A DIFFERENT WEIGHT: TENSION AND PROMISE IN "INDIGENOUS ANTHROPOLOGY"

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I WAS BORN IN OTTAWA, CANADA, where my father played football in the Canadian Football League. A few years after his retirement we moved to Tutuila, Amerika Samoa, my father's birthplace and a far cry from my mother's home in Billings, Montana. By virtue of my parents' union and later divorce, I have lived in many places, but I always think of my grandmother's house (now my father's) in the village of Fagatogo as "home." It was there that I adjusted to the rhythms of life in the village, taking on many responsibilities as my parents' eldest daughter. Being part of an extended family household on family land, with three generations under one roof, fundamentally shaped my sense of place.[1] As the matriarch of our family, my grandmother was proud of the accomplishments of her children and grandchildren, and as her namesake I offer this humble reflection in memory of her.

My family history is reflective of trends in migration and "development" made possible by a colonial history transformed by local desires; these are also major themes in my academic work, which examines aspects of recent historical transformation in American Samoa. The complexities and complications of *aiga* (kin relations) has made doing "fieldwork" at "home" infinitely more rich. In this essay I consider how different kinds of genealogies have shaped possibilities and parameters of my research as a graduate student, as well as my engagement with anthropology as a discipline more generally. In doing so, I offer a reflection on the stakes of an indigenous

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anthropology, considering what bearing it might have on dynamics of knowledge production in and about home/field communities. Using my experience as a Native Pacific Islander in the discipline of anthropology, as well as my own "homework" in American Samoa as a point of departure, this paper explores the multiple positions occupied by someone doing research in their home community. In particular, I explore how higher standards of accountability can shape one's approach to research ethics, methods, and critical perspectives, as well as local expectations of the same. In considering the weight of intersecting biographical and intellectual genealogies in my own work, I offer implications for indigenous anthropology more broadly.

A Note on Indigeneity

Strict definitions of indigeneity are notoriously contentious and ultimately not helpful. Moreover, it is not a term with wide currency in American Samoa as in other settler societies like Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, and the United States (historically speaking; this appears to be changing in recent years). Thinking about indigeneity in American Samoa (and other places across the Pacific) is complex—there is no pristine practice of unadulterated indigenous culture or people living off the land as part of a primordial sociocultural organization. This often appears to be the expectation for articulating indigenous claims (particularly in relation to legal institutions of settler states such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia), yet this is an untenable position for also inhabiting the "modern world."[2] In turn, this fetishization of indigeneity has also stimulated cynicism about "authentic" cultural practices. People in American Samoa and in the Samoan diaspora travel, consume American media programming, communicate across cyberspace, and produce hybrid cultural forms like Samoan hip hop (Fonoti 2007). Our experience mixes the disjunctures of modernity and transnational flows with the "indigenous *longue dureé*" (Clifford 2001, 482).

In this paper I examine some aspects of my own complex experience of indigeneity, which acknowledges and embraces these varied influences and practices while recognizing that they do not necessarily or automatically diminish one's cultural knowledge, modes of sociality, genealogical claims to community membership, or participation in indigenous forms of social organization like the *fa'amatai* (the customary system of chiefly titles). I remain purposely vague about defining the terms "indigenous" and "native," although I am drawing upon use of the term by Diaz and Kauanui (2001), Clifford (2001), and Tengan (2005), which reflects an expanded sense of

native as both rooted and mobile. My use is also a gesture toward solidarity with indigenous struggles for social justice against histories of colonialism and imperialism. Indigenous anthropology, for me, reflects one of many situated knowledges (Narayan 1993) but denotes a possibility for politically informed perspectives born of the tension between personal and intellectual genealogies, home and academic communities, and the demand for respectful engagement of communities with whom one studies.

First Impressions

My first exposure to anthropology was in an introductory course as an undergraduate student. Having been exposed to two sets of very different cultural values and social practices throughout my life, I had always tried to make sense of shifting social contexts. Studying culture was a natural attraction for me. The wide variety of peoples and lifeways we studied in the course opened my eyes to a wider world at once exotic and somewhat familiar. By midsemester I was seriously considering majoring in anthropology, so I did what they told us to do in our new student orientations—I went to meet my professor in office hours. After learning of my Samoan background, he recommended Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928/2001) to me and asked me to come back and share my opinion of the book.

I read it.

And I never went back to his office.

