Creating Their Own Culture: Diasporic Tongans

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> I'm interested in doing something to do with the Tongan
> culture, but I want to expose it. I'm just so sick of everyone
> saying how friendly Tongans are when in actual fact, they're
> not, they're real demons, they're *tēvolo* [devils, mischievous
> spirits]!

These words were spoken, with a bitter laugh, by 'Ana, a young Tongan woman living in Melbourne, Australia.[1] I asked 'Ana whether she would describe herself as Tongan, or Australian, or both. She replied, "I'd say both. I'm not really Tongan; I am in appearance, but I'm very western because I just don't follow the Tongan culture. I only do what suits me, what I'm comfortable with."

During her primary school years in Australia and her high school years in Tonga, 'Ana's parents encouraged her to speak only English at home, and she did not learn Tongan until she was an adolescent. Her parents did not closely follow *anga fakatonga* (the Tongan way) in her upbringing. Now, as a member of an extended Tongan household in Melbourne, when 'Ana says she wants to do "something to do with the Tongan culture" she means she wants to write about it. She also wants to write about how *anga fakatonga* is changing in Tonga, in ways as varied as the decreasing authoritarianism of parents and the increased use of plastic sheeting in the production of tapa cloth. Only a Tongan could write about such changes, she says, because outsiders could not really understand.

The focus of my paper is the question of how young Tongan migrants

construct their cultural identities, and this young woman's shifting subject position clearly exemplifies the complexities and contradictions inherent in this process.[2] She is, by her own account, "not really Tongan," "not comfortable in Tongan things," yet as a teenager in Tonga she spent her weekends with her great-grandmother, memorizing her family's genealogy. 'Ana sees herself as an "insider" who is eligible to write about Tongan culture.

Having previously carried out research in Tonga on child socialization and the construction of cultural identity (Morton 1996), I now focus on the impact of migration on these processes. This research, which commenced in January 1995 and will continue until mid-1999, is with Tongan migrants in Melbourne, Australia. As a preliminary discussion of my research to mid-1996, my paper looks specifically at the roles of the church and the family in the processes of identity construction and reconstruction and at the subjective experiencing of identities by individuals. After briefly describing my methodology, I situate myself theoretically and provide an overview of the extant literature on Tongan immigration, before moving on to discuss my findings.

The ethnographic material in this paper is drawn primarily from semi-structured interviews with three church ministers, two youth workers, and members of seventeen Tongan households living in the Melbourne metropolitan area. All interviewees chose to be interviewed in English, only occasionally using Tongan terms or expressions.[3] The ministers and adult householders have nearly all been in Australia (or New Zealand then Australia) for more than ten years, and all households include children born in New Zealand or Australia. In all households a mixture of English and Tongan is spoken at home, and the ministers and seven of the householders have (or are undertaking) tertiary-level education.

Other data are derived from observations of church services and social events as well as unstructured, informal interviews with numerous Tongan migrants and returned migrants. An important component of my research is the collection of demographic and socioeconomic data, via questionnaires, which will help to map the Tongan population in Melbourne and reveal some of the structural variables that are affecting their experiences of migration. My understanding of the situation of Tongan migrants also draws on my own experiences living in Tongan households in Sydney and Melbourne from November 1980 to June 1982.

Theoretical Approaches to Cultural Identity

Initially, my interest in cultural identity developed from the work on colonial and postcolonial Pacific societies that looked at issues of cultural identity (eg, Linnekin and Poyer 1990) and the so-called invention of tradition or politics of tradition (eg, Borofsky 1987; Feinberg and Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1995; Hanson 1989; Jolly and Thomas 1992; Keesing 1989; Keesing and Tonkinson 1982). This literature neglects the issues of migration and ethnicity, except as they occur in the Pacific (see Linnekin and Poyer 1990; Norton 1993), despite the complex history of Pacific migration to western nations. Yet in the sense that cultural identity is constructed and reconstructed—and tradition "invented" and "reinvented"—primarily in response to ongoing encounters with other cultures, there are considerable similarities with the processes by which "ethnic identity" is constituted within populations of migrants and refugees. Indeed, sociological descriptions of ethnicity as "situational, emergent, adaptable, durable through flexibility, an instrument in economic and political struggles" (Yinger 1985, 162), echo anthropologists' recent descriptions of "culture" and "tradition." The distinct bodies of literature, on the politics of tradition and on ethnicity, have moved independently toward more finely nuanced understandings of the processes of identity construction, recognizing the contextual, complicated, and often contradictory nature of cultural identities.

George De Vos has pointed out that the shift in anthropological conceptions of culture "toward a concern with a cultural identity as a subjective continuity in the minds of people" has precipitated growing interest in "ethnicity" in that discipline (1990, 207). With anthropologists increasingly focusing their attention on multiethnic societies, the salience of the work on cultural identity and tradition for the study of ethnicity (and vice versa) is readily apparent. Migrants do not construct their "ethnic identity" from scratch; they each bring their own evolving version of it with them to their new home. Not only is it important to take this historical dimension into account, it is also crucial to recognize the processes by which these different, at times even conflicting, versions emerged.

In my work with Tongan migrants I prefer to use the term *cultural identity,* which is usually used only to refer to the identity of people within their home culture. *Ethnic identity* is used to refer to the same people when

they move to another setting, most often as migrants or refugees. Thus, *ethnic* implies an identity imposed by outsiders as much as by insiders in relation to others. To say Tongans have a cultural identity in Tonga but an ethnic identity in Australia imposes a false and unnecessary distinction. *Ethnic identity* also implies identity with a bounded group, whereas *cultural identity* is more flexible, allowing for overlap and hybridity.

The term *cultural identity* allows for both variation within a group and multiplicity of identities within the individual. Intragroup variations include "nonethnic" distinctions, such as Tongans' distinctions between bush and town people, different island or village origins, social rank, church membership, and so on. Individuals also may have disparate identities that defy clear-cut ethnic labeling; for example, one individual may variously identify (and be identified as) Pacific Islander, Polynesian, Tongan, Australian-born Tongan, and simply Australian.

