hardly have games on Sunday which is real flexible. There's times when there is and it's like 'Oh, gotta make a sacrifice' there are times when it does interfere but with my parents they're not as strict as other parents would be.

This made sense to me and it offered another reason as to why netball was not ideal for Rachel. This highlighted an interesting aspect of the relationship between sport and religion: the role that church can play in shaping what sports people might choose to play. For Phoebe there was a significant amount of crossover between the people

she played sport with and the people she went to church with. I asked Rachel if the same was true for her:

Oh yeah, my cousin's one of them, she goes to church and she plays so I was like 'How does aunty and uncle let you do that?' and she was like 'Oh I train hard and they see I'm not mucking around with the sport.'

This is one of the complexities of sport and identity. While it sits within a cultural and social framework for people like Rachel who are performing at high levels it's also about their individual identity, for example as an athlete: 'I guess that's an important skill just in general' I say 'having a strong sense of purpose...' 'For everything you do...' She finished 'Yeah.'

The relationship between church and sport is often coloured by its reciprocal qualities as well as the tensions that can exist within it. For Sione church was one of the reasons he chose a particular rugby club: 'I went to Avalon because it was closer and it fit with my church schedule' he told me. I wanted to know how much of a role church played for him in terms of shaping his decisions: 'So your church schedule had a bit of an impact on that?' I asked.

'Because I play in the band as well, I play drums and keys.'

'That's awesome!' I said, 'Multi-talented.' We both laughed at this and he elaborated:

Nah, so it clashed on Thursday and rugby training was on Thursday, it was too much to go to the Hutt and band was on Thursdays as well so I went somewhere closer where I could be in the same place at one time.

'Ah yeah fair enough, and I guess church takes priority' I suggested.

Oh yeah, it depends, if I'm rostered on I'll say to the coach oh sorry I can't make it but if I'm not then rugby. I think both the leaders of the church and the coach as well, they're all smooth about it.

This reflected what Phoebe and Rachel had been telling me in terms of the balance of priorities and again there was interplay between the two. In this case it was that the church played a significant role in where and how Sione played sport and the impact that had on his social world in terms of selecting a club. Sione's experience also highlighted the imbrication of these two social spaces: 'So there's a lot of overlap?' I asked him. 'Yeah' he said, 'it's all family oriented.'

'Oh yeah so like the team and stuff as well or..?'

'More like family, we're not related by blood but just the whole culture is very chilled.'

It's hard to separate *'āiga*, *lotu*, and *tā'alogā* into distinct categories.

'That's cool, and that there's that connection across the different parts of life.'

'Yeah, it's just the way they look after each other that everyone's okay, that there's no conflict for us, yeah.'

'Which is good, less conflict is ideal.'

'Yeah' he said, smiling 'life's too short for that stuff.'

Clubs as Community

In exploring the relationship between sport and identity for my participants it can seem natural to focus on *'āiga* and *lotu* as ideal social spaces in which to consider the expression of *fa'aSāmoa* as their identities. However, this formation and expression of identity does not just take place in those spaces considered 'traditionally' Samoan. Sports clubs, which I have mentioned in passing already, play a significant role in the social lives of those involved in sport. Sports clubs originated in Britain alongside the emergence of the current Western paradigm of sport. This common history continued as their spread through the Empire paralleled that of sport (Vamplew 2015, 455). Sport

studies scholar Wray Vamplew highlights in particular the way clubs exist as a manifestation and magnifier of sport's social nature:

Sports clubs offer more than sport and perhaps that is their attraction for many people. It is not just conviviality and the creation of social capital but also the binding together of a membership by a community of interest (2015, 455).

As institutions, Vamplew credits sports clubs with playing a significant role in facilitating engagement in sport. For my participants this was certainly the case and, much like the original hybridisation of *tā'āloga* and sport, it was distinctly embedded in their cultural worlds.

For Sione in particular his experience of sports clubs was influenced by a strong sense of community. 'When you play rugby do you play for a club?' I asked him.

'Yes.'

'Cool, who do you play for?'

'When?' he responded, 'is that since I was young or..?'

'Oh you can walk me through if you want' I replied and he began:

Okay, yeah when I was about 4 I played for a club called Hutt Valley Marist and that was based in Avalon. But then, I don't know what year it was, but there was a year where they combined with Hutt Old Boy Marist so that was the Hutt team they were both Hutt teams so Hutt Valley was struggling I think and they put together with Hutt Old Boys.

'Okay, so did they merge?' I asked, making sure I was keeping up with the rugby club politics, he confirmed that this was the case. He then described his move to a college team: 'I started playing rugby for Taita College, the best school, well' he concedes 'maybe that year.' We both laughed and he continued:

Played for Taita College and then played for Hutt Old Boys for one year and then headed to Avalon 'cos that's where all my school mates were. Yeah, we just gelled better together.

I was intrigued by how Sione's decisions around clubs seemed to be fundamentally social ones. 'So were they people you knew from school?' I asked him, he responded:

From school, from school and just growing up with them and school and because our school team was so close we took that. It wasn't the same playing with the Hutt Old Boys where everyone was from Silverstream or Hutt Valley High or Bernards. It was good... But it just wasn't the same so I went to Avalon because it was closer and it fit with my church schedule.

Again this highlighted the role of the church in influencing his decisions.

For Sione rugby clubs are a matter of community and church but they're also about family. When he spoke about his siblings who play rugby I asked him: 'Do they play in the same club as you?'

'Yup, we were supposed to all go back to Hutt Old Boys 'cos they called us back but we said nah, I felt like my calling was in Avalon' To me this sounded like a significant decision 'For any particular reason?' I asked.

Just love the community, not just the players, just everyone. It's kind of the community I grew up with, I mean I grew up in Naenae and Avalon's in the Avalon/Taita area but yeah just the people there. They're not the best sometimes, they're not always the best but there's just something about that place, I can't leave. Even though we originally grew up playing for Hutt Old Boys from 4 to 13 years old. I think because we knew that Hutt Old Boys was

a healthy club and doing really well, every grade. But Avalon, they used to be, but not anymore.

I found this interesting, that this sense of loyalty was not necessarily determined by length of time with an organisation but rather by a sense of responsibility to and identification with a particular community. I was curious about this perceived decline of the Avalon rugby club from Sione's perspective: 'Is there any particular reason for that you think?' I wondered.

He had some thoughts on why this could be:

Studying sociology and stuff like that, you see it, the effects of what's happening to rugby in that community in Avalon, it's a lot of things. I don't know why rugby is... I would say rugby is dying. I reckon it is as well as it's growing.

Based on his previous statements I understood what he meant - as a rugby club the vitality of a particular community is inextricably tied to its performance in rugby and vice versa. 'Yeah, people eh' he continues, 'just community. It's real old-school. Yelling on the side-lines. I mean, you see it, those healthy clubs they're just like 'well done'' he imitated applause. 'Then you see Avalon it's like... 'Get a try!'' Again he imitated a rugby supporter and we laughed 'Smash him!' he continued 'Oh man, it doesn't get old.'