It is hard to describe my response to the book—it provoked a visceral reaction of shame, indignation, and disgust. The narrative of carefree, licentious, "primitive" people was not the Samoa *I* knew! The Samoa I knew was a place where surveillance was an extremely effective method of social control, where I could not even *ti'e ti'e pasi* (ride the bus) or hang out at the market without my family hearing of it before I got home, where we girls were always told to keep our hair tied back (or if we let it hang down we were considered cheeky for inviting male attention), where we went to church every Sunday and sometimes Wednesdays too, and where you had to cover your thighs and backside even if you were wearing jeans (no miniskirts!). Sexuality, especially, was anything but open and untroubled. Doing family *fe'aus* (tasks or errands), taking care of my younger siblings, and concentrating on my schoolwork did not equal a carefree existence—in fact, as a young girl it felt controlled and often oppressive.[3] Just barely seventeen years old when I first read *Coming of Age*, I was ill-equipped to maintain critical distance from the text or deal with my reaction to it. I

read the sweeping generalizations made in the ethnographic present tense, feeling as though Mead was talking about my cousins, my friends, my village, and myself (not, as was the case, 1920s Ta'u)—and much of it was unrecognizable, at odds with my experience of contemporary life in Tutuila.

At that moment it was impossible for me to fathom the context in which Mead's writing was part of a progressive, antiracist project. Her contemporary social world and academic environment was dominated by theories of eugenics, and racist ideas were routine, even supported by some strands of academic scholarship. Her mentor, and founder of Columbia's anthropology department, Franz Boas, was interested in research that countered prominent theories of biological determinism—an intellectual project Mead shared, at least to a degree. Drawing on her earlier work in psychology, she departed for Samoa with the intention of trying to understand the development of "primitive" peoples and gaining some understanding of their mental life.[4] She took up the task of investigating cross-cultural variation of a biological phenomenon—puberty—and focused her research on Samoan girls. Having found a place without sexual repression (according to her interpretation), Mead (1930) also found that women in Samoa were not subject to beliefs about intrinsic qualities of sex difference that resulted in their diminished social value. Among many things, the body of her work helped to denaturalize the existence of patriarchy and critique bourgeois heteronormativity, both important interventions. Her scholarship on the cross-cultural variability of gender, while subject to much critique, remains part of a long tradition of interrogating gender inequality—a subject of my own intellectual preoccupation and personal practice. While I recognize the intellectual debt to Mead and her generation of "liberated" women from a gender perspective, the critique made by Third World/Third Wave/Transnational feminists of historically white mainstream feminist projects, that they failed to sufficiently interrogate the central role of racial hierarchies and colonial dogmas in shaping particular forms of gender inequalities, is strongly resonant. Margaret Mead's research on the cultural variability of individual psychological development and gender norms presented in *Coming of Age* (Mead 1928/2001) in Samoa leaves U.S. colonialism, implicit narratives of progress and modernity, academic class privilege, and derogatory views of the capacity for intelligence among native peoples, unquestioned.

Perhaps more offensive than what I considered to be a misrepresentation of everyday life was the image of Samoans as a primitive people, with all the attendant implications of that categorization. In some ways it

recalled memories of encounters after we moved stateside, where new acquaintances would ask my nationality when they were really interested in my racially marked ethnic background. Rather than giving a cheeky answer ("U.S. citizen"), I told them we moved from Samoa. When this drew blank looks (which was often) I would keep going . . . in Polynesia . . . near Fiji . . . near Hawai'i (!?) until there was a glimmer of recognition. Some classmates jokingly asked if we still wore grass skirts and lived in huts, while adults often remarked, "How exotic!" Most were ignorant of their own imperial national policy,[5] only able to assimilate the idea of Samoa to a preexisting "savage slot" in which islands of the Pacific have for centuries been consistently figured as a Gauguin painting in the imagination of Europe and the United States. In many cases, those who had a mental imprint called up by the mention of Samoa drew their point of reference from Mead's work (As my maternal grandmother exclaimed in 1970 in Montana when she heard the news of my mother's engagement, "Not a Samoan!"). What I had written off as ignorance or anachronistic stereotypes in the public realm was jarringly corroborated in the figure of Mead's text in the university setting. Coupled with the context of debates about Affirmative Action on the University of California, Berkeley, campus at the time, Mead's depiction served as a vivid reminder that as a student of Samoan heritage I remained Other to a generic unmarked "West" and "minority" to a white American majority. The fact that my mother is American of German/Norwegian heritage and my first language is English was of little consequence. I was racialized into one of the recognizable minority groups on campus, Latinos,[6] while identifying with an ethnic group that remained, at least to introductory anthropology classes and many Californians, perennially primitive.