Dismantling the distinction between cultural and ethnic identities challenges the assumption that anthropologists deal with the former and sociologists and social psychologists with the latter, an assumption that is largely responsible for the chasm between the politics-of-tradition literature and that dealing with ethnicity. The cultural–ethnic distinction led Jocelyn Linnekin and Lin Poyer to posit in the introduction to their book a distinction between western "Mendelian" (read ethnic) and Oceanic "Lamarckian" (cultural) views of identity, in which an emphasis on shared origin and background is contrasted with one that "privileges environment, behavior, and situational flexibility" (1990, 6).[4] Maintaining such a distinction perpetuates problematic dichotomies such as modern–traditional and inauthentic–authentic, dichotomies that also recur throughout the politics-of-tradition literature (see Thomas 1992; van Meijl and van der Grijp 1993).

Stuart Hall suggested that cultural identity should be seen "as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (1990, 222). The process of producing cultural identity, while ongoing, is particularly significant during childhood and adolescence, yet this period has been largely neglected in the Pacific literature on identity and tradition. By looking at cultural identity from the perspective of child socialization, my research will go beyond the study of what has been called "ethnic socialization." Jack Eller and Reed Coughlan defined ethnic socialization as "the practices that invent, modify, and perpetuate ethnic phenomena" (1993, 198; see also

McAdoo 1993; Phinney and Rotheram 1987). By exploring beyond these practices it is possible to examine the negotiations of caregivers and children with elements of other cultures, to better comprehend the complex cultural identities forged in multiethnic societies.

The ethnicity literature contains a substantial body of research on immigrant children and "second-generation" immigrants, yet there are few detailed studies of child socialization. Many studies that purport to look at the role of family in the construction and maintenance of ethnic identity only examine relationships between adults in extended families, not relationships between adults and children within households.

Much of the work on immigrant children has been carried out by sociologists and by social and developmental psychologists, overwhelmingly through quantitative rather than ethnographically based qualitative studies. Despite its diverse theoretical perspectives, this work tends to see individuals or even whole ethnic groups as having bundles of attributes that can be measured to determine, for example, their ability to assimilate or the degree to which they maintain their ethnic identity. Similarly, relations between ethnic groups and their host societies are examined in search of determinants of ethnic "loyalty."

In this paper I wish to avoid such deterministic assumptions and focus instead on the often messy and highly subjective nature of cultural identities. To this end, I adopt an interactionist approach to socialization that emphasizes agency, intersubjectivity, and context (see Morton 1996; Wentworth 1980, 41). This approach acknowledges children's active participation in their own socialization within the constraints and limitations imposed by power relations and other structural factors. Children are not simply passive, malleable recipients of acculturation but are active agents of culture. "Socialization" encompasses the whole of life experience, all forms of social interaction, and all aspects of development.

My approach to socialization is also influenced by the poststructuralist concept of the subject, in which, to use Henrietta Moore's definition, "Individuals are multiply constituted subjects, and they can, and do, take up multiple subject positions within a range of discourses and social practices. Some of these subject positions will be contradictory and will conflict with each other" (1994, 55). As Moore has stressed, multiplicity and contradiction occur not only "between the individual and the ideological/social" but also within the subject itself (56). This concept of the subject seems particularly useful in considering the constitution of cultural iden-

tity in the context of migration, when exposure to possible subject positions increases, as does the potential for contradiction.

Moore's concept of multiple subject positions brings to mind the work of Katherine Ewing on "multiple selves" (1990). Both Moore and Ewing have been careful to point out that this multiplicity does not lead to fragmentation, and Ewing's central thesis is that maintaining an "illusion of wholeness" is a universal process. However, the term "illusion" is misleading, insofar as it implies falsity; what is at issue is maintaining a sense of the integrity of the self. While Ewing was primarily concerned with the unconscious processes that promote this experience of wholeness, Moore mentioned "the subjective experience of identity, the physical fact of being an embodied subject and the historical continuity of the subject where past subject positions tend to overdetermine present subject positions" (1994, 55).

What neither Moore nor Ewing mentioned is that the maintenance of a sense of wholeness of self may be harder for some people in some situations. Tellingly, neither had much to say about child socialization, yet it is during the period of childhood, and particularly adolescence, that both experimentation with subject positions and an experience of fragmentation are highly likely to occur. They are also likely to occur as a result of social ruptures, such as migration, including the experiences of children born to migrants. The subjective experience of identity, both personal and cultural, is challenged by confrontation with a different culture. Often, the very fact of embodiment, particularly in relation to physical appearance, can become a source of confusion and anxiety about identity; the historical continuity of the subject is challenged by the discontinuities of space, culture, climate, and so on, experienced through migration.

For migrants, challenges to their sense of wholeness of self can be met to a great extent by emphasizing cultural identity, thereby providing the sense of continuity and community needed to balance the many sources of discontinuity and alienation.[5] The Tongan young people and their parents discussed in this paper have varied strategies for seeking this balance, and while I acknowledge that many unconscious processes are involved it is the very self-conscious choices being made that concern me here.

Tongans and Migration

The Tongan diaspora, scattered throughout many nations, has the general characteristics of diaspora identified by William Safran: "a history of dis-

persal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host (bad host?) country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship" (1991, quoted in Clifford 1994, 305).

Tongans are not in exile, as were groups first identified as diasporic (such as Jews). However, conditions in Tonga, such as land shortage, unemployment, and low wages, combined with the increasing cost of living in Tonga and the perceived opportunities for material and educational advancement in western nations, create a situation that makes emigration imperative for many Tongans.

The title of this paper is taken from a comment a Tongan woman made to me when describing the problems some Tongan immigrant children face in constructing their cultural identities. Sela made a triangle in the air, with one corner representing the child and the two other corners representing western and Tongan cultures. She indicated the child taking a course somewhere in between these two points, commenting, "He creates his own culture."

Sela was talking of her encounters with disadvantaged Tongan children in Auckland, New Zealand, in families where the parents were so busy struggling against poverty and other social problems that they did not actively teach their children *anga fakatonga*—a situation that is a Tongan version of the scenario in the movie *Once Were Warriors*. It contrasts sharply with the Tongan migrants I have encountered in Melbourne, yet, as I shall show, they can also be seen to be creating their own culture.

