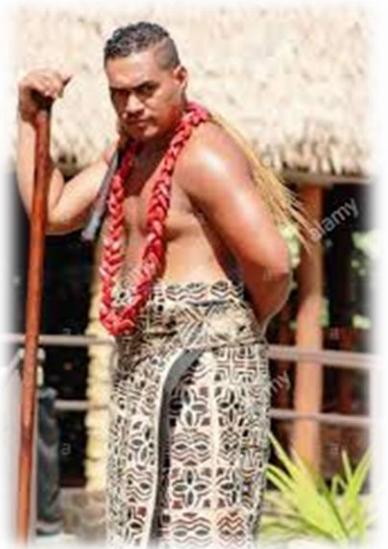




# Defining the American Samoan Man Box



# Executive Summary

Before the Alliance can begin to change social norms, we must first know

- what they are,
- how they developed and are sustained,
- who is impacted,
- where outcomes emerge and
- when they are most influential.

Knowledge is most authentic when acquired through an inclusive participatory process. Unfortunately, domestic violence and sexual assault are not openly discussed in any culture. The stigma surrounding these issues is especially profuse in Pacific Islander communities.

Past environmental assessments completed by the Alliance in American Samoa revealed that survey and interview respondents refer to DVSA as something happening to ‘them’, ‘those people’, ‘her’. In most discussions the male perpetrator is absent. Instead respondents describe ‘why’ violence happened: he was drunk, he caught her fooling around, they were fighting again.

We understand, peripherally, the reasons for violence in American Samoa. What we don’t know is *how* men become abusive. How did a male baby grow up to feel entitled, superior, privileged over not just women, but other men as well?

To gain a foothold on understanding the core construct of domestic violence, gender inequality, as it exists in America Samoa, the Alliance must engage men – all ages, socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities and vocations.

In September 2017, an opportunity arose for three Samoan men to attend a conference held by the ‘A Call to Men’ organization in Minnesota. This internationally present violence prevention non-profit strives to “*promote a healthy and respectful manhood and shift attitudes and behaviors that devalue women, girls and other marginalized groups.*”<sup>9</sup>

A Call to Men uses the Man Box to illustrate the collective socialization of men. The Man Box contains the limitations on what a man is supposed to be and what he believes. These expectations are taught to men – sometimes unconsciously – and reinforced by society, thereby becoming ‘Social Norms’.



According to Man Box creator, Paul Kivel, and his associates at the Oakland Men’s Project, the teachings of the Man Box normalize violence against women, girls, marginalized groups, and men who don’t conform to the Man Box rules<sup>7-8</sup>. In the Man Box, women are objects, the property of men, and of less value than men. This tool is used to facilitate discussions among men and boys to identify and define social norms that promote gender inequality and social oppression. Adapted to the cultural norms of American Samoa, the Man Box could be used to facilitate the conversations needed to effectively address the root causes of violence in the territory. The three local men eagerly flew to Minnesota to learn about the Call to Men movement and the Man Box instrument.



Dr. Victor Tofaeono was selected to attend the conference because of his extensive community-based research in primary prevention, his position as a lay-pastor, and his cultural knowledge. At 80-years old, Dr. Tofaeono has watched American Samoa evolve into a more ethnically diverse, and Westernized community. Where once he knew the families of all his patients, he now recognizes that he is a minority in his homeland.



Robert Toelupe, LCSW was chosen for his knowledge, educational background, and long history with the Alliance. A father of young boys, he has an innate understanding of what it means to grow up in American Samoa today. His job at the Veterans' Administration puts him face-to-face with men daily, providing the opportunity to engage men in relevant conversation.



Vincent Iuli, Director of KVZK Television, is also a matai in the second largest village in the territory. As such, he presides over a village council that determines the fate of many victims who choose not to report their experiences. Gauging the pulse of both local media and village justice, Iuli provides a unique perspective.

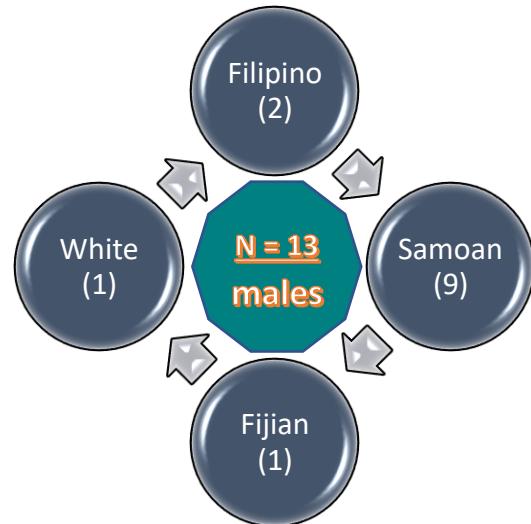
## A CALL TO MEN

The conference attendees returned to American Samoa to facilitate **two focus groups of men**. The aim was to determine whether the Man Box, in their collective opinion, is an adequate tool to address domestic violence and sexual assault in the community: is it relevant? Is it culturally sensitive? Are the norms similar to those in American Samoa? Will it effectively engage men in productive conversations?

The 13 male participants are actively involved in the community: two are pastors, one is a psychiatrist, four are in local radio, two are leaders in the Filipino community, one is a social worker, one a legal aid worker, one a doctor, and another is a politician. Eleven of the thirteen are married; they range in age from 40 to 80 years.