The impact of this first encounter with anthropology was powerful because I went quickly from the position of "amateur anthropologist" to "primitive Native" in one fell swoop and felt the full weight of the anthropological gaze turned upon me. This experience of being both anthropologist and Native Other produced "a blocked ability to comfortably assume the self of anthropology" (Abu-Lughod 1991, 140). And why would I want to be part of a discipline that saw me as a primitive, sexual, savage?

Representing the Other, Ourselves

I decided not to major in anthropology as an undergraduate. Somewhat surprisingly, I came back to it as a graduate student nearly ten years later. As I was choosing between anthropology and sociology doctoral programs,

I saw that each discipline had distinct benefits and real drawbacks. Sociology was dominated by positivist approaches and methods, skills that are marketable in other contexts, but inappropriate for the kind of research I hoped to do in Samoa. Ethnography, the central method of anthropology, had its many criticisms but still offered a window onto interiority in a way that referenced the social and cultural as important frameworks for subjectivity. The move toward focusing on the dynamic relationship in which individual subjectivity transforms and is transformed by sociocultural (and other) frameworks is at the forefront of contemporary work in anthropology and offered a productive space for me. Two books in particular helped me manage my misgivings about pursuing an academic research career and entering anthropology: Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* acknowledged the legacy of research in Oceania and reconfirmed my own belief that research is not always already a colonizing project but can be driven by local needs and desires. The second, *Veiled Sentiments* by Lila Abu-Lughod (2000), was an inspirational example of the possibilities in anthropology—a beautifully nuanced portrayal of a people that did not sacrifice analysis and critique for exoticism. Still, anthropology remains the discipline associated with creating Samoans (and the peoples of Oceania more broadly) as primitive peoples. Even though there have been paradigmatic transformations within the discipline over the past few decades, Samoan communities have long memories, and Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (Mead 1928/2001) remains the definitive anthropological treatise on Samoa.[7]

Since entering graduate school I have read and talked with other Samoan scholars who too felt like Mead's work continued to define us as a people, and as an anthropological cultural group, even as it was peripheral, at best, in the islands themselves. This was brought home to me when I saw a prominent Samoan politician at a Pacific film festival in New York a few years ago. I have known him and his family since I was young, and it was a pleasant surprise to visit with him and his wife. As we sat "talking story" at a reception, he asked me about my project. I mentioned something vague about gender and social change in American Samoa, and he said, "Good! You should do a restudy of Mead's work and set the record straight!" I smiled politely and changed the subject, but his words stayed with me. Indeed, they have been repeated by others more times than I care to mention, who good-naturedly ask if I am "going to be another Margaret Mead." The fact that I am in the same department, at the same university, and I pass a photo of her dressed as a *taupou* (high ranking village maiden who performs ceremonial duties on behalf of a particular chief) every time I go to my department, makes this point a little closer to home than they would

have reason to imagine. Her photographic specter is a constant reminder that I do not, indeed, want to be another Margaret Mead.

Given the voluminous writing around Mead's work and debate with Derek Freeman,[8] "setting the record straight" seemed a rather stale project. How long would we continue to "talk back" to Margaret Mead? And what would a corrected account say? I mostly avoided it from the outset even though my advisors warned me that, at some point, I would need to come to terms with her work in one way or another. I know now that my deep reluctance to engage her writing stemmed from not wanting it to define me, as a person of Samoan heritage, or my work as a scholar. Jose Limón (1991, 118) asks, "As we write about our peoples, do we not also write against our master precursory ethnographers?" We do, even if not always explicitly. We write against geopolitical power arrangements that allow others to define us, we write against colonial histories of academic research (Smith 1999, Teaiwa 2005), and we write to represent our subjects and ourselves with complexity, as part of contemporary social realities that encompass real experiences of deep rootedness and flexible mobility (Clifford 2001; Diaz and Kauanui 2001; Tengan 2005).

For many native anthropologists working in their home communities, part of the engagement with anthropology is a rejection of a residual ascription of primitive status. As Louise Morauta suggests, it is in part an effort to reclaim full humanity (Morauta 1979, 563). But their work is not simply intended to provide a counterbalance to existing scholarship. Rather, the indigenous anthropology project is, to varying degrees, steeped in a fundamentally different relationship to one's research community. As indigenous anthropologists, we present ourselves when we present the Other, and that stimulates a different kind of investment in our scholarship as well as a keen awareness of how our intellectual products may travel and be received by various audiences (Abu-Lughod 1991, 142).