Very little is known of the Tongan population in Australia, although Tonga is one of the main sources of Pacific Islander migrants arriving in this country.[6] Tongans are relatively recent immigrants, with few arriving before the 1970s, and it is unclear how many are now in Australia. The 1986 census recorded that Tongan was spoken by 4391 persons (Connell, Harrison, and McCall 1991, Table 1.6); however this figure does not reflect the number of persons who identify as Tongan. 'Osaiasi Faiva found that in one area of Sydney, for which 331 Tongan speakers were recorded by the census, up to 1300 residents identified themselves as Tongan (1989, 14). In official statistics, Tongans are often submerged in categories such as "Oceania," "Other," and even "New Zealand" for those who have migrated through that country. There are also many overstayers, with Tongans having one of the highest rates of overstaying in Australia (Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs 1987, cited in Connell and McCall 1989, 10).

Much of the literature on Tongan migration focuses on its impact in Tonga (eg, Gailey 1992; James 1991) or on the economic aspects of migration, particularly the practice of sending remittances (eg, Brown and Walker 1995; Faeamani 1995; Vete 1995). However, a scattering of studies of diasporic Tongans all agree that the most important resource networks for Tongan immigrants are the church and the extended family.[7] John Connell and Grant McCall have argued for Pacific Islanders in Australia that these resource networks have "contributed to social harmony and welfare support within the community, whilst also allowing Islanders to retain their traditional cultural values and languages" (1989, 12). However, these networks are weakening, and certainly have not prevented many Tongan immigrants experiencing a range of problems such as isolation from the wider community, unemployment, inadequate housing, marriage breakdown, domestic violence, and alcohol abuse. In addition, the extent to which "traditional cultural values and languages" are retained is highly variable between and within Islander populations. The issue of whether traditional culture is being retained, lost, or adapted is, of course, inseparable from the issue of cultural identity.

TONGANS IN MELBOURNE

The Tongans who have settled in Melbourne are geographically dispersed, far more than in many other cities with populations of immigrant Tongans, such as Sydney, Auckland, or Salt Lake City. My estimation, based on the available statistics and my own data collection, is that approximately two thousand Tongans live in Melbourne. This relatively small and highly dispersed population retains a sense of community primarily through its churches: there are Tongan congregations of the Uniting Church, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Catholic Church, the Church of Tonga, the Tokaikolo Fellowship, and the Maama Fo'ou. Most of these churches have several congregations in different areas of Melbourne, and some are also found in rural Victoria.

The proliferation of churches is partly the result of the population's dispersal combined with factionalism, but also indicates the importance of the church as a social institution for Tongans. Since they first began to settle in Victoria in the 1960s, Tongans have established their own church congregations, often traveling considerable distances to attend. Much of my work has been with a large Uniting Church congregation (hereafter "the Uniting Church"), where the approximately three hundred fifty

Tongan parishioners come from many areas of Melbourne, some over an hour's drive away. Ministers in Tongan churches are accorded great respect and wield a considerable amount of power, and the differences between the Tongan congregations are determined as much by the inclinations of individual ministers as by differing religious practices.

Considerable rivalry exists between the churches, with some vying to be seen as more "traditional" in Tongan terms and others claiming that their more western approach better assists the settlement process. The Uniting Church straddles the traditional and the modern, holding services in both English and Tongan and combining both Tongan and Australian elements in its activities. This church is of particular interest because it is actively involved in the process of cultural reconstruction and demands a great deal of its members' time and other resources.

Parishioners attend both morning and afternoon services on Sundays, having a break for tea and food in the church hall during the middle of the day. Children attend Sunday school during the morning service, and join the adults for the afternoon service. Both services sometimes stretch for more than two hours.[8] In addition, there is a Wednesday evening service, Bible study and choir practice each week, and young people attend the youth group on Friday evenings. Once a month the Sunday school children perform items in church, and every two months a special youth service is held. The minister and some core church members are active in the community, helping new immigrants find accommodation and employment, assisting with financing education, and at times conducting Tongan language lessons for young people who have not learned Tongan and for non-Tongan spouses of church members. The minister of the church is central to all of these activities, as well as assisting the courts and welfare authorities to help with interpreting and visiting Tongans in prison, among numerous other pastoral duties.

This is not all. This church also holds formal debates, seminars, camps, and discussions with invited speakers, during all of which participants self-consciously reaffirm, contest, and refashion aspects of "the Tongan way." The church places a strong focus on young people, explicitly to address the problems they face in the context of migration, and it employs a youth worker. This focus on youth is common to many of the Tongan churches, such as the Tongan Wesleyan Methodist Church, which has recently sponsored a trainee through the Fijian Bible College specifically to work full-time with young people in the church.

An example of the kinds of activities that are organized is a formal

debate, held in mid-1995 at the Uniting Church, on whether parents should force teenagers to return home if they tried to move away. Those arguing in the affirmative repeatedly insisted that in Tongan culture children should remain at home until they marry, so that forcing children to return home was justified. Those on the opposing side were mainly concerned with how such actions would be perceived by Australians.

The various Tongan churches clearly are not simply places of worship. They provide social opportunities, mediate between immigrants and their new society, and are sites for the reaffirmation and reconstitution of cultural identity. As a Wesleyan minister explained:

> [T]he people are not coming for their spiritually thing *(sic)*; they are coming for something like back home, like getting together and things. And I think that's very important, and the church must understand the job is not only for the spirit of the people, or the very religion, but also for the culture, tradition, and all sorts of things, and to educate the people to understand this [Australian] culture, and this land, and their law and their everything here, and to live with it.

Despite the explicit discussion of aspects of Tongan culture in the context of many of the activities organized by the church, the parents I have spoken with have denied that the church plays any role in teaching their children *anga fakatonga*. One mother explained: "The church is something for the child to fall back on, you know, it doesn't necessarily teach the child to behave like a Tongan, or in the Tongan custom. I think to learn about the Tongan custom, no, I don't think the church gives them that." Rather, the parents see the church-related activities as being of more practical benefit, in that they keep their children tied to the Tongan community by taking up much of their time and providing an opportunity to mix with their Tongan peers.

Not surprisingly, parents believe that their children learn *anga fakatonga* primarily in the home. Some people I have spoken with insist that Tongans in Australia stick strictly to *anga fakatonga,* while others claim it is being abandoned. I have found an enormous amount of variation, both in the extent to which parents claim to be teaching their children *anga fakatonga* and in their definitions of that concept. Such variations are also found in Tonga, so it should not be assumed that they are straightforwardly attributable to migration; however, in the context of migration, parents seem to make more deliberate choices in this regard.