'Gotta appreciate that enthusiasm' I say.

'Gotta have that passion man, every club was like that.'

Sport, Society, and the Individual

One of the features of identity that makes it compelling as a frame of analysis is the way in which it carries ideology. In doing so identity, as a deeply personal embodied experience, serves to connect the micro of everyday lives with the macro of broader societal norms and expectations. The relationships between participants and *'āiga*, *lotu*, and clubs offer a rich tapestry however they are also localised cultural influences that exist within a broader context. This broader context is society in general, specifically New Zealand society. Within this context their identities are influenced by societal norms and expectations around concepts such as ethnicity and gender which often overlap with sport. These forces, their expression, and their overlap with other influences act to shape the lives and identities of my participants in complicated and at times seemingly contradictory ways. Through exploration of these experiences we are able to interrogate assumptions and stereotypes forming a richer more contextualised understanding of what role sport can play in the lives and identities of Samoan-New Zealanders.

Ethnicity and Sport

As I have discussed in prior chapters the relationship between Samoan-New Zealanders and sport is complicated. These 'ambivalent kinships' (Mallon and Teaiwa 2005, 213) are coloured by seemingly contradictory attitudes. While sport has been a site in which Samoan-New Zealanders have historically been marginalised and in which harmful stereotypes have been propagated it is also one of the avenues through which they have been able to achieve success and fame. These seeming contradictions are active in the lives of people I participated in *talanoa* with. However, sport also offers a broader perspective not just on how my participants are treated or perceived within New Zealand society but also the ways in which they see themselves and form a sense of identity and belonging as Samoan-New Zealanders.

The starkest example of the at times complicated relationship between Samoan-New Zealanders and sport came from Sione. I was curious as to whether he ever felt as though he was treated different from *Palagi*-New Zealand players. He was initially dismissive of the idea: 'In terms of treating a different way, nah, I don't really experience racism, I've seen it with other players but not really me.' I was curious as to what he'd seen: 'Oh really?' I asked 'What kind of...' I trailed off as he began to speak:

I wouldn't say... Do referees count? Yeah, so we were playing against HIBS (Hutt International Boys' School) and because we were Taita College it was predominantly Samoan players, or Island players, or brown players and we had heaps of white boys too so I didn't understand what was going on. I think it was more that we were Taita College, we had that reputation as playing a hood, ghetto kind of rugby, but we didn't play ghetto rugby, we played rugby the same as everybody else so yeah. We just kept getting penalised eh, that was a tough game against HIBS. And that was the only game, we played other white schools like Scots - that was a white school back in our day. So every other school was fine, every other white school like Hutt Valley High, Newlands, it was fine then we come to this one school this one time, this ref and he just...

He paused here, took a deep breath and continued:

Yeah, it was bad, it was not a good game. Probably the worst experience I had in rugby I mean 'cos we couldn't really play rugby because it kept getting stopped. We had parents fighting, it was just verbal, a lot of verbal. But there was this white lady, but she's married to a Samoan that's the funny thing. Her son was playing in the team and then he ran the ball and then because he had his big run up and everyone was like 'Ooooooh' one of our guys went 'Boom!'

He clapped his hands to emphasise the impact.

Then the mum came screaming on the field, it was a fair tackle it was just a big impact, fair tackle, nice and low, just got folded. But I think because he was so big the ref yellow-carded that player, I think red-carded... Well, one of them. He got sent off and then the mum came running and she went 'You black gorilla!' I was like 'Whoah!'

My shock at this was considerable and, realistically, a luxury for someone who doesn't experience this kind of racism. I could understand a mother's knee-jerk reaction to her child being potentially harmed but still, her response seemed extreme to me, potentially rooted in the anxiety that *Palagi*-New Zealanders can exhibit toward Samoan bodies in rugby (Grainger, Falcous, and Newman 2012, 278). 'Whoah!' I said not really knowing how to respond, 'the mum said that?'

'Yeah' he replied, 'the mum said that. The dad didn't even care, the dad was right there, and then the parent of the guy that hit came on.' This seeming contradiction of a woman married to a Samoan, mother of a half-Samoan boy, using such strong and seemingly racially motivated language absolutely stunned me. 'But yeah' Sione continued, 'I didn't like that game, that's not the reason I play rugby.'

'Would you say that's quite uncommon though?' I asked.

'Yeah' he says, 'it's not that big here, but apparently it's around so I wouldn't say it isn't.' We talked about his team for a bit and then he returned to the topic, offering more of an insight in to how complicated and unnerving that experience of racism was for him:

I had white friends in that team, the HIBS team, 'cos I grew up with them so it was weird, it was hard. But our relationship didn't change I mean after the game it was still the same I just remember that game, it was the worst game.

We didn't even play rugby it was more stopping to argue, I don't like that stuff.

It was obvious that this experience had made a considerable impression on Sione who normally seemed so easy-going and good humoured. What I came to appreciate was that it was this positive attitude that helped him deal with these experiences as well as, what he interpreted as, less notable experiences of prejudice. He moved on to talk about these other experiences: 'Other than that I just have funny experiences, stuff I can laugh at, I mean looking back now I just laugh because it was quite funny but then it's not funny.'

'Other than that game..?' I asked.

'I think... Yeah. It wasn't funny.' He reflected again on the experience he had shared with me: "Cos at the time we were just innocent kids playing rugby, get the job done then go back home and eat McDonald's." While he acknowledged the negativity of the experience in the present it did not seem to upset him too much and I felt as though it was okay ask him about the stuff he described as funny: 'What about the funny stuff, like other times is it name calling or..?' He confirmed that this was the case:

Yeah, there's a lot of name calling. Yeah there's been quite a lot of stuff though... I'll say our dad used to say 'Let the game, let your game talk and then they get to know you.' I think I had a person call me something, I don't remember, we call it 'speak death'

Here again religion was invoked in the context of sport with a reference to Proverbs 18: 21: 'Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof' (The Holy Bible: King James Version 2004). He explained this perspective in more depth giving insight as to how his experiences of prejudice were shaped and mitigated by the influences of family and religion:

When they speak death onto you they put you down, speak death, though off the field they get to know you and then they fall in love with your character so that's how dad raised us. Let your game talk. Good old mum and dad man.

Samoan-New Zealanders face a significant degree of stereotyping within rugby. While this can be expressed in the form of explicitly racist language and behaviours another form that it can take is the naturalising of sporting ability. This is the notion that Samoan-New Zealanders are born to play sport or are somehow designed to because of their physical traits. This can be problematic for a number of reasons particularly because of the way in which it devalues the efforts of Samoan-New Zealand athletes within sporting contexts. One of the manifestations of this naturalising discourse exists in the concept of 'flair'. Julien Clément writing on 'flair' describes it as having two different usages that are often in conflict:

On the one hand, it is used to describe a distinctive style of play, which in turn refers to a tradition of conceiving and coaching the game that has been transmitted and has evolved through a social history of sports institutions, theories, and contacts. But on the other hand, people who evoke this term generally seem to be oblivious to these practical formations of this distinctive style of play. (2014, 369).

