

Playing for the Future: Sport and the Production of Healthy Bodies in Policy and Practice

*A summary of findings**

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2014

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Executive Summary

At the core of this study is a critical examination of the policy and practice of sport for development. Drawing on a case study of gender, sport, and education in the Pacific Island nation of Sāmoa, the study illuminates how the policy idea of creating healthy islands and healthy bodies through sport competes with existing local practices of sport for development. This practice, as described to me by my interlocutors, observed through twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork (between 2010 and 2012), and quantitatively surveyed, includes gendered ideas about development centered around the transnational 'āiga (family) rather than the territorial boundaries of the nation, tautua (service) rather than health behavior change, and alofa (love) rather than one's body size. Locally imagined sport for development also intricately ties together notions of transnational mobility and globalization with shifting practices of masculinity and muscularity, raising important questions about the purpose and kind of education needed for development. Exploring local constructions of sport and development, this study highlights how many Samoans view sport as a roundtrip ticket off island toward economic opportunity and the imagined good life. In this case, it is not necessarily the quest to produce a healthy body that attracts Samoan youth, especially men, to sport but rather its potential to move bodies into more central locations within a global economy of remittances that makes sport popular. By juxtaposing what sport for development policy in Sāmoa is intended to achieve with how it is actually practiced, this study foregrounds how "playing for the future" has been incorporated into the development imaginations rather than the health behaviors of Samoan youth, educators, community leaders, and government officials.

Samoan Constructions of Sport for Development

In my conversations with over 100 youth, village leaders, school administrators, and government officials, sport was often framed as something to do for fun, a social activity to pass the time. Benefits of participation were often referenced in terms of health and social development, themes similar to those promoted by official program objectives. Yet, these references were never the stopping point in our conversations but almost always a stepping stone to what my interlocutors believed were more important motivations, like promoting the country overseas, thinking about the future welfare of one's family, and participating in a remittance-based economy.

In a survey administered to nearly 600 students (boys and girls) at five secondary schools in Savai'i, a similar pattern emerged, illustrating the degree to which elements of a Samoan sport for development assemblage permeate local discourse and the collective imagination. I asked students to respond to four open-response questions: What is the usefulness of sports for 1) you, 2) your family, 3) your village, and 4) your country? As expected, students reported a wide range of uses for sport in their own lives and for their communities, including health purposes, to have fun with friends (to socialize), for achieving specific career goals (for the future), to develop their talent or leadership skills (youth development), and for service to the family, village, and country (see Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of Student Responses to the Question, "What is the Usefulness of Sports for You, Your Family, Your Village, and Your Country?"

	...for you %	...for your family	...for your village	...for your country
Health reasons	61	20	16	9
To socialize	7	21	23	6
For the future	24	20	6	3
Youth development	17	5	12	12
To serve	0	38	49	75

Sixty one percent (61%) of students reflecting on the usefulness of sport for themselves referenced health reasons like, “You don’t get sick because you sweat out the bad/poison while playing,” or “Brings down the [high blood pressure] of the [obese] body.” Notably, as students shifted their focus to the larger social units (to the family, the village, and the country), their responses are less about health—representing 20%, 16%, and 9% of students for each category respectively—and more about how sport allows them to fulfill acts of service (tautua) to the larger collective—at 38%, 49%, and 75% respectively. These acts of tautua ranged from earning money to help their families with financial obligations (especially contributions to cultural activities of exchange) to achieving recognition and fame for their family, village, and country. For example: “When you travel [to play sports] the first question people ask is where do you come from and then you will tell others the name of your village.”

The shift away from health-related responses as students reflected across larger units of analysis is particularly illuminating considering the dominant international discourse around sport’s role in addressing metabolic disorders faced by communities and nations in the Pacific. While students reported that sport is a means of exercise and a way to strengthen one’s body and obtain good health, they also saw sport as a means to personal achievement and a blessed future by way of opening pathways to fulfill obligations to tautua (serve). It is apparent that participation in sport has come to signify a vision of success and achievement very different than the vision of instilling healthy lifestyles initially imagined at the international level.

Sport as a ticket ifafo: Mobility from here to there

At the heart of Samoan constructions of sport for development is the notion that sport is like a ticket for youth to a more productive future overseas.

Sports can take you places. And I think that's, that's what's happening now. That's where the target is now for a lot of the youngsters who play sport: to earn a place overseas, too—or as we said—to gain a ticket overseas. Once you get that, that's very much the climax of our part [as teachers]. And as I've said, they earn a lot of money! That's a lot of money, compared to what they

could have got here. There's nothing here. (Iosefa, government school principal, Apia)¹

Embedded in Iosefa's statement is a common representation of the quality of life my interlocutors perceived to permeate life in Sāmoa. The dearth of opportunities cast a shadow on the future for many young Samoans negotiating their options as they entered adulthood (cf. Macpherson, 1990). For, Mikaele, a young man in Savai'i, the anxieties he faced about his future were best illuminated by his struggle to decide whether to return to university in Apia at the start of his second term. While the enrollment fee (SAT \$265, or USD \$117.40) and tuition (approximately SAT \$1,300, or USD \$575.90) would have been prohibitive for most families in Sāmoa, the burden weighing heavily on his mind was not a matter of cost but rather the long term opportunities that continuing university (and thus staying in Sāmoa) would close. He explained:

When we were younger, you always get asked, What do you want to be when you grow up? Y'know? At the time you think you can become anything. But as you grow up in this country you start to realize that there are so many limitations. You start thinking, I wanna be a lawyer. But when you grow up, studying law here is really [impossible]. If you wanted to be a pilot, you can't become a pilot in Sāmoa. Like there's so many limitations. So you start to realize like, reality kinda hits you. And then you realize that living in Sāmoa is like, your options in life are really limited compared— And so you kinda think like, so, if [you] want to achieve this, do you wanna stay in this country? Or do you opt to take another thing which you didn't wanna take? So you're kinda forced to change your course of life, to change your ambition in life.

