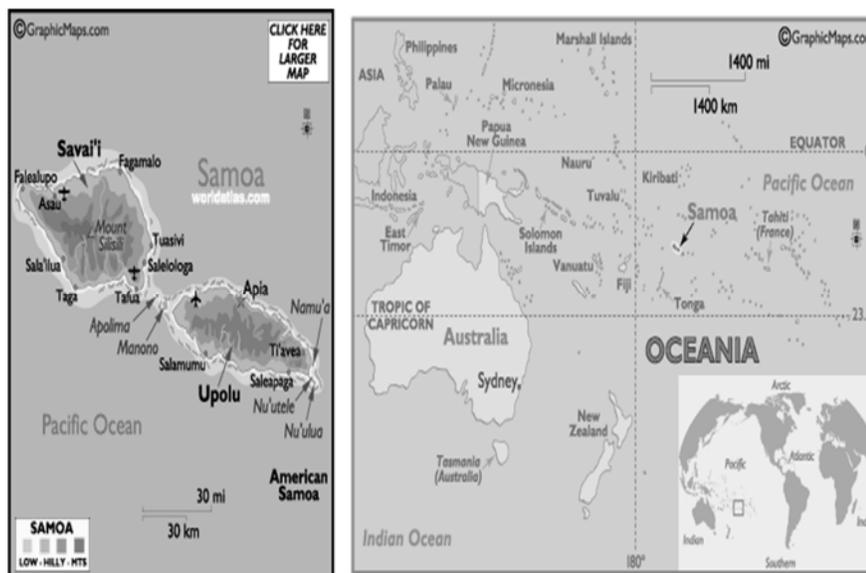


Indigeneity, Ableism, and Meanings of Dis/ability in Samoa

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Locations



Aoga Fiamalamala and Loto Taumafai Schools

▶ Aoga Fiamalamalama, 1979



Loto Taumafai, 1980



- ▶ “Samoans understand their illnesses because these have been with them for as long as there have been Samoans. Europeans brought their illnesses to Samoa when they came and they brought their own ways of treating these. They understand their illnesses because they have been afflicted by them for a long time too” (Macpherson and Macpherson, 1990, p. 88).

Samoan Culture and Dis/ability

- ▶ Ma'i (sickness) is the umbrella term that loosely translate to disability
- ▶ Samoans depend on the land to provide for their wellbeing
- ▶ Herbal medicine and fofo (massage) are used to assess illness and spiritual mishaps
- ▶ Taulasea (indigenous healer) attempts to bring balance to the Samoan worlds of the living and non-living
- ▶ ma'i Samoa (Samoan illnesses) and ma'i papalagi (European/foreign sicknesses)

Description of Dis/ability Words

Samoan Word	▶ English Translation
▶ tagata mama'i	▶ sick people
▶ ulu ka'e	▶ broken head
▶ valea	▶ stupid
▶ vale	▶ crazy
▶ tamaiti mama'i	▶ sick children
▶ mala	▶ curse
▶ leaga le mafaufau	▶ bad/broken brain
▶ leaga le ulu	▶ bad/broken head
▶ ulavale	▶ mischievous
▶ ulu ka'e	▶ crazy head

Ableism

- ▶ Ableism is a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body that is projected as perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human (Campbell, 2001, p.44)
- ▶ Disability cannot be thought of/spoken about on any other basis than negative; compulsory able-bodieness emanates everywhere and nowhere and reduced to crafty reductionism (McRuer, 2002)
- ▶ How does ableism operate in our lives everyday?

Tensions

- ▶ Are schools inclusive spaces?
- ▶ How do we negotiate the competing ideas of healing, sickness, and inclusion?
- ▶ Balancing the approaches: Medical model/Social model/Indigenous practices



- ▶ The most disturbing and preventable problem has been the use in children of local Samoan bush medicine. By this I mean the plant and herbal medicines given by taulesea or fofo. In the past year, we saw at least six children die after being given "Samoan medicine" by mouth from a fofo. The picture was not a pretty one. The children initially had mild cases of the "flu." They were then given "Samoan medicine" and soon developed seizures, kidney failure and increased acid in the blood. Despite intensive care at the hospital, these children died within three days... Many of the medicines given by a fofo are probably safe for children, but some are poisons and will quickly kill a child. In the first half of 1988, more children died in American Samoa from being given "Samoan medicine" than ... from any other use (Anonymous, the *Samoa News*, November 17, 1988)

- ▶ "We have to find out what does disabilities mean...Because it is such a broad word...I mean disabilities can mean physical, intellectual...I think if we are talking disabilities among Pacific Island people then it can mean heaps of different things...English as a second language is a disability...unemployment, alcoholism are all disabilities too...in some Pacific Island families they don't see any of their members as having a disability because they are participating as family member" (Huakau and Bray, 2000, p. 5).

Implications

- ▶ What does disability mean?
- ▶ Colonial histories and legacies: How do they influence ideas about sustainability and disability?
- ▶ How do we account for the intersections with land, bodies, diseases, displacement, gender, and spirituality?
- ▶ How do we negotiate our understandings of dis/ability at the local and global levels?
- ▶ How do we seek services and resources given our different understandings of healing, cultural values, and body-minds?
- ▶ <https://youtu.be/N1vf2C4JP0Y>