As Takami Kuwayama points out, for all the postmodern critique of ethnographic reading and writing, there is remarkably little on what it means to be the subject of those writings (Kuwayama 2004, 15). Indigenous anthropology is thus not just a methodological but epistemological challenge, because for decades native peoples were rendered outsiders in the study of their own culture—the structure of ethnography itself, Takami writes, supposes the "dialogic others" for anthropology to be readers of their own linguistic and cultural community (often professional colleagues) (Kuwayama 2004, 6), while native peoples are "excluded from this dialogic circle and acquire legitimacy only as *objects of thought*" (emphasis added) (Kuwayama 2004, 7). Only the skilled (foreign) ethnographer, it was held, could do the intellectual work of representing native peoples and their cultures. With increasing numbers of people genealogically connected to

communities long studied by anthropology being trained in the academy, "natives" have shifted from being informants and objects of study to interlocutors and colleagues, changing the dynamics of the structure of ethnography as well as professional conferences, departments, and the classroom: different questions, different narratives, different dynamics.

Recentering points of reference, interrogating accepted assumptions, and recasting dominant paradigms is potentially the most powerful contribution of indigenous anthropology because it carries with it the promise of new productive spaces of inquiry and the unsettling of hegemonic ideologies and relations of power both within and outside of the academy.[9] While it can be argued that this has always been part of the anthropological project, I am persuaded by the view that much knowledge production in the discipline, especially in the early decades, ultimately reinforced relationships of inequality between indigenous Oceanic communities and the dominant West. While perhaps anthropology did not create the "savage slot" (Trouillot 1991), its products have been used, wittingly or unwittingly, to maintain it.

The ability to define and represent is at the heart of the power relations of knowledge production. In the case of Margaret Mead, the Samoan community's lingering resentment of her work, and anthropology more generally, lies not, in my view, in the veracity of particular details (was she tricked or did her informants tell the truth?) but first in the fact that she violated norms of respect and polite speech in painting a picture of Samoans as sexual savages. That portrayal, circulated as it was internationally, certainly offends the sensibilities of respect and modesty that have saturated a Christianized Samoa. That my strongest reaction to Mead's text was shame is revealing and no doubt closely linked to the strong presence of the Christian church in my upbringing in Samoa.[10] A number of Samoans who have worked, lived, or have relatives in Manuʻa have privately suggested to me that Mead's account may have more truth than people are willing to admit (speaking to a presence of precocious sexuality among adolescents, not a *laissez-faire* social attitude toward it). This at least raises the question of whether the more public community reaction illustrates the interpellation of moral judgments and behavior by powerful Christian doctrines of modesty (especially female), a regime of ideal femininity, and the desire to embody a "respectable" ideal. In this process recognition and respect—and ultimately, the claim to civility and modernity (and repudiation of savagery)—is achieved by embodying the respectable ideal.[11]

Still, the view remains that in her effort to reach a wider American audience, her sensationalist and exploitative narrative came at our expense—unfortunately, this overshadows the valuable contribution she made in her

detailed descriptions of social practices in *Coming of Age* and *Social Organization of Manu'a*. That *Coming of Age* remains, even today, the dominant narrative of life in Samoa with which we continue to contend illuminates the tenacity of ethnographic portrayals that reinforce inherited exoticized views of native peoples.[12] In the case of Margaret Mead, she wrote as if Samoans had no place beyond "native informant" in the discussion of their own culture, creating Samoa and Samoans as ethnographic objects—an approach difficult to take if one has actively sustained genealogical ties to Samoa. Authority to speak on particular issues in the context of Samoa is in part related to one's genealogy.[13] This is not a simple blood ascription, but rather the placement that one's genealogy gives—at once signifying family histories and relations, connection to place, and one's background. It is with the weight of genealogy, knowledge, and expertise that one's voice and actions are judged.[14]

Entangled Productions

In Samoa, and Oceania more broadly, it is worth considering more closely how the thickness of familial and communal genealogies raises the stakes of knowledge production for indigenous anthropologists. In my case, I trace my Samoan heritage through my father's genealogy; I was raised in American Samoa and California, went to college in the San Francisco Bay Area, and am now in graduate school in New York. I currently live in Manhattan, but part of my family (including my father and two youngest siblings) live in Tutuila, and I return periodically for different family functions. We live on family land, in the house we rebuilt for my grandmother; she, her brother, and her adopted nephew are buried behind our house. Each time I return, I see new and familiar faces in our village. Some ask about my older brother, my mother, my two younger sisters, or my two younger brothers, who are currently off-island. Going home has been a process of reestablishing contacts and making new ones.