For Mikaele, returning to the university meant tempering his ambitions to a less than desirable future. The prospects of spending several more years doing schoolwork to earn a diploma that might give him an entry-level government job in Apia for SAT \$8 to \$10 per hour (USD \$3.51 to \$4.39) did not compare to the idea of leaving university and moving to Australia to work part time without a university degree for AUD \$13 to \$15 an hour (USD \$13.54 to \$15.96).² Furthermore, the limited employment opportunities in Apia also meant higher risks of “failing” to achieve social mobility through education and thus returning to the village to work on the family plantation. A future confined to “the bush,” however, merely perpetuated the view that there is no hope on the island.³

Indeed, the prospects of life overseas overshadow if not mark a point in the horizon of many youth's imagined futures. Although 63% of youth surveyed in my study have not yet visited or lived outside of Sāmoa themselves, over 90% have family currently living or

¹ All names used are pseudonyms.

² At the time of writing, the national minimum wage in Australia was AUD \$15.96 per hour (USD \$16.64); for junior employees 19 years of age, the minimum wage was AUD \$13.17 (USD \$13.73). In Sāmoa, the national minimum wage for employees over 18 years of age was SAT \$2 per hour (USD \$0.88).

³ This view contrasts greatly to what Andrew Robson (1987) found over 20 years ago in his study of formal schooling and the alienation of students from village life. In his study, he concluded that much of the concern about student disenchantment with village life was unfounded and overgeneralized, arguing instead that students viewed schooling as a means by which they had a reasonable chance to achieve their aspirations.

working overseas, mostly in New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. When asked where they themselves wanted to go to live and work in the future, nearly 75% of students reported a country outside of Sāmoa (about 52% said New Zealand and/or Australia), while only about 20% said they wanted to stay in Sāmoa. Never mind the hardships or realities of the migrant lifestyle awaiting them overseas; the primary pull factor is the migration itself. As globalization increases Samoa's integration into the global political economy, pathways overseas have also increased (education, seasonal work schemes, military, sport, etc.), heightening the desirability, possibility, and inevitability of transnational movement. Yet as global integration deepens, local access to transnational opportunities have become increasingly uneven across Samoan society. Although opportunities to participate in the global political economy are greater, those who have the economic resources, social networks, and human capital within their immediate kin relations are more likely to seize these opportunities than others, pushing global shores just beyond reach for those in positions of less privilege.

Mikaele's dilemma points to the anxieties many Samoan youth face as they wait on the periphery for their entry ticket to the expanded shores of the Samoan economy. Traditionally, educational scholarships to overseas institutions functioned as the conduit of mobility and thus the measure of one's success. Today, though, with increasingly fewer opportunities on-island, educational scholarships overseas are not enough. With the increasing globalization of international sport and, in particular, the increasing tendency for professional teams to contract (male) athletes from the Pacific Islands (Grainger, 2009; Horton, 2012), sport pathways have become popular for Samoan (male) youth looking for alternative ways overseas and alternatives ways to success. The media, billboard advertisements, and television commercials highlighting Polynesian athletic prowess help reproduce the notion that Samoans and other Pacific Islanders have a special place in the making of international sport history, feeding further into the allure of sport.

Sport as tautua (service): Redefining the fit and productive citizen

Many of my younger interlocutors located sport within a logic of tautua (service) to the 'āiga (family), epitomized by acts of reciprocity, love, and respect. As one young man described it, a rugby scholarship would enable him to save money from his allowance to help his family fulfill financial obligations to the church or to village fa'alavelave (like funerals or weddings). He could also support younger sibling through school, and later in the future pass on his knowledge of rugby to other village youth so they, too, could pursue sport as tautua to their families.

As Sāmoa becomes more integrated into the global economy and as families continue to become interconnected globally, Samoan youth are caught trying to negotiate pathways overseas that enable them to help strengthen the economic power of their families while allowing them also to fulfill cultural obligations of tautua in an increasingly cash-based economy at home. The economic success promised by international sport thus makes it an ideal form of tautua, where personal success can be translated into material and financial expressions of love for one's family, church, and village.

In this context, the rise of sport as tautua must also be viewed in relation to perceived diminishing opportunities for meaningful service through traditional activities located within the borders of Sāmoa, a landscape that has become increasingly gendered.

While feminine spaces in the home have remained relatively unscathed by processes of globalization, urbanization, and modernization, traditional masculine institutions of production like agriculture have been framed as undesirable and inadequate by youth for meeting the needs, demands, and desires of their cash-dependent families today. Indeed, only two (male) students who participated in my survey reported a desire to pursue an agricultural occupational future.

