Methodology marriage: Merging Western and Pacific research design

Dion Enari*

Bond University

Abstract

Throughout their migratory journeys, Samoans have continued to perpetuate their Samoan culture within their host countries such as New Zealand, Australia and America. Research on Samoan people should not only be academically rigorous, but also incorporate methodologies that are culturally appropriate. This paper discusses the appropriate methodology that was used to explore the perceptions of Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way) held by New Zealand-born Samoans who reside in Brisbane, Australia. A combination of Pacific and Western methodologies was used in producing data that is both academically reliable and culturally valid. This was achieved through talanoa, participant observation and a review of the literature. The paper concludes that the Fa'a Samoa barriers among this cohort are disconnect and burden, while its carriers were Fa'a Samoa as an ancestral gift, Samoan identity, support and respect. Disclaimer: The frequent use of secondary sources is to highlight how long-standing certain issues are and their current relevance. I also use secondary sources to show Western methods that are culturally appropriate, for example, citing other Samoan academics who also use grounded theory in their research.

Keywords

Grounded theory, Indigenous epistemology, constructivism, diaspora, Pacific culture, transnationalism, qualitative method

***Corresponding author**: Dion Enari, Bond University, dion.enari@gmail.com

Introduction

> *Culturally appropriate methodology makes fieldwork more reliable and valued* (Otsuka, 2005: 2)

The aim of this exploratory research is to access New Zealand (NZ)-born Samoans' perceptions of Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way). This article provides an overview of the study design and research process. I saw it as imperative that the voices and actions of NZ-born Samoans in Brisbane be brought to the centre. Through documenting their journeys and experiences, a better understanding of the Fa'a Samoa journey can be achieved. This research will also explore our stories of being in Samoan spaces and mainstream society, through talanoa discussions and participant observation to ensure a well-rounded analysis of our journeys in Brisbane.

For this study, a constructivist paradigm was the primary approach as it allows the voices of participants to be given authority and respect. Constructivism also epistemologically aligns with Samoan and Pasifika worldviews as it acknowledges multiple truths (Ng Shiu, 2011; Wilson, 2017).

This article is based on a PhD study. The research aims were to explore the following:

How do NZ-born Samoans residing in Brisbane define Fa'a Samoa?

The secondary research questions were:

a) What experiences shape this definition of Fa'a Samoa among NZ-born Samoans residing in Brisbane?
b) What are the carriers and/or barriers to Fa'a Samoa participation?
c) How does the built environment affect Fa'a Samoa?
d) How can Fa'a Samoa survive into the future for NZ-born Samoans in Brisbane?

This research journey was difficult, scary, mind-boggling and rewarding. The journey was more complicated and complex than I had first anticipated. There were many times where I was unsure and uncertain of how best to collect, analyse and present the stories of my participants and me. The constant analysis of my methodology and findings, coupled with regular dialogue with specialist academics, family and friends has helped bring this thesis to life. There were many mental and spiritual journeys during the research, which helped me learn how to let our stories lead and guide the direction of this article.

The willingness to share and alofa (love) of my study participants is what made this thesis possible. Without the voices of my participants, this story would not be told. The recruitment process was delightful as many NZ-born Samoans in Brisbane were willing to participate and assist when needed. All the participants within the study were generous with sharing their experiences and time and were also willing to participate in follow-up interviews and participant observation opportunities.

Participants throughout the study were caring and kind towards me as many of them invited me to family and community events. Their knowledge, time and love were gifted to me as a researcher. As a Matai (Chief), an Enari and a Samoan in Brisbane, I knew I had a responsibility to give back to my participants. After the study, I assisted some participants in homework, employment networking and Samoan language and cultural learning.

There were times throughout my research journey where I was mentally, physically and emotionally drained. At times, the data collection was overwhelming, and there were moments during the data analysis that were challenging, and the thesis writing processes produced many writing blocks. However, hearing and seeing the Fa'a Samoa stories of my participants, coupled with family and community encouragement, gave me motivation and determination to continue and complete this thesis.

The important role I hold as a NZ-born Samoan researcher and the importance of my study was constantly reiterated to me by others. All participants in the study not only supported the objectives of the research, but also wanted the research to be a tool in Samoan cultural continuation within transnational settings. The desire for Samoan cultural survival helped increase and validate the reliability of our talanoa discussions. Participants spoke deeply and openly on what they liked and disliked about Fa'a Samoa with the hope their experiences would inform suitable initiatives.