Anga fakatonga is a concept that embraces all that is said to be Tongan in values and behavior and is therefore often translated as "culture" or "tradition." Yet it is not represented as primarily past-oriented. The Tongans with whom I have discussed *anga fakatonga* are not so much concerned with "creating the past" (compare Keesing 1989) as with knowing what is right for the present. They are also acutely aware of historical processes; as one minister commented, "We've moved on from our Tongan culture of yesterday, two hundred years ago, to another Tongan culture today."

The cultural identity of younger Tongans seems to be only weakly based on explicit historical identification, unlike, for example, the case with Māori youth. In my interviews with members of households, I found that in only two households were the children sometimes told Tongan myths, or stories from Tongan history. More often, parents tell stories of their own childhoods, primarily to stress the advantages their children enjoy in comparison. "The past" in all of its historical transformations remains encoded in many aspects of these children's lives, such as the Tongan dancing and singing they learn, the Tongan clothes many wear to church and important events, and many of the practices they observe at such events, yet it is seldom rendered explicit except in the vague sense of "this is what Tongans traditionally do: this is *anga fakatonga*."

A number of elements are usually identified as centrally important to *anga fakatonga*. Tonga is a highly stratified and status-conscious society, and in any social interaction cross-cutting hierarchies such as gender, kinship, and age determine the differential status of actors. Low status persons are expected to demonstrate respect and unquestioning obedience to those of high status, and within families the higher status of sisters is reflected in their relationship with their brothers, which is characterized by *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *faka'ehi'ehi* (avoidance).

Gender differences are also central to *anga fakatonga*. Ideally, females should stay at home and do the indoor, "clean" work while males do the outside, "dirty" work and have more freedom of movement away from the home. There are also ideal standards of comportment, dress, and other aspects of appearance, the greatest emphasis being on demonstrating the modesty and dignity of females. Within families, physical punishment is frequently used in attempts to teach and enforce *anga fakatonga*, and, as I have argued elsewhere, this punishment has itself become incorporated into people's understanding of the Tongan way (Morton 1996).

Aspects of *anga fakatonga* such as these are used by Tongans as a means of measuring their own and others' degree of "Tonganness." Thus, 'Ana described herself as "not really Tongan," and her parents as not "totally Tongan Tongans," while others may call themselves "pure Tongan" or "real Tongans." One man commented that after visiting Tonga in 1990 he realized, "The Tongans here [in Melbourne] are more Tongan than the Tongans in Tonga!"

Anga fakatonga is a fluid, manipulable, yet powerful concept. While it is often represented as a determining influence, as something the individual cannot question, opposite representations are also common. One woman commented ironically that "it only suits the Tongans when it suits them; what they want it to be. You can twist it around and just have the culture to suit you in what you want to do." A minister stated emphatically, "I will respect it *[anga fakatonga]* as far as it serves a purpose."[9] Thus, to some extent individuals can make choices about which aspects of *anga fakatonga* they will keep and which they will modify or reject. Within families these choices are, by and large, made by adults, and the more closely those adults wish to adhere to *anga fakatonga* the greater the likelihood of children being expected to comply unquestioningly.

In his study of Samoan families in New Zealand, Cluny Macpherson identified three characteristic home environments in which Samoan immigrant children live (1984). In the first type of home, Samoan values and institutions are promoted; in the second, children's exposure to and involvement in these values and institutions is deliberately limited; and in the third, they are neither deliberately promoted nor avoided. My own work thus far indicates a similar pattern among Tongans in Melbourne, with the first type predominant. However, the highly varied nature of the families I have encountered makes me wary of assigning them to particular categories yet.

Moreover, while I discuss "families" and "households," considerable internal variation occurs. Studies of migrant families have often discussed conflicts between parents and children, which certainly occur in Tongan families—often between adults and their parents as well as their children. The culture gap between successive generations frequently forces family members to negotiate the differences between "the *pālangi* [western] way" and *anga fakatonga,* although "negotiate" is a rather euphemistic term for the battles that can occur.

Another significant arena of conflict exists between parents. In each of

the families I interviewed, one parent identifies, and is identified by other family members, as more "traditional" than the other, and this creates a constant tension that keeps the whole issue of cultural identity at a self-conscious level rather than being simply taken for granted. At times couples belonging to the Uniting Church have used the church-run debates and seminars as a forum for openly discussing their differences, as when a woman told a meeting that it was important to her that her children follow *anga fakatonga* and thus be unquestioningly obedient, but then her husband disagreed, saying he wanted to listen to his children's views and be more open with them.

Because *anga fakatonga* is such a broad concept, there is a "Tongan way" to do almost anything, from the simplest ordinary activities to the most elaborate ceremonial events. Thus, within each immigrant household, choices are continually made about the extent to which members will follow *anga fakatonga*. Some of the choices that cause particular concern include the extent to which physical punishment should be used; the extent of freedom to allow children, especially girls; whether to let girls cut their hair, shave their legs, pierce their ears, and do other "*pālangi* things"; whether to keep to the Tongan sexual division of labor with regard to household chores; and whether to allow children to play sport on Sunday, which in Tonga is by law a day of rest.

Respect *(fakaʻapaʻapa)* is a value central to *anga fakatonga,* and its importance was stressed in all of the interviews I conducted. One man stated earnestly, "Respect! That's the heart; the *anga fakatonga* is coming from this!" Yet there are seemingly infinite variations in the definition and practice of respect. Some families insist on keeping the whole range of respect behavior, but most modify it, particularly in terms of relaxing avoidance between brothers and sisters. Still others argue that respect is just a matter of good manners and should not be seen as specifically Tongan. In some families children learn some Tongan respect behaviors, such as not touching their father's head or sharing his food and drink, but are not told it is a Tongan practice. One woman said she told her children, who had been born in Australia, that such things were just what they did in their family; she added: "I don't relate it back to Tonga." In some other families the children are told about the Tongan customs but are not expected to follow them.