Furthermore, because educational achievement no longer promises a white collar job in the capital (let alone overseas), especially for young men who have been labeled “academically unfit” for school, pathways of social mobility at home have become even more limited. As a result, many Samoan male youth drop out of school in hopes of pursuing work overseas to send remittances home, only to find that these opportunities, especially sport-based ones, are equally in short supply. Many young Samoan men find themselves in circumstances where traditional pathways to adulthood, status, and authority have been blocked by rapid socioeconomic and geo-economic changes, holding them indefinitely at bay from fulfilling expectations of their families. Samoan male youth find themselves in an economic landscape that destines them to become “failed adults” (Sommers, 2012, p. 193): unproductive and unable to contribute to the welfare of their ‘āiga and unaccepted as adults—a status symbolized by the conferment of a matai (chiefly) title. And, as development imaginaries continue to shift overseas, these men face increasing prospects of unemployment, failure to serve, and a future “stuck” both in Sāmoa and in youth.

The rise of sport as tautua in Sāmoa is thus a uniquely masculine response to changing social and economic landscapes and changing notions of successful adulthood. For women, although they are often assumed by international policy to be included in sport for development, gendered realities have not only created different possible lives for them, but have also located sport differently in their present and future selves. The uneven terrain of opportunity and risk is read through gendered lenses that often lead young women *not* to consider alternative pathways like sport, even if they believe sport can help propel them into transnational forms of tautua.

While sport as a ticket ifafo (overseas) and sport as an alternative pathway illustrate contemporary strategies to connect Samoan youth to global shores, sport as tautua helps clarify how the fitness and productivity of the body are ultimately anchored to a de/masculinized i’nei (here, local). In this landscape, sport has emerged as an alternative means of achieving success that not only allows young men to reconstitute masculine domains of productivity but also to fulfill their roles as healthy and fit “citizens” of their ‘āiga. Dominant international frameworks of sport for development may view women as the primary beneficiary and health behavior change as the development priority; in a Samoan interpretation, though, the practice of sport for development is located in the realms of men, employment, and families. A healthy body—and by extension, one’s fitness and productivity—is reinterpreted through the social logics of relationships rather than viewed as an objective, measurable state of the body. Participation in sport itself is thus not the goal; rather, what is important is (the possibility of) using one’s earnings, fame, and social networks gained from one’s successful career in sport towards the development of one’s ‘āiga or village, church, or country.

Sport as a viable pathway: Alternatives for the academically ‘unfit’

While education has traditionally been the primary means of upward mobility in Sāmoa, these opportunities were generally limited to those with the “educational capital” needed to obtain coveted scholarships to pursue education overseas. In recent years, as it has become apparent that not all Samoan youth can successfully pursue education-based pathways—and that not all pathways are contingent on one’s educational achievements—identifying other student talent has become a strategy for youth, educators, and community leaders to maximize success.

I think not all the students are academically, you know, academically fit for getting jobs, you know? But maybe 5 or 10 of the, the school leavers here, maybe [get] a chance to go into, you know, a selected team, or a national team in the future. So we usually teach them to think of which suitable way, which suitable pathway that he or she is fit to take in order to get uh, to get a blessing for him. A chance for him or an opportunity for him to get a job in the future, or a career. ‘Cause we usually [tell] the students, sports now is a career! (Sione, secondary school principal, Savai’i)

Sione's emphatic final point “sports now is a career!” summarizes the ways in which sport for development has been put to local productive use, becoming what scholar robin kelley (1997) has described as an entrepreneurial strategy intended to enable, in this case, academically “unfit” youth to avoid “dead-end, [no-]wage labor while devoting their energies to creative and pleasurable pursuits” (p. 45). In the context of high youth unemployment where education does not guarantee success, students are encouraged to think of the fit between their talents and suitable careers.⁴ Couched within this language of “fitness” (both in terms of physical strength and alignment between talent and career), sport makes possible for those who are academically unfit the blessings and opportunities from which they would otherwise have been excluded. The incorporation of sport into a local development agenda thus functions to create access to an increasingly uneven global political economy.

According to this vision, youth are no longer constrained to the traditional pursuits of teacher, doctor, or lawyer. Instead, youth can pursue careers like sport that are believed to be easier (or at least more pleasurable) pathways to a good life with better and quicker financial returns. The fact that there have been others who have set this precedence in heroic proportions adds further weight to the belief. Indeed, the visibility of successful Samoan athletes has transformed the notion of “sport is a career” into development commonsense.

⁴ Because of Samoa’s large informal and subsistence economy, it is difficult to determine Samoa’s “real” unemployment rate. In 2012, the Samoa Bureau of Statistics (SBS) reported an unemployment rate of 5.7 percent for 2011, and that 35.6 percent of its economically active population above the age of fifteen were employed in subsistence work.

Implications for Gender, Sport, and Health

During an evening conversation in her sitting room, Malia, a young scientist in her early twenties who was educated overseas, explained to me how her desire to go overseas emerged when she was a Year 9 student at one of Samoa's most prestigious government secondary schools. She knew, however, that traveling overseas was a luxury; her family was not like those of her school peers whose parents had enough money to send their children overseas regularly. Her mother, a vice-principal of a secondary school outside of Apia, constantly reminded her and her older sister that if they wanted to go overseas, they would have to earn it. At that age, Malia was already beginning to calculate strategies available to her but realized that going overseas on an educational scholarship would require her to wait until completion of secondary school. Participation in their school's netball team, however, held Malia's hopes for an earlier ticket overseas. Even though she was young, she managed to become one of two Year 9 students to make her school's competitive netball team. Like a prize door had finally opened, Malia was able to travel to New Zealand on a school netball tour. Unlike her male counterparts, though, Malia understood that this ticket overseas was temporary and that sport was not a viable future for her: "[M]om and dad kept on telling us to do schoolwork. So I knew then that the next time for me to go overseas is from schoolwork, not from sports."