In the case of Samoan-New Zealand players it is the second interpretation of flair that is invoked when describing their style of play. In this context flair is often interpreted as being a natural result of the perceived physical qualities of players' bodies and is characterised by aggression rather than tactical thinking (Clément 2014, 370). Sadat offered an insight as to the ways in which these ideas play out on the rugby field: 'There's the stereotype that Pacific people, Pacific sports people aren't good communicators.' This stereotype could be seen in the attitudes and beliefs in how players were positioned in the game: 'For example in rugby a first five should be a

Palagi, why? Because Samoans don't know how to dictate the game.' Sadat's explanation made apparent the ways in which identity is not only reflected through the broader social dynamics of the game but also within the embodied performance of rugby.

Flair or play style is closely tied to the ways in which identity is embodied through the performance of rugby. It is reasonable then that these ideas were also expressed by my participants. In particular the views of participants around play style was one of the ways in which they constructed themselves as Samoan-New Zealanders as opposed to simply Samoans, those they saw as playing rugby back in Samoa. For Sione these perceived differences seemed to reflect the dominant *Palagi*-New Zealand narrative as he described the appeal as being physical for Samoans in Samoa: 'The way in Samoa it's just to hurt people eh... Not intentionally hurt them that is, make them feel bad, 'cos it just feels good to, the physicality eh.' This perspective was echoed by Rachel:

Bro you do not wanna step in a pitch with Islander players who don't know the rules because you'd just get injured and you'd probably just end up in the hospital. It's so funny 'cos they're just ruthless and they just go everywhere and in New Zealand there's refs and stuff like that.

Sione contrasted this with the motivations and styles of those in New Zealand:

So New Zealand Islanders, they get to enjoy the sport better 'cos there's a lot more strategy to it than just smashing people so we love the physical side of things but yeah I would say the physical side of things.

While I have noted a parallel between the perspectives of my participants and those offered by some *Palagi*-New Zealand commentators I argue that these cannot be

claimed to be equivalent. Fundamentally this is because the comparisons of participants rely on descriptions of space rather than those of ethnicity. In doing so the connotations vary dramatically from those of *Palagi* claims as their reliance on space reflects an understanding of a social context. In this way rather than a natural racialised flair these views reflect Clément's first description of flair. Ultimately what these perspectives serve to highlight is the ways in which the embodied act of playing rugby can be seen to carry identity, for Samoan-New Zealanders this is a way in which they conceptualise their place as Samoan-New Zealanders rather than as Samoans.

Gender and Sport

The exploration of the relationships between gender and sport are, at this point, well established within a wide variety of academic fields (Horne et al. 2013, 56). In particular much has been made of the gendered nature of sport, as Richard Giulianotti a prominent sociologist of sport notes: 'Modern sport has always been a crucial cultural domain for the construction and reproduction of dominant, heterosexual masculine identities' (2016, 96). New Zealand is no exception to this rule and rugby in particular is seen as a fundamentally masculine activity (Ferguson 2004, 48; Watson et al. 2016, 141). This relationship between masculinity and rugby in New Zealand has also been explored more specifically in Samoan and Pacific Island communities (Mua'au 2016; Grainger, Falcous, and Newman 2012). With this in mind I seek to explore gender and sport not from the perspective of the men I conducted *talanoa* with but rather from the perspective of the women. I do this not to suggest that there is no value to be gained from further exploration of the relationship between men, specifically Samoan-New Zealand men, and masculinity in sport but rather to offer some balance to existing literature particularly within an area of academia that so often focuses on men. The experiences of the young women I spoke to were complicated and highlighted the ways in which gender and sport overlap in their lives in a plethora of ways. Within the male dominated world of sport and in particular

rugby they have faced challenges and obstacles. Despite this they have also found empowerment by co-opting a traditionally masculine space and finding a positive place for women within it, a place that my participants see as growing.

These gendered experiences were not uncommon with Rachel in particular having played netball from the age of 5. This reflects larger gendered trends within New Zealand with women being much more likely to participate in netball than men (Sport New Zealand 2015, 8). The expectation that New Zealand women will head toward netball if they are to play a sport may seem like a fairly innocuous gendered expectation however as Rachel described her reasons for leaving I found that this was not quite the case. When I asked Rachel why she switched from netball to rugby, rather than a simple preference or love for rugby, she answered bluntly: 'I saw more opportunities in rugby than I did in netball.' I asked her what she meant by opportunities and she explained:

Netball you couldn't really go far because of the cost and payments, stuff like that. But in rugby I could go to international levels which I did this year and last year just like that. I was like this is cool it's taking me around the country whereas as netball there's steps and steps and steps but to do that there's money. I remember doing Wellington reps netball like three hundred bucks gone like that for one tournament and that's accommodation, food, and the tournament itself and to get there. My parents were broke because tournaments happened every month or so and on top of that there's fees. To play netball at my school, Saint Mary's College, it was like \$130 and then on top of that you have to play indoor netball which is like \$60 on top and uniform hires, it's ridiculous. And then with rugby it was only a \$45 fee and that's it, uniform and everything was covered and if you played for an international level or the provincial team, free gear nothing to worry about.

Rachel attributed this to rugby being well supported in New Zealand however I could not help but feel sceptical of a system that pushed women into a particular sport in which their families were put under considerable financial pressure just because it was an expectation. In this sense for Rachel and her family rugby also offered economic relief.

Despite being heavily gendered rugby has the potential to be liberating for women. This can manifest in a number of ways. Until speaking to Phoebe and Rachel I had never considered the ways in which rugby can encourage body positivity for young women. As Rachel spoke to me she mentioned the range of women she played with describing them as 'big or small'. Rachel saw this as a reason that rugby had an appeal:

That's another reason why I think a lot of girls now decide to play rugby. Because in netball if you are not a certain height for a shooter, like if I wanted to be a shooter, if that was my dream position there was no way I would ever make it to the Pulse level or an international level 'cos they just don't want that. They want the person who is closer to the hoop that can just shoot it, you can find people like that but in rugby it doesn't really matter. The smallest person's probably the best one because they can snipe through anywhere and everyone's height and body is beneficial because it's such a hard game, a physical contact game that anyone is allowed to play.

This was echoed by Phoebe though she noted the way in which there was not necessarily the same level of opportunity for men as there was for women in terms of ideal players: 'I think for men it's harder, they look at your size, your height, your age, everything.' It seemed that rugby, traditionally considered the purview of men, not only had a place for women but one that welcomed a wider range of women than the sports that they had played in the past.