The discussions were recorded in English and transcribed by the Alliance. Using a directed approach, the Alliance's Evaluator analyzed the content using codes framed by the **purpose** of the Groups which was to **determine the feasibility of using the Man Box with American Samoan men**. Secondly, the transcripts were uploaded to Dedoose software and analyzed to organically identify themes, specifically those aligned with the 7 Pillars of the Man Box attributes. The term American Samoan as used in this document refers to all men who call American Samoa home regardless of ethnicity or nationality.

The following is a summary of the focus group data analysis.



The conference and subsequent focus groups occurred between 2017-2018 prior to the development of the Alliance's strategic plan. To align the effort with the Alliance's scope of work the following underlines the relevance of the Man Box analysis to the organization's mission:

**Strategic Priority:** *To strengthen the capacity of individuals and organizations to prevent DVSA*

**Strategic Objective:** *by empowering them with knowledge and skills to change mindsets*

**Intervention:** *and influence a Positive Image of Masculinity*

**Strategic Outcome:** *that offers alternatives to harmful social norms.*

## Introduction

Gender is a socially defined construct. A baby is born genetically male or female. What it **means** to be a man, or woman, is shaped by personal experiences and messages from others – it is learned.

Gender norms are defined by culture, through interactions, relationships, media, policies, laws, systems. The dominant form of masculinity in the United States is 'Hegemonic Masculinity' described by Mark Greene (2018) as the 'Man Box'. The Man Box names qualities men are expected to show because of their gender. These are categorized into **7 Pillars**<sup>5</sup>.

The term Hegemonic infers that men are more valuable than all other genders, and within the male gender the more 'masculine' men are superior to 'less masculine' men, instituting a hierarchy demanding rigid compliancy to the norms in order to secure one's status.



Research shows most men agree with some version of Man Box attributes, especially those perpetuated by their ethnic culture, vocation, life experience<sup>9</sup>. Traditional Hegemonic Masculinity is rooted in ageless cultural ways of defining manhood<sup>2</sup>. ***Each culture may develop its own interpretation or version of Man Box norms***, but they are essentially the same throughout all cultures because gender inequality pervades all cultures. “*Gender inequality sets the necessary context in which violence against women occurs.*”<sup>1</sup> The Man Box condones the privilege afforded men over all genders, a sense of entitlement, and unequal distribution of power.

The **pressures** to conform to socially defined manhood are reinforced by relationships: families, partners and friends. A man is subject to judgement on how well he aligns his behavior to Man Box norms. Men who don’t conform are ostracized, emasculated. The constant policing of male behavior for ‘violations’ of the Man Box image intentionally perpetuate the harmful cycle of social pressures to be a ‘real man’<sup>9-10</sup>.

***To counter the pressures of the Man Box on men, especially in their formative years, primary prevention can focus on building awareness of the Man Box norms and their harmful effects. Additionally, practitioners can promote positive alternatives, e.g. a ‘Positive Image of Masculinity’, by fostering authentic discussions about manhood, and modelling positive alternatives to existing norms. The Man Box can be used as the tool to facilitate discussion.***

## How the Man Box Intersects with Violence and Sexual Assault

According to Hegemonic Masculinity, Man Box norms are reinforced in two primary ways: misogyny – the hatred of women; and homophobia – the hatred of non-heterosexuals. Boys as young as three can recognize the difference between masculine and feminine<sup>12</sup>. The sayings, “Don’t be a girl” – implying that being female is bad; and “You hit like a girl” – implying that females are weak, are not unheard of on any playground. While a little boy may not understand the implications of his statements, he realizes that being more ‘male’ is better, and that if his manhood is questioned (policing of male behavior) then exhibiting misogynistic and homophobic behaviors may protect him from scrutiny<sup>1</sup>. The fear of emasculation is real, his identity is at stake.

Man Box norms protect Hegemonic Masculinity and reinforce the patriarchy that oppresses women, marginalizes some men, limits less compliant men, and encourages violence in general. A specific requirement of the Man Box is “*its highly aggressive critique of those who do not perform gender according to its rules – it is the need to police that defines the Man Box – the need to accrue power upward.*”<sup>9</sup> Conformity to traditional masculinity is a risk factor for men’s perpetration of violence against women<sup>6</sup>.

This is where socially defined masculinity and violence intersect: ***the need to accrue power to be a man***. The hierarchy of the Man Box isolates men emotionally (be a man – handle your business, don’t cry) and channels their anger into repetitious acts of violence against others. The core purpose of the Man Box is to identify and target non-compliant men and grant permission for acting out their aggression<sup>1, 9</sup>. The more ‘manly’ you behave the greater power you accrue. The general equation (fill in the blanks with any marginalized group) is:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{_____ have} \\ \text{less value} \end{array} + \begin{array}{l} \text{_____ are} \\ \text{property} \end{array} + \begin{array}{l} \text{_____ are} \\ \text{seen as objects} \end{array} = \begin{array}{l} \text{Acts of Violence Justified to} \\ \text{secure power and obedience} \end{array}$$

Research shows that “*strong endorsement of the Man Box is associated with bad outcomes for young men, causing harm for them and others in the community, particularly women.*”<sup>1</sup> Man Box norms are drivers of violence by men against all genders, and within their own ranks.