On an early research trip, one such connection was with a local group that holds various events during the year to promote local causes. Before I left the island they were involved with fundraising for disability service delivery on island, with several events culminating in a radiothon and live telethon concert. One of my relatives invited me to their meetings, and initially I went because I was curious about the group (and they met at a restaurant that served delicious food). It was a good cause and an excuse to hang out with my cousin, so I remained involved and volunteered to help with the event. The following week as I was riding in a friend's car and we were chatting about the event, she remarked, "It's so good that you're

involved in the community and not just here doing your research like 'don't bother me'!" Her comment gave me a split reaction of confusion and smugness. Was this the initiation of the anthropologist when she is recognized as "part of the community," a familiar trope in ethnographic accounts?[15] Alternatively, was my involvement such a surprise? My family has a history of public and community service on the island, something she may not have known. Did her comment allay an unconscious anxiety that after such a lengthy absence I would be perceived as a stranger? Was this symbolic capital afforded by recognition?

My involvement wasn't part of a research agenda, just wanting to contribute to a good cause, hang out with good people, and eat good food. But her comment points to the conventional perception of research as extractive and isolating, as well as to the fact that as a mobile academic I had a choice to be involved or not; that is, I could behave as a member of the local community or as a Western academic. Being familiar with the university setting herself, she was registering her approval of my approach, and in a way I was self-satisfied. But was it also the case that she was taking on the voice of the community and positioning me as an outside researcher, thus subtly reminding me of a proper relation to my home community that I should be sustaining? Rather than any hidden agenda, I think it more likely that her comment resonated with concern I had about properly caring for social relationships. In recalling the exchange, in some ways doing certain research tasks would have been made infinitely more productive if I were able to act like a Western academic with no regard for my enmeshment in local relationships—on subsequent trips, for example, my archival research was restricted because I did not want to abuse the goodwill of my family members taking care of my young daughter, and it made little sense to contract for childcare services when we would be off to New York soon enough. The choice implicit in her remark ostensibly exists,[16] but I can hardly conceive of behaving as though I have no social obligations, even as I recognize that it was difficult to contain the compulsion to worry about how much "progress" I was making and whether I would have enough "data" with which to work when it came to the writing process. In a discussion with a colleague about how to articulate this nonchoice, she asked what would happen if I behaved as if research were the only important task when I was in Samoa. I could only say, "My family would say 'What the hell is the matter with you?'" I tried to shed the highly intense routine of intellectual labor ingrained by years of academic training so that I would not take up the social role of "outside researcher" and alienate people, but I'm not sure that I was altogether successful.

Being situated in a particular family history and network of social relationships rooted in the community with whom I study shapes the way I conceive and operationalize my research.[17] In initial conversations with other Samoans, my family name and village place me in relation to our extended family and other family clans. My extended family has a long history of living and working in the community; my father returned to the islands nearly thirty years ago following an absence of almost twenty years.[18] I am identified as a daughter, cousin, a younger sister, an older sister, a classmate. I work with the assumption that my work in and writing about my home community will be read, commented upon, criticized, if I am lucky praised or unlucky vilified by people I may know, I may be related to, I may have gone to school with, or who know my parents or siblings or other members of my extended family. Thus the indigenous anthropology project does not mean taking a less critical lens to your community, but it means writing as if the members of the community you work in will read your work. As you bring a different kind of working knowledge or sensitivity to your research, it has an impact on the kinds of questions you ask, and the kinds of claims you may make (Motzafi-Haller 1997).

Notice that I did not say my work *may* be criticized, because I know my work *will* be in some way. Perhaps by people who do not like me or my family, who think I have been gone too long or I should be living on the island year-round, by people who disapprove of my research topics or the conclusions I have drawn, who may think I do not have enough authority, cultural knowledge, or linguistic ability; that I don't have a *matai* (chiefly) title or come from a particular family. There are many reasons, and I accept them as part of the terms of doing research in Samoa. Nonetheless, they are distinct from those that may be leveled at researchers without ties to the island. In contrast to the phantom critics, there are real supporters as well: individuals who have gone out of their way to introduce me to new interlocutors, who have taken the time to talk with me, who have been very encouraging of my work and who have told me how proud they are that I am at an elite Ivy League university like Columbia. They have expressed to me support and solidarity, and I hope to be worthy of their confidence.