Both Rachel and Phoebe's initial experiences with rugby were heavily influenced by gender and gendered expectations. These expectations were particularly prominent in early experiences of rugby commonly seen as a 'boys' sport'. Both Rachel and Phoebe's families were initially opposed to their involvement in rugby. Rachel recounted how her father disapproved saying to her: 'You're too small, it's a boys' sport, you don't know how to play.' Phoebe had a similar experience: 'When I picked it up in college they (her parents) were just like 'we're not coming to your games 'cos we don't wanna watch you play.' Undiscouraged they used this denial to spur themselves on. Rachel in particular was driven by a desire to prove her father wrong 'What made me wanna play even more was because he said no and kind of underestimated me a bit.' While the discouragement offered by their families may seem unfair both stressed that it came from a place of care and of wanting to protect them. Once their parents saw how much the women loved rugby they acquiesced, becoming their biggest supporters. The notion that rugby is a boys' sport is something both are highly aware of. Women's rugby in New Zealand is still not valued in the same regard as men's rugby with a considerable pay discrepancy between players in the All Blacks and the Black Ferns⁸ (Paul 2018). It was only in 2018 that the Black Ferns received their first commercial sponsor (Perry 2018). For Rachel this is part of why playing rugby is so important to her, she's aware of her place as a potential role model for others: 'I thought to myself, if I play maybe it could help change the way New Zealand looks at women in general, kind of going back to being sexist.'

Rachel and Phoebe's experience of sport are shaped not only by the *fa'aSāmoa* but also by gender. While rugby is considered stereotypically masculine it can offer a space in which women are freed from gendered expectations. The choice to play rugby can also be a result of more pragmatic concerns for example the fact that rugby is relatively inexpensive when compared to alternative such as netball. Also, as an area of growth,

⁸ The country's national men's and women's rugby teams respectively

women's rugby can offer more opportunities to players. This is not to suggest that women's experiences of rugby are free of tension. For my participants the notion that rugby is a 'boys' sport', a perspective echoed by their families, acted as a barrier to their participation. In this instance my participants asserted their individual desires against that of their *'āiga* indicating that while the influence of family is important the assertion of individual identity is also important. As women who play rugby Rachel and Phoebe are aware of the position they hold, they are not only playing the sport they love but are also helping to carve out a place for women within New Zealand's national sport.

Conclusion

The overlap of sport, identity, and the *fa'aSāmoa* for my participants is significant. This overlap is apparent in their identity as members of communities from familial groups to churches to sporting specific institutions such as sports clubs. Sport affects their sense of collective identity and their identity as part of a community also shapes their experience of sport. This is also the case in their individual experiences of self. In this sense various aspects of their identities such as their ethnicity or their gender play a role in how they experience sport and vice versa. In this sense sport can be complicated, it is neither a wholly positive nor a wholly negative influence in the lives of participants. Rather it is a dynamic constantly shifting combination of both which can at times seems self-contradictory. This experience of sport is not only rooted in the past and present of my participants but also their future. The significant role sport has in their lives means that it also factors into the way they imagine and plan their futures. It is this aspect of their relationship with sport that I will explore in my next chapter.

Chapter 5

Hope and Going Professional: Imagining the Future, Navigating the Present

When I first spoke to Sione about sport he told me about how central rugby was to his family's identity - when we had our talanoa I asked him if his siblings also played, 'Oh yeah, everyone, I'm the oldest of six and all of us play rugby, five boys, one girl.' While our conversation wandered between topics he mentioned his desire to get back into rugby and into a representative team having taken time out due to university and sustaining injuries:

I plan to take it seriously, just have another shot I think, cos all my siblings are cracking it just like that with no injuries, everybody's cracking it, about three of them now. Two brothers and a sister are doing really well.

The desire and the possibility for Sione to go professional were, at least to his mind, very real factors that he took into consideration when imagining his future. The same was true for Rachel, when I asked her what her ideal scenario would be for her future in sport she replied:

Hopefully one day I actually get to wear the black jersey (the uniform of the Black Ferns) for 15s or 7s (variations of rugby union) but for now I'm just going with the flow. I'm not pushing anything 'cos right now my focus... I'm trying to balance uni and rugby.

This expressed her desire to pursue professional rugby but also an acknowledgement of the other forces in her life shaping her decisions. While she spoke of this desire quite casually others were more candid about the future they saw for her in rugby. When I asked Phoebe who is friends with Rachel if she knew of many people trying to make the transition to professional

rugby her response was immediate: 'Well I know Rachel, Rachel's always gonna make it, I just see so much potential in her.'

In this chapter I examine the ways in which participants' relationships with sport influence the ways in which they imagine their future with their chosen sport and, simultaneously, interpret their present. For all of my participants sport holds a significant role in their lives and the lives of many of those around them. It is inextricably connected to the way in which they experience the present but also becomes central to the way in which they conceive the future. To analyse this relationship I draw on Miyazaki's interpretation of hope as a form of knowledge production: 'A method for apprehending a present moment of knowing' (2004, vii). I am also influenced by Ghassan Hage's perspective on academic discussions of hope and the commonalities he identifies within them: 'All those terms express in one way or another modes in which human beings relate to the future' (2003, 10). Ultimately, I explore an interpretation of hope as a form of knowledge production that examines the relationship between my participants and the future but is also notable in its exclusion of positive connotations.

Because of my research's proximity to the university my participants were predominantly young. However, it is important to state in this scenario it would be a mischaracterisation to conflate youth with optimism. While sport can act as a lens through which participants envision their future it does not make them blind to the obstacles in their way. As such hope as a way in which knowledge is produced is not so much a naïve fantasy as it is a nuanced analysis of the world. It is a framework taking into account possibilities, hurdles, and the ways in which these are reconciled in the embodied present. In this way my analysis in this chapter reflects the work of Lorena Gibson who highlights the relationship between hope and agency (the ability and desire to act in the present) and her argument that 'how people hope reveals a lot about their being' (2011, 15). In this chapter hope is conceptualised as the way in which

an individual relates to the future. It is the way in which individuals take into account and are aware of the challenges that can impact their ability to achieve their idealised future and the way in which they confront these realities. If sport, as the etymology of *tā'alogā* suggests, is the school of rabbitfish travelling away and then returning hope forms part of the ocean they swim through. It is a current that influences and becomes an indelible part of that shared journey.

Going Professional

When Sione shared his desire to make it into a representative team I had some idea of what this meant however I did not fully gather the level of performance this kind of achievement involved, the significance of 'taking it seriously' was lost on me. This was also the case with what it meant for his siblings to be 'cracking it'. It wasn't until a couple of months later when I saw that his younger brother had been called up for the All Blacks that its significance hit home for me. The same was true, even more so, for Rachel who achieved her goal less than a year after our talanoa when she got to wear that jersey she had talked about as a member of the Black Ferns. I realised that when my participants discussed going professional and the factors that influenced these goals it was not necessarily wishful thinking, they were talking about very real possibilities.