## How the Man Box is Relevant to the American Samoan Community

The hierarchy within the Man Box (Box) is similar to that of the fa'amatai (Matai) system in the Samoan culture. Patriarchal in structure, both the Box and the Matai system reinforce conformity and obedience. They exercise a systematic suppression of creativity, critical thinking, individual initiative, independent voice and opinion. Titled men (matai) have a voice, the highest matai possess the greatest influence. Untitled men have no voice. But even amongst the untitled men, a hierarchy exists based on familial connections to the matai, position within the family, and socio-economic factors. Both the Box and the Matai system are directly tied to privilege, and the ‘good old boys’ fellowship that supports gender-based oppression. Both provide men with the capacity to dismiss ethical and moral responsibilities. Patriarchal masculine ideologies are strong predictors of men’s aggression against women<sup>2,12</sup>.

The Man Box has been used as a teaching tool to understand masculine norms *throughout the world*<sup>7</sup>. It also helps researchers understand how men adapt to social pressures that form their concept of manhood and influence their behavior. A secondary outcome is the actual teaching of appropriate values, behaviors and language surrounding male identity. The discussion can produce a positive Man Box or image of masculinity.

Influencing a Positive Image of Masculinity involves four of ten ‘essential actions to prevent violence’<sup>4</sup>:

- Challenging the condoning of violence against women
- Promoting and normalizing gender equality in public and private life
- Challenging the normalization of violence as an expression of masculinity and male dominance
- Reducing backlash by engaging men and boys in building relationship skills and positive social connections

***The TASK is to engage all genders in American Samoa to define masculinity, and fill the Man Box with relevant social norms, to understand how abusive Pacific Islander men are created and therefore how we can begin to promote positive alternatives that foster equality, unity, and tolerance.***

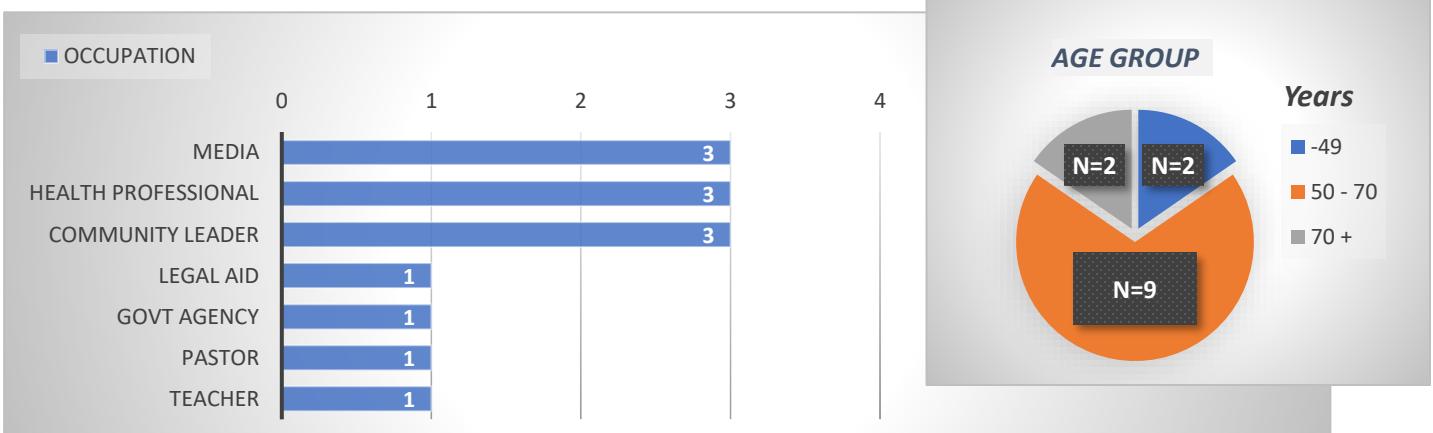
Identifying what drives and contributes to male dominance and violence in American Samoa will *establish evidence-informed guidance* for decision makers, service providers, advocates; support the development of protective policy, legislation, and positive media messages. *Not all Man Box attributes are bad – some, aligned with cultural values, support the healthy image of an Asian/Pacific Islander male. The key is to identify those that are influential on positive outcomes.* Field experts suggest that this information can only come from men and boys through discussion and critical reflection of the Man Box<sup>6</sup>. However, females are known to contribute to the policing of Man Box norms through their expectations and values so women and girls should be included in this discussion as well. This gender-transformative approach will examine all sources of norms and expectations related to masculinity, and consequently, the role of the female as well.

*“The bottom line, the corrupter, is peer pressure. If you have a solid attitude you don’t have to be one of them; you don’t have to be part of the Box if it’s wrong.” #11, Age Group -49*

## The Data

The focus group discussions were facilitated by Robert Toelupe and Dr. Victor Tofaeono. Using print material acquired at the conference, the men explained the Man Box concept and conducted an overview of the 7 Pillars. The purpose of the discussion was to educate the participants and elicit their feedback on the feasibility of using the Man Box as a tool to operationalize the Alliance's strategy of changing social norms concerning gender inequality.

In the first phase of data analysis the transcripts were reviewed by the Alliance Team who coded the participant responses (facilitator questions were excluded from transcripts) according to the intent of the focus group discussion, and attributes of the 7 Pillars. Two main codes were developed: Man Box as a Tool and Man Box Pillars (in the Box). In the second phase, the Team uploaded the transcript for individual respondents to Dedoose software. Each respondent was described by Occupation and Age Group (due to limited demographic data collection):



Note: to maintain confidentiality, each participant is assigned an ID number. Quotes are cited by ID number and Age Group rather than name or occupation.