Great variation is evident in the extent to which parents actively encourage their children to speak Tongan. Some parents, such as ʻAna's, dis-

courage Tongan on the grounds that being successful in Australia will depend on good English-language skills. Parents who wish to bring up their children according to *anga fakatonga* are more likely to insist their children learn Tongan, such as the family with a rule that, within the boundaries of their property, only Tongan can be spoken. Children may also resist their parents' attempts to make them speak Tongan: despite the Tongan-only rule, the five children in the family just mentioned frequently shut themselves in a bedroom to whisper together in English. Other children may simply choose to speak Tongan as little as possible: the father in another family, which instigated a Tongan-only rule for two days a week, laughed, "The good thing about it, it's a very quiet day!"

A great many variables affect the choices parents make about which aspects of *anga fakatonga* will be important in their households. Factors such as the length of stay in Australia, perceptions of the wider society, level of involvement with other Tongans, level of education, and personal histories are all important. Choices are not fixed, and a process of readjustment and transformation is constant. Everyday experiences, conflicts across the generations and between parents, and events such as the church-sponsored debates and seminars all contribute to this process. As indicated earlier, tremendous variation in families' adherence to *anga fakatonga* occurs in Tonga as well. Migration has an undeniable impact on families, but is not the only variable to take into account.

Constructing Cultural Identities

What do Tongan children growing up in Australia make of their parents' attempts to follow the Tongan way? I asked Lupe, a woman in her early twenties from a "very Tongan" home, how she felt about her upbringing. She answered, "Although I sit back and I think 'Oh, I wish I wasn't Tongan' sometimes, and all these things that are expected of you; although I say that, I stick to them, so it does have an effect." I asked Lupe what were the most important things she had learned from her parents, and she replied, "I look at it and I think a lot of the ways that they taught me I'm going to do differently, so that's been really good. It's like, you experience a lot, and you learn from those experiences. And like, there's a lot of things I'd adapt, like *faka'apa'apa* [respect] and things like that, but there's a lot of things I would let go of." It is significant that although she wants to adapt respect, she later identified it as the most important thing

she has learned about being Tongan, *and* claimed it will be the most important thing she will teach her own children.

For parents, "adapting" a cultural value such as respect can be difficult, particularly when it potentially conflicts with other aspects of parenting they regard as important. Sita, a sixteen-year-old girl born in Australia into what she called a "traditional" Tongan family, identified strictness and the importance of respect as the key Tongan elements of her upbringing and said she planned to bring her own children up in the same way. Yet she also said she wanted to be like Australian parents, who she said "are more down to earth, they understand—I think they get along better with their kids, you know, that they can talk to each other like friends."

When I asked Sita if there were any aspects of *anga fakatonga* she might reject, she replied, "The bit about being afraid of the parents, and I'd like to be cool with my kids. Not as strict as Tongan parents now. They seem really old-fashioned."

Sita's ambivalence about what she sees as Tongan parenting is obvious. For Sita, choosing how to be a parent is intrinsically tied to her cultural identity, which at the time of our interview was somewhat confused, as will become apparent. The link between her ideas about parenting and her Tongan identity became clear when we were discussing how *anga fakatonga* is changing in some migrant families and I asked how she felt about that. She answered, "I don't think it's so good, because, I don't know, to me I think the Tongan culture's going to lose. It's not going to be there one day. I just think it's going to disappear sometime. That's what makes me want to bring my kids up in the Tongan way."

To understand the way in which Tongan migrants such as Sita and Lupe are constructing their cultural identities, it is useful to see their identities as "framed" by both similarity and continuity, and difference and rupture, with a dialogic relationship between these two states, as Hall has suggested for black Caribbean identities (1990, 226).[10] It is fascinating to discover how each individual presents a slightly differently framed identity, varying in the extent of similarity and difference, continuity and rupture.

One of the most obvious forms of rupture occurs when, in the context of migration, an individual identifies with the new culture or is identified as doing so by others. For young children, the identification with the "other" culture, into which they are born or brought by their migrating parents, can be so complete that the discovery of their "difference" can be shocking. 'Ana described her moment of discovery, at a school sports day:

None of the kids I was with at school ever made it clear to me that I was brown. I never thought [about it] except one day, you know how you have those sports colors, and I was in the red group and one of the little boys in there he said to me, "Oh, you're *brown!*" and I was like, I looked at it [looks at her arm with a shocked expression] and that was the first time, that was when I was about eight, I think. It never occurred to me that I was different. But now, looking at the photos, I *was* different. . . . We were the only brown kids in the school, come to think of it.

'Ana's statement brings to mind Michael Fischer's discussion of "the paradoxical sense that ethnicity is something reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation by each individual and that it is often something quite puzzling to the individual, something over which he or she lacks control. Ethnicity is not something that is simply passed on from generation to generation, taught and learned; it is something dynamic, often unsuccessfully repressed or avoided" (1986, 195).

Despite her "difference," 'Ana continues to identify more strongly with Australian culture and, as indicated by her comments about Tongans with which I began this paper, she feels in many ways very negative about Tongan culture. In Tonga, she said, "you're not actually doing what you want to do: you have to live by the culture, and by the society, everything. . . . I like Australia in that you can be your own person, whereas in Tonga you, I don't know, you can't be yourself really because everyone sort of dictates to you what you have to do, how you dress, how you're supposed to act, whereas here you can just be on the dole [unemployment benefit] and no one cares!" 'Ana's awareness of rupture coexists with a sense of continuity and similarity, because 'Ana believes that she has knowledge and "insider" status that give her an unquestionable ability to understand Tongans in ways that someone like myself, as a *pālangi,* cannot.

For some immigrant Tongans, the experience of rupture can occur when others question their identity. Kilisi, a tertiary student living in a large extended family, who initially identified herself to me as "pure Tongan," went on to say, "I see myself as completely Tongan, but when I'm with Tongans I can pick out the Australian bits! I do things, and they think, 'Oh, she's not Tongan!' It really stands out. But I mean, it's nothing that you're not proud of, I'm not doing anything drastically wrong." Kilisi's identity is questioned most vigorously when she visits Tonga with members of her family. There, she says, other Tongans say: "Here come the *pālangis.*"[11] She added: "We're not *pālangis* you know. And some-

times you find that you don't fit in, because they pick you out as the *pālangi.* Even when you go out, there must be something there, because they say, 'Oh, she's from overseas' or something." I had a similar conversation with Sita, the sixteen-year-old mentioned previously. She was born in Australia and has only been to Tonga for a couple of holidays. As with 'Ana, I asked Sita whether she sees herself as Tongan or Australian or both.