Malia's realization from an early age that school, not sport, would be her vehicle overseas points to the gendering of imagined mobilities shaping Samoan youths' calculations of their futures. That is, while many boys eventually see that schooling is not a viable future for them, many girls eventually see that sport is not for them. Yet, Malia's realization also brings a more important issue to light: an increasingly limited range of opportunities for girls to pursue sport. No doubt, a global landscape where professional international sport careers for women are sparse combined with gender stereotypes about sport and misperceptions about female biology have discouraged young Samoan women like Malia from actively pursuing sport.⁵

Throughout my study, my interlocutors often spoke quickly and enthusiastically about alternatives available for boys who are not good at school: second chance schooling, sports, vocational and technical training, etc. But it was rare for any of my interlocutors to explain what could or what would happen should a girl not be strong in school. Instead, many of the images that emerged during my research are of young, disenchanted men placing their hopes on sport; rarely were there stories of young, disenchanted women turning to a similar set of hopeful alternatives. Rather, the increased attention on the plight of boys (both in schools and in the villages) often ended up masking the constrained life course options available for many Samoan women, especially those in rural areas. And because gender norms in Sāmoa tend to keep women out of the public's eye, their disenchantment becomes invisible compared to their brothers, whose less constricted movements make their unemployment a more visible social "problem."

Moreover, lost in the fray of sport, masculinity, education, and development is the original policy focus on health. Based on youth survey data, formal and informal interviews,

⁵ There are several exceptions of prominent locally born and locally raised Samoan sportswomen, like weightlifter Ele Opeloge, who have not only excelled at their sport at the international level but have also successfully entered the transnational flows of tautua and remittances.

as well as documents collected throughout my research, it is clear that the idea of sport for health lingers in the mist of my interlocutors' rationales for engaging sport. In addition, smoke-free rugby and netball tournaments, health promoting school sport days, and organized walkathons advocating healthy lifestyles regularly decorate local newspapers. In between photographs of smiling children and adults playing a variety of sports are often messages advocating healthy living and healthier lifestyles. Even in my survey, as mentioned earlier, when asked how sport was useful for them 61% of youth reported various health benefits. When describing the behaviors of a healthy person, 70% of students demonstrated their knowledge of the importance of regular exercise and a healthy diet (see Appendix for a more detailed account of youth perceptions of health). Several of my adult interlocutors also pointed to improved health as the "number one" benefit of sport, especially for women who were expected to pass on their health literacy to their children and families.

Given this awareness of the connection between sport and biomedical health, the disconnect between the policy and practice of sport for development in Sāmoa points to the urgency for program managers and policymakers to understand the misalignment between local and international visions and expectations of sport for development.

Recommendations

1. Develop local career networks and employable skills

Recognizing the socioeconomic realities and motivations of youth participating in sport and the pressure to become contributing members of their families, sport for development programs can gain an edge in addressing the social, economic, and health objectives of Samoan communities by emphasizing their role in addressing youth unemployment. Beyond creating sport-specific employment and career networks for youth, sport for development programs can more purposefully target the development and transfer of employable skills and leadership in youth. Important to note, however, is the purposeful development of these skills in *all* participating youth, including girls and boys from marginalized or less privileged families, rather than just those youth traditionally selected by community leaders based on their existing social rank in the village or church or by the prestige of their family.

2. Promote the visibility of Samoan female athletes

One of the most surprising findings of this study was the relative invisibility of Samoan women, both in terms of their physical participation in village sport programs and their place in the sport for development imaginary. While tackling gender stereotypes about female participation in sport is a long-standing challenge globally, Samoa already has a strong cadre of female athletes who could be more publicly mobilized in the promotion of health, as well as the promotion of women in sport—including traditionally male sports like weightlifting and rugby. During the time of research, programs and media that featured male athletes and stereotypically male sports significantly outnumbered those that

featured female youth. Sport for development programs can play a more active and leading role in addressing gender, health, and development issues in Sāmoa by strategically featuring female role models in leadership and program activities.

3. Take a social health approach

Sport for development programs targeting health objectives in Sāmoa should consider taking a social health approach in program activities. Based on research findings and observations, Samoan youth are literate in multiple health systems. However, these health systems are often contradictory, and the biomedical needs of the individual are not often the primary reason for Samoan youth to participate in sport. As such, the delivery of health messages that assume an individual perspective of health may get lost, especially as the excitement around the delivery of sport takes precedence. Health messages may also conflict with local prioritization of social well-being and the health of social relationships. Thus health benefits gained through participation can be lost once youth return to their homes and communities where logics of service, love, and respect may more significantly shape health behaviors.

4. Simultaneously target nutrition education and food environments

The importance of exercise and physical activity in the promotion of healthy lifestyles in Sāmoa is often overemphasized at the expense of improvements in diet and nutrition and in Samoa's food environment. Study participants often joked about working off a sweat on the malae (village green) or at zumba only to return home to eat keke pua'a (pork bun) or what might be considered an unhealthy meal. In other cases the disconnect between diet and exercise was at the other extreme: young men dabbled in nutrition supplements and other muscle-enhancing products given to them by overseas relatives without knowledge of how these substances were to be used in conjunction with strength exercises or how their inappropriate use may affect their physiology, training, or general well-being. It is thus critical that program managers identify ways of incorporating nutrition education and addressing food environments if programs are to achieve any health objectives, even if only secondarily. This is especially the case for those youth who perceive their success in sport—and thereby the health and fitness of their bodies—as their “ticket” to a better life.

