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The Health Seeking Behaviours of Ageing Niuean Women in Central Auckland

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Philosophy
in
Nursing

at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand

Doreen Minnie Arapai

February 2002

Acknowledgments

Fakaauae lahi mahaki ke he tau Matua fifine ne aumai ke lagamatai e gahua haako.

Gratitude is expressed to the Matua fifine who so graciously agreed to participate in this study. Without your contributions this study would not have been completed.

There are many people to be acknowledged, the Albany library staff who kindly sent on requested articles and assisted me when I forgot my pin number. To the many colleagues who listened to me share my thoughts as I struggled over the past few years to get some coherence out my writing. I say thank you. To Moera, Diana, Lanuola and Nogi a special note of thanks for being there for me when times were rough. I also acknowledge the faith that my supervisor Karen McBride had in my ability to complete this study.

I pay tribute to my mother, the late Ogotu Head who was the first Niuean nurse to complete her nursing training overseas (Samoa 1936-1939). Her certificate, which takes pride of place in our family home, was the inspiration to follow in her footsteps and enter the nursing profession. Tribute is also paid to my mentor and relation, the late Betty Head Togalea who encouraged and supported my academic efforts throughout my lifetime. This unstinting support was always greatly valued and appreciated.

Lastly, to Rima who has always maintained a belief that his wife would complete any task that she would put her mind to. Uncomplaining when he transported me to and from campus, the library, and especially when supplying endless cups of tea to sustain my efforts, I say thank you.

Acknowledgment is accorded to the Health Research Council of New Zealand for the Junior Award (2000) which provided much needed assistance. An application to the Massey University Research Fund also resulted in assistance for this study. To the many family and friends too numerous to mention, I say thank you for all the assistance over the past few years. Fakaauae lahi mahaki and thank you. May God bless you all in your endeavours.

Abstract

This qualitative study encompasses several features in its design. It is exploratory, emergent and the realms of discovery and description are informed by Max van Manen's (1990) human science approach. Van Manen's approach has enabled analysis of the data. Human science is comprised of phenomenology, hermeneutics and language and when coupled with the data collection method of focus groups makes for interesting outcomes. Time is needed to develop the narrative texts as phenomenological interpretation is never complete. There will always be levels of understanding waiting to be discovered. As a New Zealand born Niuean woman, I have provided a preliminary account of the health seeking behaviours of ageing Niuean women (Matua fifine) in Auckland. The context of health seeking behaviour cannot be realized until there is an understanding of the participant's perceptions of health and illness.

Understanding peoples perceptions of health and illness may give insights into the reasons for the decisions that the Matua fifine make when choosing to engage or not engage primary and or secondary health services. This also includes traditional medicine and complementary therapies. The assumption is that people make a direct move to seek a healthcare provider when well and unwell. What is not appreciated are the choices that are also available such as self management or a wait and see approach. Equally important is the role of spirituality, which encompasses Christian beliefs and traditional beliefs.

Background information of history and the Niuean way of life, sets the context for this study. Consultation within the Niuean community is an ethical consideration that has paved the way for support for this study. This study will enable the voice of the Matua fifine Niue to be heard so that health services will be able to respond to and preserve their dignity and individuality which are foundational for good health and positive ageing.

Glossary

Field text is composed of the data collected from the focus group meetings.

Narrative text is my analysis and interpretation.

Rather than use the term participant in the narrative text, the term *Matua fifine* is used as it recognizes and values the contribution that is being made.

“**Ethnic specific**” is the term used to acknowledge that Pacific people are comprised of people from different island groups. E.g. Niue Island.

I use the term **ageing** because mature women participate with older women in the groups in Auckland. To specifically ask for participants and then set an age limit to exclude some, seems disrespectful to those who wish to participate. Flexibility is crucial to this study as it allows room to manoeuvre to accommodate intending participants.

Agafaka motu Niue Niue way of life.

Ai malolo. Illness.

Ai fakahanoa. Do not display any disrespect.

Aitu. Ghost. I take the term to mean a spirit.

Fakaalofa. The definition within the Niue Language Dictionary (1997) gives multiple meanings for the term fakaalofa. These meanings are love, pity, greetings, gift and compassion (p. 63). In this study context, it means a gift. It is not a payment. Neither is it accepted as payment for information. To perceive it as payment is to undermine and under value the giving and receiving that has transpired between two people.