I received much genuine interest and support not only from the participants, but also the wider Samoan community in Brisbane. Many were supportive of my study and believed it was much needed in capturing how we navigate Brisbane with Fa'a Samoa.

Pacific worldview

Pacific peoples' epistemologies and lived realities are based on real relationships with their ancestors, their god/s and their spiritual world (Vaioleti, 2011: 114).

This research is grounded in the Pacific worldview and recognition of the unique epistemologies of Pacific peoples (Du Plessis and Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009, cited in Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2017). Research via a Pacific worldview challenges Western-centric ways of being researched through imperial eyes (Smith, 1999, cited in

Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2017). When researching Pacific peoples, one must acknowledge the effect "pervasive colonization of intellectual spaces … [has had on] marginalizing Indigenous knowledge systems" (Roberts, 2000, cited in Hviding, 2003, cited in Dunlop-Bennett, 2019: 67). Therefore, there must be proactive measures to "decolonise" research methodologies (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2002; Helu-Thaman, 2003; Smith, 1999; Taufe'ulungaki, 2000, cited in Dunlop-Bennett, 2019: 67). It is important for the research process to interweave the Pacific worldview inclusive of Pacific knowledge, skills and research values (Lingam, 2017). Consequently, everyday activities and communication are conducted with regard to the family and god/s. Knowledge within the Pacific worldview is constructed communally as people construct knowledge through social engagement (Gegeo, 2001, cited in Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2017). This communal construction, spirituality and interweaving of past knowledge is not often recognised within mainstream research models (Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2017), which is the reason for choosing a different approach for this study.

Even within Samoan transnational settings, research must be grounded in a Samoan/Pacific worldview (Dunlop-Bennett, 2019). Researchers who solely rely on Western ways of knowing would not be able to understand the knowledge and ways of being of the transnational community that originate from the spirits and land of Samoa (Vaioleti, 2006). Research on Samoan people within transnational contexts must be inclusive of a Samoan lens, which incorporates the usage of metaphors and codes of conduct (Niuatoa, 2007). It is through such knowledge systems that spirits and ancestors are encompassed and that the Pacific and Samoan views can be in "harmony" (Niuatoa, 2007: 15).

Constructivist paradigm

> *Research methodologies that were designed to identify issues in a dominant culture and provide solutions are not necessarily suitable in searching for solutions for Pacific peoples, whose knowledge and ways of being have unique epistemologies* (Vaioleti, 2006: 22)

As I read much of the literature and spoke to many Pacific academics, chiefs and community leaders, it was apparent that an epistemological standpoint appropriate for Samoan culture was needed. I started viewing the methodologies of other Samoan and Pasifika academic researchers and saw many had used a constructivist paradigm. The co-creation aspect of a constructivist paradigm was not only appealing to me as a researcher, but appropriate for the cohort I was researching (Enari & Faleolo, 2020). My lived experience within Samoan spaces and conversations with Samoan and Pasifika academics and leaders confirmed the constructivist paradigm as an epistemological basis in line with Samoan and Pasifika communities, both within the islands and transnational communities (Enari & Matapo, 2020).

Crocombe (1976) believes Pacific concepts share many similarities to a constructivist paradigm (cited in Vaioleti, 2011). Constructivism is premised on the belief that knowledge is co-constructed as opposed to discovered (Crotty, 1998). This epistemological standpoint has an emphasis on understanding a certain situation that is contextual as opposed to discovering a universal law (Willis, 2007, cited in Wilson, 2017). The ability to acknowledge multiple truths and co-construct knowledge aligns with the Pacific worldview of knowledge construction (Wilson, 2017). The interpretive constructivist paradigm enabled me to analyse the variables influencing the creation and realisation of the perception of Fa'a Samoa held by NZ-born Samoans residing in Brisbane. Their perceptions are currently under-reported in the literature and need to be explored in-depth. As a researcher using a constructivist paradigm, I was shaped by the lived experiences that presented in the knowledge I co-created with participants.

A constructivist paradigm encourages a focus on the "subjective human" when creating meaning (Miller and Crabtree, 1999: 10). It also acknowledges each individual's construction as unique and representative of their personal reality (Begg, 2000, cited in Vaioleti, 2011). Piaget (1950) believes that people are shaped by their interactions with factors of the environment, which influence their perceptions and behaviour, and that interactions with one's environment would differ among individuals (Piaget, 1950, cited in Lipine, 2010). Therefore, it is important to ensure individual truths/realities are considered when undertaking research.