Rather than any simple ascription of Samoan identity, for me the thickness of social and familial networks within which I am enmeshed strongly shapes my approach to and experience of research in the Samoan community. While I draw upon interviewing and participant observation as methods, like other researchers I am constantly negotiating social protocol, careful of the kinds of questions I ask and in what contexts. Often I have to temper my Western academic socialization and foreground Samoan ways

of learning, which means not asking questions but rather watching, listing, and doing. While this could be said of any ethnographer in the research process, in my experience the expectations for researchers working in their home communities to know *and observe* accepted patterns of social interactions are much more stringent.

To be clear, it is not a simple insider-outsider formulation at work. I do not in any way claim that being linked genealogically with the community in which you work means you are more capable, more suited, or more qualified to work in and write about that community than someone who is not so linked. It presents its own difficulties since there may be expectations of existing knowledge that you may or may not possess, or certain avenues of inquiry may be closed to you because of your social location. There may also be patterns of social interaction that are expected, and norms of behavior that nonnative researchers would not be expected to know and respect (Altorki and El-Solh 1988). These difficulties notwithstanding, I do think there is a different weight of responsibility for your actions that can force you to work harder under closer scrutiny and with higher expectations.

Research Directions

Having such an awareness of the critical community voice actually paralyzed me, creatively speaking, for a short time. While drafting my dissertation project proposal I considered several options, none of which were satisfactory. I had to be sensitive in my choice of project and anticipate questions about my authority to examine certain topics.[19] My choice to look at the history and evolution of gridiron football in American Samoa as part of an examination of "development" and local transformation on the island was, in various degrees, related to my own family history with the sport, the network of contacts accessible to me, its importance in contemporary local public culture, and my study of gender in the Pacific (and elsewhere) that stimulated an interest in masculinity studies.

While I have never played the sport, my father, brothers, uncles, and cousins have. It has been part of my family since before I was born. Football made my father's college education, as well as professional employment with the Canadian Football League (CFL) and the American National Football League (NFL) possible. With his playing experience and network of contacts, he returned to Samoa and joined other returnees in developing a local football program in the 1980s. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s he remained active with local athletics and attended a number of South Pacific, Goodwill, and Olympic Games as a track and field coach. By virtue of his

role in the development of the football on the island, I have been fortunate to have access to his institutional memory and a network of contacts for whom the focus of the project is not immediately undercut by questions of my right or interest in exploring it. At least partly in memory of his past contributions as a coach, teacher, trainer, and athletic administrator, many individuals active with football on the island today supported me in my research. In the course of my fieldwork I came to find that another relative who is currently a college coach in the United States was equally instrumental to my research; as a result of the relationships that he has cultivated over the years in his capacity as a stateside coach with (now former) players and other coaches, key individuals took an active interest in making it possible for me to talk with people I otherwise would not have been able to interview. While my work is obviously very different from that of my relatives in the field of sport, my extended family's long-standing involvement in football makes it part of my biographical genealogy. In many ways I am building on their contributions and recognize that their care for their relationships within the community has facilitated my own work.

This does not mean the research is not complicated; I have never played football and it was never a possibility because it is a sport open to males only. The structure and discourse on the field is such that football separates players from nonplayers and more importantly, the "men" from the "boys" (and women).[20] My access, while perhaps better than someone who has no background with the sport on the island, is nonetheless limited by gender politics and long-standing patterns of sex segregation in many areas of social life. While a local ethnography of football would be a fascinating project, one reason I am not the person to conduct such a study is because my gender limits both the roles I can play in relation to the sport and my access to intimate spaces occupied by coaches and players. During my observation and informal interviews at camps, coaches' clinics, and practices my presence was marked not only because some people did not know me, but because I was one of very few women (usually the only one) on the field. In any case a fine-grained football ethnography was not my interest. Football is the particular through which I explore "development" and transformation on island, changing sensibilities of how people live their lives and the evolving notions of *tautua*[21] and the *fa'aSamoa*[22] in everyday life. In some ways the history of football on island is also a genealogy of present-day American Samoa.