Using Dedoose analytics, the Evaluator combed through the collection of responses to identify commonalities, trends, insights. In addition to the Man Box as a Tool and 7 Pillars, the following themes emerged: Sources of Man Box attributes, Out of the Box values, Impacts and Outcomes of the Man Box. Figure 1 is the final Data Code Book.

During several systematic reviews of the data, excerpts were identified by code, and sub-codes emerged. Similarities in the participants' view of a 'man' began to materialize. Of significance are the following:

- Respondents agree that **women should be respected, valued, and protected** not necessarily as women, but more so **for the roles they play in the family system.**

"we teach boys to be protectors of their sisters" #6, age group -49  
"teach them (boys) that women in our family were the highest possession" #1, age group 50-70  
"treat your wife nicely; fa'asamoa say that the sisters are the pupils of their eye" #13, age group 50-70  
"women are a blessing that we need to honor, the blessing of procreation" #4, age group 50-70

- Respondents repeated consistently that a '**father**' is equated with a '**leader**'. To be a 'father' one must have children, and accordingly a wife, which then establishes a 'family'. Across the four ethnic cultures represented in the groups, the man's primary role in the home is 'leader'.

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*"If I am a father, I am a leader" #7, age group 50-70  
 "men are always the leader in the family" #3, age group 50-70  
 "women should respect that men are the head of the family" #11, age group -49  
 "the man loves the wife who submits to the husband, and children listen to their parents" #13, age group 50-70  
 "who I am as a father is a God-given responsibility" #10, age group 70+*

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- The men acknowledged that there would be **resistance from the community** towards the contents and use of the Man Box. They questioned whether the Box could be presented as "*culture-neutral*".

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*"There's always resistance whenever we're trying to implement something new into our culture...the conservatives will say, 'you're bringing something foreign, that doesn't work here'" #6, age group -49  
 "We're going to have to deal with men in the village councils...we will be violating some of their rules, protected thoughts" #5, age group 71+*

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- The men articulated cultural norms, personal experiences, and socio-ecological influences that align with the attributes of the Man Box. While the priority of values and sources of those values (church, fa'asamoa) may differ from a Westernized Man Box, the group discussions **validate the need to use the Man Box or a similar tool to jump-start these critical conversations in the community**.

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*"There was always fist fighting, that's how they solved problems, it was more accepted...I want to ask if this is a norm or something we've become used to" #5, age group 71+  
 "The Samoan tradition...to teach the Samoan child, it is very restrictive" #7, age group 50-70  
 "My father ruled with an iron fist. I wondered, why does he want to treat us this way, like a military?" #1, age group 50-70*

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The Summative Content Analysis (Figure 2) shows that using the '*Man Box as a tool*' to '*teach*' is the overriding sentiment amongst participants. They recognize the need for community engagement and find value in the Man Box framework. Three men articulated *the need to adapt the Box by scrutinizing what's in there now and identifying which norms are supportive of positive cultural norms*. One facilitator stated that "*we can gauge everybody's understanding of the Man Box*" in the context of their own environments: culture, socio-economic status, religion, politics, and general life experiences.

Notably a **conceptual conflict emerged**: the traditional Man Box focuses on the man as an individual, a self-sufficient leader while the participants paint the picture of a Man who is very much an authoritative, diplomatic figurehead of families and communities, who relies on God and his wife as a 'helper'. There are

limits to his self-sufficiency. Figure 1 defines the Codes and Sub-Codes leading into the detailed content analysis of the focus group data.

**Figure1: Data Code Book**

<i>Code</i>	<i>sub-Code</i>	<i>Definition</i>
<b>A.S. MALE SOCIALIZATION - Sources of Man Box</b>		What makes up the 'Samoan' Man Box
Cultural Norms		Fa'asamoa; how things are done locally
Experience		Anecdotal primary experiences of social influence to be a man
Influence		By a mentor, parent, someone individual perceives as positive Institutions, groups, individuals that promote and defend patriarchal ideals
<b>Man Box as a Tool</b>		How respondent views Man Box as a tool (not the concepts)
Used to <b>Document</b> patterns in attitudes and behaviors		use discussions to validate social norms
Used to <b>Teach</b> understanding of masculine norms		engage people to discuss what's in the Man Box
Used to <b>Understand</b> influence of social pressures on men		Identify social pressure and how it influences ideals of masculinity
<b>MAN BOX - Impacts and Outcomes</b>		
Patriarchal System		Perpetuates, contributes to, reinforces patriarchy
Violence and Sexual Assault		Validates violence
<b>MAN BOX PILLARS - IN the Box</b>		Concepts found in text
Acting Tough		Don't show fear, weakness
Aggression and Control		Over household and women
Heterosexuality and homophobia		Non-heterosexual males are not 'men'
Hypersexuality		overt, controlling, oppressive sexual perspectives
Physical Attractiveness		Natural attractiveness; no over-grooming
Rigid Masculine Gender Roles		Father and Husband roles
Self-sufficiency		Regarding emotional and physical wellbeing; confidence
<b>OUT of the box</b>		indicators of social norms that are outside MAN BOX (non-conforming)
Respect for Women as Sisters and Mothers		respect for their roles, not necessarily as women

## Figure 2: Summative Content Analysis

The graph below illustrates the points at which codes intersect and the number of times they do so.