A constructivist paradigm also allows one to consider the cultural and social contexts of research participants (Vygotsky, 1978, cited in Ng Shiu, 2011). Therefore, the different environments of Samoa, NZ, mainstream

Australia and Samoan transnational spaces contribute to the thinking and learning of NZ-born Samoans in Brisbane. Vygotsky (1978) also speaks of the significance of historical and cultural aspects of research participants (cited in Ng Shiu, 2011). This acknowledges the need for researchers to understand the cultural and historical past of NZ-born Samoans to understand their present context. Thus, it is important to acknowledge the migratory history and processes that shape the settlement of NZ-born Samoans in Brisbane. Constructivist epistemology allows for truth to be indicated by participants (Hmelo-Silver, Duncan, and Chinn, 2007, cited in Lipine, 2010). As the researcher, I emphasise the need to hear the views of NZ-born Samoans in Brisbane and their experiences with Fa'a Samoa, because the information they provide will help develop appropriate initiatives for Fa'a Samoa in Brisbane. The views of NZ-born Samoans who reside in Brisbane regarding Fa'a Samoa are deemed as sufficient as they are providing "genuine descriptions" of their lived experiences (Lipine, 2010: 154).

Constructivism as a theoretical framework is appropriate for this study as it aligns with Pacific/Samoan worldviews, as through a constructivist paradigm, authority and mana are given to the voices of the participants. This epistemological standpoint ensures that Samoan beliefs, values and ways of knowing are seen as valid knowledge systems (Du Plessis and Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014, cited in Dunlop-Bennett, 2019).

In order to understand the perceptions of NZ-born Samoans pertaining to Fa'a Samoa, I must speak 'with them' and not 'around them'. In other words, my participants are the "authority" and "experts" of their realities. This epistemological standpoint also allows me as the researcher to explore potential additional challenges of navigating between Samoan spaces and mainstream society (Faleolo, 2013, cited in Dunlop-Bennett, 2019).

Grounded theory

Grounded theory influenced the research methodology used within this study as it generates theory by data that is systematically collected and analysed (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). It is an inductive approach to better understand complex social phenomena (Glaser, 1978, cited in Ng, 2008). The aim of this approach is to develop theory grounded in the data that is collected from natural settings (Ng, 2008). Grounded theory research calls for creativity, closeness to respondents and the ability to interpret what is seen and heard (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, cited in Cuban, 2010).

Qualitative research and talanoa have "important links" to grounded theory (Tuia, 2013: 104) as talanoa's function of co-constructing knowledge is used to inform Samoan appropriate grounded theory (Lipine, 2010; Stanley, 2017; Tagaloa, 2008; Vaioleti, 2006). Grounded theory can, therefore, be used to expound and view the perceptions of participants based on their experiences with Fa'a Samoa (Niuatoa, 2007).

The insights that grounded theory demonstrates are the contextual explanations of the meaning of lived experiences (Creswell, 1998; Dick, 2002). This allows for the data to tell its own story (Glaser, 1992) and helps to ensure that crucial information from the talanoa does not get sanitised out (Vaioleti, 2011). Grounded theory allows the researcher to use what they hear, see and sense during data collection (Charmaz, 2014). Through grounded theory, the researcher can develop "explicit guidelines" on how they may proceed, which results in the concrete data being converted to an explanatory theory (Charmaz, 2015).

A broad description of reality is achieved through research that is grounded in multiple views, while different experiences and perspectives from different people help broaden the understanding of reality (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, cited in Lipine, 2010). Accordingly, the participants' voices should be "privileged" and "protected" to ensure the participants have power to identify challenges and solutions that are culturally appropriate (Dunlop-Bennett, 2019: 71).

Grounded theory, if unmanaged, can be potentially reductive and misrepresent data (Cuban, 2010). However, to ensure the credibility of this study, I reviewed the entire grounded theory process to identify gaps and ways of improvement. I also allowed participants to comment on transcripts and observations to ensure the codes matched the data and their stories were representative of their lived experiences.

Weaving Me/I/Dion

I am part of the people of my concern and my research interests (Medicine, 1987: 283).