5. Research and support alternative visions of development

Findings from this study illuminate a diversity of sport for development imaginaries, many of which are remotely connected to program goals of improving health or changing health behaviors in Sāmoa. Nonetheless, as suggested by many of my interlocutors, these sometimes disparate visions can be made to align more closely through collaborative identification of mutual objectives. For sport-based development programs to achieve development goals and to make a positive impact in the lives of youth, efforts must be made by program officers to research, recognize, and support alternative visions of development. This means understanding the contexts and circumstances in which socially marginalized youth, girls and women, and boys do and do not desire to play sports.

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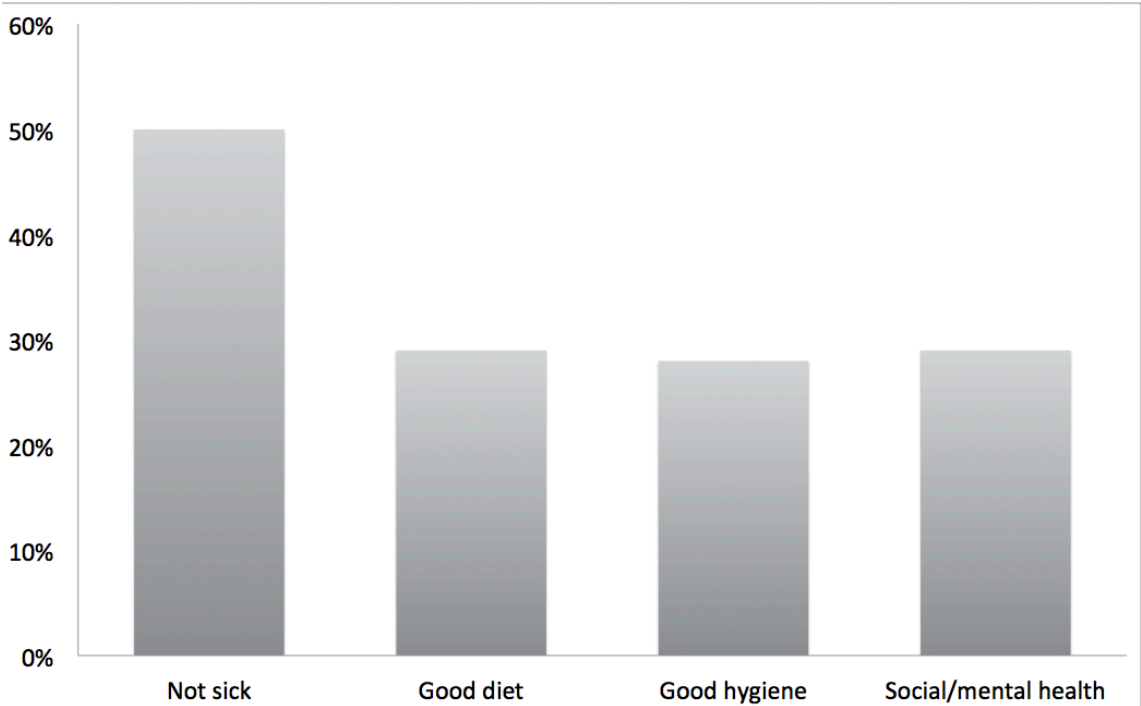
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Appendix. Youth Responses to Health Survey Questions

What is the meaning of healthy living?

Fifty percent of students reported that healthy living means the person is not sick—usually from illnesses and infections spread by germs—and not afflicted by any sort of issues, worries, or anxieties that trouble the mind (see Figure 1, below). The healthy person is also aware of the need to lose weight if s/he is overweight in order to get healthy. In addition, 29% of students reported that healthy living is grounded in eating a balanced diet and eating specifically foods like vegetables that make the body healthy and strong. About the same percentage of students (28%) reported that healthy living is grounded in the hygiene and cleanliness of one’s body, home environment, and especially of the tools and utensils one uses to prepare food. In fact, about 9% of students mentioned that healthy living is about eating clean food and safeguarding oneself and one’s family from eating foods that could make one sick from improper preparation. Finally, another 29% of students surveyed reported that healthy living entails being socially and mentally well. That is, healthy living is about being happy, carefree, and in harmony with others. It is also about working hard, especially by helping others with chores.

Figure 1. Survey responses to the question, "What is the meaning of healthy living?"