Codes	Codes			Codes																								
	A.S. MALE SOCIALIZATION -	Cultural Norms	Experience	Influence	MAN BOX - Impacts and Outcomes			Patriarchal System	Violence and Sexual	MAN BOX PILLARS - IN the Box			Acting Tough	Aggression and Control	Heterosexuality and	Hypersexuality	Physical Attractiveness	Rigid Masculine Gender	Self-sufficiency	Man Box as a Tool	Used to Document	Used to Teach	Used to Understand	OUT of the box	Respect for Women as	POLICING THE MAN BOX	Females	Media
A.S. MALE SOCIALIZATION -																												
Cultural Norms		2			3	1			1								2					1					10	
Experience	2		1			1			3	1							2										10	
Influence	1			1													1			1	1	1	1	1			8	
MAN BOX - Impacts and Outcomes																												
Patriarchal System	3		1														4					1					9	
Violence and Sexual	1	1								1																	3	
MAN BOX PILLARS - IN the Box																												
Acting Tough	1	3				1																			1		6	
Aggression and Control		1													1			1	1	1	1						6	
Heterosexuality and									1							1		1	1	1	1						5	
Hypersexuality																										1	1	
Physical Attractiveness																												
Rigid Masculine Gender	2	2	1		4										1													10
Self-sufficiency														1														1
Man Box as a Tool														1	1						2	6	2					12
Used to Document			1											1	1						2			1				8
Used to Teach																			6									6
Used to Understand			1											1	1					2	2				1			8
OUT of the box			1																					1				2
Respect for Women as	1	1	1																		1							4
POLICING THE MAN BOX			1															1	1								3	
Females											1																	1
Media												1																1
Totals		10	10	8		9	3		6	6	5	1			10	1	12	8	6	8	2	4	3	1	1			

## Thematic Narrative

The primary aim of the Man Box focus groups is to assess the feasibility of using it as a tool to **document** Man Box norms in American Samoa, **understand** how these norms are developed and maintained, and **teach** the community to challenge social norms that promote gender inequality.

### To Document

The focus group participants viewed a brief video about the Man Box before their discussion. A participant states that the '*video is a realistic description on how a lot of men deal with the manhouse*' (#4, Age Group 50-70). The same participant offered that '*the box is not as solid*' here and that '*there's a mix of how we perceive how men are initiated*'.

The participants' ethnic backgrounds and cultural experiences converge on the idea that the traditional Man Box is not completely consistent with their understanding of masculinity. A participant stated, '*women see themselves different now compared to women of years ago, from personal experience*' (#3, age group 50-70). He points to possible generational evolution as well as cultural differences. The Man Box therefore could be used to document these differences and inform the creation of a more relevant American Samoan Man Box.

### To Understand

A participant shared that he was '*having a hard time with the Man Box tool*' because '*all these problems that we are talking about ... it's a person problem*' (#9, age group 50-70). Unfortunately, a follow up to this statement was not recorded, however it raises the question: are these '*problems*' not understood as social issues? Should they be addressed on an individual level instead?

One facilitator explained, '*the things we put into the Man Box are negative. The things we teach our boys and what we want to challenge: if you don't do these things (in the Man Box) then you are woman-like...we need to gauge everyone's understanding of the Man Box*'. The other agreed, '*The Man Box points out a lot of the issues as to why domestic violence occurs.*'

A participant supported his statement saying, '*it's how men can know their roles, and accept their roles, and co-exist*' (#4, age group 50-70).

On the flip side, a participant stated, '*it's always been a positive thing to have the Man Box – it's just a matter of how you use it – the environment or where you grow up*' (#11, age group -49). These statements demonstrate that the men generally understand that masculinity is subjective, created by external forces, and a common premise across their gender. According to Figure 2, the men felt that the Man Box could be used to understand what influences negative social norms about masculinity, aggression and control by men, and the effect of homophobia and hyper-heterosexuality.

### To Teach

A facilitator shared that the '*Man Box is saying how society has brought men up to be tough, not like a woman, and this is the reason women are treated like objects – you should be a tough man – it's not right.*' A participant suggested that the '*Box is only a guideline; it depends on how you deliver it to your kids so they know how to grow up as a good or bad man today*' (#2, age group 50-70). A facilitator followed up with a question: '*as men, what do you think is the most important thing to teach boys and girls?*' These statements infer that the men are focused on teaching youth as opposed to all men and women.

A participant further supported this theme by sharing, '*the most important thing to teach is for fathers to model the type of behavior they want their sons to have by demonstrating towards their mother what type of behavior to have towards girls. I believe setting an example is very important for children*' (#3, age group 50-70).

In discussions about the cultural and personal experiences of the participants, they share that fighting and violence against women was common during their childhoods. The attributes of masculinity they learned align with the traditional Man Box. And while a few stated that it was rough, or '*my father ruled with an iron fist*', not one stated that it negatively influenced their own understanding of masculinity. Rather, it seemed normal, how every boy grew up. In the process of teaching positive ways to develop masculinity it would also be helpful to understand from grown men whether they view fist fighting to '*be a man*', to protect gender roles, as bad. Will not having these norms degrade the culture, way of life; alter the equilibrium? And what alternative messages can be developed to teach healthy masculinity without causing offense to anyone in the process? A facilitator stated, '*we're saying don't be the Man Box, don't do these cultural things.*' Are they cultural? The same experiences were shared by all the men, representing four different cultures.