When studying ethnic minorities, it is advantageous to have an insider researcher involved (Hodkinson, 2005). As an insider researcher, I had the ability to conduct interviews in Gagana, Samoa. My ability to speak Samoan and English was an asset to this study as participants could freely interchange their use of language. As an insider, I could also understand the nuances, meanings and symbolisms of Samoan cultural events. All of the participants within this study also spoke of how they were glad that a fellow NZ-born Samoan was conducting the study. Many of the participants said they felt more comfortable to share their experiences with another insider as opposed to a non-NZ-born Samoan researcher. Easier access to data and genuine interest in the study are advantages for insider researchers (Unluer, 2012).

This research is birthed from many discussions with my family and the wider Samoan community concerning the state of Fa'a Samoa amongst Samoan people in Brisbane. As a NZ-born Samoan who takes pride in the Samoan language and culture, I was drawn to explore carriers and barriers of Fa'a Samoa among NZ-born Samoans in Australia.

I have lived on and off in Brisbane for nineteen years and have formed close relationships with a number of those who were involved in this study. Although these established relationships had the potential to negatively impact the study, I was able to manage these relationships with sensitivity. My relationships have established the credibility and trust for open and transparent discussion within the wider community (Coghlan and Brannick, 2005).

Although there are advantages of being an insider researcher, I also acknowledge the potential disadvantages. I could make incorrect assumptions during the research process based on my prior knowledge (DeLyser, 2001; Hewitt-Taylor, 2002, cited in Unluer, 2012). Another challenge as an insider researcher is that participants may assume I already know what they know (Unluer, 2012). In order to maintain the integrity of the study, I reviewed what I saw and heard with participants to ensure I had correctly transcribed what was occurring.

My role as an insider researcher demands conscious intersubjectivity, ensuring that I am aware of my own Fa'a Samoa journey and the formation of my own perception of Fa'a Samoa whilst co-constructing meanings with study participants. I did not wish to project my own views onto participants. Instead, my presence as an insider who has been on a similar journey adds strength to the study. To ensure appropriateness during talanoa discussions and participant observation, I was consciously aware of the need to ensure the validity and credibility of the research process. I recorded my own personal views in my journal and throughout the research process to ensure I was aware of my positioning in the research.

Reseach site

Conversations with family and friends residing in Brisbane, coupled with personal knowledge, initially informed me of suburbs and areas within Brisbane to commence primary observations. Statistical data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and my personal knowledge validated the areas of focus for the study of Samoans in Logan, Ipswich and Moreton Bay Regional Councils, although the research was not confined to these areas as participants extended beyond these points of concentration.
I was able to engage in Samoan spaces within Brisbane including Samoan churches, celebrations, weddings and birthdays. Also included were other spaces that were not Samoan-specific, but had Samoans present such as universities, multicultural festivals, English-speaking churches and local parks. As the researcher, I ensured I conducted myself respectfully and in line with the cultural protocol that some of the different sites demanded. For example, in Samoan spaces, I ensured I was always seated and positioned below elders I spoke with.
Data collection occurred over a nineteenth-month period. Participant observations and talanoa sessions were the methods for data collection allowing for credibility of the study (Elder, 2009). Data collection commenced upon ethics application approval.

Research ethics

Fa'a-Samoa is Samoan in essence, a "textbook" for ethical and moral guidance (Niuatoa, 2007: 15).

Ethics approval was granted on April 30, 2018. The data collection phase commenced on April 30, 2018 and was completed by November 28, 2019. Data collection with talanoa discussions occurred concurrently with observations of study participants and other NZ-born Samoans who resided in Brisbane. During talanoa sessions, the following steps were taken to ensure transparency and reciprocity:

    a)   I met with individual participants to gain consent and introduce the study;
    b)   I observed (between two–six observations per talanoa dialogue participant);
    c)   I conducted the talanoa session;
    d)   I used pseudonyms throughout this study to ensure participant confidentiality was maintained.

Sample and recruitment

Purposeful and snowballing selection was concurrently used to recruit participants. Purposeful selection was used to ensure variety in age, gender, suburb of residence and religious affiliation.

I was previously known to sixteen of the twenty-two participants. This was advantageous in creating trust and openness throughout the interviews. There were also participants within the study who were recruited through online advertisements or referrals.

Interview data was obtained from the lived experiences of twenty-two NZ-born Samoans (thirteen females, nine males) aged 18–44. All participants within the study were born in NZ, identified as Samoan and resided in Brisbane.