It is particularly significant that the dream of mobility, big money, and general hype around football is at an all-time high on the island because a number of local players who have played at Division I programs in the United States have since joined NFL rosters. This, combined with an even

larger group of off-island Samoan players in the collegiate and professional ranks, has raised the sport's profile significantly. For example, *Polynesian Power*, a recent film produced and screened on ESPN (a global media outlet), profiles two professional players, Isaac Sopoaga and Pisa Tinoisamoa, while showing a bit of the football landscape on the island. Perhaps more telling of its expansion within the Samoan community is the fact that players are not strictly (although they remain predominantly) recruited as linemen anymore—one of the first college games of the 2008 season featured two Pacific-10 Conference teams (Oregon State and Stanford) led by quarterbacks of Samoan descent. Troy Polamalu, perhaps the most recognized Samoan player now, plays a "skill" position at safety. The "Polynesian Pipeline" for American football dates back to the mid-1930s and has grown exponentially since the 1970s. In line with this expansion, recent efforts at establishing a local Pop Warner program on island is aimed at providing a building block for high school programs by exposing younger players to the game (Wilner 2008). For better or worse, the hype around football in American Samoa has some[23] likening it to baseball and the Dominican Republic in its relation to United States sporting markets. Since there is every indication that it will continue to grow, the material and imaginative enticements of the sport make it a fruitful avenue of exploration.

Certain aspects of my research are of interest to people on island, and in some ways they are distinct from what interests other scholars about my work. The faculty members with whom I work encourage me to enrich my work with theoretical sophistication that speaks across cultural and geographic areas so that it is not narrow or provincial. Yet the theoretical intricacies of postcolonial, development, and gender studies are not (generally speaking) of particular interest to my local interlocutors, who are more interested in the account of football's place in local history. This is not to say that these pieces are mutually exclusive, but that writing for different audiences is not optional. Quite a bit of criticism of academic research in general and anthropology in particular has addressed its imperialistic character—the sense that indigenous communities are being mined for the benefit of individual careers and theoretical models that remain irrelevant to the communities being studied. It is my sense that this is the viewpoint of many communities across Oceania, and it is one I hope to avoid reinforcing.

Conclusion

There is a danger that indigenous research could itself be nothing more than neoimperialism masquerading as empowerment. Some could also argue that as academics enmeshed in professional politics or indoctrinated

by years of training, indigenous anthropologists are no different from outside researchers, and therefore the potential of their work to effect paradigmatic shifts or otherwise benefit their home communities is severely circumscribed. Still others have raised the issue of Native anthropologists being themselves elites whose very existence is a product of and serves to reinforce relations of inequality. As part of their research communities, attempts to respect local modes of authority may blunt their critique of practices of power and domination operating within those communities. Finally, some may charge that indigenous anthropologists working in their own communities may be too provincial in thought and their work less theoretically informed. These are criticisms to take seriously, and they militate against any simple equation of indigeneity with progressive politics, community benefit, or caliber of scholarship. Indigenous anthropologists, like others, are always situated within networks of relations (and relations of inequality) within and outside their research communities and, in the end, will be evaluated by their professional colleagues and home communities on the merit of their work and scope of their actions. Yet the criticisms enumerated above should not foreclose the potential of indigenous anthropology projects because they carry with them the possibility of reshaping the power relations and politics surrounding the production of anthropological knowledge.[24]

This article began as a conference paper, written when I was just beginning my dissertation fieldwork. After a number of years of graduate training in anthropology and completing my dissertation, the ambivalence remains: concerns about research ethics and issues of representation, awkward aspects of "fieldwork," alienating aspects of academic labor, and how to render aspects of Samoan lifeways, world views, and cultural frameworks for a larger audience without reproducing sensational narratives of exoticism. And yet counteracting the silence imposed by hegemony and marginalization by teaching about the Pacific, working with students, and illuminating Pacific Islander histories, experiences, and contemporary dilemmas remains a strong motivating force for my work in academia. This tension is uncomfortable and difficult in some ways, but also useful and productive.

NOTES

1. Historically speaking; this appears to be changing in recent years.

2. In modern democratic paradigms that draw on the notion of the universal liberal subject, the presence and claims of indigenous peoples remain problematic at best and at worst threaten to destabilize foundations of the modern nation-state. For "modern"

"Natives," cultural heritage and attendant modes of sociality, values, or everyday practices are expected to remain in the realm of private choice, as a thin veneer representing one of many sources of diversity. Recognitions of indigenous lifeways and land claims are often linked to demonstrating some type of unbroken link to primordial cultural formations and practices in a way that erases the power of histories of imperialism and colonialism. This static notion of indigeneity again serves to deny complex subjectivity and experience to contemporary indigenous peoples.

3. See Sia Figiel (1999) for a vivid and insightful literary depiction of social restrictions from the point of view of a young girl in Samoa; see also Tupuola (2000) for a discussion of the tensions stimulated by these restrictions.

4. Again, this seems a bizarre formulation, but given the time period she was working in, where some believed that "primitive" peoples were once removed from animals, supposing that there was a psychological process of development analogous to, if different from, those of "civilized" races was a controversial contention in some circles.