By first using the Man Box to document social norms about masculinity in American Samoa, we can then use it to facilitate discussions to understand how those norms are developed and maintained, and finally how we can teach healthy, positive masculinity that replaces negative rules and customs.

## Sources of the Man Box attributes

The data is coded into three sources of Man Box attributes shared by the participants: their cultural norms, personal experiences, and environmental influences.

### Cultural Norms

*'You have no right to talk. It's a mindset. I want to ask if that's a norm or something we've become accustomed to'* (#5, age group 70+). The statement reflects a need to educate the community on cultural and social norms.

According to social scientists, members of a culture must conform to its norms for the culture to exist and function. Therefore, members must want to conform and obey rules. They must internalize the social norms and values that dictate what is "normal" for the culture; then they must **socialize**, or teach norms and values to, their children. If socialization fails to produce conformity, "social control" in the form of ostracism, emasculation, fines, punishments, and even imprisonment occurs to keep people in line<sup>12</sup>. What may be 'normal' in one cultural may be taboo in another. As they shared their personal experiences, the participants all agree that domestic violence and sexual assault while taboo, are also more common than they thought in each of their cultures.

Cultural norms cited by the participants include:

#### **Male leadership**

*'If I am a father, I am a leader.'* (#7, age group 50-70)

*'Men are accepted to be the leader; the men are always the leader of the family.'* (#3, age group 50-70)

*'We look to the mind of entitlement – le ala a tautua – the steps to get into the leadership role (outside the immediate family) so when they get there, they think they are owed these things of leadership.'* (#4, age group 50-70)

*'In our culture once we have the power it stays – you're always a son, always a daughter.'* (#6, age group -49)

*'My dad said at one time that he's the best human being I know and if I become one tenth of the man he is, I'd be set. He's not a great communicator; he leads by example.'* (#9, age group 50-70)

### **Discipline with Violence to secure Obedience**

*'The Samoan child raised by Samoan family in the old time, it is very hard. If you do something bad, you expect the rod, the stone, the stick, the pipe, the hose. These were the objects that our parents used to treat us. Why did my father treat me like that? He wanted me to be good, be a good leader in the family.'* (#7, age group 50-70)

*'We are teaching the kids how to obey their parents because the value and attitude come from the home, not other people.'* (#12, age group 50-70)

[Note – the statement above negates the influence of society and culture, focusing on the influence of family which coincidentally emphasizes the influence of the father, his example to his children, his use of violence as discipline which normalizes violence in the home for his children.]

### **Masculinity**

*'For me the Man Box is like old school, like that was kind of the macho thing. If you want to be a man you got to do this or that, like to get to the next level. For Samoans, you have to go through the initiation of being a taulelea to become a matai. There's the pe'a, the tatau.'* (#4, age group 50-70)

[Note – the statement above illustrates a direct link between the Matai system and the Man Box in terms of 'getting to the next level', going through a process to become a matai which is the leader who holds the power and demands respect by virtue of his position in the family and community. It is essentially the process of accruing power which is the function of the Man Box.]

*'We are teaching our boys how to be men; how to be protectors, that our daughters (their sisters) need protection.'* (#6, age group -49)

### **Experiences**

The men generously shared their experiences, all of which demonstrate the socialization of violence in the four cultures represented in the group, but also the immense pressure to 'be a good leader'.

*'It all depends on the environment where they grow and how you were raised. I came from a dysfunctional family. They (parents) were married young and didn't get along very well. Growing up and seeing it and being a part of it plays a role in how you view it (violence). I also realized that I had to become a good fighter to protect them (sisters). I take that experience, and looking into the Man Box, if I don't protect them then I'm less of a man.'* (#4, age group 50-70)

*'My dad came from a violent family and he said, I want a better situation for my family – to provide us what he didn't have. It takes a generation. A father teaches us not to hit a woman, and for the women they should respect that men are the head of the family.'* (#11, age group -49)

*'In the time of my father, the Samoan tradition, to teach a child is very restrictive. I thought, why did my father treat us like that? Why did he train us like military people? I realized as I grew up that he wanted us to be good, a good leader in the family.'* (#7, age group 50-70)

*'My father ruled with an iron fist. Big boys don't cry. But growing up in a predominantly male household my mother had to teach us all the chores of the girls growing up.'* (#1, age group 50-70)

*'I thought of my childhood, how much is related to our make-up, science, testosterone, and our learning behavior. I remember in school, the first day we greeted each other was, do you want to fight me? From my peers I learned to challenge everyone I saw. The first boys I met in the classroom, I asked, do you want to fight me? That is learned. I think that the violence we men exhibit towards women can be based on the trauma that we experienced. My traumatization came from my peers, not my parents.'* (#3, age group 50-70).

*'I do know growing up in my home, I would be teased a lot that (I'd) be a fa'afafine. When you're teased a lot it can shape your future, how you act, and it reminded me that masculinity and manhood are really important to men.'* (#8, age group 50-70).