Twelve of the participants arrived in Australia before 2001. Five participants were married, while nine participants had children. Most participants in their 20s and teenage years resided in the family home. Participants included eleven tertiary students, one doctor, three factory workers, one childcare worker, three office workers and three with home duties. All participants reported English as their first language. English and Samoan were equal first languages for five participants who spoke Samoan fluently. Nine of the participants could speak conversational Samoan, while the remaining eight had limited fluency in the Samoan language. Table 1 (below) shows the participants categorised by age.

Table 1. Study participants by age group

40s	30s	20s	Teenagers
Penelope	Paulo	Derrick	Jordan
	Courtney	Anna	Jasmine
	Garrett	Camden	Mesia
	Terry	Johanson	Evelyn
	Nikita	Mika	Averil
		Rita	Amos
		Martin	
		Vaitulu	
		Cara	
		Amanada	

Data collection

The collection of flowers (information) from several sources which I tui (weave) as my kalala (garland) (Vaioleti, 2011: 175)

I consulted various Samoan/Pasifika academics and community leaders to ensure effectiveness and appropriateness throughout the research process. The data collected was primarily qualitative, although some quantitative data was included to strengthen findings. The ongoing review of available literature around the research questions was carried out initially to identify the research gaps and to understand the theoretical frameworks, key authorities and standpoints of this study.

Literature analysis covered an extensive reading of information available on Fa'a Samoa, NZ-born Samoans and Samoans in an Australian context. This assisted with highlighting the previous understandings of NZ-born Samoans residing in Brisbane and Fa'a Samoa within Australia, as well as the political and social changes occurring in these contexts that have contributed to the current perceptions of Fa'a Samoa held by NZ-born Samoans residing in Brisbane.

Talanoa

As an effective way of exploring the depths of the reality of Samoan experiences and expressions, the term "interview" finds little value in this work. One cannot touch the depth of Fa'a-Samoa when research is carried out in terms of formal interviews. Information from interviews, then, remains only on a theoretical level and does not really touch the profound roots of the Samoan life experiences (Niuatoa, 2007: 10)

For the purpose of capturing NZ-born Samoan voices on their own experiences and perceptions of Fa'a Samoa within a Brisbane context, it was important to collect the dialogue of the cohort in a culturally responsive way (Denzin, Lincoln, and Smith, 2008; Smith, 1999). Talanoa is an Indigenous method that can instigate discussion in the following qualitative strategies of case studies: data collection, participant observations and narratives.

Vaihu (2010) and Vaioleti (2003) both promote talanoa as a culturally appropriate method of conversing in Pasifika contexts, which is well-suited to the focus of this study on NZ-born Samoan people. Talanoa is a Samoan term meaning conversation or to converse and, in most instances, its conceptual use refers to the telling of a story that assists to generate authentic Samoan knowledge.

Talanoa is a widely accepted framework frequently used globally when researching within Pasifika contexts (Halapua, 2007; Latu, 2009; Otsuka, 2005; Prescott, 2008; Vaioleti, 2003; Vaka'uta, 2009). The purpose of talanoa is not to discover or own stories, but to co-construct through conversation (Clandinin et al. 2006, cited in Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2017). It is a spoken, face-to-face co-constructed method of research, which encourages authenticity, transparency and cultural appropriateness in the research process (Suaalii-Sauni, Samu, Dunbar, Pulford, and Wheeler, 2012).

Talanoa accomplishes this by ensuring an encouraging environment for mutual understanding in a more personal and culturally appropriate manner that would not otherwise occur through structured formal interviewing (Carr, 1994), and it recognises the needs and concerns of the participants inclusive of cultural identity (Faleolo, 2013, cited in Dunlop-Bennett, 2019).

The cultural appropriateness of talanoa differentiates it from semi-structured interviewing. For example, talanoa starts with acknowledging participant and researcher ancestral lineage to establish relationships and connections between individuals and their ancestors. Talanoa assists in creating knowledge that is culturally valid, not only in the island homeland, but also among transnational Samoans (Faleolo, 2013, cited in Dunlop-Bennett, 2019). Talanoa with NZ-born Samoans who reside in Brisbane allows for a more holistic view of their perceptions of Fa'a Samoa.

A talanoa approach informed the methodology as it allowed for me to explore cultural behaviours and the life narratives of participants in their natural environment (Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2012). Generating "thick descriptions" allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the participants and allowed for their lived experiences to be seen (Denzin, 1989).

