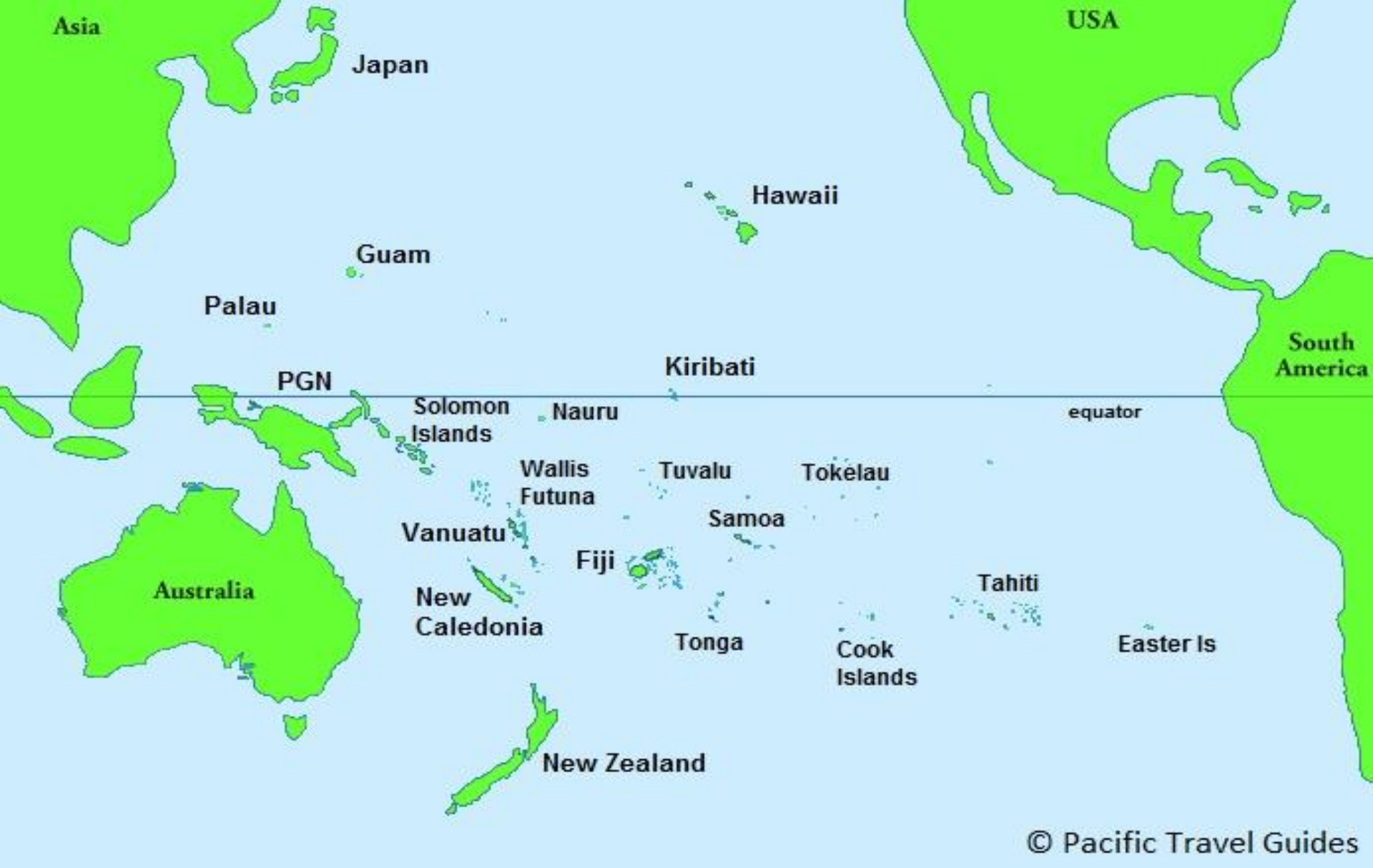




Cultural Panel: 'Pasifika'

Mafi Funaki-Tahifote
Manager – Pacific Health (NZ Registered Dietitian)



*I'm not
Pacific,
I'm
Tongan.*



What is NUTRITION in the Pacific languages?

- No direct translation of “NUTRITION”
- “NUTRITION” is the study of foods & nutrients vital to health and how the body uses these to promote & support growth, maintenance & reproduction of cells.
- Food can be translated directly into one word in the Pacific languages without the use of many words eg. me’akai – Tongan mea’ai - Samoan

Roles of Food in Pacific Cultures

Socialising

Feastings and celebrations



Fulfil & uphold obligations by using the right foods to honour family, church etc