> SITA: I really don't know; it's sort of like in the middle: when I'm down here [in Australia] I'm Tongan and when I'm up there [in Tonga] I'm Australian.
> HELEN: How do you feel about that?
> SITA: I've never really sat down and think about it, like I don't really care down here, it's just when I go to Tonga they're always mocking Australians and [saying] *"pālangi loi"* and all this.
> HELEN: Does that make you feel kind of patriotic for Australia or something?
> SITA: Yeah! I mean, I don't mind when they tell me all that. I mean, I've got Kiwi friends just come down from New Zealand and they're saying "Oh, we're better than you in New Zealand" and I stand up for Australia when people do that.
> HELEN: What about if Australians say anything bad to you about being an Islander, do you stick up for Tonga then?
> SITA: Yeah, then I stick up for Tonga and then I don't know where I stand! [Laughs.]

The kind of confusion experienced by Sita is not uncommon, and while some handle it by adroitly shifting between identities as contexts alter, others find themselves rejecting the cultural identity others would ascribe to them. I even found that one young man rejected the very concept of cultural identity. Finau, whom I interviewed in Tonga early in 1996,[12] commented:

> Actually, sometimes I call myself not a Tongan, and not anybody. . . . Sometimes people ask me where I'm from and I say, "Just from nowhere, I'm just a person. I'm just a person who has been brought up and raised up in a place which they call Tonga, or I've been raised up in New Zealand and they call that place New Zealand." Well, I'm just a person who doesn't worry about being someone, being a person from that place, or being a Tongan, or being American, or being European, or being a New Zealander, or being Australian. I just want to be a person—because I'm really sick of races and stuff like that.

Finau had spent his adolescence and early twenties living in New Zealand, America, and Jamaica, becoming involved with drugs and "gangs"

(variously Tongan, Samoan, and Mexican). Although many factors contributed to his desire to reject any cultural identity, one that he emphasized was his abhorrence of judgmental ethnocentrism, based on his own experiences and observations. He commented, "I really hate it: someone to say, 'Your people is this and this and this; they're really doing this right and they're really doing this wrong.'"

A Resurgence of Identity

Finau's wholesale rejection of cultural identity is unusual, but aptly illustrates the importance of acknowledging the subjective experience of identity. While others may continue to identify Finau as "Tongan," he can choose not to concur—unless perhaps he later chooses to for strategic or other reasons.

In contrast to Finau, Sita chooses to emphasize her Tongan identity, mainly because, she says, "it's different" and impresses her non-Tongan peers. As her older sister commented, these days "it's cool to be an Islander." Sita can do this easily, as she has grown up speaking Tongan and learning *anga fakatonga* within a large extended family in Melbourne and Sydney. For some of her Tongan friends it is not so easy: they do not speak Tongan and their knowledge of *anga fakatonga* is somewhat patchy, yet, Sita says, they yearn to be "real" Tongans.

I discussed this with an Australian youth worker involved with the Tongan population in Melbourne, who commented, "Of course some of the parents now, who've got little kids, think it's horrible that these kids [the teenagers] don't know the Tongan language, but of course they weren't in Australia twenty years ago when Australia was a very different society." To some extent it is true that the emphasis on "multiculturalism" in Australia has had a positive impact; for example Gillian Bottomley noted an increase in self-respect among immigrants' children since the mid-to-late 1970s (1992, 125). However, other factors must be taken into account when explaining both the tendency of young parents nowadays to emphasize *anga fakatonga,* and the resurgence of interest in *anga fakatonga* among adolescents.

It is particularly important to see these developments in the context of events in Tonga, where rapid social change and the recent emergence of a pro-democracy movement have contributed to a widespread fear that *anga fakatonga* is weakening and may be lost (Morton 1996). While some

embrace this change, others are responding with a reassertion of *anga fakatonga,* especially in relation to young people.

Some of the most ardent of those I call the "born-again Tongans"—the young people who have enthusiastically rediscovered their cultural identity—are those who were sent back to Tonga as rebellious youngsters in their early teens.[13] These adolescents, who have grown up in Australia, are sent to Tonga ostensibly to learn *anga fakatonga,* but actually to be disciplined (although in many respects these are much the same thing). When they return to Australia after a period of time, often several years, they identify very strongly as Tongans.

The Tongan churches in Australia have also played a role in the resurgence of interest in Tongan identity. Apart from the churches encouraging dialogue about *anga fakatonga,* it is mainly in church-related contexts that young people are given the opportunity to practice and display what De Vos called "emblematic ethnicity" (1990, 212); for example, wearing Tongan clothing to church, speaking in Tongan when giving presentations in church, and performing Tongan dances at church events.[14]

These contexts also provide opportunities to be confronted by the issue of identity. A Tongan youth worker who accompanied members of a youth group to a National Christian Youth Convention told me how they had insisted, prior to the convention, that they would *not* be singing Tongan hymns, doing Tongan dances, or wearing Tongan clothes. Once there, however, they saw a large group of more "traditional" young Tongans from Sydney performing Tongan dances and immediately changed their minds. Since then they have been practicing their singing and dancing enthusiastically; as a second youth worker explained, "the difference was that they were doing it because they wanted to, whereas two or three years ago it was the parents telling them they had to do it."[15] One of the young women in the youth group said, "Actually, that was one thing that was very important for me, as in identity: Tongan dancing. . . . And you know, it was just a dance and it was nothing really important but as the years came by I knew the importance of how to do it properly."

A renewed interest in ethnicity, including that occurring among the so-called white ethnics in North America, has been interpreted as a means of coping with the alienation of modern society, by providing a sense of belonging and continuity (see, eg, Cohen 1978, 401). A Tongan minister with whom I spoke provided a very similar analysis:

What we have come to find is that culture can be a foundation of identity. I mean, there's always a saying that part of the problem with the Australians is that they don't have any particular culture! So everyone is looking for a culture to hang on to. And we have found it with our own children: when they were much younger everything Tongan is yucky. But as they grow up and you talk about dancing, they grab it. Dressing up for church—It's amazing! Our two girls went to Tonga two years ago; they came back, and every time now they go to church they dress up in Tongan [clothes]. In other words, they have found something they can claim as their own. And when the crisis comes, very interestingly enough, they stand themselves as Tongans, not Australians.