For the young Samoan-New Zealand sportspeople I conducted *talanoa* with a professional career in their chosen sport was a very real possibility and one of a number of potential pathways that they considered and evaluated when thinking about their future. Discussions of professional sport often neglect to touch on the motivations that drive engagement in professional sport, perhaps considering them to be self-evident, and when they do address the topic Matani Schaaf notes that they tend to highlight 'success and monetary reward' (2006, 41) as the main considerations. Whilst these motivations were touched on by participants I found that their

experiences and rationale were much more nuanced. These motivations were influenced not only by their own desires and perspectives but also those of their family the *fa'aSāmoa* and the overlapping, at times contradictory, influences that make up their social worlds.

Fame

Success and fame can be a significant motivation for young Samoan-New Zealanders to attempt to make a career in professional sport. While these motivations can resemble those of their non-Samoan counterparts, for example the motivation of fame for fame's sake, these motivations are also the result of other external influences. For participants fame, or prestige, is also a means of achieving fame for their family and their community reflecting the aspect of the *fa'aSāmoa tautua*, the importance of service. As such there is not only a hope to achieve within professional sport but potentially an expectation as well. One of my more focused discussions on this idea was with Sadat and tied into one of the previously mentioned '*alagaupu Samoa* that he shared with me during our *talanoa*: '*E sui faiga, ae tumau fa'avae*' in English: 'Approaches change, but foundations remain.' This attitude and behaviour could often be seen in the field around me for example in the 'Samoanisation' (reinterpretation through the lens of the *fa'aSāmoa*) of popular music. In this instance, Sadat was referring to the ways in which sport was a source of prestige in Samoan culture historically. Not only in the origins of the *fa'alupega* or *matai* titles and the development of village hierarchies, but also as a current means of maintaining and developing that prestige. For the individuals that have inherited these names there is an expectation that they will live up to them in some sense, 'The descendants of these people carry that burden, I'm not sure if that's the right word, or that obligation to upkeep that'.

For Sadat situating this cultural practice of nurturing prestige and the reputation of family as tied to a historical setting was essential for contextualising the relationship between family, prestige, and sport in contemporary New Zealand:

For example the hooker for the New Zealand Black Ferns who's the captain, her first name is Fiao'o her last name is Fa'amausili. Fa'amausili is a title, it's a high chief title in Samoa it is one of the highest titles in the Malietoa family. These are Malietoa's chiefs, young chiefs, lower ranked chiefs. So you can see that expectation to succeed is connected to some of these titles.

Sport is not only tied to the creation of prestige but also a cultural expectation that it will be maintained in some way. This is done not purely for the sake of the individual but also because it exists as a familial responsibility for the bearers of these *matai* titles. This caused me to wonder about those individuals from families with lesser known names, is this responsibility absent or reduced? Apparently not. Sadat noted that these expectations can be just as, if not more, pronounced for individuals engaging in sport:

Modern sport now for Samoan families is also used as it was back then so the not so well known names are using modern sport to take their family up there.

For modern Samoan-New Zealanders sport is not only a means of maintaining prestige, but also establishing prestige, as such it can serve a function similar to the way in which it has been used historically within Samoan culture.

This thesis stresses the fact that sport is intertwined with the lives of Samoan-New Zealanders at a deep cultural level. Looking beyond this it is interesting to note what Sadat's exploration of sport and the maintenance of prestige as *tautua* reveals about the intersection of values considered as being central to the *fā'aSāmoa*. In particular, my *talanoa* with Sadat highlighted the degree to which the values of *tautua* and *'āiga*

overlap in the arena of sport. *Tautua* in this context was enacted through the use of sport to honour and represent one's 'āiga in a positive and meaningful way within a culturally significant context. The relationship between *tautua* and 'āiga runs deep often incorporating the concept of *fa'aaloalo* to a significant degree as well. Within the field I observed the ways in which this relationship extended beyond the boundaries of sport. One of the more notable instances of this intersection of values occurred within the setting of the university where I conducted a significant portion of my fieldwork. In my own experience I had considered my time at university from a particularly individualistic perspective. I was attending for my own benefit however it became apparent that this was not the case or at least not the expectation for those around me. During my time learning Samoan it became a commonplace occurrence that lecturers and tutors would often appeal to notions of 'āiga, *tautua*, and *fa'aaloalo* when encouraging students. It was often framed as doing right by their family and in particular honouring their families and the labour of their parents that led to them being there. While it is quite possible that this variation in perspectives says something about myself and the privilege of being able to take a university education for granted it also reflects my earlier discussion on the nature of *tā'alogā*. Specifically, this demonstrates the way in which the notion of *tā'alogā* as *faiva* is central to its interpretation echoing Sadat's observation that even education may be considered a sport from this perspective. By analysing education as *tā'alogā* it becomes apparent the way in which the *tāpua'i/ta'i* relationship is embodied in this setting attesting to the ways in which the aspects of the *fa'aSāmoa* often find expression in a way that reflects how tightly they are interwoven.

Before I go any further I feel I should note that in drawing a connection between historical practices of sport in Samoan culture and those of modern Samoan-New Zealanders I do not mean to suggest that I believe this is a culture that is in some way static. It has long been a central tenet of the social sciences that cultures are dynamic and constantly changing in response to a wide variety of factors (Samuels 1991).

Instead I argue that this is an example of approaches changing while foundations remain. It is important to remember, as has been noted in previous chapters, that what is considered sport in modern New Zealand and what constituted *tā'alogā* historically in Samoan culture are not homogeneous. Instead sport in New Zealand, specifically sport as it is experienced within the lives of Samoan-New Zealanders, exists as a combination of European sporting traditions as well as Samoan *tā'alogā*. Furthermore, the presence and possibility of this practice for modern Samoan-New Zealanders can be (at least partially) attributed to New Zealand culture itself where exceptional performance in sport, particularly professional sport, is highly valued and a source of prestige for those involved (Edwards 2007, 186; Stratton 1998). It is then perhaps not so surprising that this particular confluence of cultural values and practices has occurred. It may also be seen as a reflection of the unique space Samoan-New Zealanders inhabit and the interplay of identities as Samoans and as New Zealanders as discussed in prior chapters.