The talanoa process with the research participants had numerous stages. The early stages of dialogue allowed me to make connections through key informants and begin the snowball identification, recruitment and selection of participants for the study. The next stage of talanoa took the form of twenty-two initial interviews that informed me of the perceptions and experiences of Fa'a Samoa held by NZ-born Samoans residing in Brisbane.

I collected and analysed the life-story narratives of NZ-born Samoans who migrated to Australia for social or economic opportunities. The method of talanoa captures the perspectives of the individual Samoan and Samoan families, because according to Vaioleti (2003), talanoa is a culturally responsive method in Pasifika contexts that creates 'authentic' Pasifika knowledge (Vaioleti, 2003). It has become adopted as a concept of

analysis across a range of disciplines within several Melanesian and Polynesian academic circles and is a widely accepted 'critical Indigenous' method (Brown and Strega, 2005) of collecting qualitative data in Pasifika contexts (Halapua, 2007; Otsuka, 2005; Prescott, 2008).

It was important to ensure the procedures of my fieldwork were conducted in a culturally appropriate manner, especially with some of the participants voicing concern over culturally insensitive, Western-centric interview procedures they had previously experienced. The concept of collaborative co-construction was explained to talanoa dialogue participants to ensure trustworthy dialogue and rapport.

The talanoa sessions were conducted individually to allow participants to freely and privately voice their stories. Individual talanoa was also deemed more appropriate as opposed to a group talanoa to allow for more in-depth discussion and ensure participants were not discouraged from fear of embarrassment within a group setting.

Each talanoa session was guided by questions that inquired about their journey within Samoan spaces, mainstream society, church and perceptions of fa'alavelave, aiga potopoto and fa'a matai. The talanoa was semi-structured to allow participants the ability to discuss all the issues they felt were important to Fa'a Samoa. The open-ended nature of talanoa allowed participants to freely express what they believed was important and thoroughly explain their feelings and experiences of Fa'a Samoa. This allowed me to explore their deep and inner perceptions, which structured interviews would not provide. Participants were able to delve and expand into sensitive, spiritual and personal experiences. As a speaker of both Samoan and English, I could conduct the interviews in the language participants felt comfortable conversing in. This allowed me not only to display respect to my participants, but also to accommodate their desire to speak Samoan when they wanted. During the talanoa sessions, fluent Samoan speakers would speak Samoan and English, while participants who were not fluent in Samoan would occasionally use Samoan words.

The beginning of each talanoa session would start with a discussion of where in Samoa one's ancestral origins were. This was to establish the ala (pathway) between me and the participant, to create commonality and understand how we were culturally linked. I would proceed to establish where I came from in NZ. This further reinforced another similarity—that we both migrated from NZ to Australia. This solidified me as an insider in the research to the participant and allowed for closer rapport. As a result, I was able to use my insider status to speak of everyday events as if we were friends or family. This interconnected rapport would allow for trustworthy co-construction, mutual understandings and an in-depth view of the participant's perspectives. The open-ended, natural and transparent nature of talanoa allows for thorough data collection. These talanoa sessions were conducted in various public parks, libraries, cafes and university rooms. The sites for talanoa sessions were selected at the convenience of the participants.

Participant observation

Participant observation is a means by which the researcher observes what is occurring within the research field and listens to participants (Becker and Geer, 1957). Participant observation is a practice of registering, interpreting and recording what is seen and heard (Schwartz, 1955), while directly engaging as a participant in the community being studied.

Being an insider participant observer (a NZ-born Samoan who resides in Brisbane) is considered important and challenging (Herrmann, 1989, cited in Unluer, 2012). As an insider participant observer, I had conversations with different people including participants, teachers, ministers, parents and community leaders who are actively involved within the Brisbane Samoan community.

I observed all study participants through cultural events, birthdays, funerals, weddings, churches and social media. My participant observations extended beyond the participants within the talanoa discussions as I observed other NZ-born Samoans in Brisbane who did not participate in the talanoa discussions. This was to gain a wider perspective of NZ-born Samoans in Brisbane and their behavioural patterns.

My field notes comprised of: (a) environment and surroundings; (b) activities and interactions occurring within the environment; and (c) frequency and duration of activities and interactions, and other subtle factors which may include unplanned activities, symbolic meaning and nonverbal communication (Merriam, 1988).