The appeal of asserting a Tongan identity seems to lie both in the flexible nature of *anga fakatonga* and in the subjective experience such identity provides. The children of the minister quoted can don their Tongan clothes for church, perform Tongan dances, and socialize with other Tongans, yet they can also attend university, aspire to professional careers, go to nightclubs, and otherwise participate in Australian society: they can successfully adopt multiple subject positions, or, in Hall's terms, they can negotiate continuity and rupture to form hybrid identities.

In her 1982 study of the Western Samoan "kinship bridge," spanning Western Sāmoa and the diaspora, Evelyn Kallen argued that *fa'asāmoa* (the Samoan way) is flexible enough for it to be interpreted differently to fit migrants' varying lifestyles. "Yet, at the core, *all* of these expressions of the new international, Samoan ethnicity contain a common, strong, affective/symbolic tie with *fa'asāmoa* roots" (1982, 140, emphasis in original). For young Tongans rediscovering their *anga fakatonga* roots, this affective and symbolic tie provides a powerful sense of attachment and belonging.

Furthermore, because the identification involved is most crucially on this affective and symbolic level, it does not require an unquestioning acceptance of all aspects of "tradition" and "culture." Pita, an older Tongan man with children born and raised in Australia, said that he and his wife had explained aspects of *anga fakatonga,* even when they did not expect their children to follow them. "My wife has got a habit of explaining almost every single habit; why you do it. And I mean, the good thing about the young ones, they come up with their [own] reason. And some of [the Tongan ways] they didn't find any reason why you should do it: it's just for the sake of culture. Serves no purpose. So with these young ones, if they don't find any purpose in it they won't do it! Which is a great

thing." Such statements help non-Tongans to comprehend the apparently paradoxical attitudes of Tongan immigrants like 'Ana, who have rebelled against *anga fakatonga* and rejected many of its values and practices in favor of a more individualistic, *pālangi* orientation and lifestyle, and yet retain a deeply emotional identification as Tongan.

"Born-again Tongans," and those who have always identified as Tongans, also identify to varying extents as Polynesians and Pacific Islanders. In the past such identifications were imposed by outsiders, with diasporic Islanders lumped together for the purposes of gathering statistics, providing services, and so on. For young people today it is increasingly a matter of what Barbara Lal called "ethnicity by consent," where different ethnic groups merge and adopt a common identity in specific contexts (1983, 166). This process is facilitated by the overlapping of identification that can occur, as with the Tongan children who spent their early years in New Zealand, whose mother claims "they've got a real tie with the Māori background" and who prefer Māori dancing to Tongan dancing; the Tongan girl whose appearance allows her to sometimes pretend to be Samoan; and the Tongan youth group at a church convention who preferred the company of a group of Samoans who could not speak Samoan to that of a Tongan group that prided itself on its adherence to *anga fakatonga*. The Uniting Church is actively encouraging interactions between Islanders, and in 1994 held a seminar for Islander youth and their parents to discuss their common problems with settlement and within the family.

To some extent an identification as Islander is politically instrumental. However, the Tongans I have encountered in Melbourne are not mobilized in the sense of actively seeking assistance or recognition from the government (see Loomis 1991 for a discussion of this lack of mobilization among Pacific Islanders in New Zealand). A few Tongans in Melbourne have been involved in groups such as the Pacific Island Council of Victoria, but such activity has not been a major factor in the resurgence of cultural identity as has occurred in other migrant groups in Australia, notably the Italians and Greeks. Rather, young people's increasing identification as Polynesians and Islanders is part of the process of constructing cultural identity by experimenting with subject positions; it is a search for a satisfactory sense of self. Popular culture is contributing to these young people's positive identification with their Polynesian backgrounds, with sports stars such as Olympic boxer Paea Wolfgramm and footballer Jonah

Lomu, singing groups such as Kulcha, and of course the movie *Once Were Warriors.*

If constructing a cultural identity is a question of "something to hang on to" and "something to claim as their own," as the minister suggested, then the appeal of identifying as Pacific Islander may be explained. It offers an identification that is much broader and less specific than "Tongan" and incorporates a much larger peer group. It is also more easily adopted by those who are not fully versed in the language and culture of one or both of their parents. This was apparent when my own son saw the movie *Once Were Warriors.* At the age of fourteen he had spent years rejecting his Tongan identity, yet after seeing the movie he kept breaking into his version of a Māori *haka,* began wearing a carved bone pendant, put on his bedroom wall posters from the movie depicting young men with Māori facial tattoos, and was suddenly proud of being Polynesian.

Even for young people who are knowledgeable about *anga fakatonga* and who identify as Tongan, a broader identification as Islanders can be appealing, insofar as it greatly expands the scope of their affective and symbolic ties. This desire to emphasize sameness, at least in some contexts, stands in stark counterpoint to the current trend in theorizing that focuses on difference. Although at an analytical level it can be invaluable to address the intersecting elements of difference—ethnicity, class, gender, religion, and so on—one can be left wondering just what any individual has in common with anyone else.[16] By attending to the level of subjective experience one can recognize the crucial importance of sameness and identification as a fundamental element of sociality, which can exist in spite of, or even because of difference.

One of the songs on the soundtrack of *Once Were Warriors,* entitled "So Much Soul" makes my point, addressing the "children of Polynesia" and telling them that "Polynesian people have got their soul" and "unity is our only behavior" (Gifted and Brown 1994). A sense of belonging, togetherness, essential sameness—all the emotional, subjective aspects of cultural identity from which researchers have largely shied away—are expressed in these lyrics. They also show how the complex cultural identity that can be forged in the context of migration and postcolonialism can overcome the false dichotomy of "traditional" and "modern." This is captured nicely in another line in the song, which plays on the pan-Polynesian value of respect. The "Polynesian children" are urged to give "respect to the soul community."

Conclusion

> People everywhere have now learned to talk about them-
> selves, when they need to, in terms of their culture: much of
> the world has internalized culture as the marker of difference.
> Lamont Lindstrom and Geoffrey White
> *Anthropology's New Cargo*

Despite the earnest debates in anthropology about the viability of the concept of "culture" (see Brightman 1995), it is certainly alive and well for the Tongans I have met in both Tonga and Australia. As exemplified in many of the quotes in this paper, they readily used terms such as culture, tradition, and identity in our interviews and conversations, most often in relation to the concept of *anga fakatonga*. As was shown in 'Ana's comments at the beginning of this paper, the essentialist notion that "the Tongan culture" exists as some kind of stable, bounded entity is readily accepted. This is confirmed in the way Tongans measure themselves and each other against this norm, as being more or less Tongan (Morton nd).