Money

In the same way that an understanding of the significance of success or fame for Samoan-New Zealand participants taking part in or considering professional sport benefits from a more nuanced interrogation so too does the motivation offered by money. Specifically, I refer to the opportunity for financial gain that a career in professional rugby offers. With the 1995 professionalisation of rugby union in New Zealand (James and Sayers 1995, 78) the notion of a career in rugby became more feasible for Samoan-New Zealand men and indeed all men able to perform at a competitive level. Much like the influence of success or fame it would be hard to argue that money and the accumulation of wealth do not play a role in making a career in professional sport an appealing prospect for my participants and those around them. However, like fame, the relationship Samoan-New Zealanders have with money in this context is far more complicated than that of straightforward accumulation of

personal wealth. As has been noted the unique intersection of sport and the *fa'aSāmoa*, particularly the values of *tautua* and *fa'aaloalo*, shapes the ways in which participants imagine their future and conceive their relationship with sport and their culture. Just as this intersection creates a deeper relationship with the notion of fame so too the motivation offered by money takes on new dimensions within this context.

As I have discussed in earlier chapters, aspects of the *fa'aSāmoa* such as the reciprocal relationship between *ta'i* and *tāpua'i* are inherent to a Samoan interpretation and understanding of sport. Specifically they highlight notions of interdependence that are fundamental to conceptions of the *fa'aSāmoa*. While these concepts are present in many aspects of Samoan life, including participation in amateur sport, their expression and significance become especially pronounced in the context of professional sport. An individual's success in sport is seen as a product of the support given to them by their *'āiga* and broader community so there is an expectation that they will meet their obligation in this relationship by giving back. In the case of professional sport this reciprocity is often expected to take the form of gifts or money.

As the oldest of my participants as well as the bearer of several *matai* titles Sadat was best placed to explain these obligations to me as well as the ways in which they related to participation in professional sport. This was because of his more in depth cultural knowledge and experience.

So the whole reciprocity between *ta'i* and *tāpua'i* you can see some of the obligations of some sports people to look after their families finance-wise, not only for their own families but also their extended family, their church family.

Just as the expression and interpretation of the *fa'aSāmoa* can vary between individuals, the obligations represented by this relationship of *ta'i* and *tāpua'i* are interpreted and responded to in the same ways. Sadat offered an example from his

own life of two professional rugby players whose responses to their obligations varied significantly within the context of his church. The first behaved in the expected manner:

Whenever he'd play a game here he'd always come to church and you know, he'd give some gifts. Not much but that showed that obligation to give back because he realised and he knew that the church were praying for him and wishing him well in his career. He built a new house for his family so some of those obligations to give back are really important.

In this instance the player displayed the values of *tautua* and *fa'aaloalo* by giving back to those who were responsible for his success. This included both his *'āiga* and his broader community in particular his *lotu* or church another significant feature of the *fa'aSāmoa*. Sadat contrasted this behaviour with another professional athlete who had been part of his church community:

He'd come now and then [to church] but he's become distant from the church environment mainly because of those obligations to give which he didn't understand, but his parents were trying to explain to him, maybe too late in his life.

These differing responses to the obligations that can exist when pursuing a career in professional sport as a Samoan-New Zealander highlight the complex role that money and culture can play in shaping the lives of those that go on to compete at this level. Furthermore, the scenario that Sadat shared in which one of the professional athletes didn't understand his obligations and their significance within a cultural framework highlights a tension that can exist for Samoan-New Zealanders. While the *fa'aSāmoa* is central to a sense of identity it is a set of cultural ideals which values collectivism highly and arguably to a greater extent than is present within the mainstream *Palagi*

world. The tension between these two world-views seem capable of potentially causing some degree of cultural alienation for those caught in the middle. While professional sport can be a means of earning money it is also a way in which individuals gain more responsibility, expectations, and potentially pressure as well. This is in large part due to its intersection with the *fa'aSāmoa* and the way in which sport overlaps with values such as *tautua*, *fa'aaloalo*, *'āiga*, and *lotu*. Within this framework the role of money as a motivator can be more complex and culturally embedded for Samoan-New Zealanders than their *Palagi*-New Zealander counterparts.

Staying Amateur

I have discussed some motivations that can play a role in the way Samoan-New Zealanders hope when it comes to a career in professional sport and the ways in which these overlap with the *fa'aSāmoa*. However, it is not the case that all of my participants wished to pursue such a career. Furthermore, even for those who did express a desire to do so, there were mitigating factors which were also taken into consideration. My discussion of hope focuses on hope as a form of knowledge creation a process in which a complex network of factors are taken into consideration when envisioning the future rather than as a simple optimism. For my participants, whether they wished to pursue a career in professional sport or not, this process of hope was coloured by an understanding and evaluation of not only positive factors but also those that could possibly be detrimental or undesirable. These undesirable factors were varied and occurred in a range of different contexts from broader societal issues of fetishisation and commodification within international professional sport to the intersections of the *fa'aSāmoa* and professional sport.

Perhaps unsurprisingly commercial interest has long been a factor driving the professionalisation of sport. The professionalisation of rugby union in 1995 was the result of an NZ\$828 million offer from media mogul Rupert Murdoch to secure the television rights for a professional world rugby competition. This move, supported by New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa, compelled the International Rugby Board to remove the governing rules which had until then enforced amateurism (James & Sayers 1995, 78). Subsequent to the official professionalisation of rugby, corporations in the form of sporting goods producers and media companies have become increasingly more involved in the realm of sporting teams and events, for example, through broadcast and sponsorship (Carter 2011, 67). Sports teams and clubs have become corporations in their own right competing with one another not only on the playing field but also in the accrual of resources and talent (Besnier 2015, 850). When players enter the world of professional rugby they become part of an international marketplace in an arena in which their performance is commodified. In this context, noted by Niko Besnier as: 'the only sector of the global market in which workers, and more specifically their bodies can be bought and sold' (2015, 852) it is not only the performance of the player that becomes a commodity but also the player themselves.

Ironically, within this professionalised setting the stereotyping of Pasifika, and specifically Samoan bodies, can be an asset in securing contracts and a source of opportunity. The notion that they are 'natural' rugby players as well as a perception of them as exceptional 'products' within the global sport market serves to make them desirable athletes to teams worldwide (Horton 2012, 2399; Lakisa et al 2014, 350). While at first this may seem advantageous for these athletes seeking employment through transnational sport migration it is not without its risks. In a system where the value of individuals is dependent on their ability to perform physically and in which there is a fairly narrow age range for the ideal player as well as the risk of sustaining bodily harm (not to mention a number of other possible issues such as substance abuse, scandal, or unsatisfactory performance), employment within international

professional rugby is precarious to say the least (Besnier 2015, 852). Though the visible and considerable presence of Pasifika and Samoan athletes within sports may be seen as positive representation, it can also mean that they are disproportionately affected by the harsher machinations of international sport. The tension these forces produce highlight the complexity that colours hope as knowledge production within this space.