*'In my view Samoans are a very violent society. I saw women getting beaten up, my step-mother being beaten by my father. My foster father belonged in the aumaga and they were always fighting – that's how they solved their problems. That's how I grew up.'* (#5, age group 70+)

### **Environmental Influences**

In addition to the aumaga, the culture, and fathers, the participants also cited God and religion as a significant influence on their understanding of masculinity. They agreed cross-culturally that mores, the norms of morality, should come from the home but that there are many social influences to consider.

*'Men to be good role models in the family. According to Ephesians this is the triangle that must be solved – the father, mother, and kids: man love your wife who submits to husband, and children listen to parents. Without God in our family we cannot do our position in the family.'* (#13, age group 50-70)

*'Who I am as a father is a God-given responsibility.'* (#10, age group 71+)

*'I remember that my grandfather taught me to be respectful of women, to my sisters. I was fortunate. He taught me that women are a blessing that we need to honor, and that's the blessing of procreation. It's teaching kids to protect (women) not because they cannot protect themselves, but that they protect our blessings.'* (#4, age group 50-70)

*'Kids learn from their parents.'* (#8, age group 50-70)

### **Samoan Man Box pillars**

In the Summative Analysis (Figure 2), the pillar of Rigid Masculine Gender Roles correlates most often with the Patriarchal System described in the code for Impacts and Outcomes. Simply put, according to the participants, their experiences and understanding of **masculinity aligns most closely with the patriarchal system of gender inequality**.

## **Pillar: Rigid Masculine Gender Roles**

Masculine gender roles in the traditional Man Box include the ‘man as the breadwinner’, ‘men and sons don’t do household chores like cooking and sewing’. The man is seen as the aggressor, the protector, and the authority. The participants emphasize the role of the man as the ‘*father*’ and therefore the ‘*leader*’, the role model. They did not point to actual functions within the home but agree that the man is the protector and in control.

*‘My mother taught us all the values of growing up doing the chores of girls.’ (#1, age group 50-70)*

*‘With a girl, you have to be a man by conquering the situation.’ (#4, age group 50-70)*

*‘I have to talk from my position as a father in the family. The man is the main key of everything; men should become a very good role model in the family.’ (#13, age group 50-70)*

*‘Women should respect that men are the head of the family...it’s respect.’ (#11, age group 50-70)*

*‘I know a family with 7 boys and 2 of them became feminine. They are now fa’afafine because they take over those roles. They still maintain the man aspect. In that situation the brothers don’t look down at them because they’re feminine.’ (#4, age group 50-70)*

The last statement raises a critical issue in defining the American Samoan Man Box: fa’afafine are accepted, respected, and still seen as ‘men’. They can acquire matai titles and enjoy many male privileges. Fa’afafine are found in the Filipino and Fijian communities as well. **The role of the fa’afafine and how they fit with the Man Box, and in society in general, is an important issue.**

## **Pillar: Self-sufficiency**

As indicated on page 7, the traditional Man Box emphasizes the man as an individual while the American Samoan man is viewed as the leader of his family and community. The Filipino, Fijian, and Samoan cultures are collectivist in nature, giving priority to the community, village, family over the individual. Daily life involves serving the needs of more than just oneself and having to rely on others to do so. For example, in the Samoan culture any major life event from a wedding to a funeral involves the entire extended family participating in a fa’alavelave. While the protocols are steeped in patriarchal customs, nevertheless a man recognizes his need to contribute and even prides himself on the ability to do so. In this way the traditional Man Box contrasts with the priorities of the American Samoan man. As one facilitator shared, *‘One of the guiding principles of Samoan culture is relationship with others. To improve our relationship with others is what we want to do.’*

This Pillar also goes deeper to include what a man shouldn’t share with others – their feelings, show emotion, rely on others for support. In this aspect the participants agree with the traditional Man Box.

*‘You have to be willing to take pain and suffering. You have to show you’re a man. This attitude men have is developed outside and they go into their house to treat those around them (like that).’ (#5, age group 71+)*

*‘Something as subtle as when my daughter comes to me crying, I give her my whole attention. She can express her emotions. I want her to know that I’m going to take care of her. But when my son comes to cry, I’m already thinking, man up! I’m telling him to get himself together, be a man.’ (#6, age group -49)*

### **Pillar: Acting Tough**

This Pillar encompasses those traditional male personas created by society, hyped by media, and perpetuated in schools, playgrounds, stadiums, bars – anywhere men and boys may feel threatened. The traditional Man Box holds that a real man fights back, isn't weak, and acts strong even if he's insecure or nervous. The participants recognized these attributes in their own Experiences and Environmental Influences (pages 12-13).

One participant pointed to how these attributes are performed by youth concerning females: '*... it's a love triangle. They fight because they never respect the owner of that girl in the school. They think, I am the man, I'm gonna beat you up cause that's my girl*' (#2, age group 50-70).

This is an interesting aspect that can be explored in discussions with females – how do their expectations of male behavior (a champion, protector) support the Man Box?

### **Pillar: Physical Attractiveness**

These attributes conjure images of the 'Marlboro Man', athletes and hunters. A 'real man' is rugged, doesn't spend time on trying to be physically attractive or make too much of an effort to attract women. The participants didn't discuss these attributes. Follow up discussion could identify whether or not these attributes exist, and if so, how they define masculinity.

### **Pillar: Hypersexuality**

In the traditional Man Box a 'real man' is always ready for sexual encounters and should engage with as many partners as possible. Talking publicly about sexuality is not a social norm in American Samoa, particularly out of respect and cultural courtesy for others. However, one participant shared that '*Porn is a huge addiction, it's damaging and it's huge here.*' (#8, age 50-70) This Pillar may be better addressed using a survey or key informant interview.