The field notes helped provide context as to why certain phenomena occurred. It was important for me to take field notes in a non-intrusive and non-distractive manner post-observation to ensure minimal disturbance. I was able to capture many precise quotes and participant actions throughout my observations. I also had a reflective journal to record my own thoughts and feelings towards what I had observed to protect the legitimacy of the study (Schensul and Lecompte, 1998).

This method of participant observation also acted as a reference point when analysing the commonalities and differences between what was discussed in the talanoa dialogues and what occurred. For example, observing Samoan language fluency by those who claimed to be fluent in the talanoa dialogue.

In order to counter potential participant observation problems within the study, I chose to be a passive observer and gain post-observation consent.

I was a passive observer as I tried to minimise communication with the study participants during the observation period. This form of participant observation works on the premise that the less I interact, the less I will affect the situation. This form of observation also allows for a greater opportunity to view events as they happen (Schwartz, 1955).

Post-observation as opposed to pre-observation permission was obtained to ensure participants did not previously know they were being observed and their natural behaviour patterns were not altered. Post-observation permission was obtained by participants to ensure their behaviour was as natural as possible. The appropriate ethics approval was obtained for this post-observation approach.

After observations were made, I would discreetly record what I had observed and ask the participants for their permission to use the collected data. The participant observation data I collected included written field notes, reflections and my own personal views on events I had observed, which were compiled in my research diary. The time duration of observations varied from one hour to one day.

I spoke with participants I observed when I needed clarification on their behavioural patterns. This allowed the participants to better explain their behaviour and beliefs, whilst also allowing me to better understand observations.

Quantitative data

For the collection of quantitative data, such as migration and survey statistics for the creation of spatial distribution maps of Brisbane's urban environment were used. I also relied on up-to-date census data and services obtained from the ABS, the Samoan Bureau of Statistics, Statistics NZ, Queensland Multicultural Affairs, the Samoan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship. These departments have a valid set of databases that have captured figures of Samoan immigration into NZ and Australia from both the Pacific Islands and NZ.

Data analysis—Constant comparative method

The constant comparative method "combines systematic data collection, coding, and analysis with theoretical sampling in order to generate theory that is integrated, close to the data, and expressed in a form clear enough for further testing" (Conrad, Neumann, Haworth, and Scott, 1993, cited in Kolb, 2012: 83). Thus, it relies on constant systematic coding and analysis of the data to produce theory (Ridolfo, 2011). This is contrary to beginning research with a set hypothesis as the theory is generated from the data (Ridolfo, 2011). The method of analysis for triangulation was using data from the talanoa, participant observation and literature (see Figure 1).

Talanoa

**Participant
Literature**   observation

Figure 1:   **Methodology**
triangulation
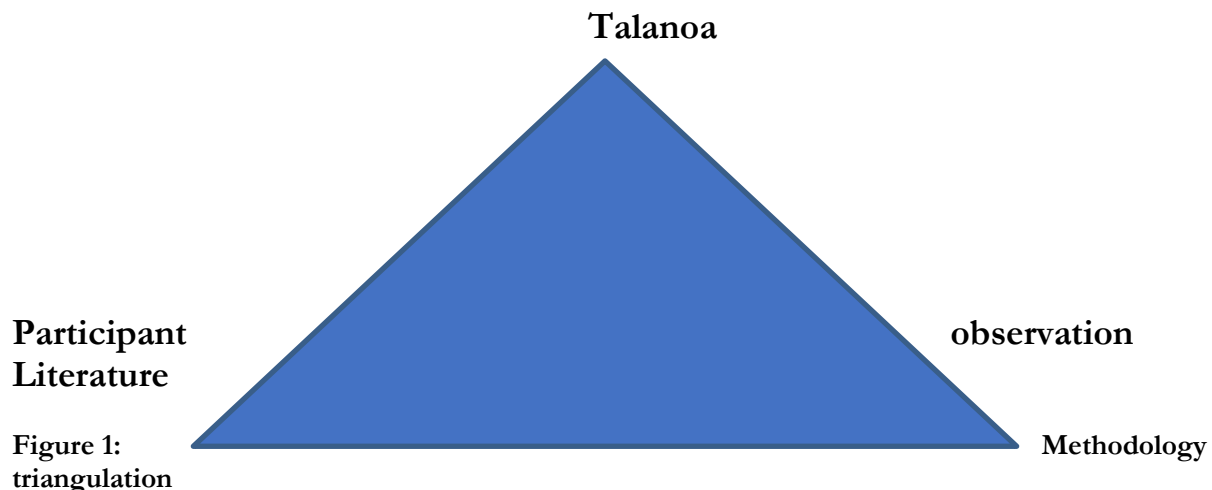
Once the raw materials are ready to be woven, the weaver is clear on the concept design, and begins the weaving process
(Lingam, 2017: 6)

The constant comparative method combined with theoretical sampling created the fundamental foundation of qualitative analysis in grounded theory (Glaser, 1992; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). Glaser and Strauss (1967) defined the four steps of constant comparative methodology as: "(1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory" (105).