These processes of commodification operate at a high level but their impact is widespread. They are simultaneously distant from and intimately entangled in the lives of the athletes either employed as professional sportspeople or considering a career in professional sport. Terms such as fetishisation, commercialisation, and labour migration may not be present in the minds of my participants when imagining a possible future in sport but that is not to say that they are unaware of what is occurring or the personal risks involved. Sione in particular had seen the ways Australian rugby league teams head-hunted young talent and the negative effects this could have: 'A lot of young players have gone to league because league is just throwing money and contracts at kids now.' In another context this statement could have been promising, but the way he said it, his tone, made that impossible:

I remember growing up in college and there were all these rugby league coaches from Wellington Rugby League and they would just come and be like: 'Hey you wanna come trial for the Melbourne Storm or for the Australian teams?' Or they'd come and watch you in this final or that final and if you play well and they see you, you have a chance of going to their summer camp, seen heaps of those eh. I would say they took some real good players, a lot of good players from my generation, I think it was a good thing as well but then what happened to them after the contract was what I didn't like.

He paused, letting the words hang there briefly before starting again, moving the conversation in a slightly different direction.

They were real good rugby players, as good as Ardie Savea, he's one of our generation who's up there in the All Blacks now, and there were a lot of players in our year, it was a tough year group. Class of '93 was a tough year group 'cos there were a lot of great players, but league, league took a lot of our great players and I would say of about 20 of them that I know about two of them are still playing. The rest are just back at... Either they've gone fat or they're just working.

'So...' I asked tentatively '... what happened after the contract?' He sighed.

I know two of them, two guys, one of them was close to me and he went to Melbourne, made the team, did the age groups, and then he got injured. After that they let him go, but he was the man at our age level, he's the man, so yeah... It was sad.

Pursuing an international career in rugby can offer more immediate and more easily accessible opportunities to players, especially if they are willing to move between codes, but risks are involved. These risks, inherent in the current professionalised system, leave athletes to grapple with the possible consequences their choices may have on their futures both professionally and otherwise. Rugby offers both fame and money to those who go professional. While these factors may push them towards such a career their awareness of the ways in which such opportunities can sour temper their perspectives and the production of knowledge that hope entails.

While cultural values may encourage a career in professional sport it is important to note that these same values can also play a role in guiding Samoan-New Zealand

athletes away from sport as they contemplate their futures or at least affect the options they consider as valid. One of the elements of the *fa'aSāmoa* that can play an important role in these decisions is that of *'āiga*. Incidentally the role of the family in literature on professional sport is one that Thomas Carter claims is one that is left relatively untouched. He notes that the interests, concerns, and interferences of family greatly impact the decisions and actions of sports migrants. Ultimately he is critical of the simplistic view that families only stand to benefit from the establishment of transnational connections: 'There are risks and costs that must be attended to as well as strategies forged, partnerships renewed and adjustments to be made' (2011, 14). This more nuanced relationship was reflected in my *talanoa* with participants and particularly with Rachel. This was a notion Rachel discussed as we talked about the increasing prominence of women's rugby internationally and the impact it was having on herself and those around her: 'I've got some friends in America playing as well, and from France, some friends from France, yeah, everywhere!' She told me excitedly going on to elaborate:

There are some girls that played for Poneke club from France, we call them the 'Frenchies' like: 'Oh the Frenchies are here' or some Germans, a Czech - she was really good. I've got a lot of friends from different places.

'Does that kind of movement happen that much?' I asked her.

'The movement?' She responded and I realise I probably could have phrased my question better, I tried again: 'Like in terms of different nationalities moving to different countries.'

Yup, it happens a lot, I guess 'cos rugby, for women now, they're offering money for girls to play. I've got one friend named Georgia she just moved to Japan 'cos she got offered this much to go play. It's not just for boys.

I smiled at this and we touched on other topics before I returned to the question of sports migration: 'What about thinking long term, would you consider moving overseas?' I asked her. 'I remember going to Japan at the beginning of the year for just a week' she told me 'and it doesn't mean I didn't like the country, I just hated being away from home and I'm going to Japan again it's like: 'Oh, I'm gonna miss my family' but maybe...' She paused for a moment, thinking, then continued: 'Nah, I wouldn't. Just too far away, too far away from home. I guess I've always been close to my parents and New Zealand is my home and I just like being here better.'

Conclusion

As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, hope as a form of knowledge creation offers individuals a way to relate to the future and the *fa'aSāmoa* plays a crucial role in this. A number of possible realities and, significantly, choices are weighed against each other and motivations are assessed and pitted against one another as well. The influence of fame and money, though more nuanced and culturally embedded than they may appear on the surface, interact with many other factors. Hope is the way in which individuals take into account and are aware of the factors that can impact their ability or desire to achieve a particular future, in this case a career in professional sport. An awareness of the possible negative repercussions of a career in sport as well as the conflicts that can arise between sport and other priorities must also be taken into account. It must also be noted that the reasons people got involved with rugby originally can be part of the reason that they seek to continue to play at a professional level as well. As Peter Horton, an academic working in the field of exercise, notes: 'The opportunity of playing the game they loved for money was perceived as 'manna from heaven' (2012, 2398).

Of course it must also be noted that not all of my participants wished to continue at a professional level. When I asked Phoebe if she wanted to continue to pursue rugby at higher levels she was quick to dismiss that particular future while echoing all of my other participants in voicing her love of the game: 'I love playing rugby and I love being there but I think it's just my getaway from school and work.'

'Like a way to unwind? So you don't necessarily want it to become work as well?'

'Yeah, I kinda want to be a police officer right now.'

Chapter 6

Conclusion: A Social Network

In producing this thesis I have presented a more complex counter-narrative to previous discourses which have tended to naturalise and stereotype the relationship between Samoan-New Zealanders and sport participation. While the study of sport has become more common since the middle of the 20th century within anthropology, ethnographies particularly those that examine issues of race and religion have been underrepresented. Anthropology's examination of sport is a field still in its relatively early stages and ethnographies within this context are similarly uncommon. The key findings of my thesis suggest that the contemporary practice of sport for Samoan-New Zealanders is the product two distinct cultural traditions: Samoan *tā'alo* and European sport. For my participants this contemporary practice sport is deeply ingrained in both their individual and community identities as well as their culture. Not only this sport is also central to the way in which they hope and imagine their futures particularly in the realm of professional sport.

In chapter 3 I used my problematisation of sport as a concept as an entry point into a discussion on the ways in which *tā'alo* and sport were culturally constructed and embedded. By positioning sport as a cultural practice which embodies cultural values and meanings I was then able to explore the ways in which identities are also tied into this exploring the evolving relationship between Samoans and *Palagi*. To do so I used *kilikiti* as an example of the tensions arising from the meeting of these two cultures as well as the ways in which the *fa'aSāmoa* can find expression through sport. I then traced this relationship to New Zealand examining the complicated histories of Samoan-New Zealanders in sport.

Chapter 4 began by discussing the relationship between sport and identity in more depth while also acknowledging the potentially problematic implications of invoking

hyphenated identity. I then explored the connections between sport and community specifically focusing on elements of the *fa'aSāmoa* such as *'āiga* and *lotu*. Next I examined the ways in which the historically European institution of the sports club played a significant role in how participants negotiated their sense of community and belonging. I then finished by analysing the links between individual identity and society on a macro scale examining how participants' experience of their ethnic and gender identities were shaped by sport and vice versa.