Yet 'Ana and other Tongans with whom I have discussed "culture" also acknowledge the characteristics more often identified in anthropology today: culture as strategic, constructed, fragmented, improvised, contested, and so on. They hold both views of culture, invoking them according to context and, most important, incorporating both in the construction of their cultural identities. If anthropology has a lesson to learn from "the natives' point of view" it is that these two conceptions of culture are not mutually exclusive and indeed that they are essential characteristics of the same phenomenon. That people hold both views simultaneously makes the construction of cultural identities more confusing and complex than either modernist or postmodernist accounts would sometimes suggest.

My paper is only a preliminary exploration of this confusion and complexity, and can be seen as part of a movement toward more specific, microlevel analyses in the literature on both the politics of tradition and ethnicity. There is also increasing recognition, at least in ethnicity research, of the need to unravel the connections between microlevel and

macrolevel processes (Pedraza 1994, 2).[17] While the latter have not been the focus of this paper, an important aim of my research is to explore the impact of structural variables such as Tongans' migration history and their positioning in Australian society: their incorporation in the labor market, their socioeconomic status, experience of discrimination, and so forth (see di Leonardo's 1984 work on Italians in America).

Throughout this paper I have used the language of agency, asserting that individuals can "choose" or "reject" their cultural identities, yet I am not entirely comfortable with the notion of "volitional" ethnicity (Nagel 1994, 152). By combining the kind of microlevel analysis presented here with an account of broader structural influences, I hope to identify the constraints within which Tongans in Melbourne are constructing their cultural identities, the kinds of limitations that operate as they are creating their own culture.

<div align="center">*   *   *</div>

Notes

1 Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of Tongan migrants referred to in this paper.

2 I use the term *migrant* in this paper to refer to Tongans who have migrated to Australia and the children of those migrants, whether brought from Tonga or born in Australia.

3 Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. For future interviewees who

choose to conduct the interview in Tongan, my transcription and translation will be checked by my Tongan research assistant.

4 Although Linnekin and Poyer stated in their introduction that the Oceanic–western, cultural–ethnic dichotomies are "to some extent a matter of emphasis rather than an either/or distinction" (1990, 6), some contributors to the volume proceeded as if it were a clear distinction.

5 Docker made the more general point that "Postmodern theory has tended to argue that in the contemporary world identity is multiple, contradictory, fragmented, pluralized. . . . But such fragmentation and plurality—such hybridity—is in tension with the continuing force and power of collective identities and communities" (1995, 422).

6 A survey by Connell and McCall of much of the published and unpublished literature on Pacific Islanders in Australia highlighted the lack of research in this field (1989).

7 For Australia these include Cowling's study of motivations for migration (1990), Faiva's report on health and welfare needs and concerns (1989), and Niumeitolu's paper on the social and health consequences of migration (1993). Each of these papers discussed Tongans living in Sydney.

8 The different Tongan churches vary in the length of services, but it is more common to have only an hour-long service, as is the case in Tonga.

9 An "instrumental" approach to ethnicity is addressed, in the literature on migration and ethnicity, primarily in terms of political mobilization. This more personal level has been neglected, although it has far greater impact on people's everyday lives.

10 Keefe and Padilla discussed such framing in terms of a "neo-pluralism model that can accommodate concurrent states of change *and* continuity, integration *and* pluralism, in ethnicity" (1987, 191, emphases in original).

11 Derogatory terms often used for Tongans born or raised overseas are *pālangi loi,* meaning fake or phony westerners, and *fie pālangi,* having pretensions of being a westerner.

12 Part of my research project will involve interviewing returned migrants; however, at the time of writing little such data had been collected.

13 This is part of a wider practice of sending children between kin in Tonga and in host countries such as Australia (Cowling 1990, 200; James 1991, 17). This may involve several moves by the time a child reaches adolescence, with the intervals between moves varying in length from months to years. This process, which I call repeat migration, means that in effect the child must repeat the settlement process with each move. James has suggested that "such children may not absorb Tongan values . . . but rather will learn economic individualism and may cut themselves off from wider kinship ties" (1991, 17). Yet adults choosing

to move children between kin claim to be motivated by notions of tradition and cultural identity, such as the need to retain kinship links and a desire for children to speak Tongan. I intend to investigate repeat migration more thoroughly, as it seems highly likely to have a significant impact on the ways in which such children construct their cultural identities.

14 "Church events" is a broad category including weddings, funerals, baptisms, fund-raising concerts, and many other social activities. One aspect of these events that I have not investigated in depth is the common use of video to record the events and, as Hammond (1988) showed for Tongans in Utah, to affirm, communicate, and negotiate aspects of cultural identity.

15 All Tongan families I have met have taught their children to perform Tongan dances. The children vary greatly in their enthusiasm: one mother confessed that she had to pay her reluctant daughter $50 to get her to dance!

16 I refer here to feminist theory such as is found in Bottomley, de Lepervanche, and Martin (1991). Moore has made a similar point in relation to feminist standpoint theory; she suggested that "a more radical reading of its premises would suggest that we all have different experiences and understandings of cultural discourses, and symbols and institutions. The question is how much any of us share with each other" (1994, 16).

17 The importance of acknowledging both micro- and macrolevel processes in the construction of "ethnicity" is also recognized in calls for analyses that allow for the "multidimensional" nature of ethnicity (eg, De Vos 1990).

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Abstract

The impact of migration on the construction of cultural identities is examined by
focusing on Tongan migrants in Melbourne. Within contexts such as the church
and the family these immigrants are shown to be self-consciously defining, recon-
structing, and contesting the nature of *anga fakatonga* (the Tongan way). Signifi-
cant variation is revealed within and between families in definitions of and
adherence to *anga fakatonga,* and the effect of this on child socialization is
explored. Attention is paid to the younger Tongans who have been brought to
Australia by their parents or who have been born in Australia. Although some
individuals are clearly rejecting at least some aspects of their Tongan identity,
others are experiencing a resurgence of interest in "Tongan culture" and in being
Polynesian.