Ceremonial gifting

Shows respect

Communications



Cement on-going relationships

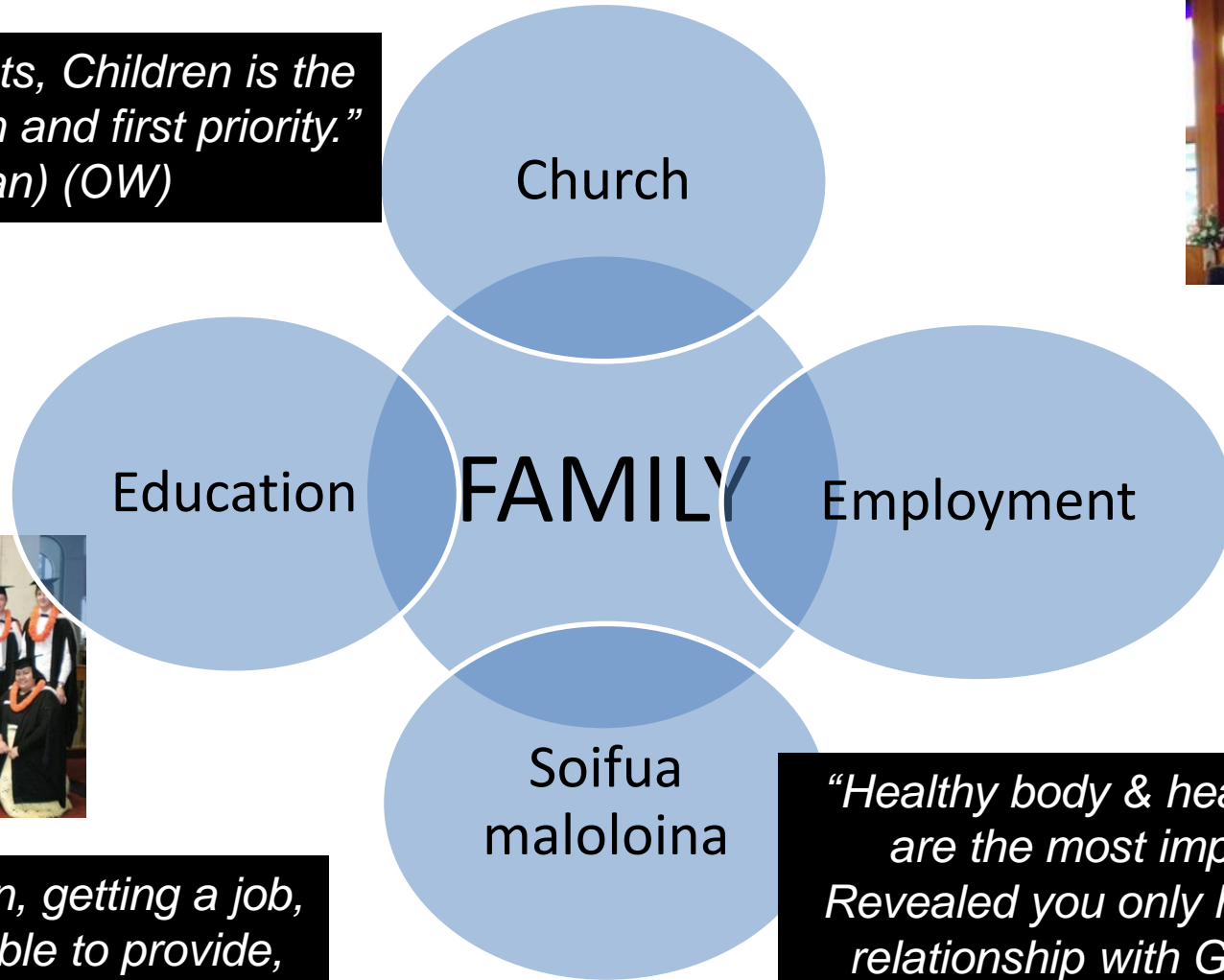
Cultural identity



A literature Review: Social and cultural underpinnings of the custom 'quantity over quality' in Pacific communities

- Aim : to explore the **cultural values** that underpin the **social norm** of 'quantity over quality' in food and drinks among Pacific peoples.
- 1) **Symbolism of food** in its role to **express love & hospitality**
 - social interaction, fellowship and strengthening relationships; reciprocity
- 2) **Reputation and Shame/Fakamā**
 - social expectations of being a good host and a pressure of upholding a good reputation impacts on the abundance of food offered as it is considered a measure of success of an event to Pacific peoples.

Priorities in Life



*Family, Parents, Children is the most common and first priority.”
(Men, Samoan) (OW)*



*Education, getting a job, being able to provide, breaking the cycle.”
(Youth, Samoan)*

“Healthy body & healthy mind are the most important. Revealed you only have good relationship with God if you have good health, good health is central to success in education and work etc.” (TW)

Pacific Concepts of Food

- Emphasis on starchy foods & protein as accompaniment

For Tongans:
starchy food =
me'akai Tonga

For Samoans:
starchy food =
mea 'a'ano



For Tongans:
accompaniment
= kiki (protein)

For Samoans:
accompaniment =
mea lelei (can be
coconut cream)

Hau'ofa, Epeli. 1977. Corned Beef & Tapioca: a report on the food distribution systems in Tonga. Suva, Fiji.

Pollock, Nancy. 1992. These Roots Remain: Food Habits in Islands of the Central & Eastern Pacific Since Western Contact.

Personal comment, Sitaleki Finau & Malkai 'Ofanoa, 20 August 2001

Varying Pacific Concepts of Food

- “Complete Meals”:

Samoa: taro and coconut cream

Tonga: starch and protein or ‘ufi (yam) on its own

- Kai Lelei & Kai Kovi (Tongans)

- Kai Lelei: starch with protein; eating a high status food eg. ‘ufi (yam). It is good, abundant and status giving.

- Kai Kovi: starch without protein. It is ‘poor’ and unhealthy.

- Oder Tongan participants grew up in Tonga when meat & other fatty foods were considered a treat or delicacy...”...never imagined that “kai kovi” could ever be considered as healthy...”



Moata'ane, Lora N, Muimuiheata, Soana, Guthrie, Barbara E. 1996. Tongan perceptions of diet and diabetes mellitus.

Leota, Moemoelegausia & Jackie-Anne. 1997. Food Project – The Samoan component . In Understanding Food Decisions in NZ.