The constant comparative method should not only be applied to the direct analysis of the talanoa data, but also to the ongoing process of constructing themes. This process allows for the concepts to be revisited at numerous stages in the data analysis process and redefined where newly formed deductions can be made from further analysis of interview data (Mila-Schaaf, 2014). The method of comparison is used for every intellectual situation during analysis such as forming categories. The goal is to distinguish conceptual similarities and to ascertain patterns (Tesch, 1990, cited in Boeije, 2002).

The analysis process should fully respect the perspectives of each research participant and should also attempt to view their perspectives relative to the collective understanding of NZ-born Samoans (Ellis and Berger, 2002; Prus, 1997, cited in Tunufa'i, 2005). This means that I would endeavour to hear these voices within the context of mainstream society, Samoan spaces and the cultural situation of NZ-born Samoans who reside in Brisbane (Tunufa'i, 2005).

I believe this analytic method allows a comparative analysis of the data that highlights how different respondents process and respond to talanoa questions along with behavioural patterns evident in the participant observations.

Data analysis consisted of stages as described by Glaser (1965). During the first stage, I coded data into different categories of analysis. The traditional grounded theory method of coding includes open, selective and axial coding (Glaser, 1998; 2001; Goulding, 2002; Strauss and Corbin, 1998, cited in Tunufa'i, 2005). However, there are criticisms of this style of coding including its reductional nature (Rennie, 2000, cited in Tunufa'i, 2005). I employed holistic coding to allow for correct coding of cultural comments and to ensure holistic meaning was captured. I coded all my transcripts manually to ensure attention to detail as I believe data analysis software was unable to capture all the nuances and spirit of the talanoa dialogue.

Initially, two broad categories emerged: 1) carriers of Fa'a Samoa and 2) barriers to Fa'a Samoa. These two core categories were coded as "carriers" and "barriers". When coding portions of data as a category, they

were compared with similar codes. An example of this was comparing the different experiences people had with their aiga potopoto. Seven categories were evident whilst constantly comparing the talanoa dialogue. All the participant talanoa dialogue could be categorised under "gift", "identity", "respect", "support", "disconnect", "burden" or "learning". Learning was categorised as the process of carrying Fa'a Samoa, whilst gift, identity, respect and support were identified as carrier aspects. The barrier aspects that were identified were disconnect and burden.

Next, my coding moved to a deeper analysis of different categories. Categories were compared and contrasted to look for links and properties to develop knowledge and generate theory (Stanley, 2017). I then tried to develop a further understanding of the carriers and barriers of Fa'a Samoa for NZ-born Samoans in Brisbane.

The last stage of analysis involved theory generation and involved summarising the literature review, participant observations and talanoa dialogues for each category. Each category summary was then compared. This enabled broad themes to be drawn from NZ-born Samoans in Brisbane, Samoan spaces, mainstream Brisbane and their Fa'a Samoa journey (Stanley, 2017).

Constant comparative analysis was an effective form of ensuring data was representative of the 'lived experiences' of the study participants. This is an effective form of analysis as it allows for the participants' voices to be heard, their actions seen and previous literature to be referenced.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore New Zealand (NZ)-born Samoans' perceptions of Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way). The epistemological standpoint of constructivism aligns with Pacific and Samoan worldviews and allows for co-construction of meanings and analysis of multiple realities. Importantly, talanoa was the primary data generator in addition to participant observation and my personal experiences as a Samoan researching Samoan cultural perceptions. This methodology of researching the study participants is both academically rigorous and culturally appropriate.

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Author's biography

Dion Enari is an Aotearoa/New Zealand born Samoan and a current PhD candidate in the Faculty of Society and Design, Bond University, Gold Coast, Australia. He is the Bond University 2018 3 minute thesis winner and holds the high talking chief title from Lepa, Samoa. His research areas include Pacific studies, decolonisation, transnationalism and indigenous studies.