Chapter 5 finished exploring my ethnographic data by considering the role sport plays in shaping how participants experience hope. By establishing hope as a form of knowledge production I was able to examine the ways in which the motivations offered by pursuing a career in professional sport impacted the way they considered their possible futures. While fame and money may be considered typical motivations for Samoan-New Zealanders the form these motivations take can be uniquely influenced by their culture. Specifically they can involve the expression of aspects of the *fa'aSāmoa* such *tautua* and *fa'aaloalo*. My participants were not naive or idealistic they were also aware of the challenges and risks inherent in pursuing a career in professional sport. They were aware of the precarity of such a career and the ways in which they could be taken advantage of. In other ways their identities and relationships with others also played a role in shaping the ways in which they could consider pursuing careers in the arena of global sport.

My chosen methods of participant observation and *talanoa* were well suited to my project and allowed me to gain a nuanced understanding of the field around me. While one of my participants preferred a semi-structured format to *talanoa* my accommodating this reflected a commitment to the principles central to my use of the method. Furthermore those conversations that were conducted as *talanoa* proved to be valuable sources of data. My selection of participants was also satisfactory as one of the individuals I conducted a *talanoa* with has gone on to play professional rugby

reinforcing the value of her perspective within my chapter on hope. Though my position within the field was the cause of some anxiety on my part and cast me as an outsider there was some benefit in this. It meant that those around me were aware of the need to explain unfamiliar things to me. Furthermore, as an outsider my learning the language served as an asset not only as an entry to the field or even as a means of familiarising myself with the language around me but also as a means of showing respect to those I met through my fieldwork.

While I have tried to introduce nuance and complexity into the conversation around the reasons why Samoan-New Zealanders participate in sport and the role it plays in their lives it must be noted that I have done so in a manner divergent from my initial research questions. As observed in chapter 2 to offer a comprehensive answer as to why Samoan-New Zealanders play sport would be almost if not entirely impossible due to the range of complex relationships that individuals can have with sport. To address this I have limited my scope to examine the more prominent themes that emerged during my research and, using TSP, emphasised the way in which these are all connected as part of a larger picture. It must be acknowledged too that not only are these relationships complex they are also at times contradictory. In this sense it is hard to essentialise such relationships and indeed this should be avoided so as to avoid the issues this thesis seeks to address. In retrospect while I was happy with the fieldwork I conducted I admit that undertaking research within a more directly sport related context could well have offered valuable data. Also, despite the fact that I collected a significant amount of data from my fieldwork and *talanoa* it may have been of value to include more participants in my research as a means of enriching the range of data I had to work with.

Because of this complexity there is much to be gained from further study in this area. In particular I was disappointed that I was not able to delve into the differences between sports or performance at different levels from amateur to professional.

Furthermore research that focuses in more depth on the relationship between religion and sport or the ongoing and evolving relationship between women and sport is particularly valuable as it is an area in constant flux. Another aspect of the relationship between Samoan-New Zealanders or any group that faces stereotyping within sport worthy of investigation is the way in which agency is asserted by such groups through the strategic reappropriation of such stereotypes. This phenomenon in particular was something that I observed in the field but due to the limits of a relatively brief thesis was unable to address significantly. While these areas are of particular interest to me due to the fact that I was aware of them but limited in my ability to investigate them further research is not limited to these areas. Indeed while they would be significant and highly valuable contributions to the literature I would hope that this thesis has shown the sheer number of possibilities for avenues of inquiry in this space and the ways in which research may develop and progress from my contribution

In this thesis I have offered an in-depth and detailed ethnographic account of the relationship between society, culture, communities, individuals, and sport. Existing work on sport has done so but often in ways that privilege broader perspectives rather than the lived experiences of individuals and it is in this context that anthropology can fill these gaps in novel ways. Hopefully further anthropological research into the phenomenon of sport will enrich this growing ethnographic exploration.

I conclude that the combination of TSP and *fa'aSāmoa* is immensely valuable in the way that it enables the exploration of the complex and nuanced relationship between Samoan-New Zealanders and sport. To gain a realistic perspective on this relationship the use of TSP as a means of appreciating sport was crucial. It enabled the analysis of sport a deeply embedded cultural and social practice offering a holistic perspective exploring connections social institutions such as family and church as well as individuals experiences of identity. The incorporation of the *fa'aSāmoa* into this analysis was also beneficial as it enabled a more nuanced understanding of the role of

Samoan culture within this context. I have offered a rich complicated depiction of the relationship between my participants and sport and in doing so have interrogated the stereotypes and the naturalising discourse that is often targeted at them.

My thesis contributes to a small but growing field of study that examines the ties between culture and sport as a phenomenon that operates at all levels of society and across multiple contexts. For the people I spoke to sport was a significant and meaningful part of their lives past, present, and future. It reinforces their ties to their culture as well as their communities and families. On a more individual level, it plays a significant role in the way they think about themselves and the way in which they negotiate, explore, and express their identities. My analysis was rooted in Mauss's concept of the *fait social total* or Total Social Phenomenon while also being informed by the *fa'aSāmoa*. The *fa'aSāmoa* is fundamental to the way in which Samoan-New Zealanders express and embody their cultural identities and plays a role in shaping their relationships with others. By contending that sport exists as TSP for Samoan-New Zealanders and tying this into notions of the *fa'aSāmoa* I have argued that for my participants sport is inextricably tied to their sense of self and is expressed or has influence in all aspects of their social lives. Samoan-New Zealanders do not play sport because they were 'born to play'. Sport is not just something my participants do, and it's more than just an aspect of their lives. For my participants, sport is part of who they are.

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Glossary

<i>‘Āiga</i>	Family
<i>‘Alagaupu Samoa</i>	Samoaan Proverb
<i>Fa’aaloalo</i>	Respect
<i>Fa’alupega</i>	System of honourific titles
<i>Fa’aSāmoa</i>	‘The Samoan way’ a collection of Samoan cultural values
<i>Fa’asinomaga</i>	Identity
<i>Faiva</i>	Task
<i>Kilikiti</i>	Samoaan cricket
<i>Lotu</i>	Church or religion
<i>Lupe</i>	Pigeon
<i>Matai</i>	Honourific title
<i>Palagi</i>	European-New Zealander/Pākehā
<i>Seuga lupe</i>	Pigeon-snaring
<i>Tā’aloga</i>	Equivalent of sport
<i>Ta’i</i>	Individual performing task or sport supported by <i>tāpua’i</i>
<i>Talanoa</i>	Conversation, also a research method
<i>Tāpua’i</i>	Individual or group supporting <i>ta’i</i>
<i>Tautua</i>	Service