### **Pillar: Heterosexuality and Homophobia**

The attributes in this Pillar favor 'straight' males and contend that 'real men' are heterosexuals. This view contrasts with one shared by a participant referring to fa'afafine (page 12: Rigid Masculine Gender Roles). Additionally, a facilitator shared that *men are encouraged to do the taualea (customs) and if you don't, they say you're a fa'afafine.*

*'There is more respect here for the fa'afafine. Back home they are laughed at.'* (#11, age group -49)

*'The LGBTQ is a growing population, they are accepted, and it affects the kids, the kids grow up the wrong way.'* (#2, age group 50-70)

The issues of fa'afafine and homophobia definitely require more inquiry.

## Pillar: Aggression and Control

This Pillar promotes violence when necessary to acquire respect, obedience, and establish conformity. With regards to relationships, the man has the final say and is the singular authority to whom everyone in the family reports. The participants' views strongly support this Pillar.

*'Part of it is control. We control the understanding and don't get a lot of feedback on how to receive.'* (#6, age group -49)

*'The idea is, you be quiet, and you'll stop being beaten.'* (#4, age group 50-70)

*'When my father speaks, my mother will not speak. Now, I get up, tell my wife to iron my clothes. I'm busy, and my wife works but if I say something . . . '* (#3, age group 50-70)

*'Even if the man's wrong in the fight, the woman is told to stop. It goes back to the man being in control.'* (#5, age group 71+)

*'Violence against men – I thought of my childhood and how on the first day of school we greeted each other with, do you want to fight me?'* (#3, age group 50-70)

## **Impacts and Outcomes of the Man Box Attributes**

The participants did not say the word '**patriarchy**', and the facilitators didn't use this concept in the discussion, however the responses clearly point to how both traditional and American Samoan Man Box attributes support the limitation of women's control.

The statement, *'in my view, the man is the main key of everything...nowadays mothers want to become the head of the family'* (#13, age group 50-70) illustrates the sense of intimidation this man feels when considering women becoming the head of the family. Another shared, *'Women now see themselves as more equal to men, and some more important than men. That influences their behavior.'* (#3, age group 50-70).

The status quo, across cultures, is one of gendered inequity promoted by Man Box attributes interwoven with cultural values. Out of respect for the culture there is very little challenge to these social and cultural norms. A facilitator warned, *'we are going to have to deal with the village councils (comprised of men) and make sure we're not violating their rules, protected thoughts.'*

Additionally, the men derive some validation by pointing to scripture and citing God's will. *'According to the word of God . . . the wife submits to the husband and the children listen to their parents.'* (#13, age group 50-70). This suggests that challenging the patriarchal order would be synonymous with challenging religion.

The role of the woman is impacted by these attributes as well. *'The woman is accepted to be the helper. The helper of the leader. I was discussing this with a friend here and he gave me an interesting idea: a helper is a servant. You order, the servant comes.'* (#3, age group 50-70) The roles of women as mothers, sisters, procreators, helpers and servants is respected, valued, but not the woman herself as an individual.

The need to accrue power and the acceptance of using force to get it will inevitably become internalized and socialized resulting in **violence and sexual assault**. ‘One of our church members works at High Court and he reported to our church that there are so many cases (of violence) going through the Court every day.’ (#7, age group 50-70). A facilitator shared, ‘There’s teen pregnancies – you have a lot of molestation cases dealing with old men.’

The participants shared their first-hand experiences living through violence in their homes and schools. All 13 had experienced some form of domestic or peer related violence. Additional discussions will be informative but should be conducted with caution, being mindful of the trauma shared.

## Out of the Man Box

In spite of their negative experiences the participants shared some ‘out of the box’ comments:

‘To hit the woman and be macho – in reality, it’s negative and wrong.’ (#11, age group -49)

‘I don’t see how a man can hit a woman, she’s part of you.’ (#10, age group 71+)

‘I teach my daughters that if they are faced with a boy, they honor themselves enough to say no. We need to teach them to value each other and understand their role in the bigger picture.’ (#4, age group 40-50)

‘Treat your wife nicely, respect and love her, they’ll do the same thing to their sisters.’ (#13, age group 50-70)

The men recognize significant pressures to be a man who is ‘tough’, a ‘protector’, ‘fighter’, ‘leader’. They also believe that there are good and bad attributes to these labels. They see their definition of a man as a requirement to maintain order. They see it as a way of sustaining cultural values. There are definite contradictions between the traditional Man Box and one defined by an American Samoan male. While the labels may be similar, the values and the principles, come from a kinder place...a need to be good, nurturing, loving. Back to the original question: how does an American Samoan male develop into an abusive person?

***The Man Box is alive and well in American Samoa, and the Alliance has validated that it exists within the context of culture and religion. The challenge will be to design ways of addressing negative social norms so that change is not perceived as an affront to culture or religion, as ‘palagi’, as threatening to the male role in the family.***

The Man Box is also validated as a feasible tool to elicit the desired information. The data supports the development of media messages and interventions that will address gender-based inequality with this context in mind. More discussions are needed, in a more structured format, and with a more diverse group of men. These focus groups are an excellent beginning for the Alliance’s strategy to ‘change mindsets’.

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