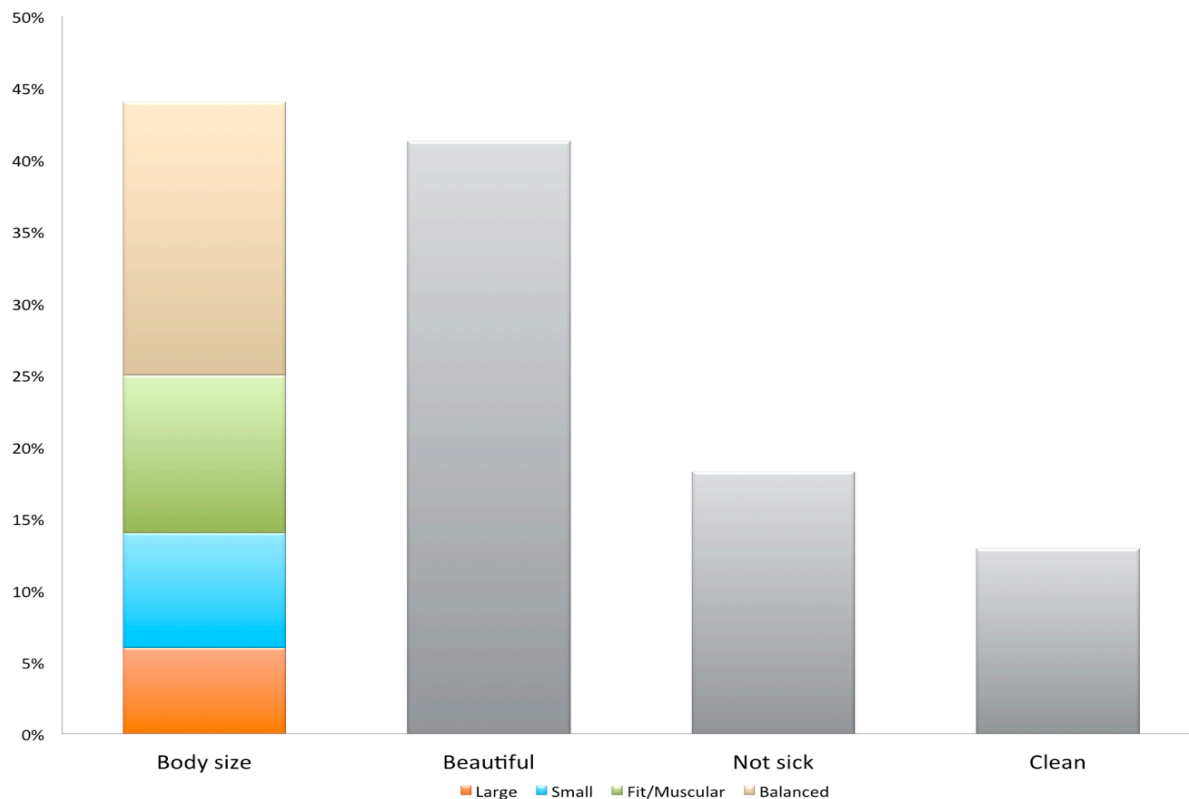
In this sense, health is not only about taking care of one’s own health, but also the health of others in one’s family and village, which includes behaviors like not smoking or drinking, and being willing to share with others one’s own knowledge about eating healthy and getting enough exercise. Of note is that Samoan youth perceptions of health encompass

multiple dimensions of health: from hygiene to nutrition, mental to physical, social to individual. Their views seem to be informed by both socialized sociocultural understandings of health and biomedical understandings of health taught in school and/or promoted by government and social media. Public health policy should take note of these holistic understandings of health when trying to promote health campaigns that take a more narrow conceptualization of illnesses, their causes, interventions, and preventions.

What does a healthy person look like?

After filtering results for responses pertaining specifically to appearance, I found that Samoan youth referred to the healthy body in four primary ways: 1) according to one's body size, 2) based on one's appearance, 3) as illuminated by one's outward state of health/illness, and 4) in terms of one's cleanliness and hygiene (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Survey responses to the question, "What does a healthy person look like?"



About 43% of students described the healthy person in terms of bodies and body size. That is, a healthy person has a good body (tino lelei), which itself is defined in a number of ways: large (6%), small (8%), fit and muscular (11%) and balanced, or not too big, not too fat, not too lean, and not showing any bone (19%). While the terms paleni (balanced), fika/fetaui (fit), and masomasoa (muscular) were used the most to describe what a healthy body looks like, there were inconsistencies around the way healthy bodies were described in terms of lāpo'a (to be big or large in size), puta (to be fat), and pa'e'e (to be lean or scraggy/scrawny), perhaps a reflection of changing valuations around large body

size (cf. Becker, Gilman, & Burwell, 2005; McCabe, Ricciardelli, Waqa, Coundar, & Fotu, 2009; Ricciardelli, et al., 2007). In some cases, for example, students reported that a good body is a large body (tino lāpo'a); while in other cases, students reported that a good body is a lean/thin body (tino pa'e'e). Still yet, in other cases students described the healthy body as full of muscle and not scrawny, which one could interpret as being a large body but not necessarily a fat body. Several students explained that people who are too fat will get sick, just as people who are too thin will get sick. This awareness, along with the range in responses about body size, demonstrates that a diverse and complex matrix of bodies, behaviors, practices, and dispositions coinciding with one's risk for developing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) exists within Samoan youth's imaginations of health.

As depicted in the remaining columns in Figure 2 above, another 41% of students described the healthy person in terms of their appearance: tall, beautiful, pale-skinned, and smooth-skinned (without blemishes, sores, or scars). Related to this, about 18% of students believe that a healthy person does not appear to be sick. That is, a healthy person has a particular state of biomedical fitness: they hardly fall ill; they are not suffering from obesity, heart disease, diabetes, or high blood pressure; their skin is absent of ringworms and other skin infections; and they are not easily out of breathe while performing chores or getting around. Finally, about 13% of students commented on a healthy person's states of cleanliness and hygiene. That is, the healthy person keeps his/her body clean; they have clean hands, clean feet, and clean clothes. Their teeth are not brown; their hair is free of lice. In addition, they keep their living space clean, neat, and tidy, especially the things they use daily. These multi-dimensional depictions of the healthy person contrast greatly with popular depictions of health and Samoans, which often focus solely on one dimension of Samoan health: body size.