Fakahohoko e manava. To satisfy a craving for food.

Fakalilifu. To respect.

Fakapokia. To be hit by a spirit.

Fakatau au. To walk together arm in arm.

Fifine. Woman.

Fotafota. Massage.

Fuafua. Test or examine. (This is the Matua fifine’s understanding of the term fuafua).

Fakatonuaga. Proof.

Gagao. To be sick. Gagao pikitia. Contagious disease. Gagao matima. A salt related disease (Sperlich, 1997 p.94).

Higoa haau ne fia kai. What do you want to eat?

Lagamatai. To help.

Magafaoa. Family.

Malolo. To be strong, to be healthy.

Masemase kelea. Misfortune.

Mataola. To be healthy looking.

Matua. Parent.

Mamatua. Parent.

Matua fifine. I use the term to mean a mature woman or older woman and as a respectful way of addressing the participants. There is no equivalent Niuean word for participant.

Momotua Elder. I understand it to mean a respectful term for an older person.

Nane. A Niuean dish made from arrowroot and young coconut meat.

Palagi is the term used by Niuean people when referring to mainstream people of New Zealand.

Patuiki. King or Monarch.

Taulaatua. Practitioner of traditional medicine.

Tatalu. A mild illness (Sperlich, 1997 p. 300).

Toafeka. To be in perfect health

Tuafu. To feed with a rich protein (Sperlich, 1997 p.328). A special food for a sick person.

Tunu paku. To cook food on hot embers.

Uka feke. Very difficult.

Vai lakau. Herbal medicine.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
ABSTRACT	ii
GLOSSARY	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
FIGURE 1: MAP OF NIUE	xi
FIGURE 2: MAP OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
The research question	1
The research aims	2
The research interest	2
Health seeking behaviours	3
Overview of the study	4
Significance of the research	5
The researcher's position within the study	6
The structure of the thesis	8
CHAPTER TWO: HEALTH AND ILLNESS	11
Section I: The concept of health	11
Family	12
Health belief systems	13
Illness and disease	13
Section II: <i>Moui faka Niue</i> : the Niue way of life	14
Conclusion	23
CHAPTER THREE: THE SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT	24
The omission of women in historical accounts	24
Women's health	24
Paucity of information on older Pacific people in New Zealand	26
Confusion due to different roles within the health sector	26
Self denigration of old age	27
Undervaluing of cultural beliefs	28
Conclusion	28
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	29
Methodology	29
Phenomenology	30
The work of van Manen	33
Conclusion	38

CHAPTER FIVE: DESIGN AND METHOD	39
Section I: Modifications to the original project	39
The research design	39
The interpretations I bring from phenomenology	40
My approach to phenomenology	40
The researcher's assumptions	41
Section II: Focus groups as the method of data collection	42
Trustworthiness of the study	58
Self as the research tool	60
Method of analysis	60
Conclusion	62
CHAPTER SIX: UNDERSTANDING HEALTH AND ILLNESS	64
Keeping <i>malolo</i> (health) in New Zealand	64
Maintaining health beliefs	68
Searching for health information when well	72
Finding health services	73
Knowledge of older people's services	76
Attaining wellbeing	76
Understanding illness or <i>ai malolo</i>	79
<i>Ai malolo</i> or feeling unwell	80
Being prepared when living alone	81
Conclusion	83
CHAPTER SEVEN: SPIRITUALITY AND TRADITIONAL BELIEFS	84
Definition of Spirituality	84
The power of prayer	85
Health seeking behaviours and the use of blessed oil	86
Caring for yourself enhances your prayers	88
Thanking God for his blessings	90
Traditional spiritual beliefs	91
Conclusion	95
CHAPTER EIGHT: DIFFERING COSTS	96
Cost	96
I went to look for treatments	97
Getting me something for my health	98
Paying for primary medical care	100
Paying the full price for a doctor's letter	101
No money to travel on the bus	102
Dental costs	103
Delaying payment	104
Being prepared	105

Emotional cost when I know that I am sick	106
Homehelp as wasting time	108
Cost of traditional medicine	109
Cost of complementary or herbal medicine	111
Conclusion	112

CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION

Malolo – Health as strength	115
Health seeking as being a movement to a higher level of wellness	116
Self management	117
Spirituality and praying as experiences of health seeking	118
Traditional medicine	120
Issues of health seeking and the Matua fifine’s experiences of cost	120
Hidden costs	121
The family	122
Implications for the nursing profession	122
Tensions	124
Limitations of the study	125
Future research that is needed	125
Conclusion	126
Conclusion of the thesis	127

REFERENCES	129
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APPENDICES	144
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FIGURE ONE
MAP OF NIUE

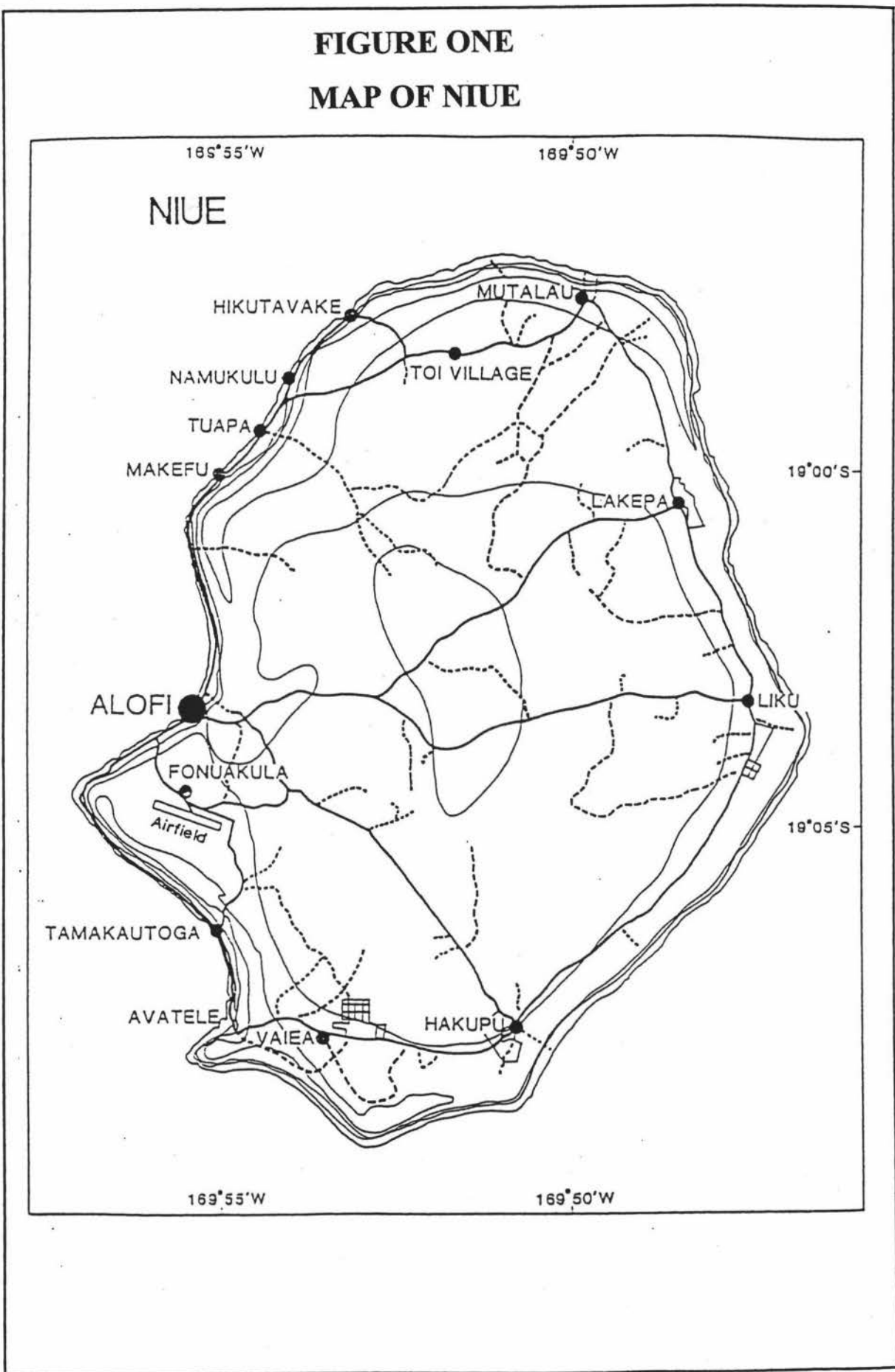


FIGURE TWO
MAP OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