5. I am no longer surprised by the number of Americans I meet, both within and outside of academic circles, who are unaware that American Samoa is a U.S. territory, and has been since 1900.

6. I was often racialized as Latina. In exchanges with Latinos on campus I was often addressed in Spanish, and the perception of me as Latina was supported by my conversational Spanish, a language I (ironically enough) began learning in Samoa as part of the high school curriculum.

7. For many Samoans, Mead's work is the exemplar of anthropology, while for non-Samoans it is often the classic picture of Samoa. A number of Samoans I know who have read her work often describe a reaction strikingly similar to my own. Mead's shadow is so long that many local people take a dim view her and her work even if they have never read it themselves. In fairness, anthropologists cannot always control the many ways in which their work may be circulated or transformed once in the public sphere, but at the end of the day we are each responsible for what we produce.

8. See, for example, Caton (1990), Holmes (1987), Leacock (1992), and Shankman (1996, 2010).

9. In a similar vein as explorations of feminist standpoint epistemology, recent research of indigenous epistemology (within and outside of the discipline) takes other world views and ways of being in the world seriously and mounts a productive interrogation of dominant liberal rational paradigms. See, for example, Battiste (2000), Bennardo (2002), Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001, 2002), Huffer and Qalo (2004), Meyer (2001), Semali and Kincheloe (1999), Teasdale and Ma Rhea (2000), Thaman (2003a, 2003b).

10. I am reminded of Dan Taulapapa McMullin's recent series of portraits (Portraits of Friends, 2008, oil on canvas) where he depicts various persons of Samoan descent with church steeples on their heads, symbolizing the importance of church doctrine in consciousness.

11. Figiel (1999) gives a vivid description of the powerful discourse of the "good girl," the various kinds of discipline that shape female behavior, and the *faifeau* (pastor) as an ideal for moral behavior more generally.

12. There have been a number of scholarly works on Samoa—see for example Mageo (1998), Meleisea (1987), Tcherkézoff (2008), Shankman (1976, 2010), and Shore (1982)—but none with the circulation, stature, and impact of Mead's work.

13. The weighting of genealogy may be particularly relevant in many parts of the Pacific as opposed to other regions around the world. In Samoa knowing one's genealogical history and connections is important because the knowledge (or lack thereof) directly impacts one's social obligations, position in various intersecting hierarchies, and claims to land and resources.

14. I recognize that there is a delicate balance between respecting genealogy and rank and being critical of established hierarchy and forms of inequality. Moreover, external markers of status such as academic degrees are separate sources of mobility within local hierarchies distinct from genealogical histories and connection.

15. Of course classic among them being Clifford Geertz's account (1973) related in "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" in The Interpretation of Cultures.

16. Let me pause here a moment because I want to mark that although I do not view my local involvement as a choice, I recognize clearly that my mobility is a marker of class, and the ability to make certain choices is sustained by various forms of capital my family and I myself have accrued over time. I am not now nor have I ever claimed to be indigenous in the subaltern sense because I do have relative class privilege.

17. This is not a new idea; see Abu-Lughod (1991), Altorki (1982), Altorki and El-Solh (1988), Fahim (1982), Ka'ili (2005), Limón (1991), Tengan (2005), and Smith (1999).

18. He followed his father and uncle, who were part of the Fitafita, the native U.S. military enlistment personnel in Samoa, who comprised the first wave of migration to the United States when the local U.S. naval station was closed in the 1950s.

19. It was in this process that I gained a more sympathetic view of Margaret Mead's work. The audacity of her undertaking in the mid-1920s alone deserves respect. I imagine that following research protocols was difficult to say the least; the thought of her administering psychological tests to Samoan children or playing the role of taupou made me shake my head in pity. However flawed *Coming of Age* may be, her ethnography *Social Organization of Manu'a* captured a picture of life in Samoa that is invaluable to any contemporary scholar of Samoa.

20. In fact, I know of at least one case where a female student on island pursued and was denied the right to play.

21. Often translated as service to one's family, it is a key consideration for choosing a family *matai* or title-holder.

22. Often glossed as "the Samoan way" or Samoan culture.

23. See, for example, ESPN.com "Football's Dominican Republic" dated May 1, accessed at http://espn.go.com/gen/asianamerican/index.html on September 15, 2009.

24. Jacobs-Huey (2002, 799) acknowledges that self-identification as a native anthropologist can result in marginalization among professional colleagues. Yet it can also signal a tactical repositioning of the "native" as postcolonial subject and gesture toward efforts at decolonizing anthropology.

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