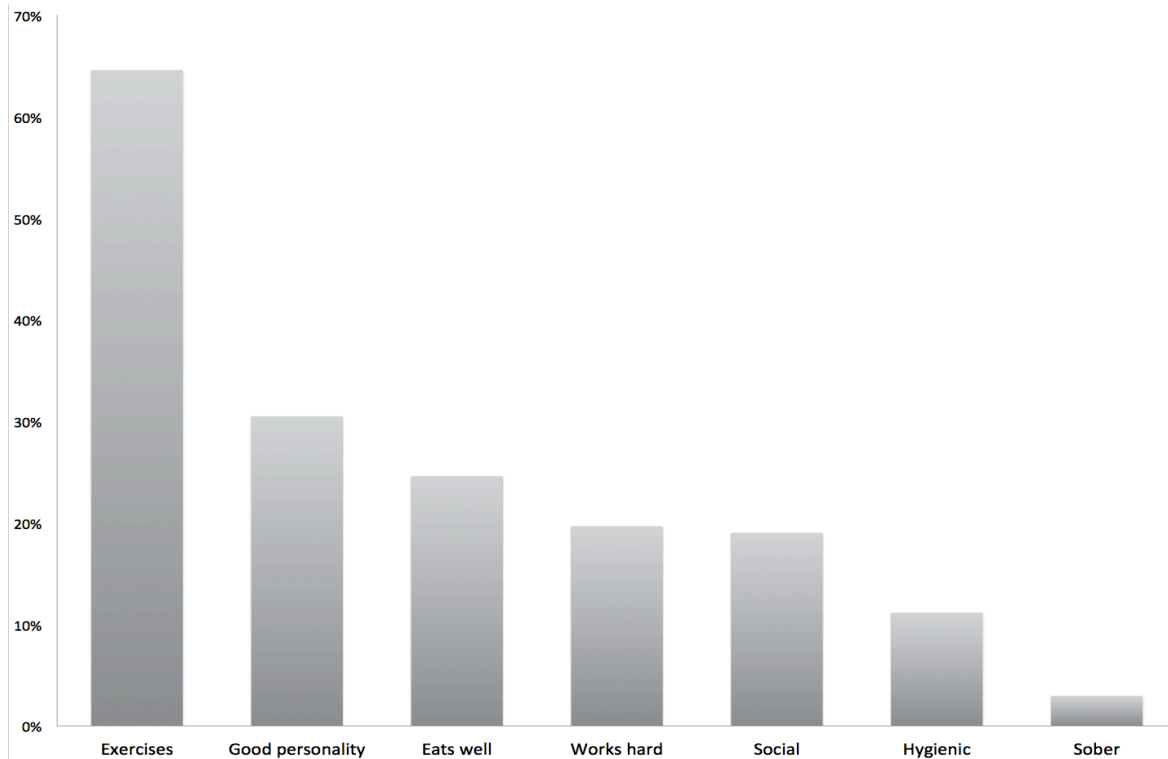
What does a healthy person do?

Interestingly, 70% of participants reported that a healthy person follows the "rules" (tulafono) of healthy living: exercising regularly and observing a good diet (see Figure 3). What is noteworthy, however, is how exercise was disproportionately stated. Sixty-five percent (65%) of participants stated that a healthy person exercises, plays sports, and is active "all the time"; while only 25% of participants reported that a healthy person eats well—especially a balanced diet (mea'ai paleni) with fruits and vegetables, and does not overeat. The discrepancy between exercise and diet responses appear to reflect a larger and perhaps popular understanding of healthy living in Sāmoa as being about exercise and active living, and where approaches to changing health behaviors lie almost exclusively in the realm of exercise, ignoring diet and nutrition.

In addition to the tenets of healthy living, about 30% of participants mentioned that a healthy person has an amicable personality: they are happy; alert and fresh; humble; calm and relaxed; never lazy, tired, sleepy or weak; never sour or sad; and not easily agitated. According to 20% of participants, this person is also a hard worker. A healthy person is never sitting around but always busy helping with chores. In addition, the healthy person likes to do these chores and carries them out diligently, without tiring, and completing them satisfactorily to the end. Expanding on more of the social aspects of health in Sāmoa, about 19% of participants explained that a healthy person exhibits specific social skills or dispositions: they take care of others and are attentive to others and the relationships

between themselves and others. They are friendly to others, respect others, and are willing to help others; they like to talk to others and are patient with others. All in all, the healthy person is well liked by other people.

Figure 3. Survey responses to the question, "What does a healthy person do?"



Other responses included behaviors pertaining to hygiene and cleanliness (11%) and refraining from activities like drinking beer or ‘ava and smoking tobacco or marijuana (3%). While survey responses encompass a range of socioculturally informed behaviors, the fact that 72% of survey participants noted “traditional” (e.g., dominant, global public health) healthy lifestyle behaviors (daily exercise, good diet, proper hygiene, and no smoking or alcohol) points to the reach that dominant health literacies, as promoted by the MOH and other NGOs and INGOs, have had in Sāmoa.

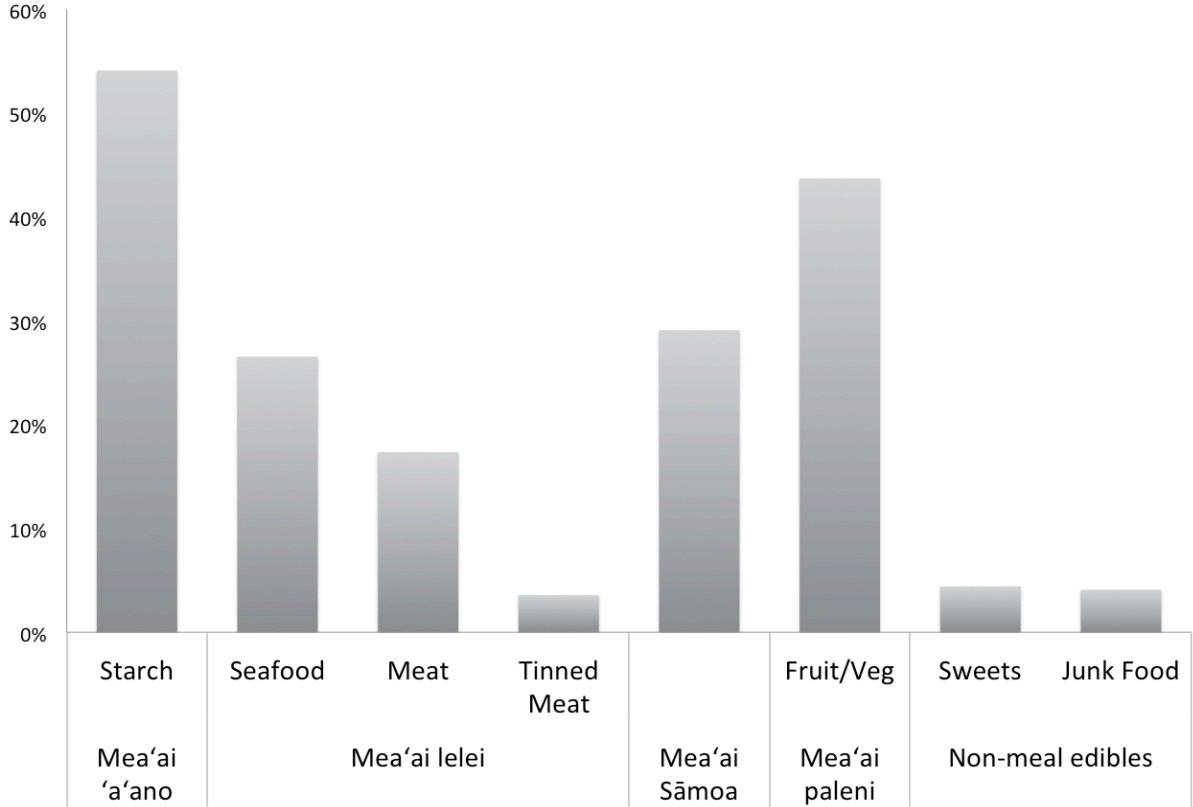
What kinds of foods do you like to eat?

Survey results provided a rather different image of Samoan food preferences than expected (see Figure 4). According to popular media and public health discourse about NCDs in Sāmoa, Samoans are consuming less fruits and vegetables and are opting for more imported processed meats, like tinned meat, and convenience foods, including sweets and junk food (AFP, 2008; Radio Australia, 2011; Squires, 2008; WHO, 2010). Yet based on survey results, the opposite appears to be the case.

Nearly 55% of participants listed one or more starchy foods, or mea‘ai ‘a‘ano, as one of their “favorite” foods. The most popular starch listed was taro (73%), followed by fa‘i (boiled or baked green bananas, 8%). Surprisingly, nearly 45% of participants listed one or

more fruits and vegetables as their favorite foods. The most popular fruit and vegetable items named were esi (papaya) and popo/niu (coconut, usually the meaty flesh of a young coconut) at 30%, which is interesting given popular discourse framing these foods as meant for feeding pigs and chickens. Serving guests esi and popo was once considered an embarrassing act, as this indicated the family did not have enough money to purchase “better” foods from the store, like bread, butter, and tinned meat. The high frequency of esi and popo in the survey may be a reflection of recent MOH and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) campaigns to re-brand local fruits as healthy and therefore good to eat, as well as increasing demand by Samoa’s hospitality industry to provide “exotic” fruits to tourists. How often or whether participants actually consume esi and popo is an issue beyond the scope of the survey.

Figure 4. Survey responses to the question, "What kinds of foods do you like to eat?"



With regard to protein foods (mea'ai lelei), about 27% and 17% of participants listed seafood and meats as one of their favorite foods. Of the seafood, fish (85%) was most widely cited; of the meats, chicken (56%), moasāmoa (11%), and mutton (11%) were the most widely cited. Tinned meats like pisupo (corned beef), fasipovimāsima (corned beef and/or salted beef), and elegi (canned mackerel) were less referenced (about 4%), counter to general perceptions of the popularity of and high value given to these particular imported food commodities, especially in rituals of exchange. Moreover, the low reference to mea'ai lelei items in general points to a larger inconsistency with popular discourse,

which claims that Samoans like to eat meat and that their diets are meat heavy.

Finally, junk foods, including popular snacks made locally (like panikeke and Samgos) and imported from Fiji, Australia, and the Philippines (like Twisties, UFO's, and saimin), as well as sweets were each cited by about 1% of participants surveyed—again, counter to popular perceptions.

Based on these results, I would argue that the discourse of healthy living is as much a part of Samoan youth consciousness as are popular discourses about the unhealthiness of Samoan lifestyles. The matter of health promotion in Sāmoa is thus not about knowledge (or increasing strategic health communication); nor is it simply about empowering Samoans to enact a specific health literacy. Rather, the challenge is determining how to balance multiple conceptualizations of health and different health knowledges that are often conflicting and then act upon them in ways that do not contradict each other.